

Fristling Hall, Stock, Essex. Watching brief on the works at Fristling Hall.
Surveyed during 2012. CBC 10/01780/FUL.



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Location of Fristling Hall in the middle of open countryside NW of Stock.



Fristling Hall naming the principal buildings.

Location

Fristling Hall is located at the end of a long drive off Swan Lane to the NW of the centre of Stock. Among the buildings is a Listed granary at NGR. TL6798700061. The site is a large farm complex with an Essex Double Barn attached to an organic accretion of buildings around a

building known as the Dairy but which is internally equipped as a piggery. These buildings form the NW range. Parallel, across a wide drove way to the SE, is a second range with a two storey granary, open-shelters and closed stables. A number of buildings contain bird cages. The granary is the only building which exhibits characteristics earlier than the late C18th. The granary is Listed as 'C18th and earlier' and internally has a C17/18th frame.

Scope of this Report

This reports records the watching brief carried out on selected ground works at Fristling Hall as part of the conversion of the farm buildings into dwellings. It details the sequences uncovered in the foundations of the buildings and the cable trenches excavated across the yard.

The site itself has already been analysed and the buildings phased in the report 'Fristling Hall, Stock, Essex. Description and analysis of the farm buildings at Fristling Hall. Surveyed 09 11 and 06 12 2011'.

The Watching Brief was applied as part of the planning conditions set out in CBC10/01780/FUL by Chelmsford Borough Council.

Summary

The site was visited on several occasions to coincide with planned ground works. The outcome was that there were no archaeological sequences revealed within the yard or the footings of selected buildings. The conclusion is that there were no earlier buildings or visible signs of settlement prior to the current buildings.

Timescale

The site was visited on the following days to inspect works:

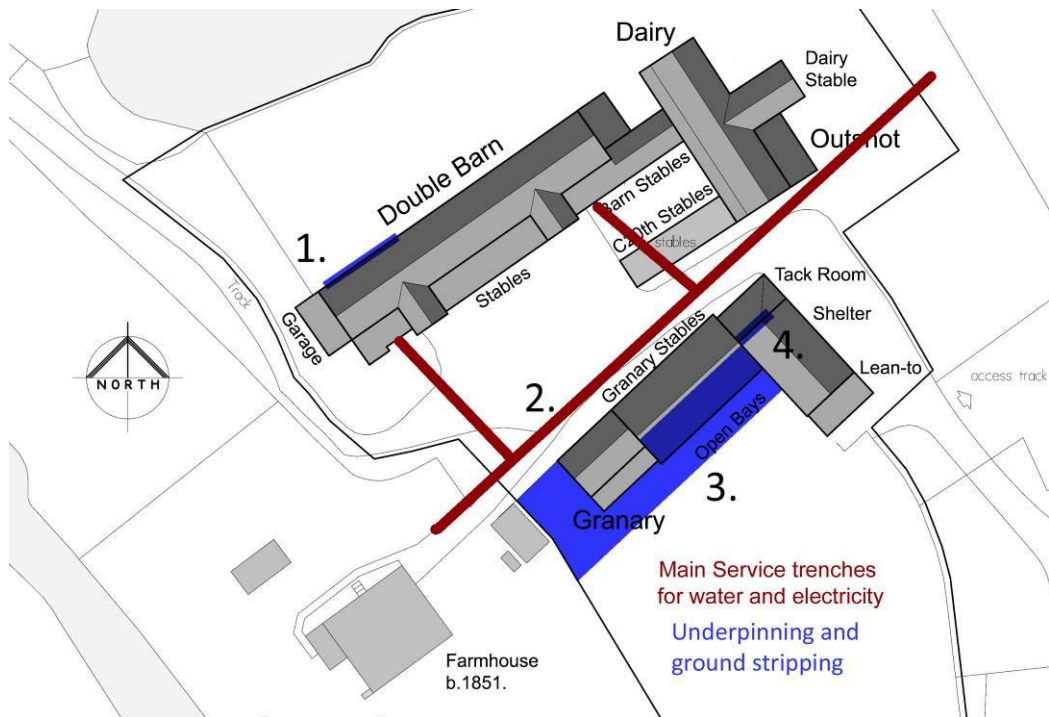
- 01 07 2012 - Ground stripping within the Stables.
- 10 07 2012 - Ground stripping adjacent to the Granary
- 15 09 2012 – Underpinning trenches for the Stables
- 25 10 2012 – Cable run for the water main.
- 17 12 2012 – Confirmation of end of ground works.

Excavation Methodology

All surfaces were removed by machine with a ditching blade. The cable runs were cut with a toothed bucket with side blades which left a smooth finish to the trenches. As no archaeological features were discovered it was not necessary to hand clean any of the surfaces.

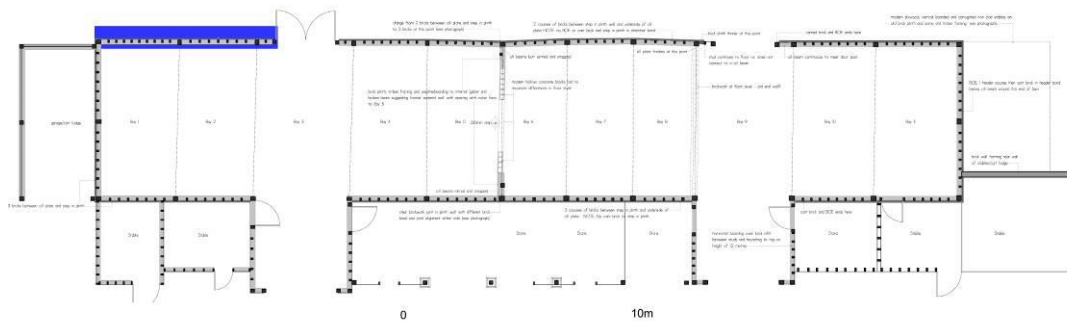
The location and detail of each excavation was photographed with an 8Mp Canon professional digital camera and site context records completed where necessary.

The local geology is a tumbled mixture of London and chalky boulder clays interleaved with gravels and sands and as such is typical of the geology of the area. The following narrative illustrates the works and the excavations.



Location of the excavations recorded in the Watching Brief.

1. The north plinth of the Double Essex Barn.





The north plinth being removed prior to replacement. Looking S.



Section through the floor of the Double Essex Barn. Looking SE.

The brick plinth in the northern wall of the Essex Double Barn was removed because it was structurally unsound. Because the exterior levels had been reduced over the years this left a clean section through the floor of the Barn. It was apparent that the Barn was built directly onto the ground which is a mixture of interleaved London and Chalky Boulder Clays. The original beaten earth floor was lost where the interior had been scathed and then hardcore rubble dumped in for a concrete raft.

The construction trench for the plinth contained only desiccated clay and some roof tiles of the same type as removed from the Barn. The frame was stood on a continuous plinth of red, 65x110x220-225mm hand-made unfrosted bricks with creased and smooth faces, crisp arrises, and diagonal pressure lines. They were bedded with beige-white lime mortar in English bond. The quoins were finished with queen closers. All the viable bricks were reused.

It was noted that the studs of the timber-frame were numbered sequentially E-W using a bolster point. Each numeral was impressed on the outside face at the foot of each timber. All these features, already reported upon, reinforce the EC19th date of the Barn.

2. Water main and cable trench.



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Open section of the water main trench. Looking E.

The water main trench consisted of a main branch passing E-W with spurs passing north toward the Double Essex Barn. Because of the logistics of cutting trenches across the main thoroughfare it was done in sections. Each section exhibited the same sequence. The trenches were 250 mm wide with 400mm junction points and 400mm deep.



Representative section in the watermain trench. Conduit is 100mm in diameter. Looking NE.

The excavation was remarkable sterile of finds and archaeological horizons. It appeared the surface of the yard had been mechanically graded and then laid with compressed road chippings. Here and there were pockets of broken red brick used to fill earlier pot-holes. The local clay was compressed, un-aerated and undisturbed. There was no indication of previous structures or services trenches.

3. Ground stripping around the Granary and Stables.



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Ground stripping within the Stables on the southern side.



Builders test pit against the NE corner of the Stables. C19th tubular field drain.

The interior of the southern side of the stables was stripped of its earth surface down to the drainage layer of London clays and gravel lenses. The only feature uncovered was a line of C19th tubular field drains put in to drain the shelter. A builder's test pit against the foundations showed that the brickwork descended only two courses to a stepped pressure base placed upon 2ft exactly of rammed gravel hoggin. Curiously, the pressure base stepped inwards rather than becoming larger – a peculiar economy of bricks.



The south side of the Granary after the topsoil was removed.



The western side of the Granary after machine stripping

Topsoil removed from around the Granary revealed an impervious layer of undisturbed clay. The soil above was interspersed with old and modern brickwork and appeared to have been ramped up for access.

4. Underpinning in the Tack Room / Shelter.



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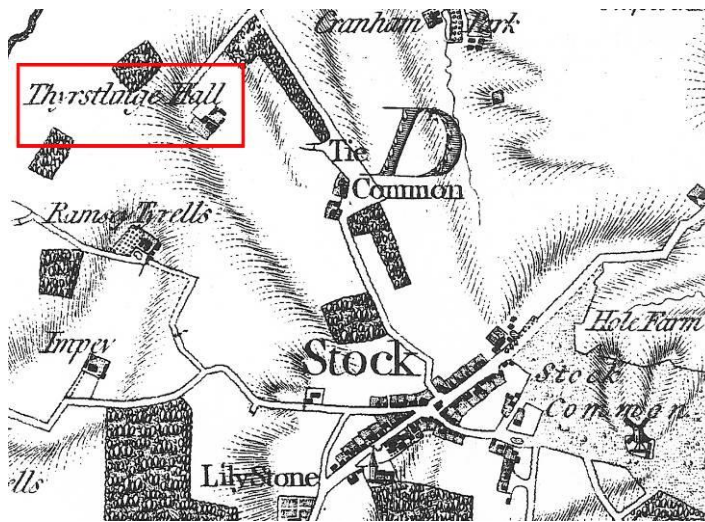
Trenches cut for underpinning the Shelter walls. Looking W.



Underpinning trench. The trench is 1m deep and 2m long.

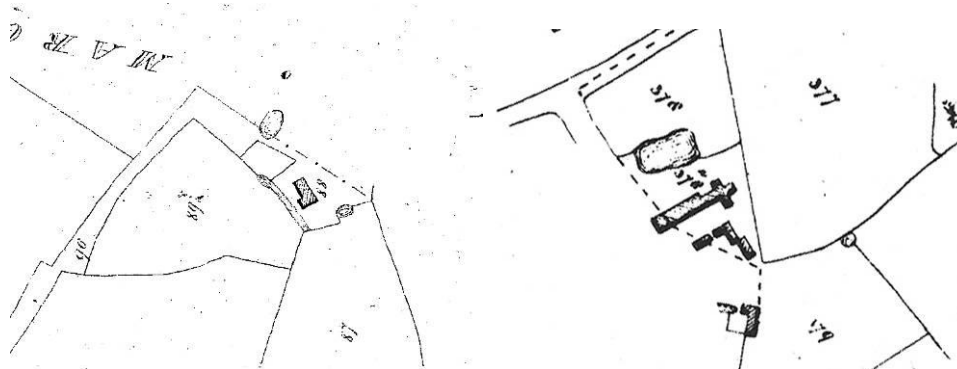
Trenches for underpinning revealed that the Chalky Boulder Clay was undisturbed. No archaeological features were discovered.

Topographical Survey from Maps



1777 Chapman and Andre's Map of Essex.

Thyrstlinge Hall (probably a spelling error) is shown as a large enclave of buildings within enclosed grounds reached by a lane from the NW or from across the way from Tie Common. The disposition of the buildings and their form is not very similar to that of today.

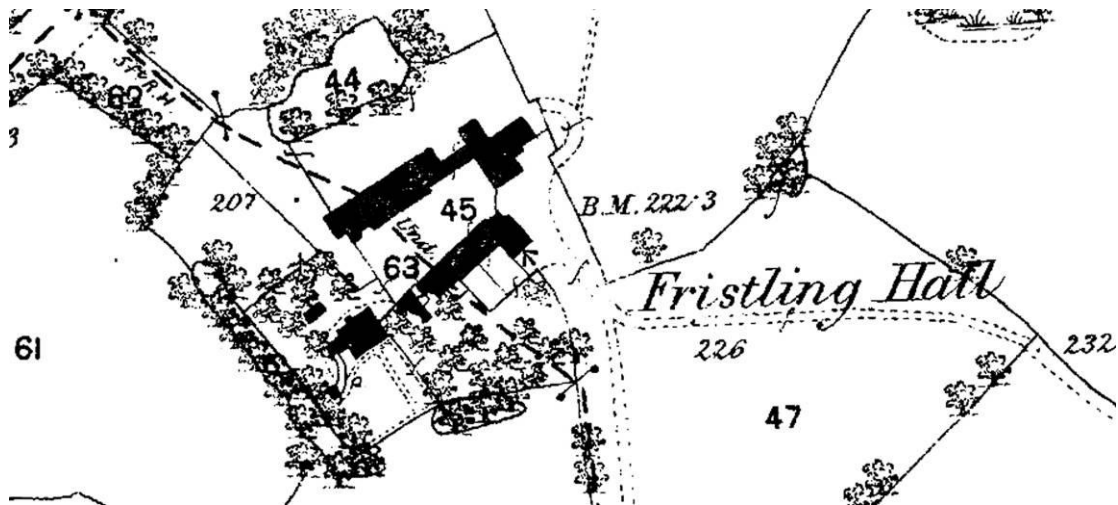


1841 Tithe Award Maps for Buttsbury ERO D/CT 65 (left) and Stock ERO D/CT 336a

The Tithe Maps for Stock are notoriously difficult to interpret because the parish of Buttsbury runs right through the middle of the parish of Stock. Not only that but both award maps are not drawn with north uppermost. Fristling Hall is shown on the Tithe Award for Stock and Buttsbury but the drawings do not easily connect due to different scales and standards of drawing.

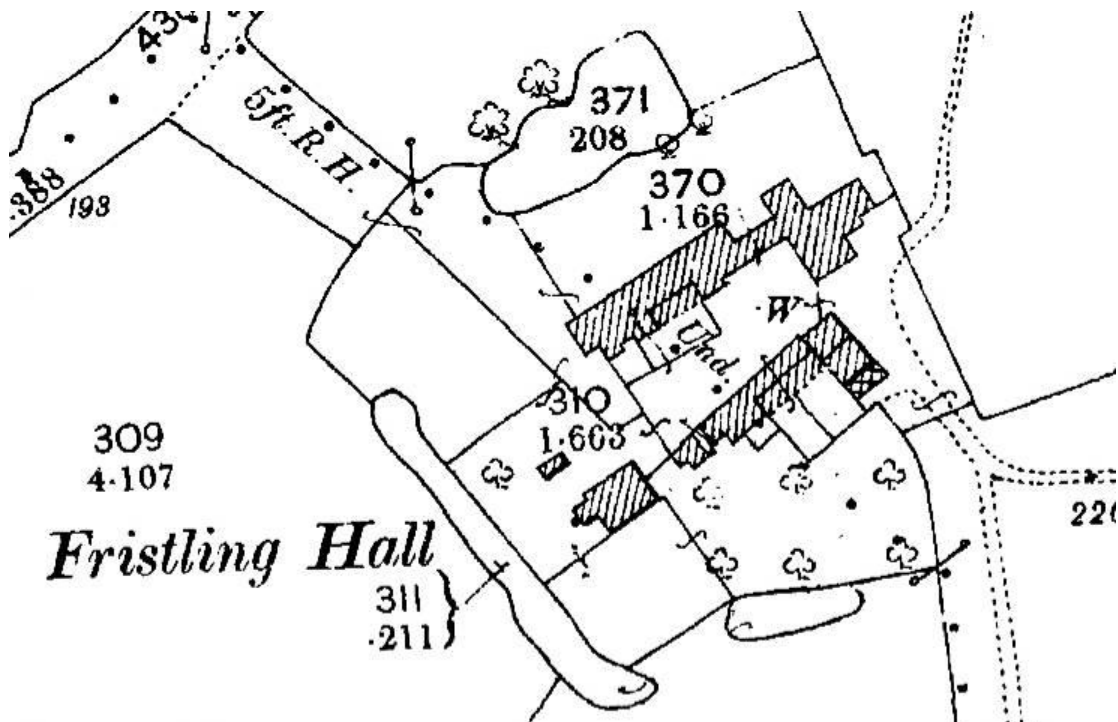
The disposition of the buildings is similar to today and the plan of the Double Barn, Dairy and Granary can be easily identified. The other buildings are not in the same layout and are likely to have been altered or replaced later. The current farmhouse, claimed to have been built in 1851 and the upper floor added for the Wilson family in 1886 (Joy Leighton, 1982) is indicated by its predecessor.

The land was owned by William Henry Francis, Lord Petre and occupied by Thomas Bridge. The land was cultivated in equal measure as arable and pasture.



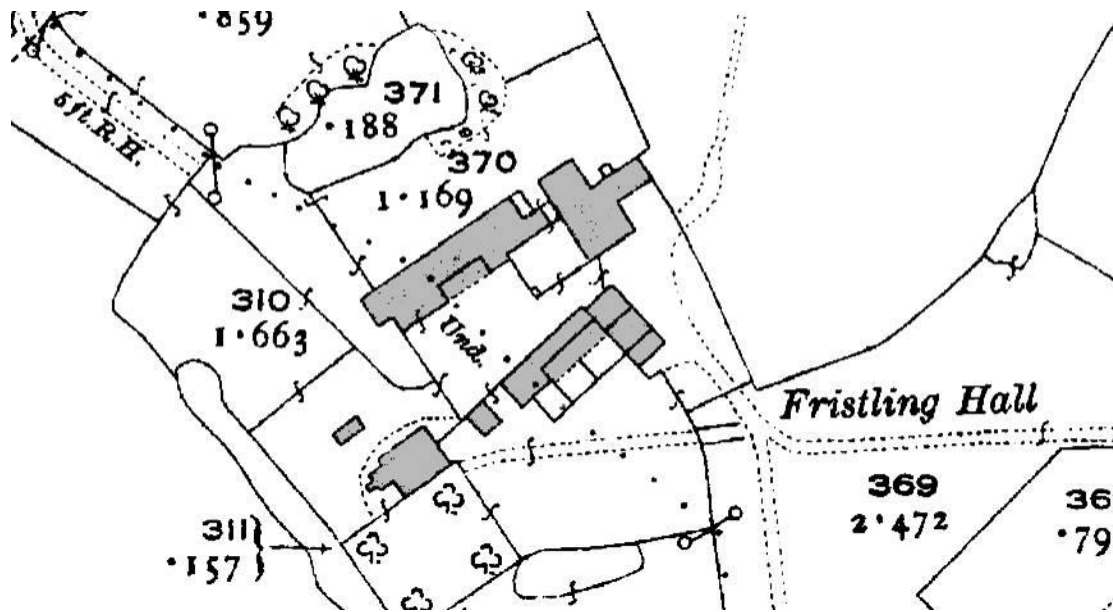
1874 First Edition OS Map

By 1874 the plan of the site is very similar to today. The Double Barn has an outshot between the midstreys, another on its western end where the Garage is today and the Barn Stable is in place. The Dairy has a very similar footprint but there is an addition small unit on the eastern side. The Granary and its Stables are in place and the Tack Room is shown as a smaller unit. The area occupied by the Shelter has a much smaller building in place.



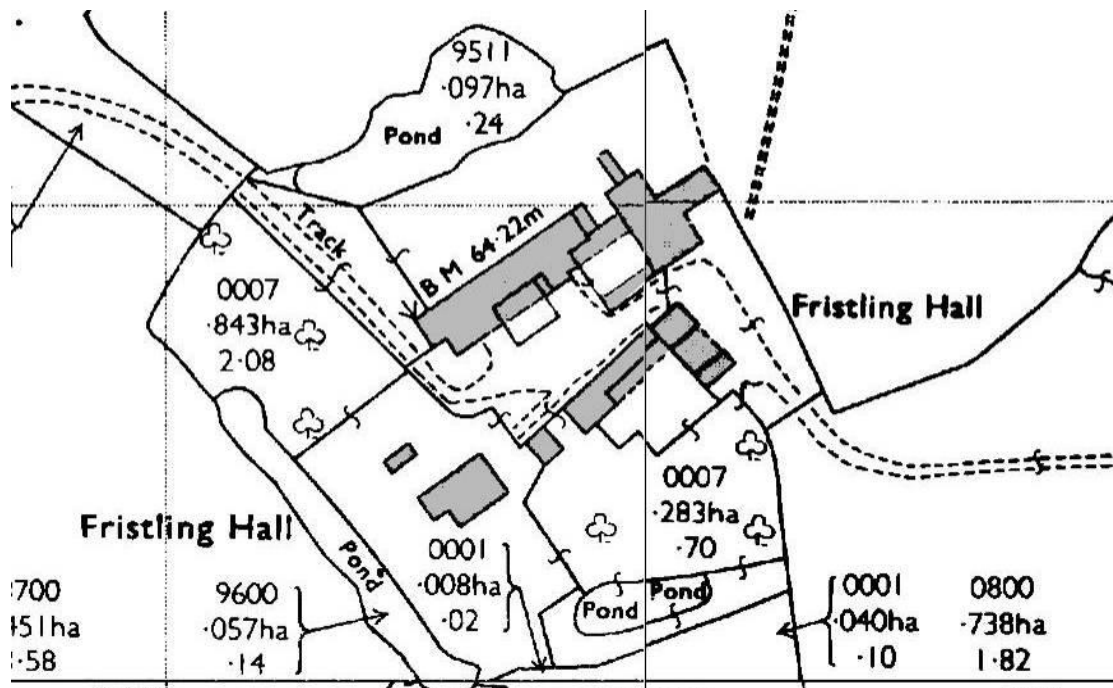
1896 Second Edition OS Map

By 1896 there is little change but the mapping convention of using dashed lines allows us to identify the open-sided buildings. There is now a greenhouse within the footprint of the Shelter and the Tack Room has expanded. There is an open-sided shelter on the south side of the Granary Stables corresponding to the current building. The large number of fences suggest stock control and animal husbandry. A well W is marked in the centre of the site.



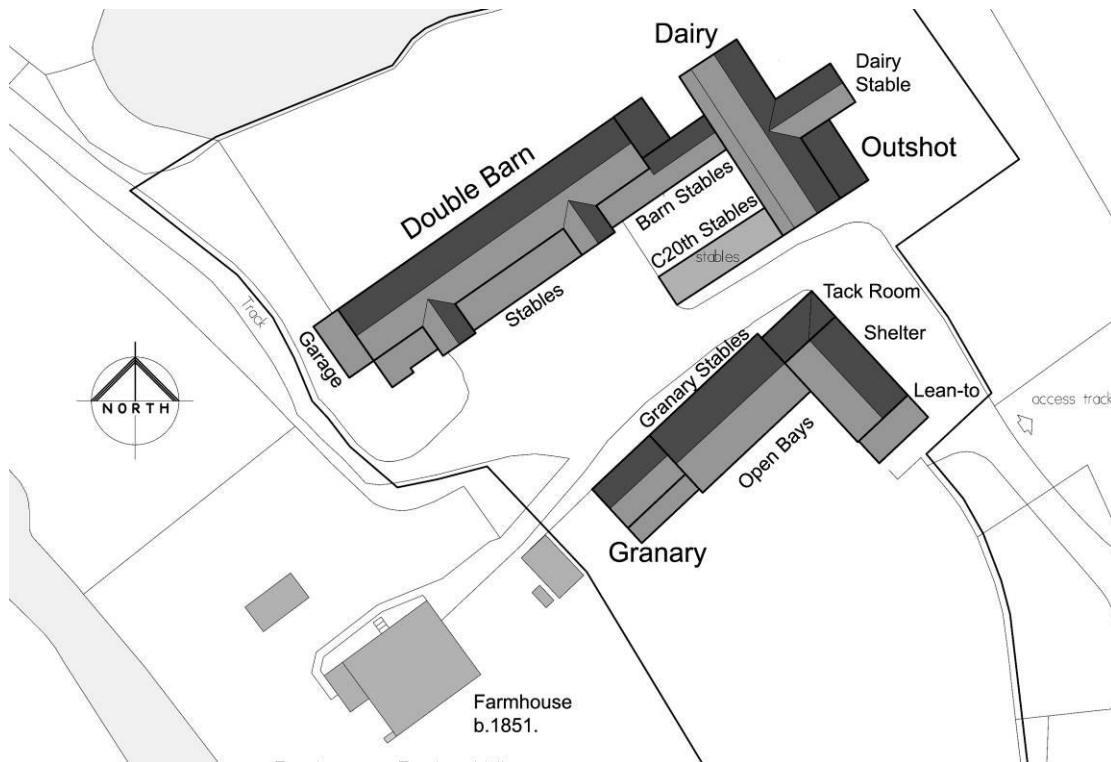
1923 OS Map.

By 1923 there are small changes to the outshots on the Double Barn and the loss of a unit from the east side of the Dairy. An extra bay coinciding with the lean-to on the south end of the Shelter has appeared. There appears to be a mapping error which has carried through from the earlier plan showing the Tack Room as much larger than it is. Effectively the Tack Room has been combined with the adjacent bay of the Shelter.



1965 -71 OS Map.

By 1971 the C20th Stable range has appeared as an open-sided shelter. The Shelter is also shown as open-sided. There is an additional unit added to the north side of the Dairy.



2011. Fristling Hall site as planned by The Planning and Design Bureau.

Discussion.

The phasing of the site has been fully explored in the companion report. The result of the Watching Brief is that no previous archaeological features were uncovered indicating that the site is not stratified and that the buildings were erected on virgin soil.

It can be deduced therefore that the historic village of Fristling, mentioned by Morant, was not centred on the current farmyard of Fristling Hall.

Acknowledgements

I am indebted to the owners of Fristling Hall, Mr and Mrs Sharp, for engaging me to record the buildings. I also thank their agents, Barry Powell and Stewart Rowe for their valuable input and the production of the drawings. I also acknowledge Richard Havis and Alison Bennett of the Essex County Council Historic Environment Team for their help and advice.

Bibliography

Joy Leighton published an account of Fristling Hall with photographs in 1982. This is contained in her paper: *Farming in the 18th & 19th Centuries with reference to Fristling Hall and Crondon Park in Stock, Essex, UK* which is now uploaded to <http://www.stock.org.uk/farming/index.htm>.

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Details of the history of Fristling are also outlined in *Origins of Stock* by Charles Phillips. Also uploaded onto the internet at <http://www.stock.org.uk/history/origin-theory.htm>

Fristling is mentioned by Philip Morant in his *The History and Antiquities of the County of Essex*, (published in two volumes between 1763 and 1768) as being in the Domesday Book.

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**ESSEX HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT RECORD
ESSEX ARCHAEOLOGY AND HISTORY
SUMMARY SHEET**

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Site name/Address: Fristling Hall, Swan Lane, Stock, Essex.	
Parish: Stock	District: Chelmsford
NGR: NGR. TL6798700061	Site Code: SKFH11
Type of Work: Historic Building Recording	Site Director/Team: Barry Hillman-Crouch
Date of Work: 01 07 2012 – 17 12 2012	Size of Area Investigated: 100x100m
Location of Finds/Curating Museum: N/A	Funding source: Owner
Further Seasons Anticipated?: No	Related EHER Nos:
Final Report: Fristling Hall, Stock, Essex. Watching brief on the works at Fristling Hall. Surveyed during 2012. Barry J Hillman-Crouch MStPA DipFA BSc HND.	
Periods Represented: C18th - C20th	
<p>SUMMARY OF FIELDWORK RESULTS:</p> <p>01 07 2012 - Ground stripping within the Stables. 10 07 2012 - Ground stripping adjacent to the Granary 15 09 2012 – Underpinning trenches for the Stables 25 10 2012 – Cable run for the water main. 17 12 2012 – Confirmation of end of ground works.</p> <p>No archaeological features were discovered in any of the above works. It must be deduced that the farm was established as new and that the early settlement of Fristling was located elsewhere.</p>	
Previous Summaries/Reports: Fristling Hall, Stock, Essex. Description and analysis of the farm buildings at Fristling Hall. Surveyed 09 11 and 06 12 2011. Barry J Hillman-Crouch MStPA DipFA BSc HND.	
Author of Summary: Barry J Hillman-Crouch MStPA DipFA BSc HND.	Date of Summary: 28 01 2013.

