

Report № 1979

The Old Dairy, Poplar Farm, Langley Street, Norfolk: An Historic Building Survey

NHER 51525

Prepared for

Mr and Mrs Young
The Old Dairy
Poplar Farm Barns
Langley Street
Norfolk



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Location: The Old Dairy, Poplar Farms Barns, Langley Street
District: South Norfolk
Grid Ref.: TG 3667 0209
HER No.: 51525
Dates of Fieldwork: 17 October 2008

Summary

A level 2 archaeological survey was undertaken on the Old Dairy, a disused L-shaped agricultural building of brick and flint construction that formed two sides of the yard at Poplar Farm, Langley Street, Norfolk. The resulting survey identified three separate structures (A, B and C) all of which appear to have been built in the 19th century. None of the buildings are visible on the 1839 tithe map, but had been constructed by the publication of the 1st edition OS map in 1886.

The plan and surviving fixtures and fittings strongly support the interpretation of Building A as a cow shed. Limited survival of evidence meant that Building B's function was more difficult to ascertain beyond its general agricultural use, but structural details suggest was a later addition that linked Buildings A and C. Building C is likely to have had a dual function as a cow shed and cart shed, and has a weather-boarded upper storey accessed externally from the southern gable wall.

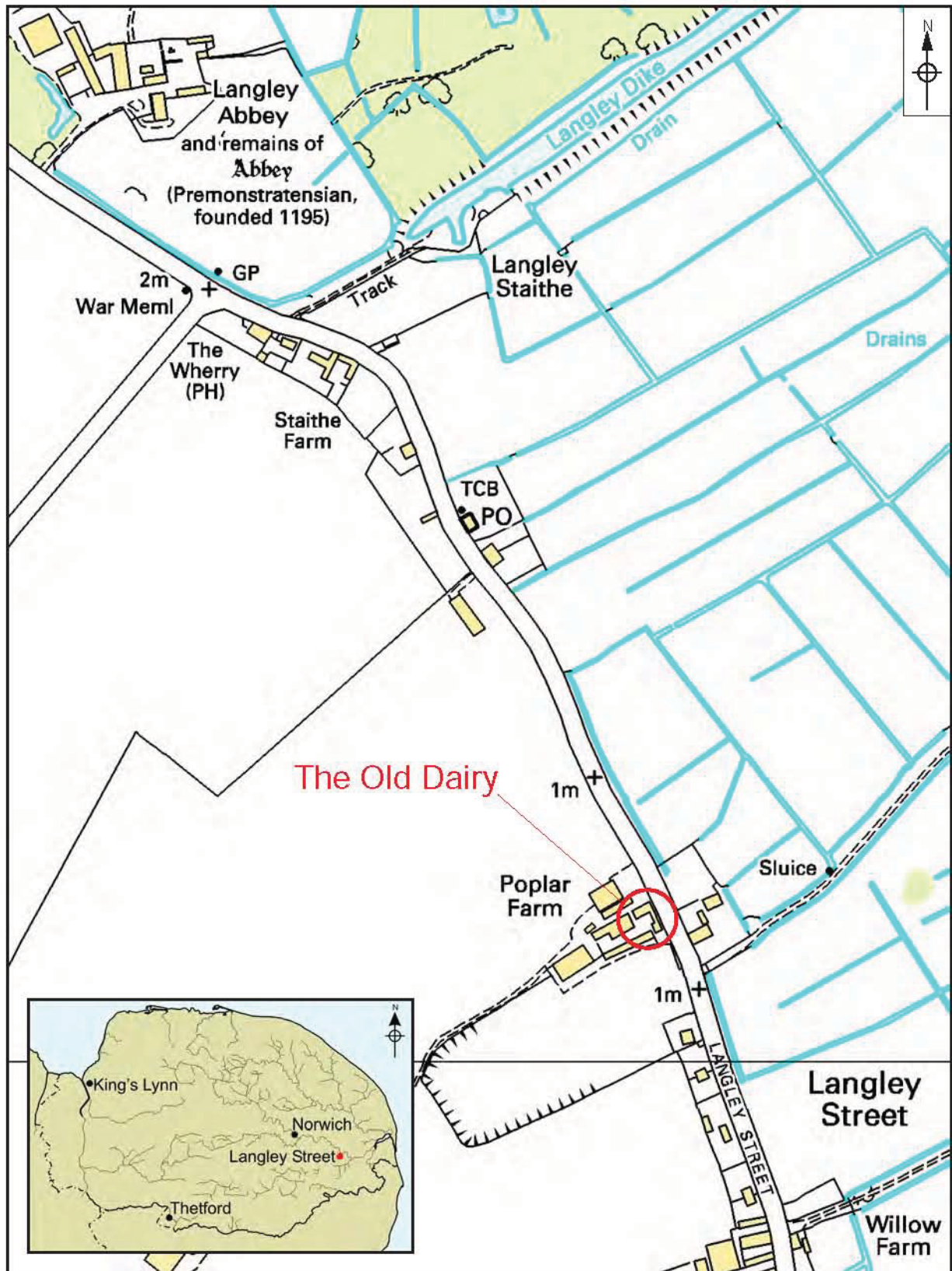
All three buildings are likely to have been built within 50 years of each other. Buildings A and B are of the same bond and share other constructional similarities, implying a broadly contemporaneous construction, while Building C is mostly of flint and may be slightly earlier, perhaps pre-1850 when brickwork was more expensive and used only at the critical structural points.

1.0 Introduction

A building recording survey was conducted in October 2008 at The Old Dairy, an L-shaped structure forming part of a now disused complex of farm buildings to the west of Poplar Farm, Langley Street, Norfolk (Figs 1 and 2). The survey was designed to record details relating to the form, function, date, extent, phasing, character, status and significance of the building via a drawn, photographic and written record.

The work was commissioned by Mr and Mrs Young in response to a planning condition set by South Norfolk District Council and a brief issued by Norfolk Landscape Archaeology (Ref: KH & SH 08/09/2008). This brief requires that a building survey be conducted on the current building prior to the commencement of the conversion of the structure to residential use.

The site archive is currently held by NAU Archaeology and on completion of the project will be deposited with Norfolk Museums and Archaeology Service, following the relevant policy on archiving standards.



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Figure 1. Site location. Scale 1:5000

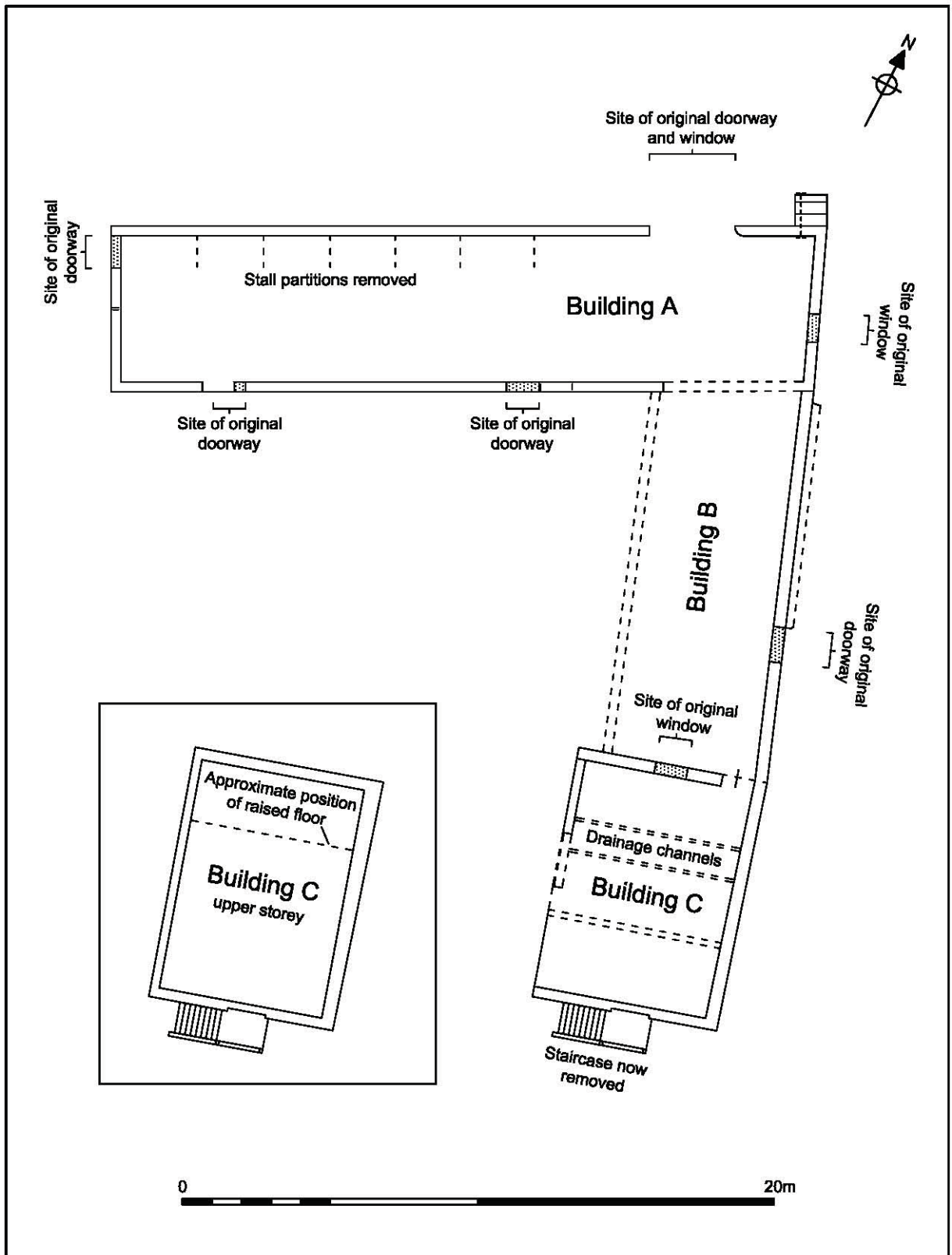


Figure 2. Plan of The Old Dairy buildings. Scale 1:200

2.0 Historical Background

The Old Dairy forms part of a series of agricultural buildings associated with Poplar Farm House, an 18th-century dwelling just to the east, although the structure may have earlier origins (NHER 44341).

Buildings A, B and C are all shown on the 1st Edition Ordnance Survey maps, giving them a date of at least 1879–86. There was some suggestion that the most northerly of these, Building A, was visible on the Langley tithe map, but closer inspection suggests that the building depicted is actually the shed to the north of this (NRO DN/TA 211). The tithe map is dated 1839, meaning that the buildings are all broadly mid-19th century.

3.0 Methodology

The objective of this survey was to create a record that included the following three elements:

- A black and white photographic record using 35mm film.
- A drawn record, highlighting significant features, fixtures and fittings.
- A short written record.

The work conforms to the guidelines for a Level 2 survey set out in *Understanding Historic Buildings: A Guide to Good Practice* (English Heritage 2006).

Access was restricted in a number of areas due to the current renovations taking place. The loft within Building C appeared structurally unsound and was therefore not intensively investigated. The area below the loft behind the double doors was locked and no key was available. The western wall of Building B had been taken down and the internal eastern wall of Building B was hidden behind building materials.

4.0 Building Survey

The survey revealed the presence of three buildings, labelled Buildings A, B and C for the purposes of this study (Fig. 2).

4.1 Building A

4.1.1 Exterior

Building A, aligned east–west, is a wholly brick structure constructed in monk bond with orangey-red bricks 217mm long, 106mm wide and 72mm thick. The building measured 24.2m long, 5.60m wide and was approximately 4.90m high (Fig. 2; Plates 1 and 3).

4.1.2 Doorways

Four entrances were identified, two in the southern elevation, one in the western gable end and a larger one at the southern end of the northern elevation. The two entrances in the southern elevation, located fairly evenly at the eastern and western ends, were 1.10m wide and extended to the wall plate (Plate 3). The current renovation works had removed one side of both of these doors leaving the actual width to be determined by trace evidence of weathering upon the wall plate.



Plate 1. North-facing elevation of Building A, looking east



Plate 2. Wheel housing. 1m scale, looking south



Plate 3. South-facing elevation of Building A, looking north-east



Plate 4. West-facing elevation of Building C



Plate 5. East-facing elevation of Building C, looking north



Plate 6. West-facing elevation of Building C, looking east

The doorway at the northern corner of the western gable was entirely hidden from view on the exterior due to the reconstruction of the gable wall. However, it was visible on the interior and measured 2.15m high, 1.10m wide and had a wooden lintel above and doorpost to the south. The opening located on the northern elevation was somewhat larger at 1.4m wide, although the actual width was determined from the architectural plans, as one side had been knocked down prior to arrival on site. In common with the other doors it extended to the height of the wall plate.

4.1.3 Windows

Only two windows were recorded in the structure. The first was identified directly to the east of door in the northern elevation discussed and is no longer extant, having been incorporated into a larger opening during the current renovation. One point of note is that its eastern window jamb is chamfered inwards at a gentle curve.

The second window was observed as a blocked opening in the eastern gable wall. Again this wall had been entirely rebuilt on the exterior surface leaving no trace, but on the interior it was clearly visible, measuring approximately 1m square. Its lintel (not visible) must have been at the height of the wall plate.

One further opening was recorded in the form of a narrow vent towards the apex of the western gable. Internally this had clearly been blocked. It measured 0.50m high and 70–100mm wide. Access was not available for closer inspection.

4.1.4 Interior

The interior was divided into eight roughly equal bays, with the exception of the penultimate eastern bay which was notably larger and into which the northern entrance opened.

4.1.5 Roof

There were seven roof trusses with the purlins resting upon the gable walls at both ends, removing the need for end trusses. All of the trusses are of soft-wood construction, employing an iron bar in place of a king post. They are largely nailed or bolted together. Carpenter's marks are present at the western most truss (Plate 8). The roof was constructed of plain tiles.

4.1.6 Fixtures and fittings

Few fixtures and fittings remained. Of note were six sets of two vertically parallel iron poles recorded along the northern interior wall. These occurred at regular intervals of between 2.2m and 2.5m and appeared to have been cut off about 30mm from the wall face. There were also the remnants of a staining line below this and 0.55m from the current floor surface, which may have indicated the upper limits of a trough and these points in combination suggest the poles divided the cow stalls from one another.

4.1.7 Machinery

A pulley system appeared to be contained within a brick housing appended to the north-eastern corner of the structure. Flywheel pulleys were visible on the exterior and interior and it probably transferred power from an external source of some kind (Plate 2). No further evidence could be found to explain its use.

4.2 Building B

4.2.1 Exterior

Constructed of flint and brick and at a right angle to Building A, this building is 13.35m long, 5.65m wide and has an approximate height of 4.1m. The bricks are of the same bond and type as Building A and form the upper half of the structure. The lower half of the structure is of roughly faced and coursed flints, of which only the eastern elevation remains. A retaining wall has been built along the northern half of this elevation to a height of 1.2m, presumably to stabilise the lower crumbling flint portions. The western elevation had been removed prior to this survey. No evidence exists for there ever having been gable walls, the abutting Buildings A and C fulfilling this function.

4.2.2 Doorways

A single blocked doorway is visible in the east-facing elevation, just to the south of centre. It measures 1.2m wide and extends to the height of the wall plate. It has been bricked up using modern brick in a stretcher bond (Plate 7).

It would appear from the architectural elevations that the structure had two further openings on its western side and up to seven windows, all with their lintels at wall-plate height. No traces of these windows remain.

4.2.3 Interior

The interior is divided into four bays with four trusses in the same composite style as Building A. The two northern bays are approximately the same size, but the central-southern bay is wider and encroaches on the smaller southernmost bay. The southernmost truss clearly impedes an opening in the gable end wall of Building C, suggesting that Building B was constructed at a later date than Building C (Plate 9).

4.2.4 Roof

The four trusses were of identical character to those of Building A, however pan tiles have been used instead of plain tiles.

4.3 Building C

4.3.1 Exterior

Building C is a one and a half storey half structure of random coursed flint construction with rare brick and dressed stone inclusions. The corners are constructed of brick and a single course of brickwork runs across the eastern face at about 0.6m from the ground. It is aligned north–south and is 8.5m long by 6.3m wide. The northern half of the western elevation has been reconstructed from modern yellow brick from the sole plate to the wall plate. The upper storey above the wall plate is constructed from weather boarding (Plate 4).

4.3.2 Doorways

Four doorways were identified, two on the western face, including a double doorway at the southern end and a single stable-style door towards the centre. Access is gained to the loft above via an external doorway located within the southern gable 1.55m above the ground. This was presumably originally accessed by a ladder or staircase, now removed.



Plate 7. Blocked doorway in eastern elevation of Building B



Plate 8. Carpenter's makings on west truss, Building A



Plate 9. Dividing wall showing top of arch between Building B and C, 1m scale



Plate 10. Internal view of Building C loft, looking north

The fourth entrance was at ground level and was probably originally an external entrance. It is located at the eastern end of the northern elevation and currently serves as a passage between Buildings B and C. The doorway incorporates a step down into Building C.

4.3.3 Windows

Two window openings were recorded. The first is probably not original and is incorporated into the rebuilt brickwork elevation on the western side. It measures 0.67m wide by 0.45m high. The second is within the northern gable wall and has been blocked by the southern truss of Building B. It measures about 1m high and 1m wide.

4.3.4 Interior

Building C is divided into two cells on the ground floor. The northern cell accessed through the stable door has a stepped ceiling that is lower to the south and the sloping floors on both sides empty into two drainage channels. The walls have been tarred up to a height of approximately 1.2m. Access to the southern cell was not available. A limited visual survey of the loft above revealed an open space with a plinth or raised floor at the northern end reflecting the change in ceiling height in the ground floor room. It was divided up into three roughly equal bays.

4.3.5 Roof

The roof was of fairly crude construction with tie beams nailed across rafters slightly thicker than the rest and forming four rough trusses. It appeared to be in a fairly decrepit state, but supported a full complement of pan tiles above it (Plate 10).

5.0 Conclusions

The cartographic evidence suggests that all three buildings were built between 1839 and 1886. The divisions within Building A lead to the conclusion that it was a cow shed with stalls and a trough running along the northern wall. The two windows are both located at the eastern end, allowing light into the larger bay and probable working area. Light would certainly have been necessary to operate the drive machinery which enters building at the north-eastern corner. The now-blocked doorway located at the north-western corner is typical of a cow shed with a feeding passage along its back wall (Peters 1981). However, this would not have been possible with the stall divisions in place and this may indicate a change in feeding practices and internal layout during the building's history.

The low ceiling and drainage channels in the floor of Building C suggest that this structure was also used at least partially as a cow shed. It may have been open fronted when first built, with a double-door cart shed at the southern end and a loft overhead. Originally the ceiling must have been of uniform height, as the northern window has been partially blocked by the joists of the raised section of the floor above.

Evidence for the usage of Building B is limited, with only a single original wall remaining intact and access being restricted at the time of the survey. The flint construction of the lower portion of this wall may indicate that a boundary wall running parallel to the road was utilised as a foundation upon which a brick structure was built. The roof truss at the southern end of Building B partially blocks

the only window in Building C and this would seem to suggest that the construction of Building B postdates that of Building C. This is also true at the northern end, where the roof of Building B has been built to rest upon that of Building A. Building A also preserves its gable end and this lends further support to the phasing of these buildings.

Although Buildings A and C have no direct relationship it is possible to hypothesise that Building C is the older of the two because of its limited use of brick. Until 1850 brick was taxed and was, therefore, a more expensive building material than flint.

Acknowledgements

Thanks go to Nigel Page for overseeing the project and Ken Penn and Steve Hickling for additional advice. This report was illustrated by David Dobson and edited by Richard Hoggett.

Bibliography

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| Peters, J. | 1981 | <i>Traditional farm buildings.</i> Shire publications. |

Appendix 1: Black and White Photograph Register

Shot	Description	Facing	Scales	Init.	Date
1	ID Shot	-	-	AP	17/10/08
2	ID Shot	-	-	AP	17/10/08
3	North elevation of Building A	East	-	AP	17/10/08
4	North elevation of Building A	East	-	AP	17/10/08
5	North elevation of Building A showing machinery	South-west	-	AP	17/10/08
6	North elevation of Building A showing machinery	South-west	-	AP	17/10/08
7	Front on shot of machinery	South	-	AP	17/10/08
8	Front on shot of machinery	South	-	AP	17/10/08
9	East facing elevation of buildings along road	North	-	AP	17/10/08
10	East facing elevation of buildings along road	North	-	AP	17/10/08
11	South facing gable end of Building C	North-east	-	AP	17/10/08
12	South facing gable end of Building C	North-east	-	AP	17/10/08
13	South facing elevation of Building A	North-east	-	AP	17/10/08
14	South facing elevation of Building A	North-east	-	AP	17/10/08
15	West facing elevation of Building B	East	-	AP	17/10/08
16	West facing elevation of Building B	East	-	AP	17/10/08
17	West facing elevation of Building C	East	-	AP	17/10/08
18	West facing elevation of Building C	East	-	AP	17/10/08
19	Internal elevation of machinery Building A	North	1m	AP	17/10/08
20	Internal elevation of machinery Building A	North	1m	AP	17/10/08
21	Internal east gable wall of Building A showing blocked window	North-east	1m	AP	17/10/08
22	Internal east gable wall of Building A showing blocked window	North-east	1m	AP	17/10/08
23	View of north wall Building A, internal	East	1m	AP	17/10/08
24	View of north wall Building A, internal	East	1m	AP	17/10/08
25	Roof truss, Building B	South	-	AP	17/10/08
26	Roof truss, Building B	South	-	AP	17/10/08
27	South facing elevation of Building A	North-west	-	AP	17/10/08
28	South facing elevation of Building A	North-west	-	AP	17/10/08
29	Blocked opening between Buildings B and C	North	1m	AP	17/10/08
30	Blocked opening between Buildings B and C	North	1m	AP	17/10/08