# Historic Building Recording of Grove Farm, Pulham Market



by Robert Smith with Heather Wallis

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Project name	Grove Farm
Client	Mr. Bim Mountain
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# Introduction

The site is located on the edge of North Green within the Parish of Pulham Market. Planning permission has been sort to redevelop this plot which will include the demolition of Grove Farmhouse. This has recently been identified as being of historical importance. A *Brief for Historic Building Recording* was issued by Norfolk Historic Environment Service. Building recording work was commissioned by Mr. Bim Mountain and was undertaken by Robert Smith and Heather Wallis.

Plates included in this report show specific elements relating to the construction of the building. The full photographic record of both black and white print and digital photographs are included within the archive. This will be deposited with the Norfolk Historic Environment Service.

# Archaeological Background

An initial assessment of the buildings has been made by Stephen Heywood, Conservation Officer for Norfolk Historic Environment Service. This indicated that the structure is largely of 17th-century date with some earlier 16th-century fabric also present. Four main phases were identified

- an early 16th-century open hall
- the insertion of a floor later in the late 16th-century
- the addition of a high status parlour extension (c.1640
- the heightening of the former open hall

The building was damaged and reduced in size by a fire in the 1950s which destroyed the low end of the hall. The condition of the building with a cement rendered exterior and plastered interior gave no indication of its historical importance until the recent assessment. Since the compilation of the assessment in March 2010 various elements which are illustrated in the assessment report have been removed from the building. This report should therefore, be read in conjunction with Heywoods assessment.

#### Aims of the work

The property at Grove Farm is not presently inhabited, the interior having been stripped out and the exterior is covered in concrete render. The aim of the archaeological work was to record the historic elements of the building prior to its demolition.

#### Methods

A 'Level 2' survey, as defined by English Heritage (2006), was carried out. This work included a descriptive and photographic record of both the interior and exterior of the buildings. A measured plan of the building was also created.

The photographic record of the building included general views of the buildings setting and the appearance of the exterior, the interior rooms and circulation areas. The photographic record consists of both black and white film and digital colour images.

At the time of inspection the building was empty and unused. Most of the inspection was undertaken by daylight, although torches were also used as there was no electricity to the property. In some rooms light levels were poor and flash photography was required. Recording was undertaken during two visits to the site on 15th and 25th October 2010.

All works were carried out in full accordance with national and regional guidelines for the treatment of archaeological remains, and in particular the guidance set out in *Standards for Field Archaeology in the East of England* (Gurney 2003) and the Institute of Field Archaeologists *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Investigation and recording of Standing Buildings or Structures* (2001).

# **Description of the building**

The building stands in an isolated position and is approached by a long drive. It is two storeys high, constructed partly in timber frame and partly in brick all of which is encased with a hard concrete render on an expanded metal frame. The present plan form, apart from the remains of a large off-centre chimneystack, dates from the late 20th century. This is also the date of the fenestration and probably the rendering. The roof also dates from the 20th century. It has a ridge piece and a single purlin in each pitch that are supported by an up-raking strut.

It is known that a fire occurred in the property in the 1950's and this is thought to have led to the demolition of the eastern part of the house. Evidence that the building was once longer can be seen within the fabric of the structure itself as the close proximity between the lateral ground floor ceiling beam in the east room and the present end gable indicates that that the building was longer in that direction. Assuming the present lateral end beam was central to the room then some 3.25 metres of the building has been demolished. This is also supported by map evidence from the early 20th-century which shows the full extent of the building prior to the demolition of the eastern end.

## Phase I

The earliest identified phase of building can be dated to the late 15th or early 16th century. Remains of this phase are scant but indicate the presence of an open hall. Evidence for this is in the form of a corner post (Plate 1 (A)), a principal wall post and the remains of the wall plate, all in the north wall. The corner post has the scant remains of what was a substantial iowl, it is some 3.70m in height and has two empty mortises presumably for decorative downturning braces between the post and the gable-end ground sill. Heywood's report has a photograph (2010, fig. 12) of the top of this post with an associated wall plate extending away to the right, the top edge of an arched brace between post and wall plate and signs of smoke blackening. The smoke blackening would suggest that this was the high end of the hall, unless of course the blackening is the result of an earlier fire. This latter suggestion is given some credibility by a post further to the east along the wall that is in the same alignment as the corner post and is contemporary with it. The top of this post has a mutilated joint that was initially related with the tie beam and the inside face of the post is completely fire-damaged (Plate 2). In what is now the north-east corner of the building there is a short stretch of the wall plate that was associated with these two posts and again the inside face of this is firedamaged (Plate 3).

## Phase II

The second phase of the building saw a floor inserted within the open hall. Evidence for this took the form of a relatively insubstantial horizontal rail which was notched into the Phase I corner post. This is some 0.2m below the immediately adjacent ceiling. The rail was inserted to support the principal lateral beams of the ground floor ceiling that was introduced into the open hall and the principal ceiling timbers of this ceiling are decorated with a simple chamfer that is terminated with a run-out-with-step chamfer stop suggesting an early to mid 16th-century date.

# Phase III

The next phase of development consisted of an extension to the west, the characteristics of which suggest a 17th-century date. The extension has timber-framed walls with arched braces from the jowled corner posts to the tie beam and to the wall plate at the west end (Plates 4 and 5) and internally to the tie beam from the second post away from the corner post associated with the earlier block (Plate 8). All of these braces have been removed and their former existence is now seen by the mortise on the post at the start of the jowl and by the empty lap joint between the arched brace and the adjacent wall studs on the gable wall. At least one brace had survived until this year and is illustrated in the building assessment report (Heywood 2010, fig. 5).

Between the two posts associated with the 17-century phase there is a threelight window at ground and first floor level that had metal saddle bars and mullions with an ovolo-plus-fillet moulding although these have been removed (Plate 1 and Heywood 2010, fig. 11).

Within the 17th-century extension, timber framing was evidently still seen as a prestigious architectural statement in Grove Farmhouse as the studs at

ground floor level are very closely spaced, being on average only about one or two centimetres wider than the studs themselves, this being about 0.16m for the spaces against 0.14m for the studs. At first floor level the studs are more widely spaced being on average 0.33m between studs.

#### West wall

Despite the removal of quite a few of the wall studs (Plates 4 and 5) enough remain to reconstruct the pattern of fenestration which is of particular interest in the west gable wall (Figs 2 and 3). Here there was a central, four-light mullion window with its sill 0.8m up from floor level which was flanked on both sides by other four-light mullion window but with sill 1.5m above floor level. The lack of mortises for the mullions in the central window suggests that it was framed independently. There are no empty mortises for brackets and corbels to suggest an oriel window existed. The profile of the mullions is visible in the flanking windows and this is the same as seen in the two windows in the north wall, i.e. an ovolo-plus-fillet design.

#### South wall

An empty mortise in the central principal wall post suggests there was window in the south, front wall. The width of the window is discernable only by the lack of pegs for wall posts in the mid rail as the opening for the 17th-century window was enlarged to accommodate the existing twentieth-century window. The sill of this window is only about 0.6m up from floor level. There is no evidence to support the suggestion (Heywood 2010) that a similar pattern of fenestration seen in the gable end wall existed here.

#### Stack

There is a large chimney stack between the two blocks that sits partly beneath the 17th-century ceiling beam and extends beyond the line of the corner post of the Phase I building. A large winding newel stair exists, albeit in a ruinous state, on the front door side of the stack producing the typical lobby entrance arrangement. However, the uncomfortable relationship between the width of the stack and the ceiling beams that form the stack bay raises questions as to whether the two elements are contemporary. More likely most of the 17thcentury stack was replaced in the nineteenth century when a prominent stair was required, a fact partly supported by the characteristics of the remaining bricks that formed the stair well.

#### Discussion

At first floor level the relationship between the western extension and the original open hall is curious and as yet inexplicable as the arched brace between the post and the tie beam prevents access to the stack-side space where the three-light window is positioned and the arched brace 'should' be associated with the corner post. This suggests that access to the stack-side space was from the adjoining, earlier block (Phase I) and that the building was originally heightened at this time. Contrary to this is the weathering on the timbers of the 17th-century extension, which suggests that they were exposed to the elements on the outside of the building (see Heywood 2010) and that the heightening of the open hall only occurred in the 19th century.

As the late 15th/early 16th-century corner post rises only 90 centimetres above the inserted floor level the room at first floor level would have been open to the apex of the roof of the former open hall.

# Conclusions

In conclusion three main phases of construction were recorded

Phase I – construction of open hall, late 15th/early 16th century

Phase II – insertion of a floor, early to mid 16th century

Phase III – western extension, 17th century

Very few elements relating to Phase I survive in comparison to the more extensive remains relating to the Phase III structure. It is important to note that this report should be read in conjunction with that compiled by Stephen Heywood (March 2010) as some of the elements noted then, including the 17th-century hearth, were no longer present when this survey was undertaken in October 2010. However further stripping out of the internal plaster had revealed some additional elements of the Phase I open hall, and indicated that that the west window was not an oriel window.

Overall this building can be seen to be one with an interesting and complex history with many important structural elements surviving, hidden beneath modern plaster and render. The importance of this building is further emphasised by the fact it is located on the periphery of North Green, an area where other such buildings have recently been recorded by the Norfolk Historic Buildings Group.









A Late fifteenth / early sixteenth-century corner post initially associated with an open hall
B Seventeenth-century corner post
C Position of seventeenth-century window
D Seventeenth-century wall plate
E Wall plate associated with the heightening of the open hall



Late 15/early 16th century wall plate with charred inside face



Late 15/early 16th century wall post with charred inside face





Removed wall studs, central window and arched braces from corner posts to tie beam and wall plates at first floor level, west wall.

Plates 4 and 5



Two of the remaining posts to the left of the C20 window associated with the close studding at ground floor level



Position of the pegs associated with the wall studs above and below the mid rail

Plates 6 and 7



Seventeenth-century wall post with the removed arched brace at first floor level adjacent to the position of the contemporary window. The arched brace prevented access to the stack-side lobby.