

Outbuilding at Rams Farm, Fordham, Essex

Historic Building Record

OASIS ID leighals1-349779



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April 2019

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Outbuilding at Rams Farm, Rams Farm Road, Fordham, Essex

(TL 93481 28848)

Heritage Asset Assessment

This report provides an archaeological record and analysis at Historic England (2016) Level 2 of a redundant outbuilding originally constructed as a granary in the curtilage of a grade II-listed farmhouse. The report has been prepared to the standard specified by Dr Jess Tipper, archaeological adviser to Colchester Borough Council, and is intended to fulfil a condition of planning consent for conversion (CBC application 181295 dated 21 May 2018).

Introduction

The report is accompanied by a CD containing a full photographic record in the form of 30 Canon 5D digital images of 21 megapixels (Appendix 1), but also includes 16 photographs of key features to illustrate the text (Appendix 2). Each image is described in a separate schedule and wherever possible shows a scale rod with half-metre divisions in red and white. The site was inspected on 9th April 2019.

Summary

Rams Farm lies in open countryside 1 km north-east of All Saints church in Fordham. Known in the 19th century as Dean's Farm it formed a medium-scale tenanted arable holding of approximately 75 acres at the time of the parish tithe survey in 1838. The site includes a grade II-listed farmhouse of 'circa 1510' with a separately listed aisled barn on the east which is said to have been built in the 14th century but in fact dates from the beginning of the 17th. A mid-19th century refurbishment saw the addition of two animal yards to the west of the barn served by a pair of red-brick shelter-sheds and a detached granary to the south. The slate-roofed granary is of typical form, with a red-brick lower storey beneath a timber-framed grain loft that retains its original internal and external boarding. Despite the addition of a lean-to greenhouse and tractor shelter during the late-20th century the building survives largely intact with a number of chalk tally marks to the interior, and is of local historic significance.

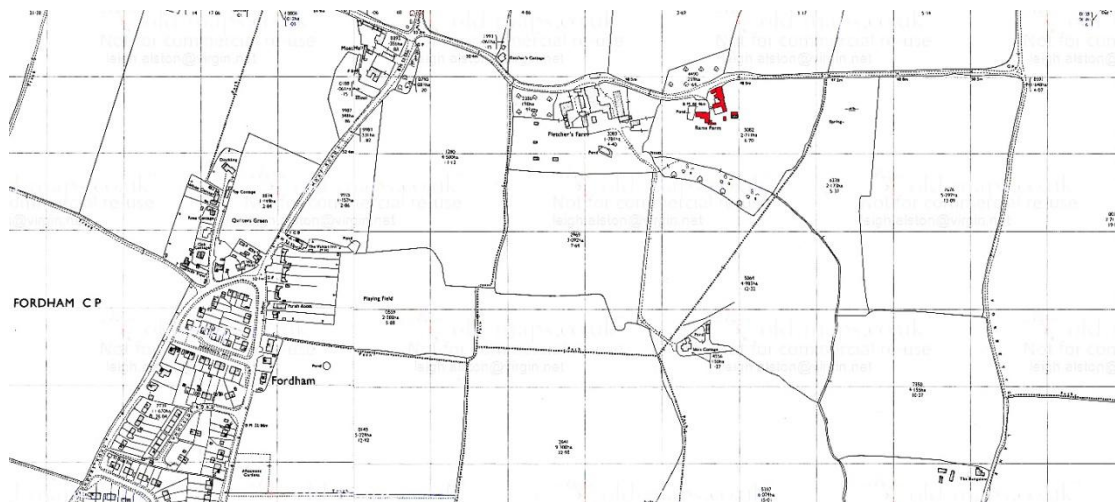


Figure 1. Location plan highlighting Rams Farm in red to the north-east of the village.

Documentary History and Map Regression

Rams Farm lies in open countryside on the southern side of Rams Farm Road approximately 1 km north-east of All Saints church in Fordham. The site consists of a grade II-listed timber-framed and weatherboarded farmhouse with a complex of farm buildings to the east that includes a separately listed aisled threshing barn. The house is dated in Historic England's Schedule to 'circa 1510' and said to retain a crown-post roof while the barn is ascribed to the 14th century. The house was not inspected for the purpose of this report but the framing of the barn includes face-halved and bladed scarf joints with part of an original wind-braced clasped-purlin roof and in fact dates from the beginning of the 17th century. At the time of the Fordham tithe survey in 1838 the property was a tenanted arable farm of approximately 75 acres owned by Elizabeth Boars and occupied by Martin Harvey who was recorded as a farmer in White's Directory of Essex for 1848. The site was described in the accompanying apportionment only as 'homestead' with 'barn field' to the east (plots 274 and 275 in figure 3). The farm was named as Deans Farm on the Ordnance Surveys of 1876 and 1896, perhaps deriving from John Dean, a farmer of Fordham, whose will was proven in 1798 (ERO D/ABW 114/1/21). Rams Farm made its first appearance on the map of 1923 (figure 6). A red-brick stable and shelter-shed were added to the barn in the mid-19th century to create a typical Victorian yard complex which included the detached granary to the south that forms the subject of this report. These buildings are itemised in figure 10 below. In recent years the majority of the farmland was sold separately to the house and now forms part of Fletchers Farm which adjoins on the west.

Figures 3-7 below illustrate the changing outlines of the buildings on the site since 1838.

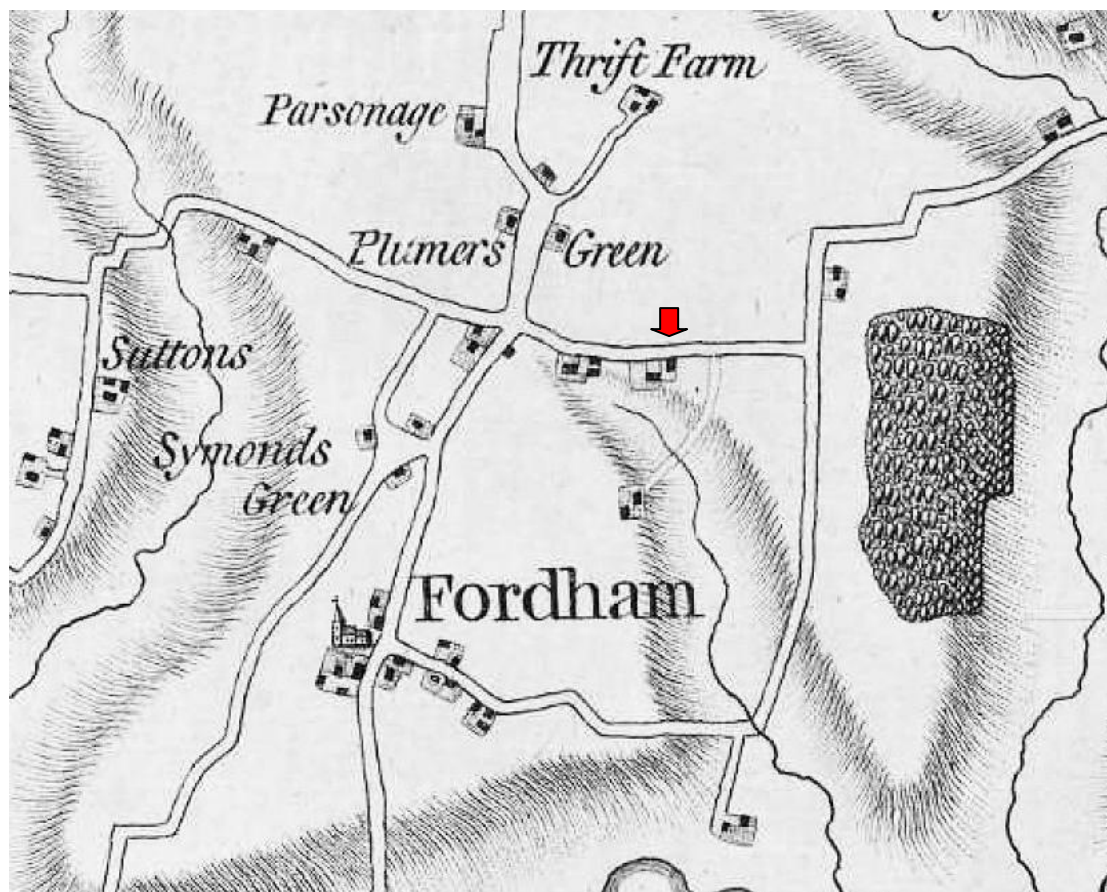


Figure 2. The area as depicted on Chapman & Andre's map of 1777, with Rams Farm arrowed. The house and barn are accurately depicted in opposite corners of the site.

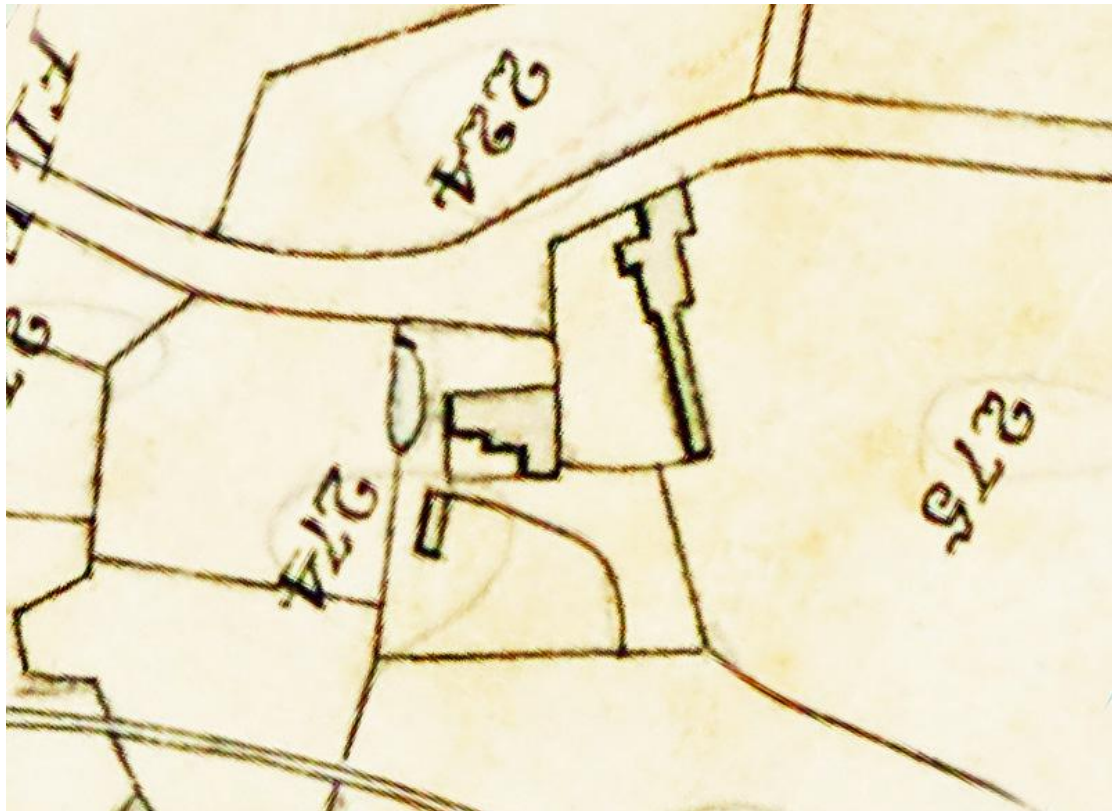


Figure 3. The Fordham title map of 1838, reoriented to show north at top (Essex Record Office D/CT 142/B). The farmhouse lies to the south-west of the barn adjoining the road from which a long narrow range projects to the south.

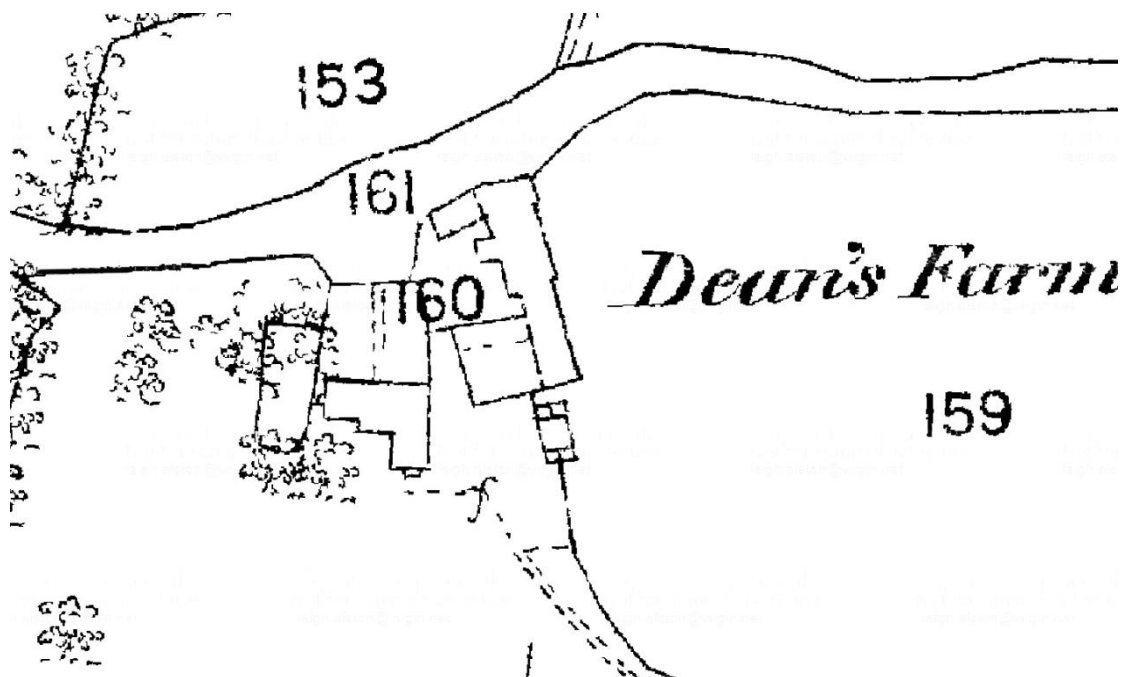


Figure 4. The First Edition 25 inch Ordnance Survey of 1876. The present stable had been added to the north of the barn's 17th century western porch since 1838 (structure 6 in figure 10) along with an open-sided shelter-shed serving an enclosed animal yard to the south (4). The barn's southern projection appears to have been truncated to accommodate the detached granary to the south with what appear to be a pair of small pig pens adjoining its northern and southern gables.

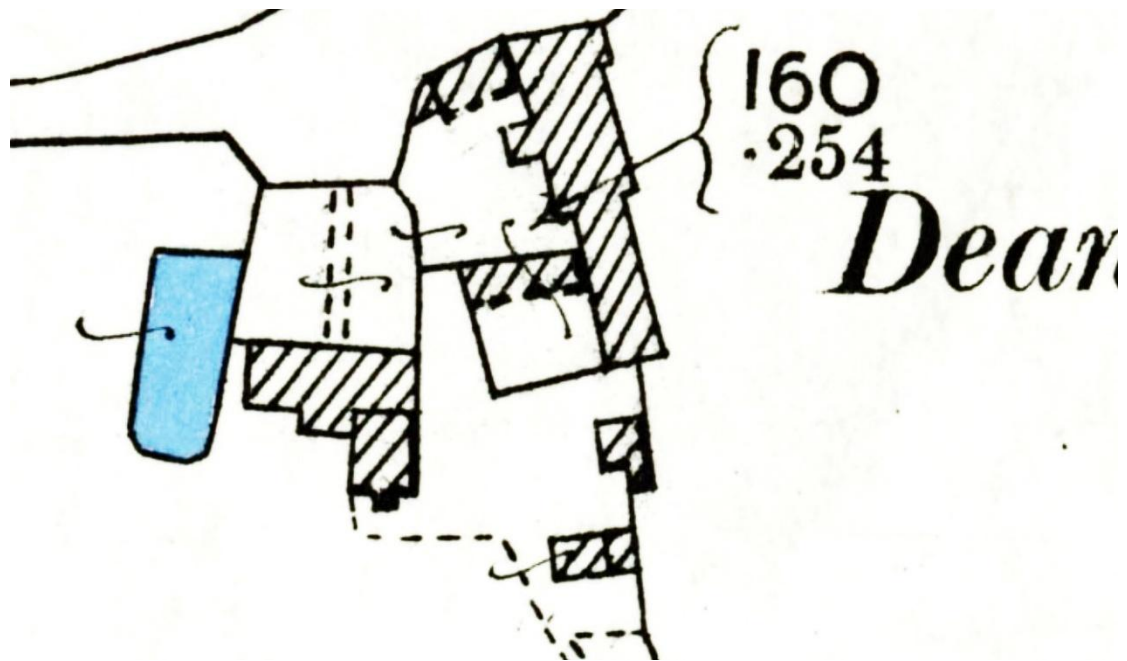


Figure 5
 The Second Edition Ordnance Survey of 1896. Of the four small pens adjoining the granary in 1876 only the south-easternmost now remained, and a new structure that no longer survives had been built to the south.

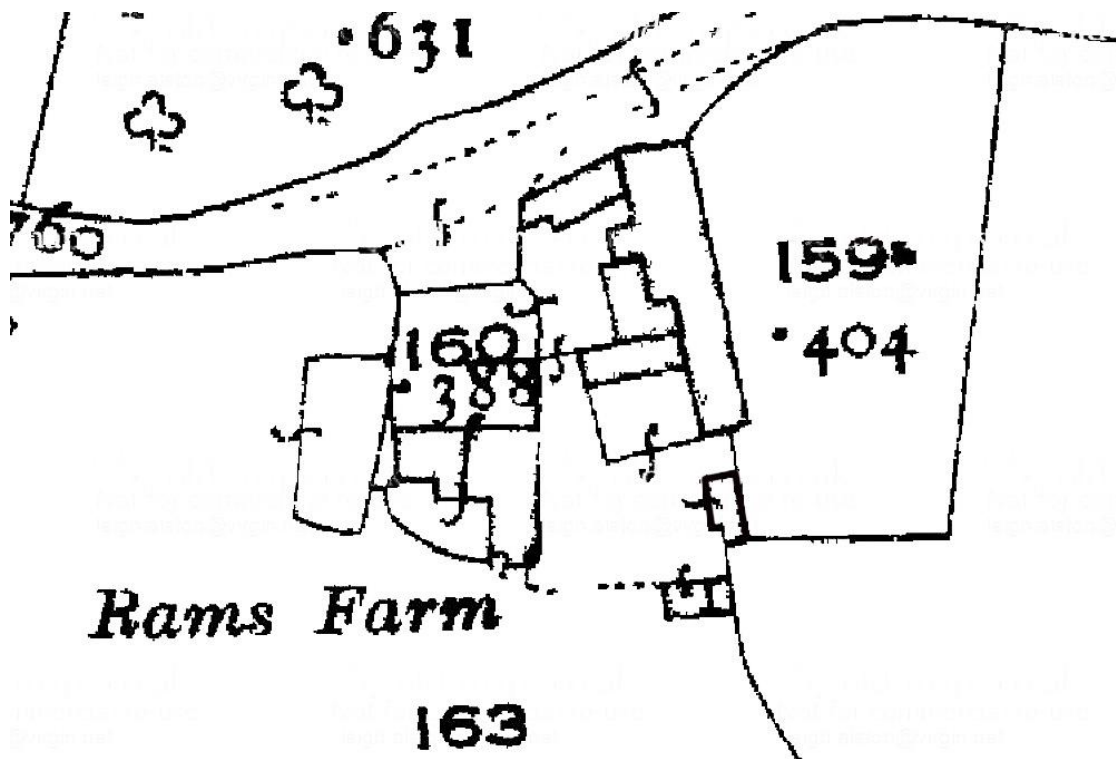


Figure 6
 The 25 inch Ordnance Survey of 1923, showing little change since 1896 apart from the farm's name.

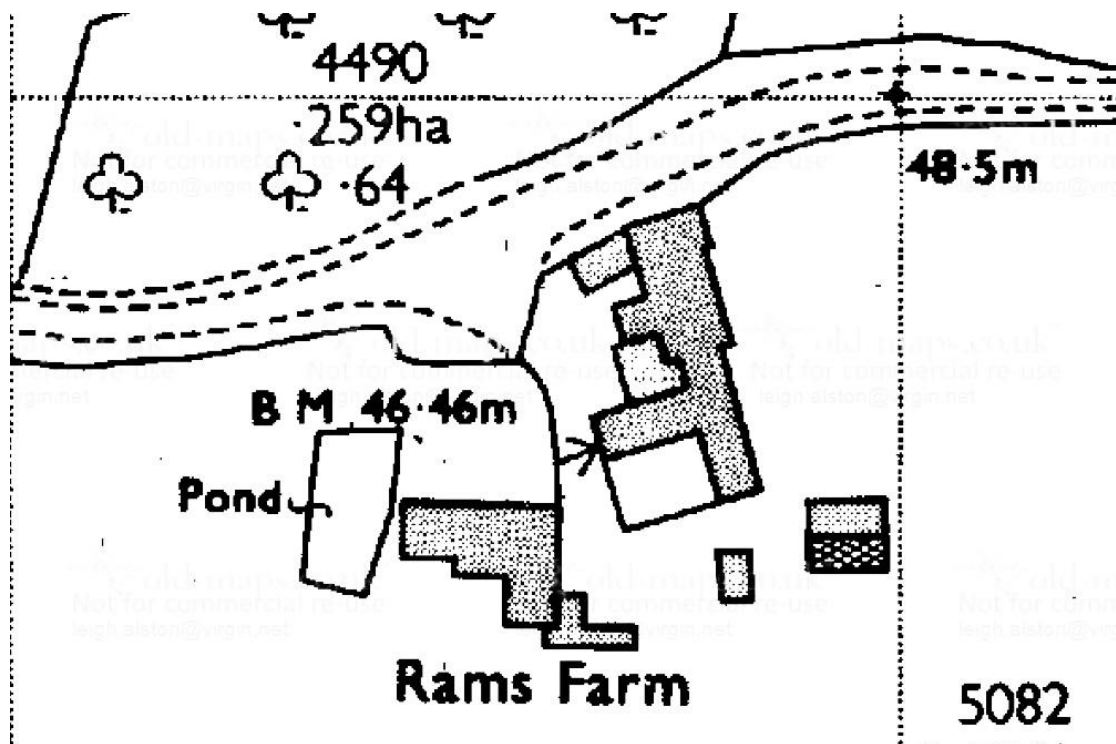


Figure 7

The Ordnance Survey of 1971.

The pig sty and greenhouse is shown for the first time to the east of the granary (structure 5 in figure 10). The range to the east of the southern shelter-shed (4) probably formed a stable or cow shed but has since been demolished.



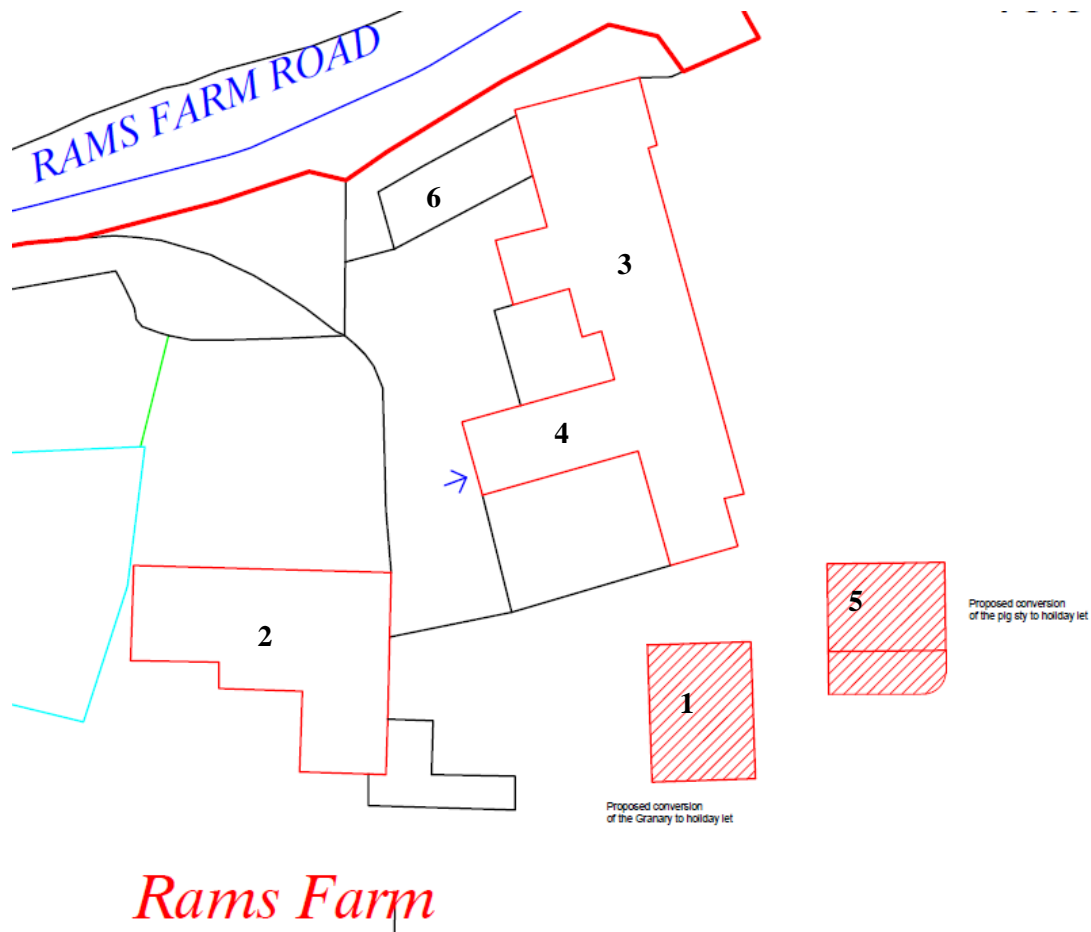
Figure 8

The northern facade of the farmhouse in 1922 (published in 'Fordham Essex: A Photograph Album', Millrind Press, 2000). Weatherboarding was usually confined to lower status cottages and is less common in substantial farmhouse of this kind.



Figure 9
A current aerial view showing the barn terminating at the north-eastern corner of the southern shelter-shed (4) with the detached granary to the south.

Building Analysis



Rams Farm

Figure 10

Site plan by Oswick Ltd dated 2016 adapted to identify each key structure with a number for ease of reference in the text and photographic record. The area of the barn has since been truncated to the south and east of the shelter-shed (4) as shown in fig. 9.

Key to figure 10

- 1 The brick and weatherboarded granary of *circa* 1870 that forms the subject of this report.
- 2 The grade II-listed former farmhouse with a weatherboarded northern facade. Listed as '*circa* 1510' and said to contain a crown-post roof but not inspected for the purpose of this report.
- 3 A grade II-listed timber-framed and weatherboarded aisled barn of five bays with a contemporary gabled entrance porch facing the yard in front of the farmhouse. Extended by one bay at both ends in the early-19th century. Listed as 14th century probably on the basis of its reverse assembly (once mistakenly thought to be a medieval feature) but in fact dating from the early-17th century.
- 4 A mid-19th century red-brick and pantiled open-sided shelter-shed serving a formerly enclosed animal yard on the south. Probably contemporary with the granary and stable (1 and 6).

5. A mid-20th century former pig sty of cement block-work shown on the Ordnance Survey of 1971 but not that of 1923.
6. A mid-19th century red-brick and tiled stable range probably contemporary with the shelter-shed (4) and granary (1). The Ordnance Survey of 1896 shows this building as an open-sided shelter-shed.

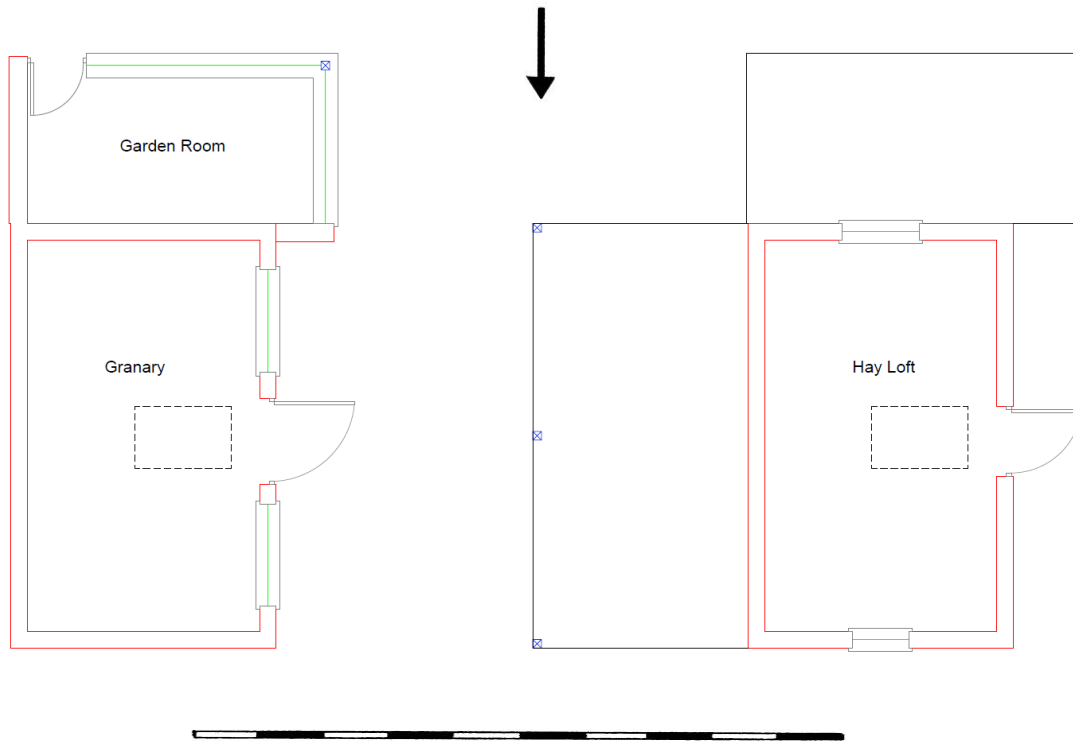


Figure 11
Ground (left) and first-floor plans by Oswick Ltd. Scale in metres. The ‘hay loft’ was in fact a grain store.

The following account of the granary is intended to be read in conjunction with the descriptive captions to illustrations 1-16 of Appendix 2.

The Original Granary (1)

Proportions, structure and date

The granary is a two storied structure extending to a total of 6.1 m in length on a north-south axis by 3.6 m in width (11.75 ft). It consists of 23 cm (9 inch) red brickwork laid in Flemish Bond to the lower storey and weatherboarded timber-framing to the upper, and rises to 3.75 m at its eaves above an internal floor of 20th century concrete (12.25 ft). A ceiling of uniformly sawn tall-sectioned softwood joists of 6.2 cm by 15 (2.5 ins by 6) offers clearance of 2.1 m (7 ft) and the loft floor lies 1.5 m (5ft) below the roof-plates. The softwood weatherboarding is tarred externally with red-brown pigment visible beneath where the surface has been protected by a 20th century lean-to tractor shed – suggesting the cladding was reddled initially (as often found locally before tar became ubiquitous in the late-19th and 20th centuries). The slate-covered shallow-pitched roof structure consists of tall-sectioned softwood rafters with two nailed collars and a ridge-board but without purlins, and indicates a date during the later decades of the 19th century. The structure appears to be shown on the Ordnance Survey of 1876 but is likely to have been newly built at this time, and probably formed part of the same High Victorian refurbishment of the site that included the shelter-sheds.

Layout and purpose

The building forms a typical 19th century granary with a central entrance in its western facade (facing the house) and a loading door to the grain loft immediately above. The ground-floor doorway is respected by closers but its left-hand (northern) jamb appears to cut the brickwork in a manner that would normally indicate secondary widening, although there is no other evidence of this and both doors are of equal width (at 1 m or 40 ins). The ground-floor windows flanking the door interrupt the brickwork in a similar manner but these are clearly 20th century insertions – but may have replaced smaller predecessors. A wooden ladder opens onto the loft via a hinged trap door immediately inside the entrance. This represents an unusual arrangement but appears to be original as the trap is fully framed with a tenoned trimmer secured by a peg. The gables and rear wall are blind on the ground floor and the loft walls are lined by horizontal deal boarding. A series of secondary vertical fillets nailed to these boards formed grooves to secure a pair of missing partitions that divided the storage compartments on each side from the narrow area opposite the loading door. There is no evidence of bins in the normal sense and both compartments were probably designed for grain in sacks. The original purpose of the loft is confirmed by a number of chalk tally marks as shown in illustrations A2. 15 & 16, with rodent damage repaired by nailed sheets of tin (A2. 14). The roof retains an original boarded ceiling between the slate and rafters, and 20th century windows in both loft gables probably replaced original predecessors.

Later Additions and Alterations

The granary was depicted in 1876 with pairs of small enclosures adjoining each gable that may have served as pig sties, with all but one removed by 1896 (figures 4 and 5). The southern gable is currently adjoined by a lean-to greenhouse of brick and cement block-work, with an open-sided lean-to tractor and implement shelter projecting from its rear (eastern) wall. Neither the greenhouse nor the shelter was shown on the Ordnance Survey of 1971, and both were probably added in the 1970s when the present windows were installed in the main building and its facade was repointed in cement. With the exception of the possible widening of the main entrance noted above the granary otherwise remains largely intact and unaltered, albeit stripped of internal fixtures and fittings.

Historic Significance

The granary at Rams Farm survives in relatively original condition despite the insertion of 20th century windows. It was built in *circa* 1870 as part of a major refurbishment of the farm complex that included new animal yards and shelter-sheds, and reflects the semi-industrial, yard-based system of agriculture known today as Victorian High Farming. It is accordingly of local historic significance, representing a late example of a traditional granary, but is not of sufficient rarity or architectural importance to warrant listing in its own right.

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Leigh Alston is a building archaeologist and architectural historian who lectures on the analysis and recording of timber-framed structures in the Department of Archaeology at Cambridge University, but also undertakes commissions on a freelance basis for the National Trust and various county archaeological units. He co-founded the Suffolk Historic Buildings Group in 1993 and served as Chairman for 13 years. Publications include 'Late Medieval Workshops in East Anglia' in 'The Vernacular Workshop' edited by Paul Barnwell & Malcolm Airs (Council for British Archaeology and English Heritage, 2004) and the National Trust guidebook to Lavenham Guildhall.

Schedule of full photographic record follows (pp. 10-11)

Appendix 1 (on accompanying CD): Full Photographic Record

Descriptions of Photographs in Appendix 1

1. A general view of the site from the road to the north-west showing the granary (1) in the rear between the listed house (2) and barn (3) to right & left.
2. The weatherboarded northern facade of the listed house (2) with the granary (1) in the rear to the left.
3. A general view of the site from the road to the north-east showing the listed barn (3) with the granary (1) in the rear to the left.
4. A general view of the site from the south-east showing the granary (1) in the foreground with the house (2) and barn (3) to the left and right.
5. A general view from the east showing the listed house (2) and barn (3) with the granary (1) on the left.
6. A general view from the north-east showing the 20th century cement-block pig sty (5) to the left of the granary (1).
7. The granary (1) from the former animal yard to the north-west showing the position of its removed southern boundary wall in the foreground.
8. The granary (1) from the south showing its 20th century lean-to greenhouse in the foreground with the 20th century implement shelter to the right.
9. The granary (1) from the north-west showing the window & tarred cladding of the northern gable with the adjoining 20th century brick wall on the left.
10. The granary's western facade (1) showing central door respected by closers in the brickwork to the right with the loft door above and 20th century ground-floor windows.
11. A detail of the heavily tarred western entrance door which is respected by closers to the right but appears to cut the brickwork on the left (1).
12. The granary (1) from the north-east showing the 20th century lean-to implement shelter against its rear wall to the left.
13. The rear (eastern) exterior of the granary (1) showing its tarred ground-floor brickwork and first-floor weatherboarding.
14. A detail of the granary's heavily tarred eastern external brickwork and weatherboarding with some evidence of earlier red-ochre pigment (1).
15. The granary's cement-rendered southern gable within the greenhouse with tar-free weatherboarding above.
16. The southern gable of the granary (1) from the west showing the 20th century cement-block fabric of the lean-to greenhouse.

17. The internal northern gable of the granary's lower storey (1) showing its Flemish Bond brickwork and ceiling of tall-sectioned deal joists.
18. The internal southern gable of the granary (1) showing its concrete floor and loft ladder.
19. The interior of the granary's western ground-floor facade (1) showing the 20th century windows cutting the brickwork.
20. A detail from the east of the granary's tall-sectioned softwood ceiling joists (1) with the ladder trap on the left.
21. The interior of the granary's blind eastern rear wall showing 20th century cement render to the lower courses of brick (1).
22. A detail from the west of the granary's ladder trap showing the apparently original tenons of the framing joists (2).
23. The granary loft from the south (1) showing its deal boarding and original roof structure of paired rafters with a ridge-board and nailed collars.
24. The granary loft from the north (1) showing its external loading door on the right.
25. The western interior of the granary loft (1) showing the vertical grooves for missing bin partitions flanking the loading door.
26. The eastern interior of the granary loft (1) showing the vertical grooves for missing bin partitions opposite the loading door.
27. A detail of the eastern interior of the granary loft (1) showing the nail patches of sheet tin to the deal boarding.
28. A detail of the chalk tally marks to the eastern interior of the granary loft (1) with the groove for the southern bin division on the left.
29. A detail of the chalk tally marks to the western interior of the granary loft (1) with the central loading door on the right.
30. A detail of the chalk tally marks flanking the northern groove of the eastern interior of the granary loft (1).

Photographic Appendix 2 follows on pp. 12-19.

Appendix 2 (pp. 12-19): Selected Photographs to Illustrate the Text



Illus. 1. A general view of the site from the road to the north-west showing the granary (1) in the rear between the listed weatherboarded house (2) on the right and the listed barn (3) to the left.



Illus. 2. A general view of the site from the south-east showing the slate-roofed granary (1) in the centre with the house (2) and aisled barn (3) to the left and right respectively.



Illus. 3. A general view from the east showing the house (2) and barn (3) with the granary (1) and 20th century cement-block pig sty (5) on the left.



Illus. 4. The granary (1) from the south showing the 20th century lean-to greenhouse against its gable and the 20th century tractor and implement shelter projecting from the rear (eastern) wall to the right.



Illus. 5. The granary's western facade showing its red-brick lower storey and the central loading door of the weatherboarded loft. The ground-floor doorway is respected by closers (quarter bricks) to the right but its left-hand jamb cuts the brickwork suggesting it has been widened. The present windows date from the 20th century and also interrupt the brickwork.



Illus. 6. A detail of the heavily tarred western entrance door with closers to the right and cut bricks to the left.



Illus. 7. The granary from the north-east showing its tarred northern gable and the 20th century lean-to implement shelter against its rear wall.



Illus. 8. A detail of the granary's heavily tarred eastern external brickwork and weatherboarding protected by the later implement shelter. There is some evidence of earlier red-ochre pigment beneath the tar.



Illus. 9. The lower storey of the granary from the north showing its featureless interior with a concrete floor and ceiling of tall-sectioned softwood joists. This space was probably used for the milling and storage and animal feed.



Illus. 10. The interior of the western ground-floor facade showing cement repairs to the cut brickwork on the right of the door. The windows also appear to cut the brickwork on the left and may have replaced smaller originals.



Illus. 11. A detail from the west of the granary's ladder trap showing the apparently original tenons of the framing joists. The trimmer supporting the ladder is through-tenoned and pegged at both ends.



Illus. 12. The western interior of the grain loft showing the vertical grooves for missing bin partitions flanking the loading door. The interior is clad in deal boards with later staining and the original softwood roof structure consists only of coupled rafters with a ridge board and two nailed collars.



Illus. 13. The eastern interior of the grain loft showing the vertical grooves for missing bin partitions opposite the loading door.



Illus. 14. A detail of the eastern loft interior showing the nailed patches of sheet tin to the deal boarding. The circular patch on the left appears to be the base of a tin can. A series of chalk tally marks are visible on the top board (see detail in illus. A2. 16).



Illus. 15. A detail of the chalk tally marks to the western interior of the grain loft with the central loading door on the right.



Illus. 16. A detail of the chalk tally marks flanking the northernmost groove of the grain loft's eastern interior.