

STONEHOUSE BARN, FOREST ROW.

By IAN C. HANNAH, F.S.A.

ON the estate of Stonehouse, at Forest Row, just opposite the gate of Broadhurst (Admiral Sir Charles Madden), there stands a very interesting example of



STONEHOUSE BARN, SOUTH SIDE.

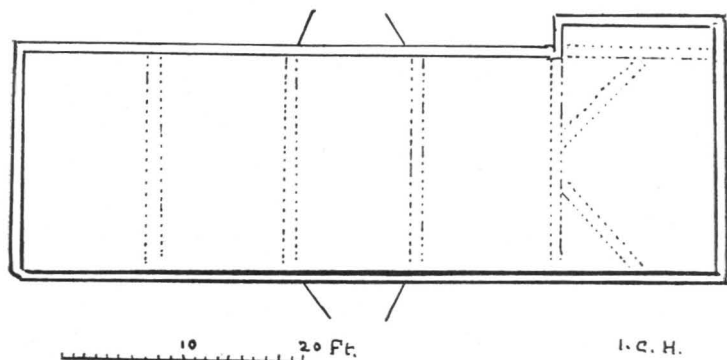
the old timber barns which are still fairly numerous throughout the Weald, though gradually dwindling in numbers.

The present example has the advantage of preserving its original features in quite unusual perfection, but its thatch is in such a state of decay that the rains of the last few years have rotted much of the main timbers; its repair would be a work of considerable difficulty and seems not very likely to be undertaken.

It is unfortunately not dated, as indeed is the case with the great majority of the timber examples. A

rather inferior one, constructed of thinnish beams, at Philpots, West Hoathly, in the same neighbourhood, has the great interest of bearing a date, 1761. By that time the custom had become established of economising timber; experience had presumably taught the farmers what were the minimum requirements. The Stonehouse example is much more massive and its date is probably at least as early as the first quarter of the eighteenth century; it may belong to the seventeenth. Some few of the timbers are re-used. There appears to be no traditions about their having been taken from ships, though further to the south this is exceedingly often the case. From the persistent

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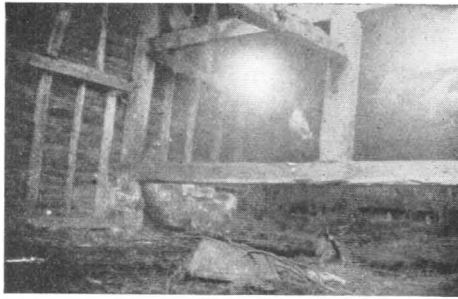
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stories of ships having been brought as far as possible up the rivers and then broken up that their timbers might be used for building and the character of the materials of some of the old barns, and even houses, it may probably have been the case in a few instances. It might appear superfluous to bring woodwork into the Weald, but the labour and cost of hand-sawing must have been great.

The Stonehouse barn stands east and west and has

five bays, the east one hipped with a small and apparently original little aisle extension toward the north. The building is set upon a roughly built foundation of the local sandstone, lower in the eastern bay than in the rest.

The structure is rather rudely framed of sawn timbers; the principals about one foot square,—all put together with mortices and pegs. Massive beams



STONEHOUSE BARN, INTERIOR FROM EASTERN ANNEX, LOOKING SOUTH WEST.

rest upon the stone work; principals carrying the wall plates have cross-pieces about half way up the walls, into which the uprights are framed. A few of the original large clap-boards remain, fastened with blacksmith nails. The middle bay has cart doors, reaching to the eaves on the north, a little lower on the south.

The bracketed tie beams support queen-posts, which are upright and sustain collars in the end wall to the west, in the next space and at the end against the hipping; in the other two cases the queen-posts slope to the purlins. All the rafters are the same size, about four inches square, and there is no ridge piece. Rough Roman numerals $\equiv =$ indicate the relations of tie-beams and queen-posts.

Very rough split laths, not kept in line, are nailed over the rafters and support the thatch. Slithers of wood are fastened on by stout cords passing under each rafter, making a thickness of about nine inches.

Over this is a thick covering, which apparently was originally reeds, fixed by the usual system of split osiers laid along the outside of the thatch and pegged down. Though frequently patched with straw and now in the worst condition, absent altogether over



STONEHOUSE BARN, INTERIOR
LOOKING NORTH WEST.

considerable areas, the thatch has every appearance of being original, a circumstance which is most unusual.

The old barn, like others of its disappearing class, seems really to belong to the landscape, which is far more than can be said for the numerous modern houses all around. It is perhaps asking too much to expect landowners and farmers never to destroy an old barn whose usefulness is wholly past, but it would be a grievous loss to the county if these picturesque old features of the countryside—with all their associations of harvest homes—were finally swept away.