

**Bribery Cottage,  
Walsham le Willows,  
Suffolk  
WLW 102**

**Heritage Asset Assessment**

OASIS ID: Suffolke1-121536



**Leigh Alston MA (Oxon), Architectural Historian**  
*on behalf of*  
**Suffolk County Council Archaeological Service**

**The Archaeological Service  
(Field Projects Team)  
Suffolk County Council, Shire Hall  
Bury St Edmunds IP33 2AR  
Tel. (01284) 352446**

**March 2012**



# **Bribery Cottage, Bribery Lane, Walsham le Willows, Suffolk**

**(TM 019 706)**

## **Heritage Asset Assessment**

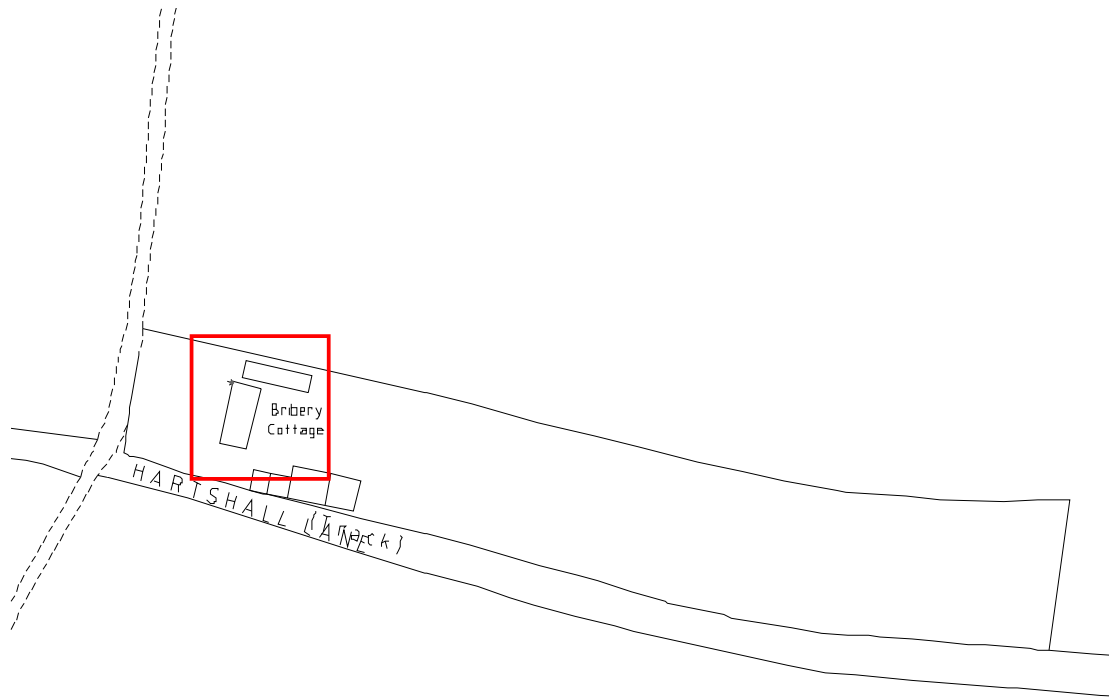
*This report provides a record at English Heritage (2006) Level 2 of a cottage for which a planning application for demolition is being formulated (Mid Suffolk District Council 132/12). It has been prepared to a specification written by Edward Martin of Suffolk County Council's Archaeological Service (ref. SpecHAA(EM)\_BriberyCott\_Walsham\_132\_2012), dated 20<sup>th</sup> February 2012.*

### **Introduction**

The report is accompanied by a CD containing a full photographic record in the form of 44 digital images of 21 megapixels (Appendix 1), but also includes 12 printed photographs of key features to illustrate the text. 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 6<sup>th</sup> March 2012.

### **Summary**

Bribery Cottage lies in a conspicuous but isolated position on high ground approximately 2 km east of the village of Walsham le Willows, and commands views of open countryside in all directions. The building is not shown on a detailed parish map of 1817, but had appeared by the time of the tithe survey in 1842 when it formed a pair of cottages belonging to the neighbouring 138-acre farm 800 m to the north (now known as Cranmer Lodge). It is marked as 'Bribery Cottages' on the Ordnance Surveys of 1886 and 1904 but was converted into a single dwelling by the present owner's grandmother in the 1960s, before being sub-divided once more in recent years. The property is an unusually early example of a clay-walled structure which pre-dates the seminal article of 1843 by the Reverend Copinger Hill of nearby Buxhall who recommended the use of inexpensive clay fabric in labourer's cottages. The original layout of Bribery Cottage was almost identical to one of his suggested plans, with a single living room and a narrow lean-to store-room on each side of a central chimney. The 0.5 m thick walls here appear to consist of shuttered clay and straw in the manner of West Country cob rather than the more typical blocks known as clay-lump, and this may reflect its early, experimental form. The great majority of clay-walled buildings in the region are agricultural and domestic examples are rare, particularly before the 1850s. The external walls of Bribery Cottage were probably rendered with clay and whitewashed initially, but were later tarred to protect them from the weather and eventually encased in red brick. The roof is likely to have been tiled or thatched (as suggested by Copinger Hill), and the present hipped slate roof was added with the brickwork in the late-19<sup>th</sup> century. The windows were replaced in the 1960s and with the exception of two plank-and-batten doors and the studwork partitions of the upper storey the interior has been largely stripped of original fixtures and fittings. The extent of these alterations is too great to justify listing, although better preserved 19<sup>th</sup> century clay-lump cottages elsewhere in the County are listed at grade II, but the building's original external symmetry and internal layout remain recognisable and it still represents an historic chapter in the development of cheap housing in Suffolk.



© Crown Copyright. All rights reserved. Suffolk County Council Licence No. 100023395 2008

**Figure 1**  
**Modern Ordnance Survey**  
**Enclosing the cottage (and a 20<sup>th</sup> century timber shed to the north) in red and showing its location at a medieval crossroads.**

## Documentary and Cartographic Evidence

Bribery Cottage lies in a conspicuous but isolated position on high ground approximately 2 km east of the village of Walsham le Willows, commanding fine views of open countryside in all directions. The site adjoins a crossroads on two medieval roads as documented in the manorial surveys of the parish: Mill Lane and Hartshall Lane running from west to east and Market Way (now Bribery Lane) from north to south (*Towards a Landscape History of Walsham le Willows*, Stanley West and Audrey McLaughlin, SCC 1998). The former now exists only as a public footpath. Despite its ancient origin, however, there is no evidence of a medieval tenement here, and Bribery Cottage ‘was first shown on the tithe map’ of 1842 (West and McLaughlin, p.24). It is conspicuous by its absence from a detailed enclosure map of 1817 (SROB 373/26), which shows its distinctive rectangular garden as an empty field. This garden was identified by West and McLaughlin as ‘a remnant of a furlong which was respected when Market Way ‘otherwise New Way’ (in a survey of 1581) was made, creating a sharp double bend in the road’. The reason for the unusual 19<sup>th</sup> century name of the cottage and road is unknown.

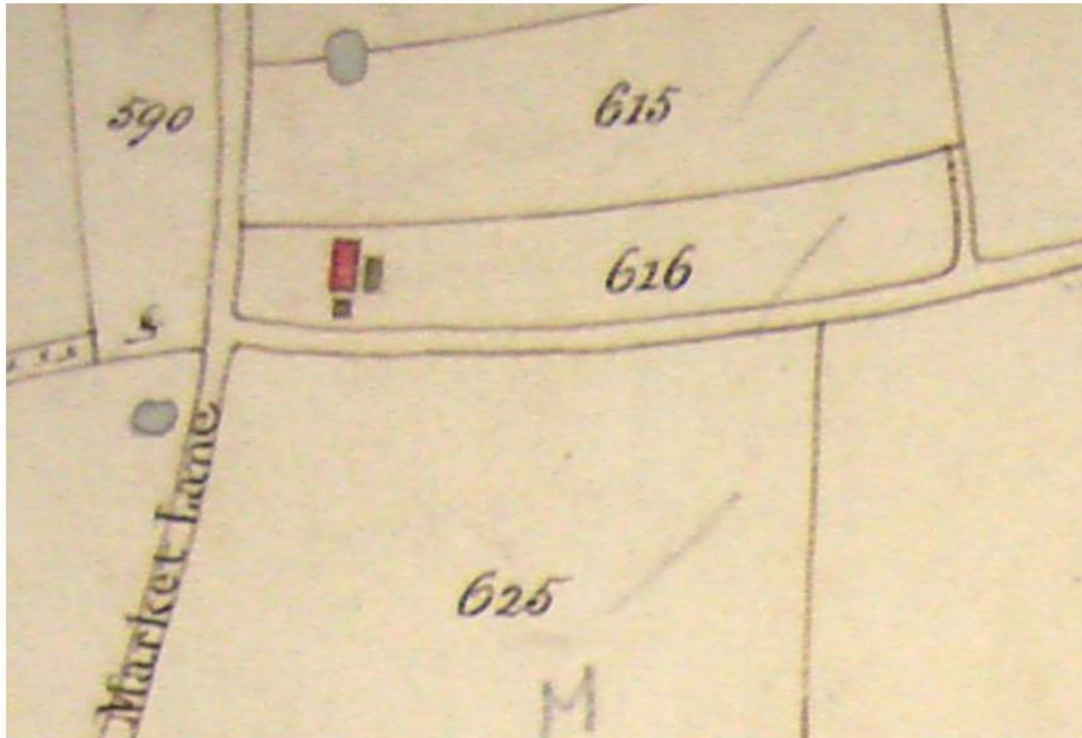


Figure 2. The 1842 tithe map of Walsham le Willows (SROB). The newly-built cottages (absent from an earlier map of 1817) are shown in red with outbuildings to the east and south. Bribery Lane was then known as Market Lane.

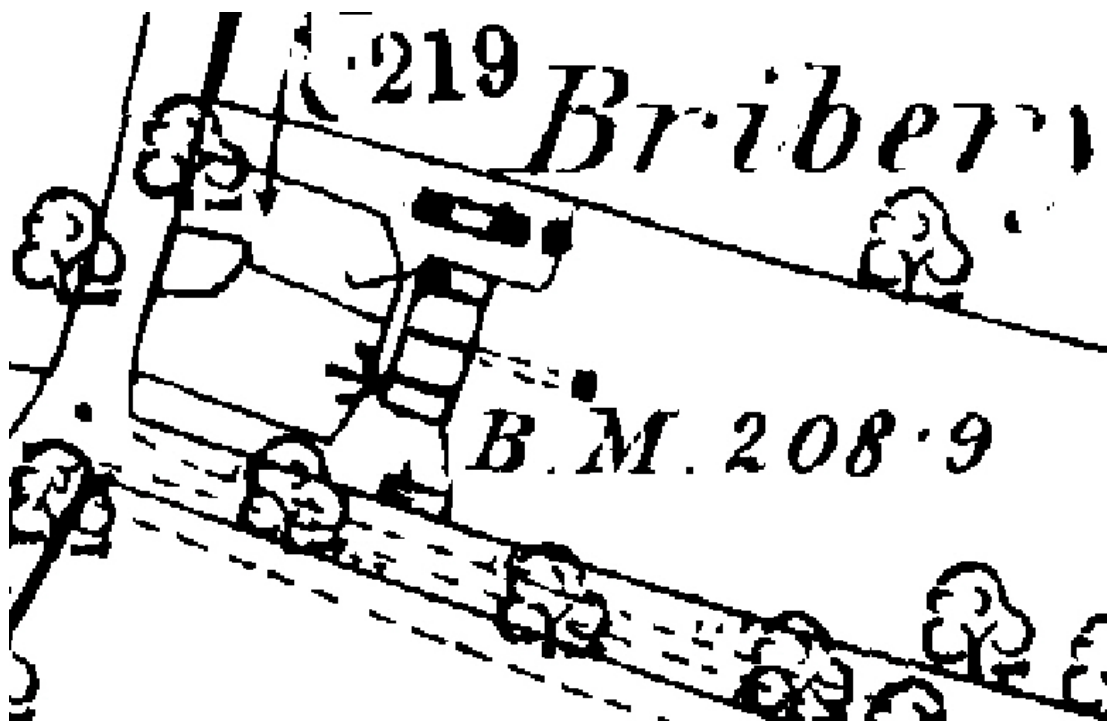
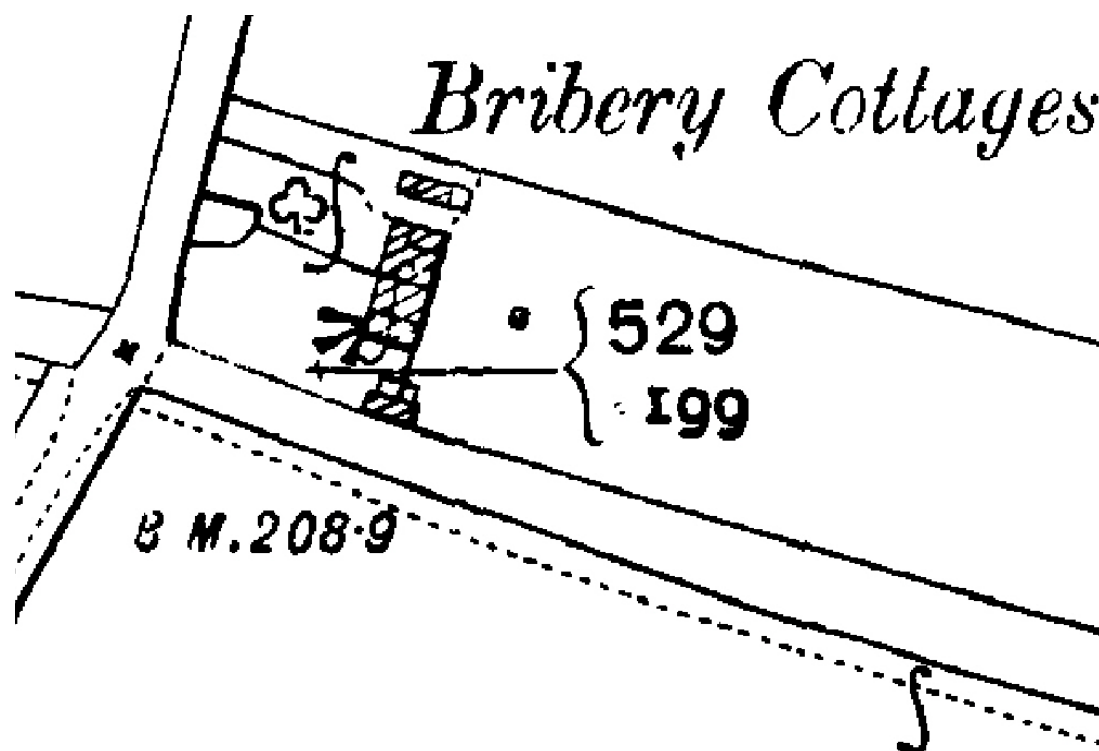


Figure 3. First Edition 25 inch Ordnance Survey of 1886. 'Bribery Cottages' are shown more clearly with the narrow lean-tos adjoining the northern and southern gables now delineated. A small privy to the rear (east) had replaced the larger outbuilding of 1842 and a narrow new shed had appeared to the north. The alterations to the site since 1842 suggest a major phase of refurbishment that probably included the brick facade and slate roof.

The 1842 tithe map (figure 2) shows the cottages in red with two outbuildings in grey, and the accompanying apportionment describes the site (plot 616) as ‘cottage and pightle’ (a pightle being an enclosed paddock). The property contained just under 1.75 acres (1 acre, 2 roods and 30 perches), and belonged to Robert Hayward Hatton of Home Farm (now Cranmer Lodge) – a substantial 138-acre holding at the junction of Bribery Lane and the Finningham Road 800 m to the north. Hatton’s tenants were named as ‘John Baker and another’, who may have been his farm labourers although a John Baker was listed by White’s Suffolk Directory of 1842 as one of no fewer than six boot and shoemakers in Walsham.



**Figure 4. The Second Edition 25 inch Ordnance Survey of 1904, showing little change since 1886.**

Having evidently been built between 1817 and 1842 the cottages appear to have been significantly altered before 1886 as the two outbuildings shown on the tithe map (one of which lay in close proximity to the back wall) had been replaced with new sheds including a small privy at a discrete distance from the house. These alterations may well have occurred in conjunction with the new brick facade and slate roof indicated by the architectural evidence. None of the outbuildings shown on the historic maps now survive, although a mid-20<sup>th</sup> century boarded shed to the north occupies much the same site, and the brick privy is recalled by the present owner, Mr Scase, whose grandmother, Mrs Kemp, purchased the property in 1964. This purchase coincided with a third major phase of refurbishment which included the insertion of the present windows and the combination of the two cottages into one house by blocking the earlier entrances and inserting a new central door. In more recent years this central door was blocked and the house sub-divided once again. Mr Scase currently operates an agricultural engineering business from a shed in the rear yard.

## Building Analysis

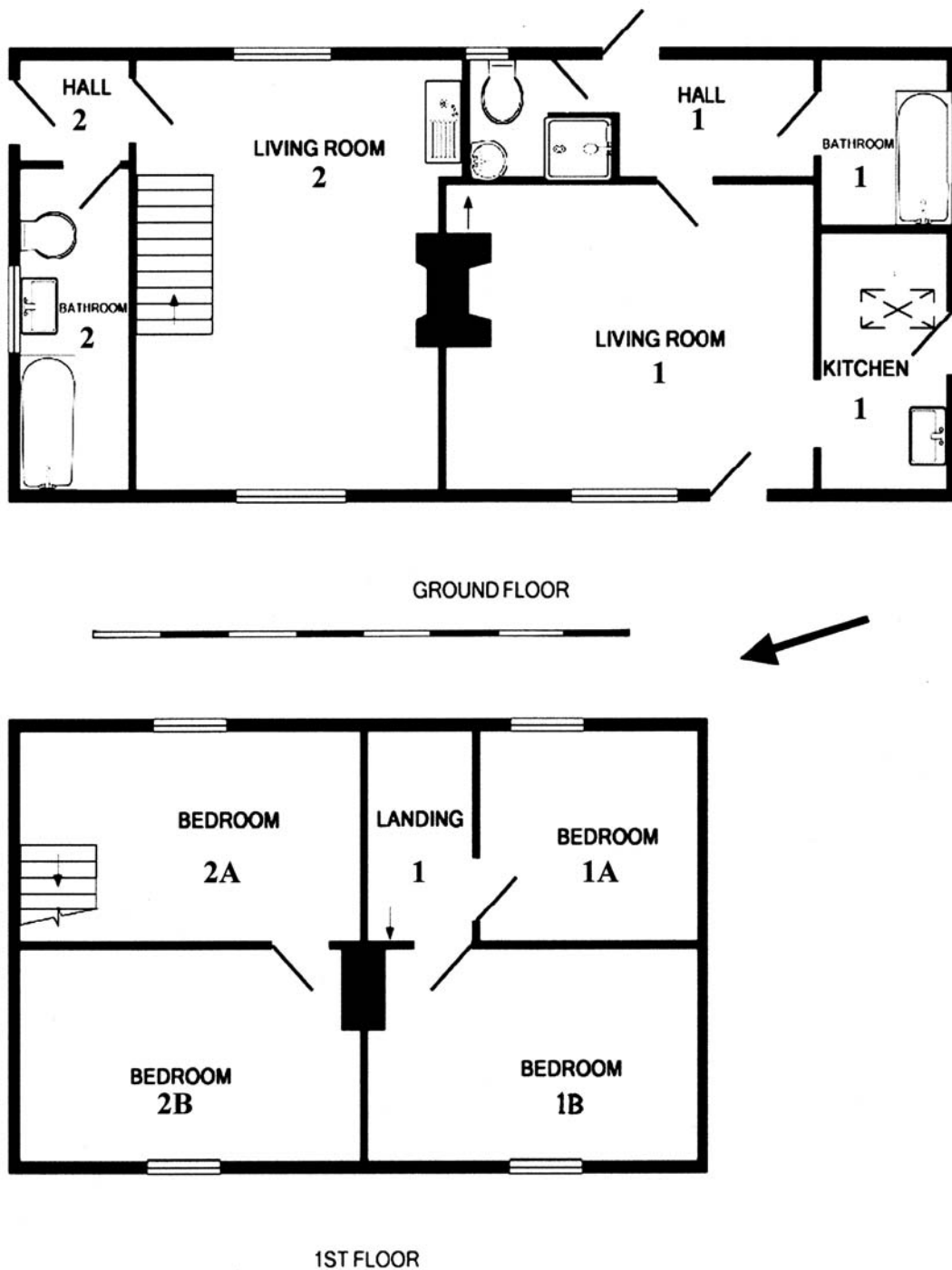


Figure 5

Ground and first-floor plans of the building identifying each room for ease of reference in the text and photographic record. The two cottages are numbered 1 and 2 for convenience but it is not known whether these coincide with their earlier postal addresses. Scale in metres.

Adapted from an inaccurate Estate Agent's plan which fails to show the thickness of the walls or the true proportions of the chimney and wrongly indicates that cottage 1 is significantly longer on the lower storey than cottage 2.

## Proportions and Structure



The rectangular outline of Bribery Cottage appears on the Walsham tithe map of 1842 but not an earlier map of 1817 and was therefore built during the 1820s or 1830s. Both the tithe apportionment and the Ordnance Survey of 1886, which labels the property as 'Bribery Cottages', indicate that it was designed as a pair of identical tenements. The building extends to 6.1 m in width by 14 m in total length (20 ft by 46 ft) on an approximately north-south axis, including a two-storied central range with a hipped slate roof which rises to 3.5 m at its eaves (11.5 ft) and slate-roofed lean-to structures roofed with corrugated iron at both gables. Each lean-to is 2.2 m long (7 ft) and the central range 9.75 m (32 ft).

The external wall fabric of both the two-storied range and the lean-tos is 0.5 m thick (19 ins) and consists of a thin red-brick outer facing (now painted) laid in stretcher bond of 11 cm (4 ins) and a 0.3 m (11 ins) thick inner core of clay. This is revealed in the northern gable where the rendered clay fabric remains exposed and the narrow width of the brickwork to the front and rear is clearly visible. The precise nature of the clay fabric is unclear as only a small area is exposed internally (to the north of the entrance to Bathroom 1 as shown in figure 5 and illus. 9) but this appears to consist of shuttered clay and straw rather than individual clay blocks (i.e. clay lump). The present occupant, Mr Scase, whose family has owned the property since 1964, has made various alterations to the walls (including the insertion of an arched doorway between the Kitchen and Living Room in cottage 1) and reports a similar situation elsewhere: he has discovered no evidence of clay lump. Mr Scase also reports that the outer surfaces of the external walls are painted black beneath the brickwork, and that the brick facade is a later addition. The presence of black 'paint' is consistent with the use of tar to preserve clay and weatherboarded buildings from the weather, as was standard practice in 19<sup>th</sup> century Suffolk. The present roof consists of machine-sawn softwood rafters nailed to a ridge-board in the manner of the late-19<sup>th</sup> century and cannot be contemporary with the clay walls as it respects the increased width of the building after the addition of its brick facade. The original cottages of rendered and tarred clay probably possessed a more steeply pitched roof of thatch or tile as might be expected of a cheaply built structure of the early 19<sup>th</sup> century (when slate was a new, fashionable and relatively expensive material).

### **Original Layout and Alterations**

The upper storey of each cottage is divided into a pair of bedrooms by axial partitions of studwork with lath-and-plaster to one side. The framing is typical of the early-19<sup>th</sup> century, with narrow, irregular studs interrupted by diagonal primary braces (illus. 11). Each partition retains what appears to be an original plank-and-batten door with a Suffolk latch. The historic layout of the lower storey is less certain as the interior has been extensively modernised in recent decades and no original stairs survive. Each cottage contained a main living area of 4.6 m in length internally (15 ft) by 5.2 m in width (17 ft), with a central brick fireplace and a narrow store-room of 1.8 m in length (5.5 ft) housed within the gable lean-tos (which are also of clay fabric and appear integral to the main range). The present partition between the southern Living Room (1) and the rear 'Hall' (1) is a modern addition and it is unclear whether the two living spaces were sub-divided in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Each cottage was entered by a door in its outer front corner, as indicated by flat arches in the brickwork (i.e. a row of headers), but the northernmost is now blocked. The single front and rear windows are insertions of the 1960s but occupy the positions of narrower predecessors as shown by similar flat arches above their lintels, and these were presumably reflected on the upper storey to create a symmetrical appearance. There is no evidence of doors in the 19<sup>th</sup> century brickwork of the rear elevation and each cottage appears to have been provided with a back door in the gable of its lean-to: there is evidence of a blocked door in the position of the present Bathroom (2) of the northern cottage and the side-door of its southern counterpart is probably in its original location. As the door between the southern Living Room (1) and Kitchen (1) is a recent insertion the original internal doors evidently lay to the rear, much as in figure 6 below.



The fireplace of the northern cottage is rendered, but the exposed brickwork of an alcove to the east contains a shelf which almost certainly indicates the position of a demolished bread oven. The brickwork of the southern fireplace preserves a blocked door in its western pier that undoubtedly opened onto a missing oven, suggesting that the two ovens were on opposite sides of the chimney precisely as shown in figure 6. The present stair of the northern cottage is a modern insertion, and the southern cottage possessed only a temporary ladder at the time of inspection, but the original stairs must have risen to the rear of each chimney where the broad 19<sup>th</sup> century floorboards have been renewed with narrow deal.

In summary, when first built of rendered clay in the early-19<sup>th</sup> century, each cottage probably possessed an almost identical layout to that shown in figure 6, although the single-storied nature of the lean-to pantry meant that the stair lay behind the chimney and the first-floor was partitioned axially to create the necessary pair of bedrooms. The exterior was probably clay-rendered and whitewashed initially, but later tarred and then provided with a new brick facade to seal it against the weather. The original tiled or thatched roof was renewed with slate at the same time. The conversion of the two cottages into a single dwelling in the 1960s saw the insertion of the present windows and a new central door, while a recent sub-division saw the insertion of a new rear door in the position of the original southern window and the obstruction of the central entrance. With the exception of the doors, studwork partitions and floorboards on the upper storey no original fixtures or fittings have survived.

### **Historic Significance**

Although its interior has been much altered in recent years, particularly on the ground floor, Bribery Cottage retains much of its original external symmetry and is of considerable historic interest as an unusually early clay-walled tenement. Although clay structures are known from documentary and archaeological evidence in medieval East Anglia, where they were termed ‘mud’ rather than ‘cob’ (as in the West Country), the tradition disappeared in the late Middle Ages but was re-introduced to the region in the 19<sup>th</sup> century as a fashionably efficient, inexpensive building method. The great majority of local examples are agricultural buildings, and while entire Council estates of clay-lump were built in Norfolk during the early-20<sup>th</sup> century (most famously at Harling), domestic structures are rare before *circa* 1850. Given its appearance on the 1842 tithe map Bribery Cottage is among the earliest known examples, and may have inspired the philanthropic Reverend Copinger Hill of nearby Buxhall (6 miles to the south) when he published his famous article ‘On the Construction of Cottages’ in the Journal of the Royal Agricultural Society for 1843. Copinger Hill recommended the use of cheap ‘clay’ fabric, giving a series of recommended plans and proportions with full costings, but did not distinguish between clay-lump, in which the walls were built of individual clay blocks, and shuttered clay where layers were raised *in situ* within wooden boards. The great majority of East Anglian examples are of the former, and Bribery Cottage is also unusual in appearing to consist of the latter – perhaps due to its experimental nature at a relatively date. Its internal layout is strikingly similar to Copinger Hill’s plans of 1843. Two examples of such buildings in the parish of Buxhall retain their original thatch and are listed at grade II, but others are known to exist there and more may await discovery behind later brick facades. While the alterations of the late-19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries mean that Bribery Cottage it is unlikely to meet the strict English Heritage criteria for listing, both its original external symmetry and internal layout remain recognisable and it still represents an historically significant chapter in the development of cheap housing in Suffolk during the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

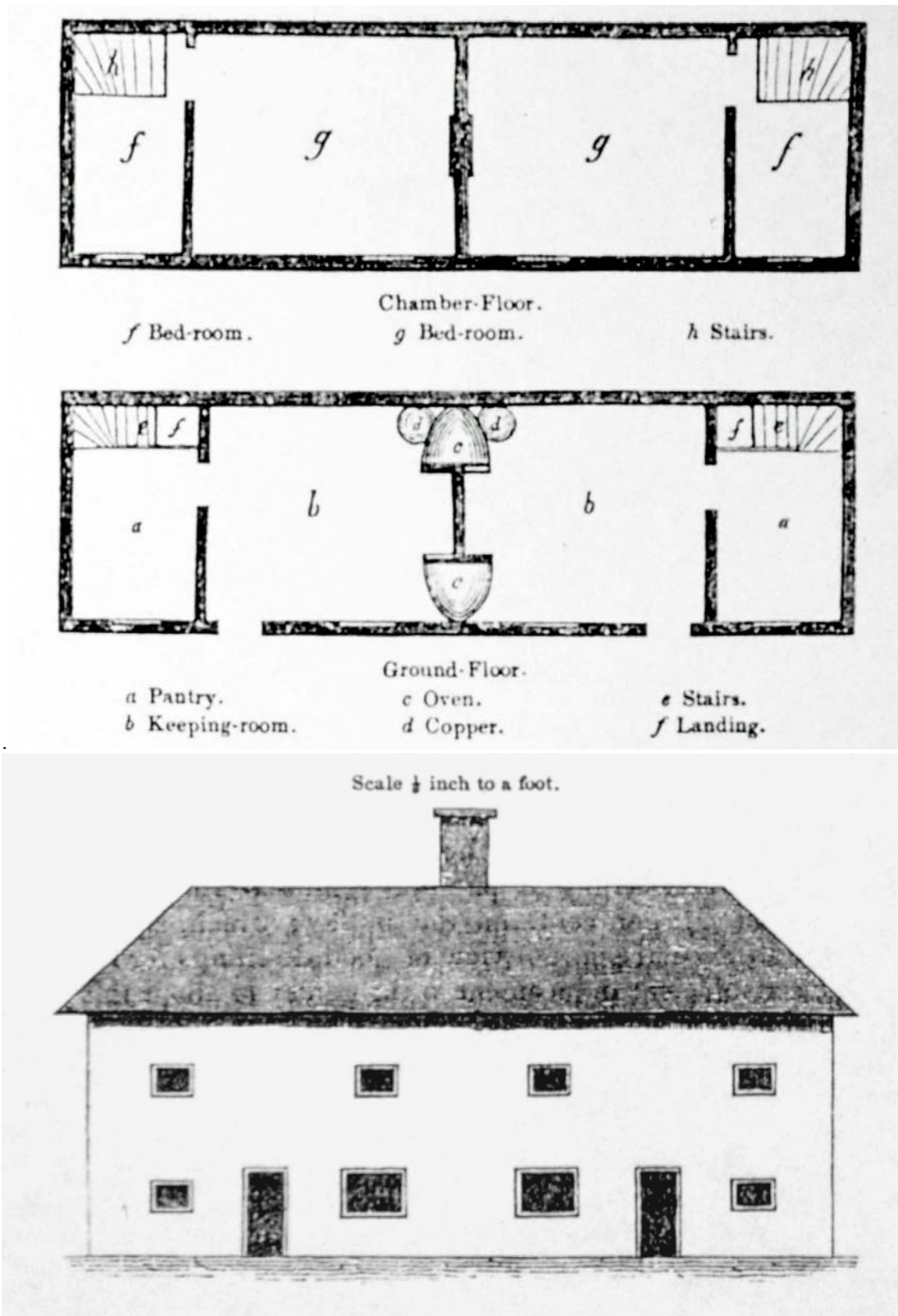


Figure 6

A recommended plan and elevation of a clay tenement from the Reverend Copinger Hill's 'On the Construction of Cottages' of 1843 (Journal of the Royal Agricultural Society). Bribery Cottage pre-dates this seminal work, but its layout was strikingly similar.

small dimensions for aged women; so that those who object to the Union House may continue to reside in the neighbourhood of their friends.

One room, 13 feet square, will be sufficient, in which the bed will stand; no oven is wanted; the double chimney in the middle may be small, say 3 feet by 3 feet at the base; thus leaving a space on each side of it; 5 feet by 3 feet for a closet, one in each house. The outside measure for two apartments will be 30 feet by 15, and 8 feet high to the eaves. It will be observed that I do not recommend ceiling on the rafters, because the additional cost of lath and plaster almost equals the saving in ceiling-joists; and the cost of a foot or two more in height of clay-wall is hardly worth thinking of. A flat ceiling, too, has this advantage, that in after years one defective rafter can be removed without disturbing the ceiling; and thatching-hooks may be dispensed with.

	£.	s.	d.
Chimney . . . . .	3	0	0
Paving 39 square yards . . . . .	3	14	9
Skirting . . . . .	0	4	0
Clay ceiling . . . . .	2	0	7½
Clay partitions . . . . .	0	15	7½
Clay walls . . . . .	6	15	6
Windows . . . . .	2	16	0
Stud-work of partitions and closet-doors, &c. . . . .	2	14	6
Ceiling-joists . . . . .	2	6	0
Doors . . . . .	2	14	0
Roof . . . . .	18	0	0
Out-buildings . . . . .	4	19	0
Total cost of two cottages . . . . .	£50	0	0

The rent of each of these apartments may be put at 30s., which would pay 6 per cent.

Scale ¼ inch to a foot.

**Figure 7**  
**The Reverend Copinger Hill's scale of costs**

## **Appendix 1 (on accompanying CD): Full Photographic Record**

### **Descriptions of Photographs in Appendix 1**

#### **Photograph no.**

1. General view of site from Bribery Lane to north showing isolated location on high ground in open countryside.
2. General view from Bribery Lane to the south-west showing the junction with Hartshall Lane to the right & Mill lane left.
3. The symmetrical western facade with windows of 1960s and original entrance to Cottage 1 to right.
4. The exterior from the north-west showing the exposed rendered clay fabric of the northern gable.
5. Detail of the northern gable showing the lean-to bathroom (2) with exposed rendered clay fabric above.
6. Western facade showing the blocked 1960s central door with soldier courses of narrow earlier windows above 60s windows.
7. Western facade of cottage 2 showing flat arches of blocked door to left and narrow earlier window to right.
8. Western facade of cottage 1 showing flat arches of door and narrow window above present window.
9. Southern external gable showing lean-to bathroom (1) with boarded clay fabric above.
10. Rear (eastern) exterior of cottage 2 showing flat arch of narrow earlier window above present window.
11. Rear (eastern) exterior showing evidence of two ground-floor windows in brick cladding but no doors.
12. Rear exterior of cottage 1 showing northern brick of flat arch of narrow earlier window to right of later door lintel.
13. Detail of northern external gable showing door to Hall (2) and 0.5 m thickness of external walls.
14. Detail of northern external gable showing straight joint of blocked door beneath present window.
15. The exterior from the south-west showing the southern gable lean-to with boarded cladding above.
16. Chimney of Living Room (2) from north-east showing flat arch of small aperture in painted brick (probably for an oven).

17. Living Room (2) from south showing modern stair with entrance to Hall (2) to right.
18. Living Room (2) from north showing rendered fireplace with exposed 19th century brickwork of probable oven to left.
19. Rear Bedroom (2A) from north showing 0.5 m thickness of eastern wall to left and entrance to front Bedroom (2B) right.
20. Rear Bedroom (2A) from south showing stair and slope of hipped roof with 0.5 thickness of eastern wall to right.
21. Front Bedroom (2B) from north showing central chimney and 0.5 m thickness of western facade to right.
22. Front Bedroom (2B) from south showing 0.5 m thickness of western facade to left and slope of hipped gable to right.
23. Detail from west of 19th century plank-and-batten door between front Bedroom (2B) and rear Bedroom (2A).
24. Lean-to Bathroom (2) from entrance door to east showing modern decor.
25. Kitchen (1) from east showing arched access to Living Room (1) cut through 0.35 m thick clay fabric.
26. Detail from south of 0.35 m thick clay fabric wall between Kitchen (1) and Living Room (1) showing red-brick plinth.
27. Kitchen (1) from west showing 20th century studwork with external door to right.
28. Living Room (1) from south showing 19th century brick fireplace with recent studwork partition to right.
29. Detail of 19th century fireplace in Living Room (1) showing aperture of probable bread oven in left-hand pier.
30. Living Room (1) from west showing modern partition to Hall (1) with 19th century central chimney to left.
31. Living Room (1) from north-east showing original western entrance door to right and door to Kitchen (1) left.
32. Hall (1) from north showing entrance to Bathroom (1) with door to Living Room (1) to right.
33. Entrance to Bathroom (1) from Hall (1) to north showing exposed area of clay fabric in left-hand pier.
34. Detail of eastern pier of Bathroom (1) door showing fabric of clay and straw with no obvious sign of individual blocks.
35. Hall (1) from south showing shower room with external eastern door to right and entrance to Living Room (1) left.

36. Eastern interior of Bathroom (1) showing lath-and-plaster wall fabric with door to Hall (1) to left.
37. Bedroom (1B) from south showing 19th century studwork partition to west of chimney and 0.5 m thick external wall.
38. Bedroom (1B) from north showing 19th century plank and batten door to Landing (1) to left.
39. Detail of 19th century shaped iron latch to door between Bedroom (1B) and Landing (1).
40. Landing (1) from west showing 19th century studwork with later blocked door to left.
41. Bedroom (1A) from north showing slope of hipped southern gable and studwork partition to Bedroom (1B) to right.
42. Bedroom (1A) from east showing hipped southern gable to left and 19th century studwork partition to Bedroom (1B).
43. Bedroom (1A) from south showing 0.5 m thick eastern wall to right, door to Landing (1) & studwork to Bedroom (1B) left.
44. Detail of central chimney from south showing softwood rafters and ridge-board of roof structure.

*Photographic Appendix 2 follows on pp. 13-18*



## Appendix 2 (pp. 13-18): Selected Printed Photographs



**Illus. 1.** A general view of the site from Bribery Lane to the north showing the cottage's isolated location on high ground in open countryside.



**Illus. 2.** The symmetrical western facade with contemporary lean-tos adjoining both gables. The present brick facade and slate roof date from a late-19<sup>th</sup> century refurbishment and the original building was probably thatched. The original left-hand entrance was blocked when the two cottages were combined and the present windows inserted during the 1960s.





**Illus. 3. The exterior from the north-west showing the one remaining area of exposed original fabric of rendered clay above the lean-to of the northern gable. The same area of the southern gable is weatherboarded. The upper part of the chimney consists of 20<sup>th</sup> century Fletton brick and was probably rebuilt in the 1960s.**



**Illus. 4. The western facade of the northern cottage (2) showing the flat brick arches of the 19<sup>th</sup> century entrance door to the left and the narrower window above the present 1960s window to the right. The central door of the 1960s conversion (since blocked) is visible to the right but lacks an arch and interrupts the brickwork.**



**Illus. 5. The rear (eastern) exterior with evidence in the brickwork of two earlier, narrow ground-floor windows but no doors. The position of the southernmost window to the left is now occupied by a secondary door.**



**Illus. 6. The Living Room of the northern cottage (2) seen from the north, showing the 0.5 m thick front (western) wall to the right and the rendered fireplace with an exposed area of 19<sup>th</sup> century brickwork to the left. A fragmentary shelf and a small original aperture in this brickwork probably indicate the position of a bread oven to the rear of the main fireplace.**





**Illus. 7. The Front Bedroom (2B) of the northern cottage from the north, showing the slope of the central chimney and the 0.5 m thickness of the western facade to the right. A 19<sup>th</sup> century plank-and-batten door opens onto the rear bedroom (2A) to the left.**



**Illus. 8. The southern Living Room (1) from the south showing the 19th century brick fireplace with a recent studwork partition adjoining the Hall (1) to the right. The recess to the rear of the fireplace may have contained a copper as there is evidence of a bread oven to the front (illus 12). The studs framing the chimney are modern.**



**Illus. 9. A detail of the eastern pier of the door to the Bathroom (1) of the southern cottage showing an exposed area clay and straw fabric with no obvious sign of individual blocks.**



**Illus. 10. The front Bedroom (1B) of the southern cottage from the south, showing the 19th century studwork partition to the west of the central chimney and the 0.5 m thickness of the external wall. The 19<sup>th</sup> century plank-and-batten door opens onto the Landing (1).**





**Illus. 11.** The rear Bedroom (1A) of the southern cottage seen from the east, showing the hipped southern gable to left and the 19th century studwork partition to the front Bedroom (1B). The plank and batten door to the right opens onto the stair Landing (1).



**Illus. 12.** A detail of the 19th century fireplace in the southern Living Room (1) showing the aperture of a probable bread oven door in its left-hand pier.



