

**Barn at Charity Farm,
Hemingstone,
Suffolk
HMG 028**

Historic Building Record

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Barn at Charity Farm, Main Road, Hemingstone, Suffolk

(TM 152 534)

Historic Building Record

This report provides a record at English Heritage (2006) Level 2 of a redundant barn in the curtilage of a grade II-listed farmhouse. It has been prepared to a specification written by Edward Martin of Suffolk County Council's Archaeological Service (reference: SpecHBR(EM)_CharityFm_Hemingstone_2200_08, dated 8th March 2011) and is intended to fulfil a condition of planning permission for conversion (Mid Suffolk District Council consent 2200/08 condition 7).

Introduction

The report is accompanied by a CD containing a full photographic record in the form of 54 digital images of 21 megapixels (Appendix 1), but also includes 12 printed photographs of key features. Each image is described in a separate schedule and wherever possible includes a scale rod with half-metre divisions in red and white. The site was inspected on 5th September 2011.

Summary

Charity Farm adjoins open countryside on the western side of Main Road, approximately 750 metres east of Hemingstone parish church. The grade II-listed farmhouse is a single-storied timber-framed and rendered structure with a thatched roof which lies parallel to the road and is dated to the 18th century in the Schedule of Listed Buildings. The timber-framed and thatched barn to the north lies at right-angles to the road and faced south towards the house but is now largely hidden by a pair of late-20th century sheds which adjoin both sides. Its thatched roof is fully hipped at both gables in a uniform and picturesque manner which disguises the complexity of the building's evolution. The earliest part of the structure dates from the late-18th or early-19th century and may be contemporary with the farmhouse. It formed a small threshing barn of three bays with a clasped-purlin roof and vertical gables, but was extended within a few decades by a single bay to the east and three further bays to the west – more than doubling its original length. Both new additions contained lofts and probably formed a stable and cow-house respectively, although no relevant fixtures or fittings remain. The studwork of the original barn was infilled with wattle-and-daub and rendered externally while the extensions were weatherboarded, but (unusually) much of the latter was subsequently rendered to match the earlier walls. The eastern extension retains a good clasped-purlin roof while the western bays employ butt-purlins with a ridge-board and appear slightly later. The studwork of the original gables has been removed and the entire building is now undivided from end to end, with the two lofts substantially rebuilt in the late-20th century, but one of the two arch-braced open trusses of the three-bay barn still survives intact. Given the extent of these recent losses the building may not meet the strict English Heritage criteria for separate listing despite its undoubted visual character and historic interest.

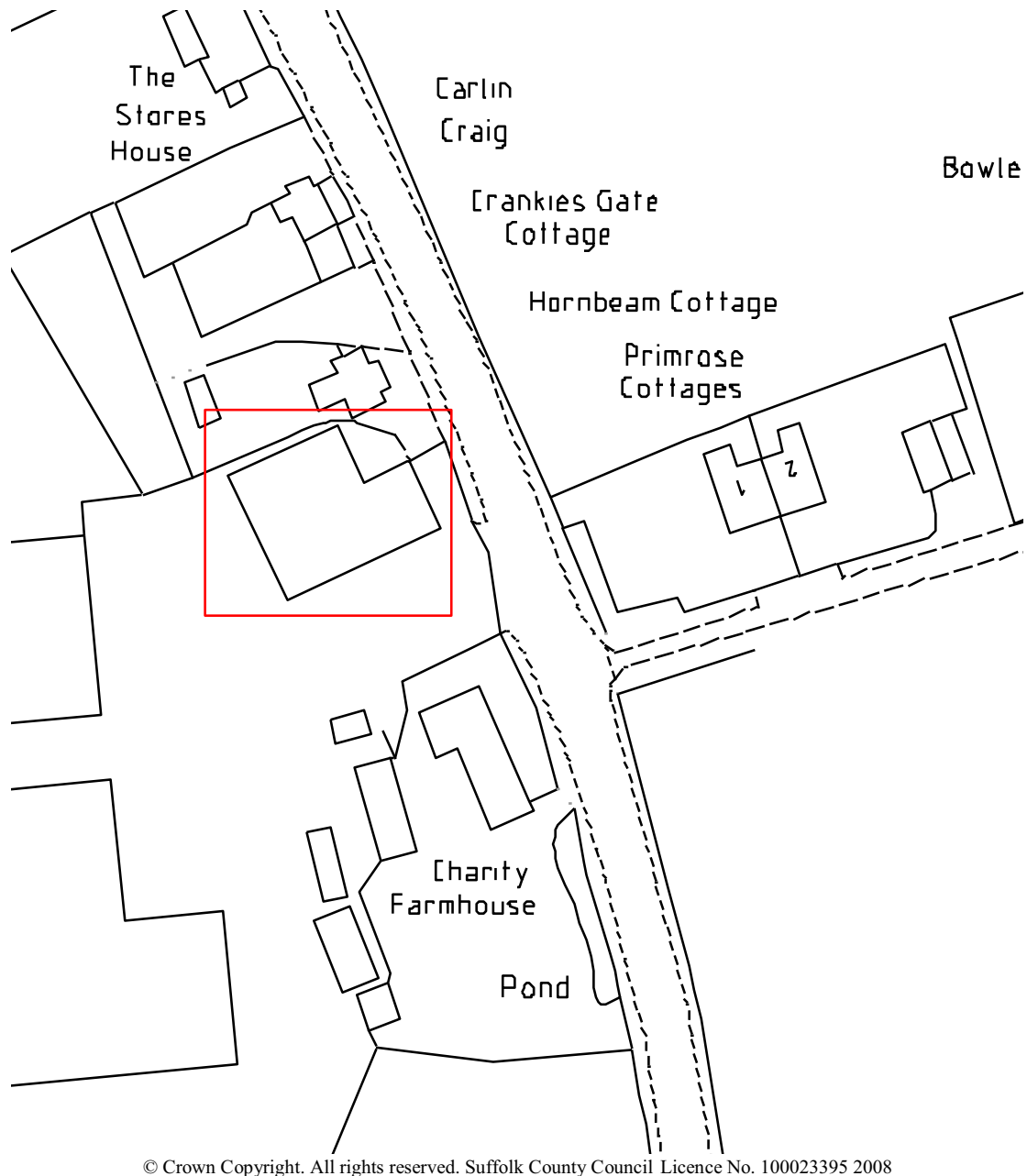


Figure 1
Modern Ordnance Survey
 Enclosing the barn and attached sheds in red and showing its close proximity to the broadly contemporary grade II-listed Charity Farmhouse to the south. See figure 6 for more detail.

Documentary and Cartographic Evidence

Charity Farm adjoins open countryside on the western side of Main Road, approximately 750 m east of Hemingstone parish church. The grade II-listed farmhouse was not inspected for the purpose of this report but is a single-storied timber-framed and rendered structure with a thatched roof lying parallel to the road. It is dated to the 18th century in the Schedule of Listed Buildings and said to contain a clasped-purlin roof with primary wall-braces and much re-used timber. The thatched barn to the north lies at right-angles to the road and appears to have faced south towards the farmhouse.

The farmhouse and barn now form part of a large complex of structures supporting a commercial fruit farm but were the only buildings shown on the site by the Hemingstone tithe survey of 1838 (figure 2). The barn is depicted with a simple rectangular outline but a small shed adjoins its north-eastern corner. This shed still survived in 1884, by which time a second, slightly larger shed had been attached to its south-eastern corner and a small porch projected from its northern elevation in the approximate position of the threshing bay (see figure 6). A pair of small enclosed yards now lay to the south, flanked by a long, narrow structure that adjoined the western end of the same elevation and probably formed an animal shelter-shed.

Both southern sheds had been demolished by 1904 (figure 4) and replaced by what appears to be an open-sided lean-to at the western end of the same southern elevation. The profile of this shed's western gable is still visible in the wall of its late-20th century replacement (structure 2 in figure 6). Little had altered by 1926, and the same layout was still recognisable on the Ordnance Survey of 1969 (not illustrated), but major changes occurred in the final quarter of the 20th century when the porch-like northern projection was replaced by the present cement-block garage and the existing boarded lean-to with sliding doors was added to the southern elevation



Figure 2

The 1838 tithe map of Hemingstone parish (Suffolk Record Office).

The simple, rectangular outlines of the present barn and farmhouse are shown at right-angles to each other with a small shed adjoining the former's north-eastern corner. The small shed appears to have endured until the Ordnance Survey of 1969 but has since disappeared.

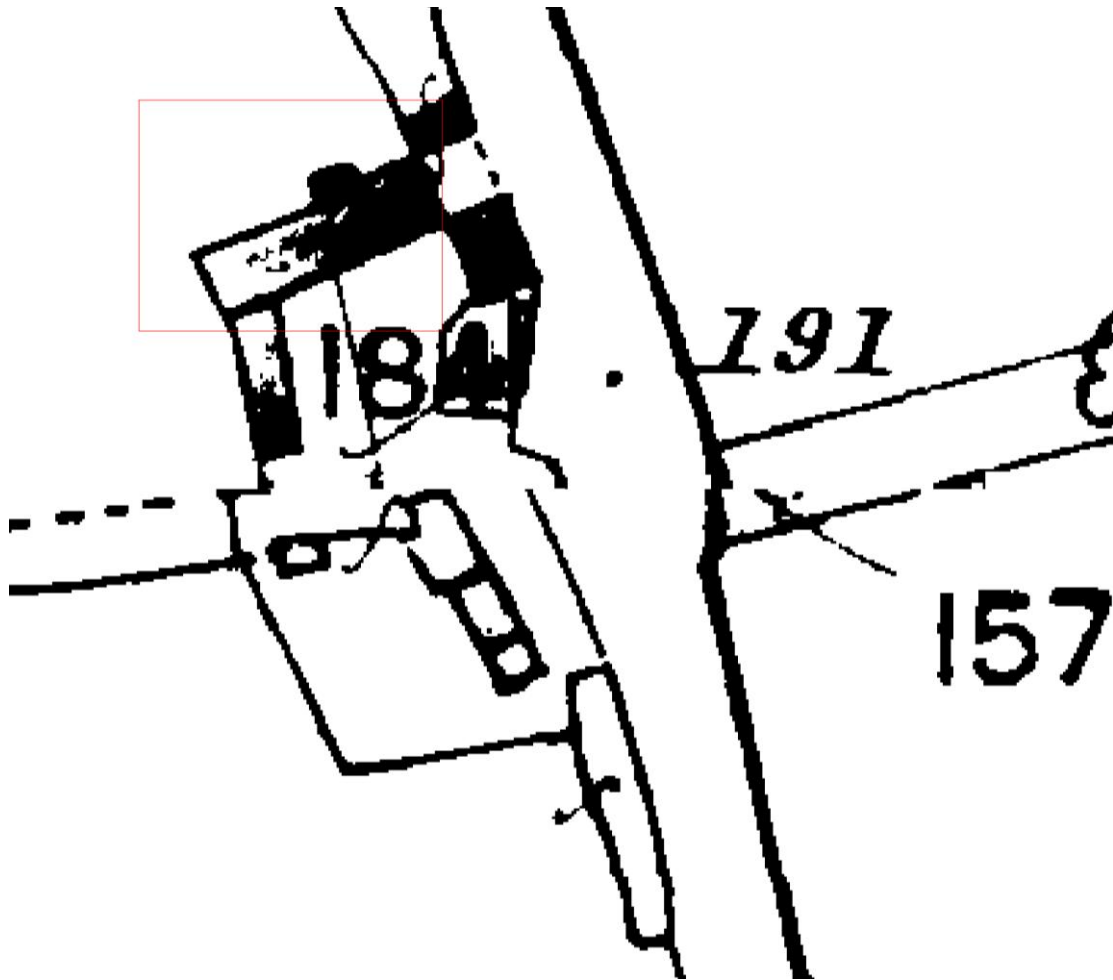


Figure 3

First Edition 25 inch Ordnance Survey of 1884.

The barn has arguably increased in length since 1838 and is now shown with a small porch-like projection from the approximate position of its northern entrance and a pair of additional buildings flanking a pair of enclosed animal yards to the south. Similar alterations were made to many local barns during the mid-19th century as the system of yard-based mixed animal husbandry now known as Victorian High Farming replaced the earlier practise of keeping cattle abroad in the fields. The farmhouse appears to be divided into three tenements.

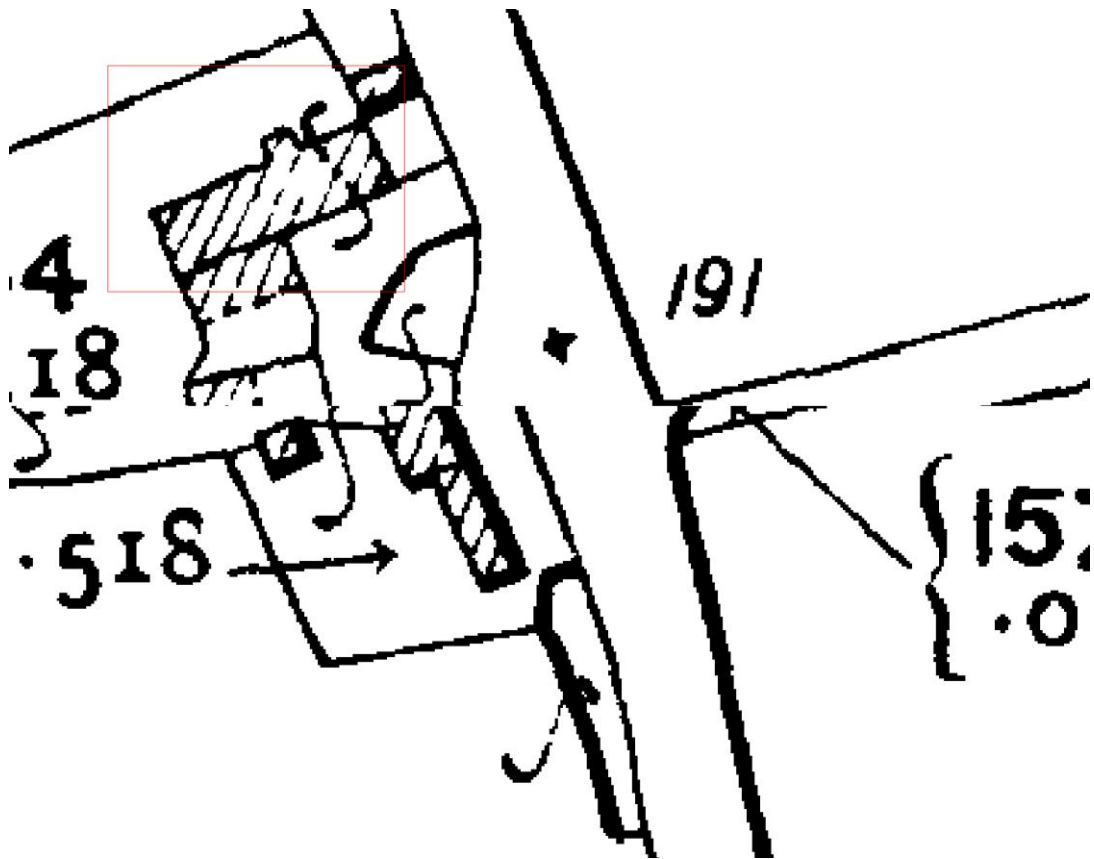


Figure 4
 The Second Edition 25 inch Ordnance Survey of 1904.
 A single open-sided shelter shed now adjoins the southern elevation of the barn (its open side indicated by a broken line).

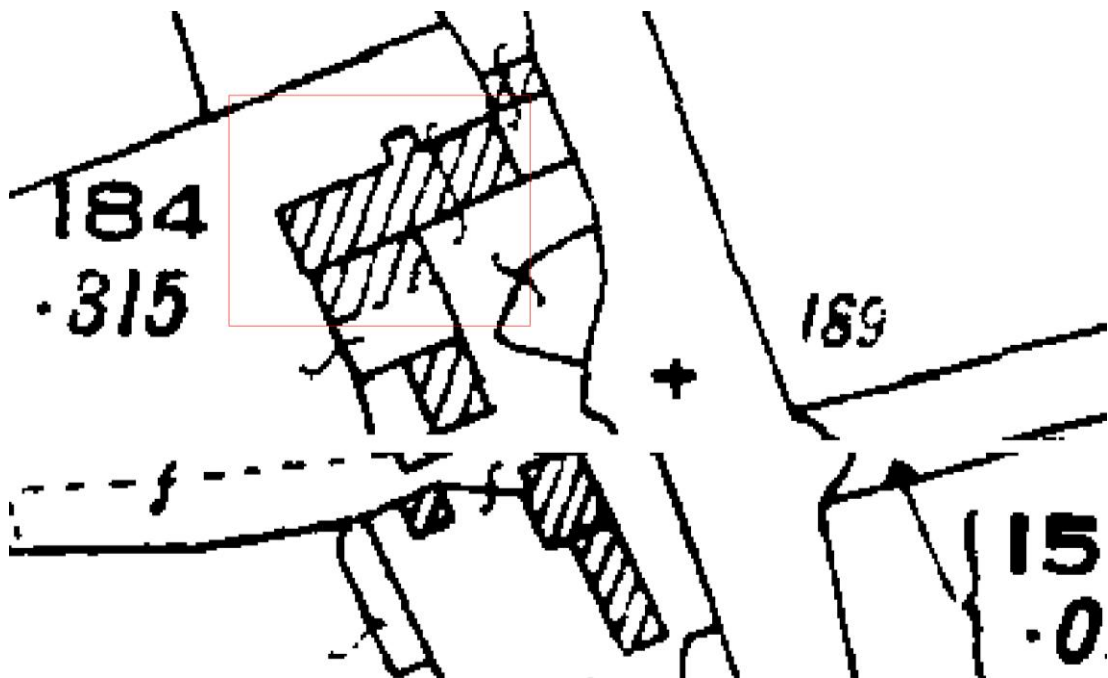


Figure 5
 Third Edition 25 inch Ordnance Survey of 1926. Little had changed since 1904. The pond to the south-east of the barn has since vanished beneath a large concrete yard.

Building Analysis

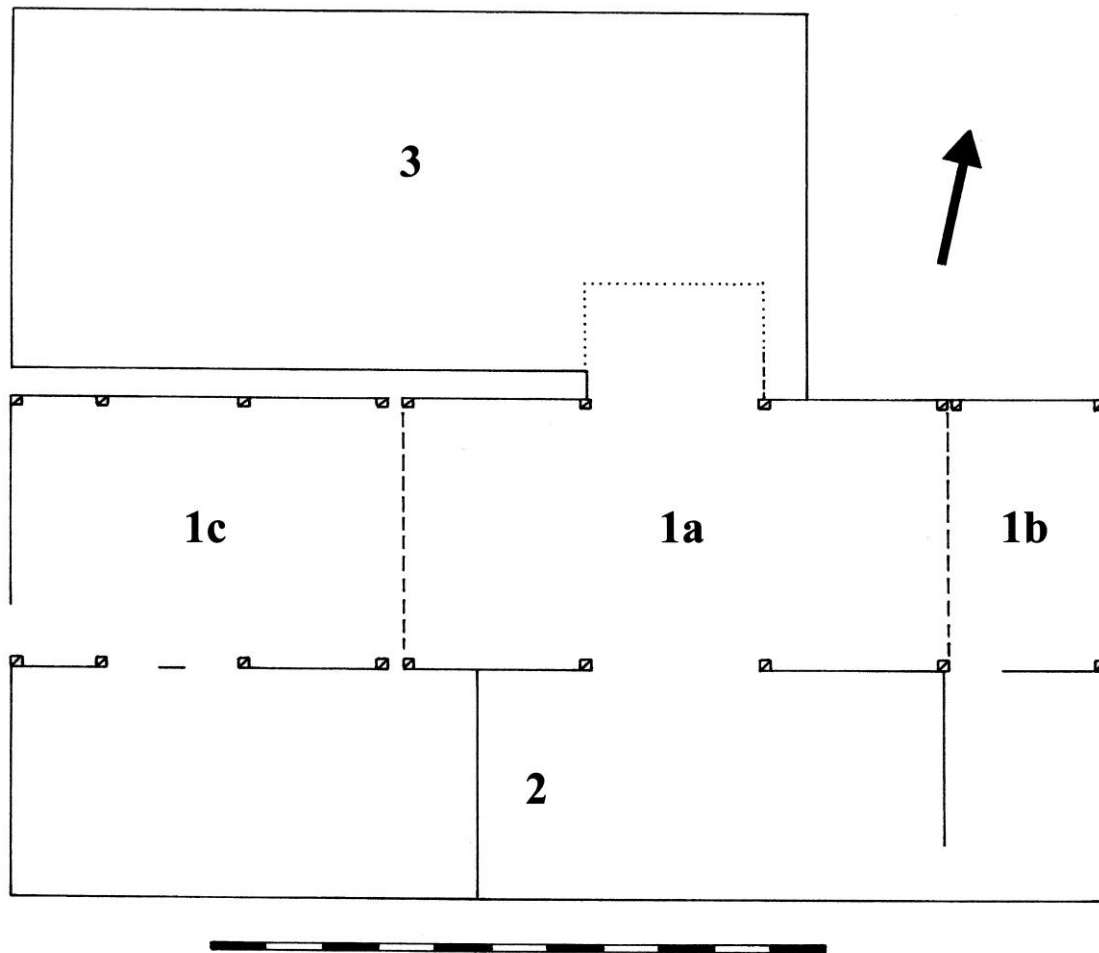


Figure 6

Schematic block plan of the barn and attached sheds, numbering its principal historic elements for ease of reference in the text and photographs. Scale in metres.

Key

1. A timber framed and thatched building with fully hipped gables, now undivided internally but consisting of three phases of construction as follows:

1a. A small three-bay threshing barn of *circa* 1800 with an original clasped-purlin roof structure, arch-braced tie-beams and primary wall-braces that are mortised and pegged to the frame. Originally with vertical gables (now removed but indicated by broken lines above). Central threshing floor with a southern entrance and (probably) a lean-to rear porch. The floors now of concrete throughout. Remains of original external cladding of clay daub to north but with later weatherboarding to south.

1b. An early-19th century single-bay extension with a loft and hipped clasped-purlin roof structure. Entrance and loft hatch to south as shown in figure 6. Probably a small stable and hay loft. The loft rebuilt.

1c. A mid-19th century three-bay extension with a loft and hipped butt-purlin roof structure. The loft partly removed and much rebuilt. Probably a stable with a southern entrance but possibly a cow-house and certainly used for cattle in the 20th century (as indicated by the presence of a low concrete manger to the west). Much re-used timber and timber of poor quality.

2. A late-20th century boarded lean-to shed with corrugated iron roof and sliding doors to the length of its southern elevation. Of no historic significance and not discussed further below.
3. A late-20th century cement-block shed designed as a farm or commercial vehicle garage with double doors in its western gable and a small office entrance to east. Of no historic significance and not discussed further below.

The historic barn at Charity Farm is a timber-framed and thatched structure in 7 bays on an approximately east-west axis which now extends to 19.5 m in length by 4.9 m in overall width (64.5 ft by 16 ft). It lies in a 20th century concrete yard and is adjoined on the north by a late-20th century rendered cement-block or brick shed which appears to have been designed as a commercial garage and on the south by a boarded lean-to shed with sliding vehicle doors. The barn's walls rise to 3.2 m (10.5 ft) above the internal concrete floor and are clad externally in 20th century tarred weatherboarding to the south and cement render with a narrow tier of weatherboarding beneath the eaves to the north. The fully hipped gables give the illusion of a single, uniform structure, and the interior is now undivided from end to end, but the building consists of three distinct elements as detailed below.

The Original Barn (1a)

The earliest part of the building is a small three-bay threshing barn of traditional form extending to 9.75 m in length by 4.9 m in overall width (32 ft by 16ft – or approximately two perches by one). Its steeply pitched roof structure was designed for thatch and consists of a single tier of clasped purlins with pegged collars to which raking queen struts were added in the 20th century. The curved tie-beam braces of the open truss to the east of the central entrance survive intact (illus. 9 below), but while the tie-beam remains *in situ* to the west its braces are 20th century softwood replacements. The tie-beams of the original vertical gables also survive but the studwork has been removed (as indicated by empty mortises in their soffits), and replaced by 19th century knee-braces (to the east) and 20th century softwood arch-braces (to the west). The framing of the northern and southern elevations is largely intact and of good quality with no obvious sign of re-used timber: the storey posts are neatly jowled and the diagonal primary braces which interrupt three of the four studs in each bay are tenoned and pegged at both ends. The single stud in each bay which rises from sill to roof-plate is larger than its neighbours and is also pegged at both ends, while the interrupted studs are tenoned but not pegged. This framing is highly characteristic of the late-18th and early-19th centuries, and the barn is typical of the many built in Suffolk during and immediately after the Napoleonic wars (which restricted grain imports and saw a great increase in cereal production and capital investment by the region's farmers).

The central threshing bay was entered from the south by double-hung doors which have been removed, leaving only their iron pintles in the western storey post. The soffit of the roof-plate is hidden by a later board containing a mortise for a central door bar but there is no evidence of stud mortises. The rear (northern) plate also lacks stud mortises but was probably adjoined by a small lean-to 'porch' in the usual manner. Such porches were used to extend the length of the threshing floor (of which no trace is visible beneath the present concrete) and there is an unpegged mortise for its roof-plate in the external surface of the eastern storey post (illus. 11 below). The porch is clearly shown on the Ordnance Survey of 1884, and indicated by dotted lines in figure 6, but is conspicuous by its absence from the tithe map of 1838. Given its relatively early date the barn is unlikely to have been built with a full-height vehicle thoroughfare (as the absence of both stud mortises and a porch might suggest) and the porch may have been disguised by adjoining lean-to grain sheds of a kind often found elsewhere:

Vehicle thoroughfares were not normally required until the latter part of the 19th century and the rear entrances of earlier barns were usually far smaller than their principal entrances.

The barn's southern elevation is now clad in tarred weatherboarding of some quality and character (exposed within the adjoining lean-to) but much of the rear wall retains its original wattle-and-daub with vertical coppice poles between the studs and some lath-and-plaster repairs. The exterior has been rendered in modern cement, but a small section of original roughcast lime plaster survives behind the eastern storey post of the central bay where it is protected by the modern shed (illus. 11). Many local farm buildings were externally rendered in this way before tarred weatherboarding became dominant during the latter part of the 19th century.

Eastern Bay (1b)

The narrow, weatherboarded eastern bay of the present interior is a separate timber frame that was probably added to the gable of the three-bay threshing barn within a few years of its construction. It extends to just 2.75 m in length overall (9 ft) and consists largely of re-used timbers on a tall brick plinth of 0.5 m with diagonal primary braces that are pegged and tenoned to the sill beans but nailed to the storey posts. The fully hipped roof contains a pair of clasped-purlins with a pegged collar and is almost identical to that of the three-bay barn but its purlins are crudely nailed to the latter's final rafter. It contains a 20th century loft with tall-sectioned softwood joists and modern shelving above. The loft is reached by a tarred hatch in the southern gable immediately above a double-hung door which opens onto the ground storey as shown in figure 6. The nailed rungs of an internal loft ladder lie beside this door, with a wooden harness hook in the south-eastern corner, but the bay has otherwise been stripped of any fixtures or fittings relevant to its original purpose. It was almost certainly designed as a small stable and hay loft. The bolted knee-braces in the angles of the adjoining storey posts and tie-beam of the three-bay barn were inserted to replace the gable studwork before the end of the 19th century and allowed the loft to be loaded from inside the barn.

Western Bays (1c)

The three bays at the western end of the building were also added in the mid-19th century as a separate structure to the gable of the earlier barn, and were designed either as an additional stable or – more probably – a cow shed with a hay loft or granary above. They extend to 6.8 m in length (22.5 ft) and consist of poor quality, waney timber with much re-used material. In contrast to the clasped-purlins of the three-bay barn and its eastern extension the roof relies on butt-purlins of triangular section with a ridge-board, but its full hip was intended to reflect the opposite gable. The loft has been largely removed or rebuilt in modern softwood, with only a single original binding joist supporting an axial joist in the end-bay. A series of modern storage shelves rest on the loft, which is open to the interior. The walls are clad in weatherboarding but (unusually) this has been cement-rendered to the western and northern exteriors: there is no evidence that anything other than the earliest part of the barn was rendered rather than boarded from the outset. A gap in the thatch indicates the sometime presence of a loft loading hatch or door in the gable, and a concrete trough with iron tethering hooks indicates the presence of cattle here in the mid-20th century. The studs of the original barn's western gable have been replaced by 20th century softwood braces (imitating the 19th century oak braces to the east of the threshing floor), suggesting the space remained separate until quite recently, and the presence of limewash in the end-bay but not elsewhere indicates the presence of an internal partition of which no other trace remains.

Historic Significance

The external proportions of the barn at Charity Farm are largely obscured by the adjoining modern sheds but in their absence the building would again stand as an impressive and unusually symmetrical thatched structure with matching fully-hipped gables. Thatched barns are increasingly rare in Suffolk, and the building is also of considerable historic interest given its complicated evolution: It expanded from a small, externally rendered threshing barn of three bays with vertical gables in the early-19th century to a building of more than double its original length by the middle of the same century. Its new extensions incorporated a stable and probably a cow-house with lofts above both, and reflect the new Victorian fashion for keeping animals in enclosed yards rather than abroad in the fields (a system of mixed animal husbandry now known as Victorian High Farming). The original barn relates instead to the rapid expansion of cereal production and local agricultural affluence during the Napoleonic wars. Given its intact 19th century thatched roof and walls the barn is a strong candidate for listing at grade II, but may fail to meet the strict English Heritage criteria due to the loss of the threshing barn's gables and the original lofts of its extensions.

Appendix 1 (on accompanying CD): Full Photographic Record

Descriptions of Photographs in Appendix 1

Photograph no.

1. General view of site entrance from Main Road to south showing Charity Farmhouse to left and barn in centre to rear.
2. Entrance to site from Main Road viewed from south-east, showing Charity Farmhouse to left.
3. General view of site from Main Road to north-east showing eastern gable of modern garage (3) adjoining barn to right.
4. Exterior from south-east showing 20th century lean-to (2) in foreground.
5. Southern exterior showing 20th century lean-to (2) with sliding doors in foreground.
6. Exterior from south-west showing thatched barn (1) in centre with modern lean-to (2) and garage shed (3) to right & left.
7. General view of site from west showing thatched barn (1) to left and thatched farmhouse to right.
8. External western gable showing evidence of blocked window or loading hatch in thatch above stable (1c).
9. External northern elevation of barn (1) from west showing cement render beneath weatherboarding with garage shed (3) to left.
10. Interior from east of 20th century garage shed (3) showing covered inspection pit with entrance to barn (1) to left.
11. Interior from west of 20th century garage shed (3) showing boarded office in north-eastern corner to left.
12. Interior from west of 20th century lean-to shed (2) showing entrance to central bay of barn (1a) to left.
13. Interior from east of 20th century lean-to shed (2) showing entrance to central bay of barn (1a) to right.
14. Interior of lean-to shed (2) from south showing half-hung door and upper hatch to eastern bay of barn (1c).
15. Interior of lean-to shed (2) from south showing tarred weatherboarding to barn with door to stable (1b) to left.
16. Western interior of lean-to shed (2) showing boarded wall of earlier lean-to shed on same site with stable wall (1c) right.

17. General view of interior from west showing secondary arch-braces to tie-beams in foreground and original pair in rear.
18. General view of interior from east showing original arch-braces to tie-beams in foreground and secondary pairs in rear.
19. Original clasped-purlin roof of central bay of barn (1a) showing pegged collars, waney rafters & secondary queen struts.
20. Interior from east of formerly lofted 3-bay stable 1c at western end of barn showing the much rebuilt loft with modern shelving.
21. Northern interior of three-bay stable (1c) showing re-used timber with mid-rail & nailed diagonal primary braces.
22. Northern roof structure of stable (1c) showing butt-purlins & ridge-board with western tie-beam of barn (1a) to right.
23. Knee-braced collar of stable roof (1c) from east showing empty mortises of re-used timber & triangular butt-purlins.
24. Northern interior of stable 1c showing bent-wood storey post with original binding joist of loft right & western gable left.
25. Floor of stable (1c) from west showing 20th century concrete cattle trough with iron tethering rings.
26. Internal western gable of stable (1c) showing original binding and axial joists with modern softwood common joists.
27. Southern interior of stable (1c) showing two doors with modern loft joists and soft toy at foot of blocked right-hand door.
28. Detail of 20th century deceased soft toy at foot of blocked door in southern interior of stable (1c).
29. Southern interior of stable (1c) showing junction with removed western gable of barn (1a) to left.
30. Roof structure of stable (1c) from north showing butt-purlins and junction with clasped-purlin roof of barn (1a) to left.
31. 20th century softwood shelf units on rebuilt loft of stable (1c) seen from east.
32. Junction between stable (1c) & barn (1a) from west showing later softwood tie & braces & shaped terminals of clasped-purlins.
33. Junction between stable (1c) & barn (1a) from east showing later queen struts and empty stud mortises in soffit of tie-beam.
34. 20th century softwood tie-beam and braces adjoining original tie-beam of barn (1a) to west of central bay seen from east.
35. Southern interior showing junction of barn (1a) to left and stable (1c) with mid-rail, loft & re-used timber to right.

36. Northern interior of original three-bay barn showing pegged primary braces with central entrance to right.
37. Northern interior of original three-bay barn showing pegged primary braces & central entrance to left & extension (1b) right.
38. Detail of northern roof plate of central bay of barn (1a) showing lack of mortises & face-halved & bladed scarf joint.
39. Interior of three-bay threshing floor (1a) from west showing intact original open-truss with later queen-struts.
40. Eastern truss of central bay of barn (1a) from west showing exposed section of external roughcast render.
41. Detail of exposed section of original lime-rendered clay daub to northern exterior showing mortise for porch in storey post.
42. Eastern internal gable of threshing barn (1a) showing original tie-beam with empty stud mortises & later addition (1b) beyond.
43. Detail of eastern tie-beam of barn (1a) showing empty stud mortises and separate clasped-purlins of addition (1b) beyond.
44. Northern interior of eastern addition showing corner post adjoining barn (1a) left, tall plinth and recently renewed loft.
45. Southern interior of eastern addition (1b) showing entrance door adjoining barn (1a) to right and new loft joists.
46. Rebuilt loft of eastern addition (1b) showing wall fabric and modern softwood platforms.
47. Detail of clasped-purlin roof structure of eastern addition (1b) showing pegged collar and re-used rafters.
48. Southern roof structure of eastern end of barn (1a) showing junction with similar roof of addition (1b) to left.
49. Southern interior of eastern bay of barn (1b) showing entrance bay to left.
50. Southern interior of three-bay threshing barn (1a) showing concrete floor and original central entrance.
51. Southern interior of barn (1a) showing entrance bay to left and junction with stable (1c) to extreme right.
52. Detail of southern roof-plate of central bay (1a) showing later timber with door bar mortise but no evidence of stud mortises.
53. Original roof structure of three-bay barn (1a) from north showing mortises for replaced tie-beam braces to right.

54. Detail of western bay of southern interior showing typical pattern of pegged brace right and larger uninterrupted stud left.

Photographic Appendix 2 follows on pp. 14-19

Appendix 2 (pp. 14-19): Selected Printed Photographs



Illus. 1. General view of the site from Main Road to the north-east showing the eastern gable of the thatched barn (1) in the centre with the late-20th century garage shed (3) adjoining its northern elevation to the right. The grade II-listed thatched farmhouse is visible in the rear to the left.



Illus. 2. The exterior from the south-west showing the fully hipped and thatched roof of the barn (1) in the centre with the late-20th century lean-to with sliding doors (2) to the right and the garage shed (3) to the left.



Illus. 3. The external western gable showing the sliding doors of the garage shed (3) to the left and evidence of a blocked window or loading hatch in the thatch of the hipped gable above the former stable (1c). Note the tarred external render and the profile of an earlier southern lean-to shed to the right.



Illus. 4. The interior from the west of the 20th century lean-to shed (2) showing one of its two internal partitions and the tarred and weatherboarded southern exterior of the barn (1) to the left. The storey posts of the entrance in the central bay (1a) bear iron pintles for missing half-hung barn doors.



Illus. 5. The interior from the west of the late-20th century garage shed (3) showing a boarded office in its north-eastern corner to the left and the entrance to the central bay of the barn (1a) to the right.



Illus. 6. General view of the barn interior from the west showing two secondary pairs of arch-braces to the tie-beams in the foreground and an original pair in the rear. The interior was originally divided into three compartments by lateral partitions that have since been removed, viz. a three-bay stable and hay loft in the foreground (1c), a slightly earlier three-bay threshing barn in the centre (1a) and a narrow floored bay that may have served an additional stable in the rear (1b).



Illus. 7. The northern interior of the three-bay stable (1c) showing evidence of re-used timber with nailed diagonal primary braces and unusually distorted storey posts linked by mid-rails. The original tie-beam of the removed western gable of the three-bay barn is visible to the right (with some extant lath-and-plaster to its western bay). The remaining fragment of the original loft to the left has been largely rebuilt in modern softwood and supports a series of modern storage shelves.



Illus. 8. The northern interior of the original three-bay threshing barn of *circa* 1800 barn showing its largely intact framing with pegged primary braces and the position of the northern entrance in its central bay. This entrance appears to have opened onto a rear porch (possibly with a lean-to roof structure rather than a vertical gable).



Illus. 9. The interior of the concreted central threshing floor of the three-bay barn (1a) seen from the west, showing the intact open-truss of the steeply-pitched clasped-purlin roof structure with later (V-shaped) queen-struts above its tie-beam.



Illus. 10. The southern interior of the slightly later eastern bay of the barn (1b) showing its rebuilt loft with black-painted loading hatch and half-hung entrance door in the centre. The adjoining tie-beam of the threshing barn contains empty mortises for the studs of its missing eastern gable.



Illus. 11. The eastern truss of the central bay of the barn (1a) seen from the west, showing the narrow exposed section of original external roughcast clay daub with a skim of tarred lime plaster. The mortise of the demolished rear 'porch' which this daub abutted is also visible.



Illus. 12. The southern roof structure of the three-bay stable (1c) showing its triangular butt-purlins and the junction with the clasped-purlin roof of the barn (1a) to the left.