

**Barn to Rear of
2-6 Little Lane,
Wickham Market, Suffolk
WKM 034**

Historic Building Record

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Barn to Rear of 2-6 Little Lane, Wickham Market, Suffolk

(TM 300 558)

Historic Building Record

This report provides a record at English Heritage (2006) Level 2 of a redundant historic agricultural building. It has been prepared to a specification by Dr Jess Tipper of Suffolk County Council's Archaeological Service dated 15th February 2012, and is intended to fulfil a condition of planning permission for conversion (Suffolk Coastal District Council application C/08/1926).

Introduction

The report is accompanied by a CD containing a full photographic record in the form of 55 digital images of 21 megapixels (Appendix 1), but also includes 14 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 2nd April 2012.

Summary

The barn described for planning purposes as lying to the rear of 2-6 Little Lane in Wickham Market in fact lies 20 m east of a gap in the street frontage at the junction of Little Lane and Broad Street, some 50 m north-west of the medieval market place. At the time of the title survey in 1843 the building belonged to Hill House at the western end of the market; a substantial grade II-listed Georgian town house with four acres of land owned by a wealthy surgeon. Three-bay threshing barns of this scale, extending to 10.4 m by 5.6 m overall, are typically associated with more substantial arable holdings of between 30 and 60 acres, and it may well have been linked previously to a medieval farmstead on the site of Sycamore Cottage (2 Broad Street) adjoining the eastern yard from which the barn was always approached. The shallow-pitched pantiled roof of the timber-framed and weatherboarded structure is a mid-19th century replacement, but in other respects the original fabric of *circa* 1600 (with edge-halved and bridled scarf joints) is unusually well preserved. The arch-braces of both open trusses survive intact and the studs are secured by a full complement of externally trenched wall-braces. The central threshing bay was entered by full-height doors which swung on 'pin' hinges (i.e. pivoting on dowels projecting into the roof-plate) and the rear (western) door lay beneath a low mid-rail in the standard manner of early barns. The low height of this rail suggests the ground level within the barn may have risen by as much as 0.6 m and that early threshing floors may lie hidden beneath the modern concrete. A vehicle shed with a first-floor granary was inserted into the southern bay during the mid-19th century, and the latter retains a series of large incised apotropaic (evil-averting) circles designed to protect its content from harm. Early urban barns such as this are rare survivals and offer important insight into the nature of the built environment of medieval and Tudor Britain. Given this special point of historic interest and the quality of its original frame the barn in my view meets the strict English Heritage criteria for listing at grade II.

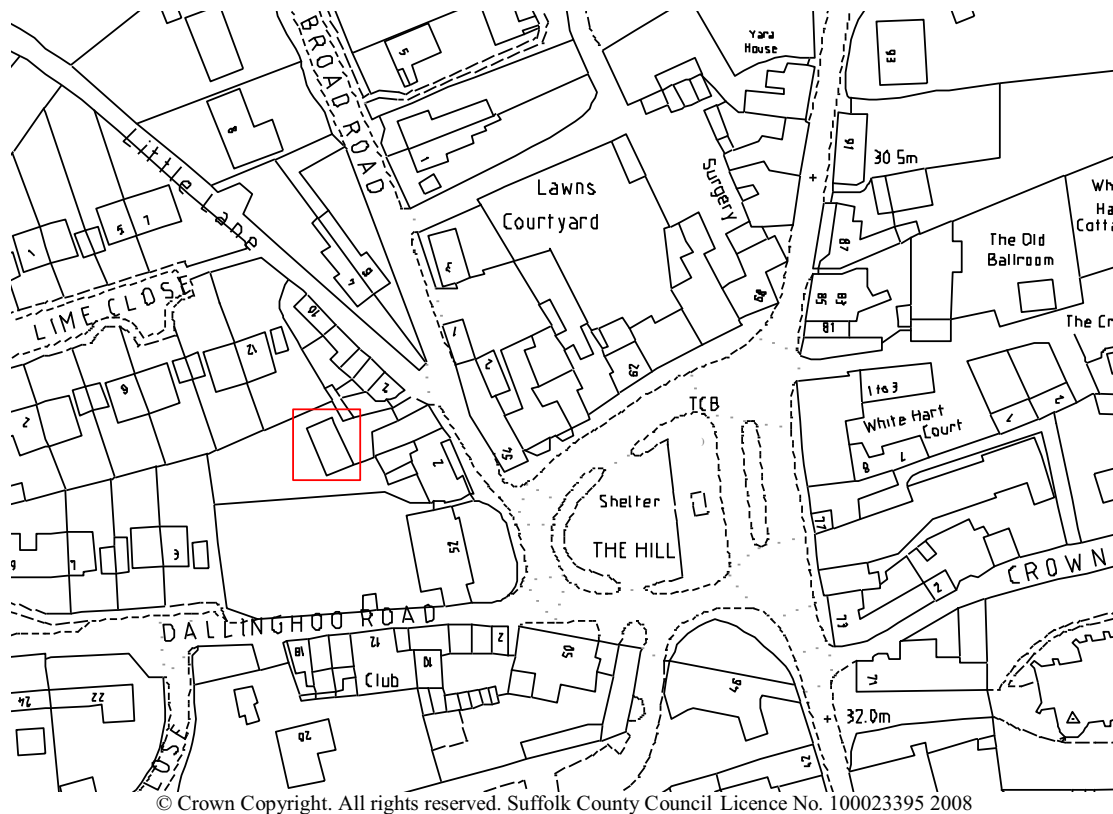


Figure 1. Modern Ordnance Survey

Enclosing the barn in red and showing 2 Broad Street (Sycamore Cottage) immediately to the east and Hill House (to which the barn belonged until recently) at the western end of the former market place to the south-east.

Documentary and Cartographic Evidence

The barn described for planning purposes as lying to the rear of 2-6 Little Lane in Wickham Market in fact lies 20 m (70 ft) east of a gap in the street frontage at the junction of Little Lane and Broad Street. The structure is understood by its present owner, who recently purchased it as a separate property, to have formerly belonged to Hill House approximately the same distance to the south-east. Hill House is a substantial grade II-listed building with a Regency facade which dominates the western side of the former market hill in Wickham Market and is said to contain an early-18th century interior. It is now divided from the barn by a serpentine wall but the tithe map of 1843 confirms the link between the sites as both were then owned by Thomas Harsant Esquire. Harsant was a wealthy surgeon of some scientific repute, said by the Post Office Directory of 1865 to have died in Wickham Market at the age of 88 in 1852 and to have been well regarded for ‘his mechanical attainments’. He is best known today as the maternal grandfather of the pioneering Victorian photographer Robert Howlett, who was responsible for the iconic image of Isambard Kingdom Brunel in front of the Great Eastern’s winding chains. Howlett’s Wikipedia entry notes that he was inspired by his grandfather’s collection of ‘telescopes, microscopes, electrical machines, implements and instruments’. Hill House (plot 66 in figure 2) contained a total of 4 acres of land including the 2.5 acre ‘Home Meadow’ adjoining the barn on the north. The original threshing barn of *circa* 1600 seems too large for such a small holding, and was entered from the east in a manner that does not immediately point to an association with Hill House to the south. It lies in closer proximity to Sycamore Cottage (2 Broad Street) immediately to the south-east, and while this building is not listed its external profile is typical of 17th century and earlier farmhouses elsewhere in the region. It is possible that the barn initially belonged to this property, and that that it represents a late-medieval farmstead on the edge of the early town.



Figure 2. Wickham Market as depicted on the parish tithe map of 1843 (SROI).

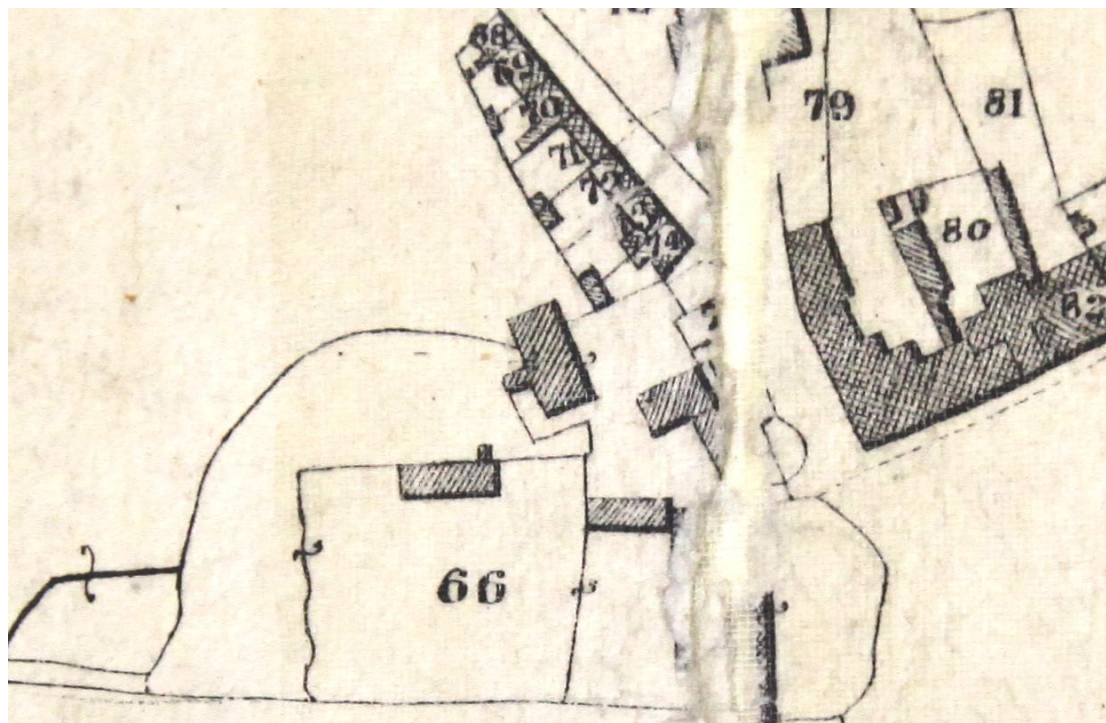


Figure 2a. Detail of the 1843 tithe map. A tear in the original map has obliterated Hill House (bottom right) and part of Sycamore Cottage, but the barn is clearly shown to the north of the former's rear garden and was apparently part of the same plot (66) which included a 'house, buildings, yard and garden'. The barn presumably served chiefly the adjoining meadow of 2.5 acres (plot 67) and the entire property extended to only a fraction over 4 acres. No trace now survives of the small shed projecting from the barn's rear (western) elevation, but its outline is otherwise unchanged, and it faced what appears to be a walled yard on the east much as it does today.

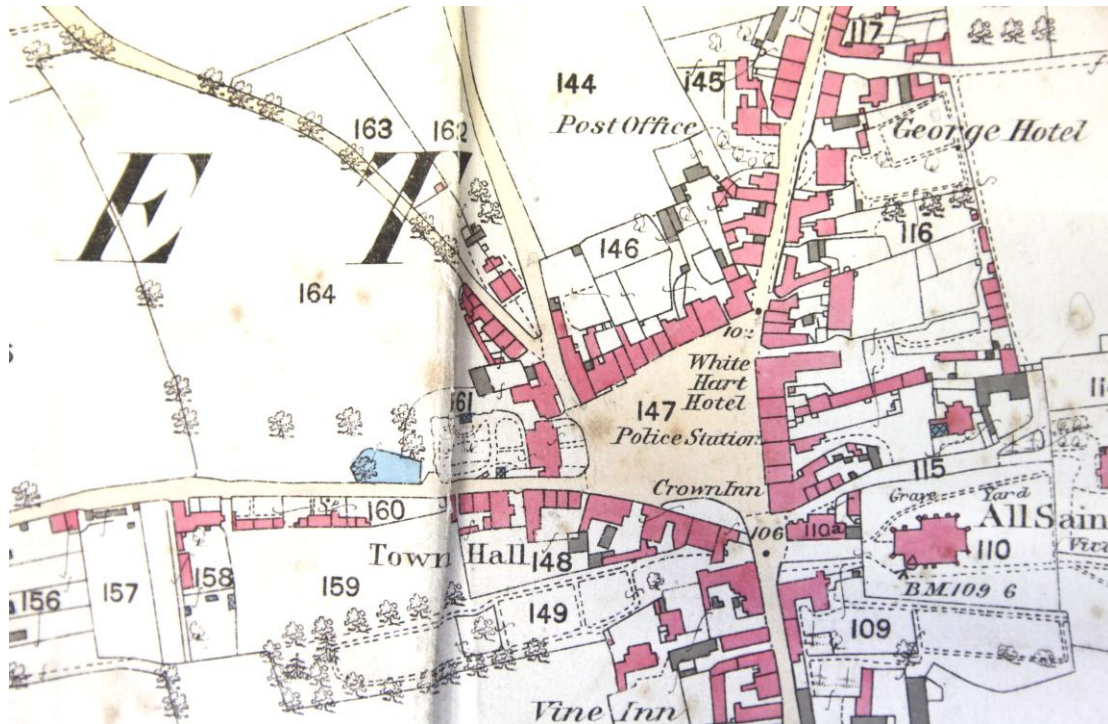


Figure 3. First edition Ordnance Survey of 1883. The dark vertical line is caused by a fold in the original map.

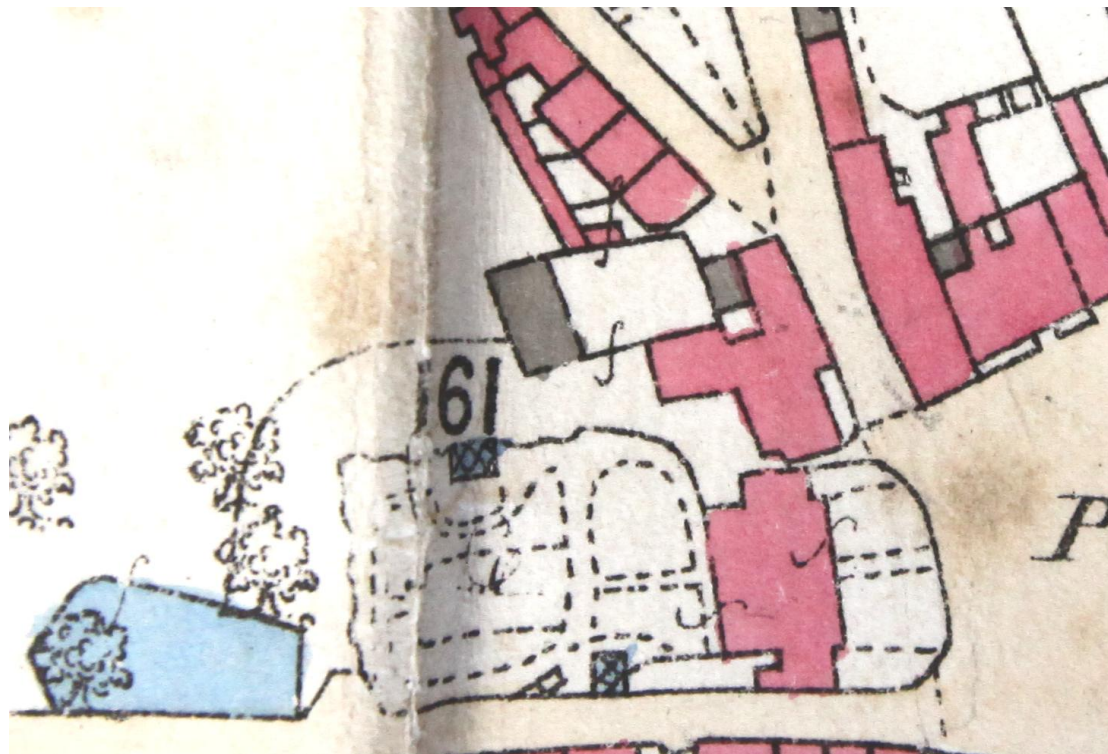


Figure 3a. Detail of the 1883 Ordnance Survey. The barn in grey has lost the rear projection of 1843 and now faces a fully enclosed yard on the east. This map demonstrates the close association between the barn and Sycamore Cottage (2 Broad Street) immediately to the east and suggests they may have formed an early farmstead before the barn was acquired by the gentry residence at Hill House. Note the surviving serpentine wall to the north and west of the latter's garden.

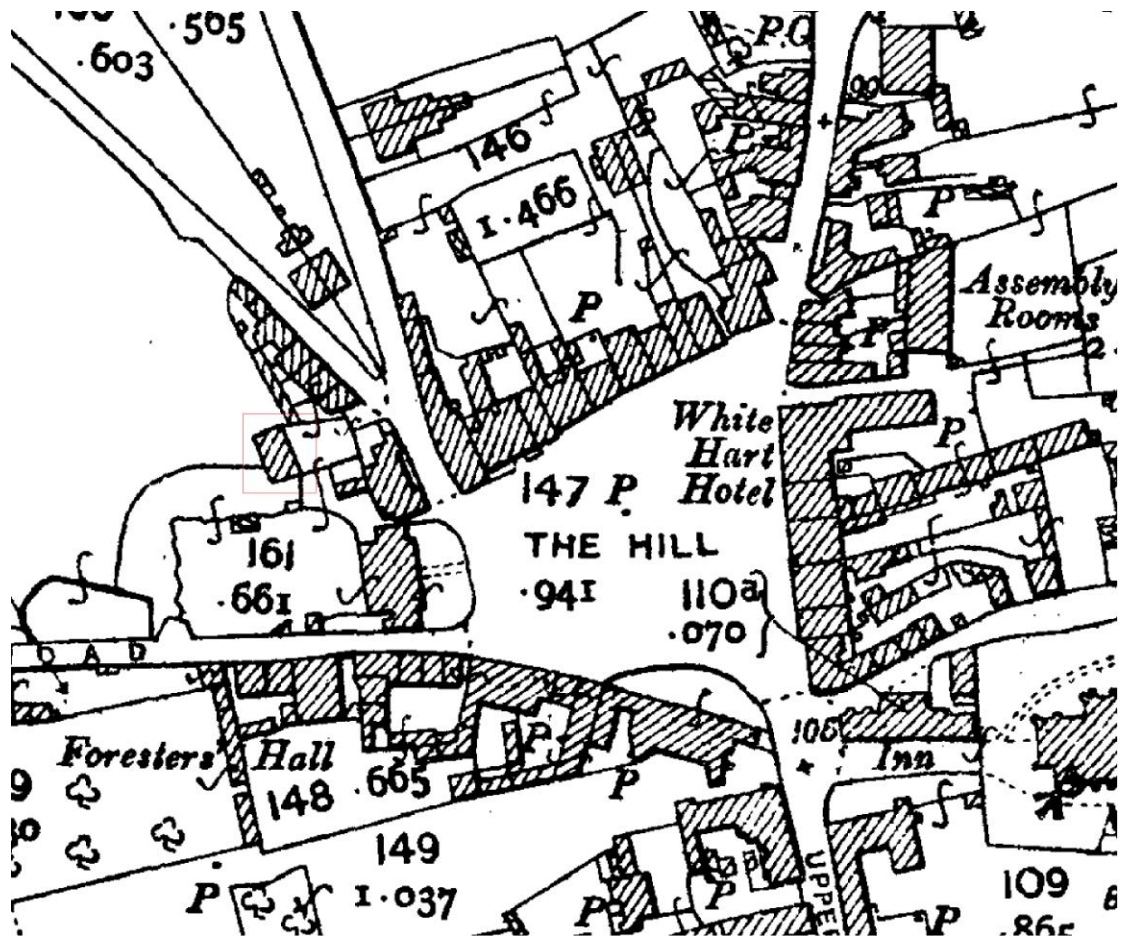


Figure 4. The Second Edition 25 inch Ordnance Survey of 1904, showing little change since 1883.

Building Analysis

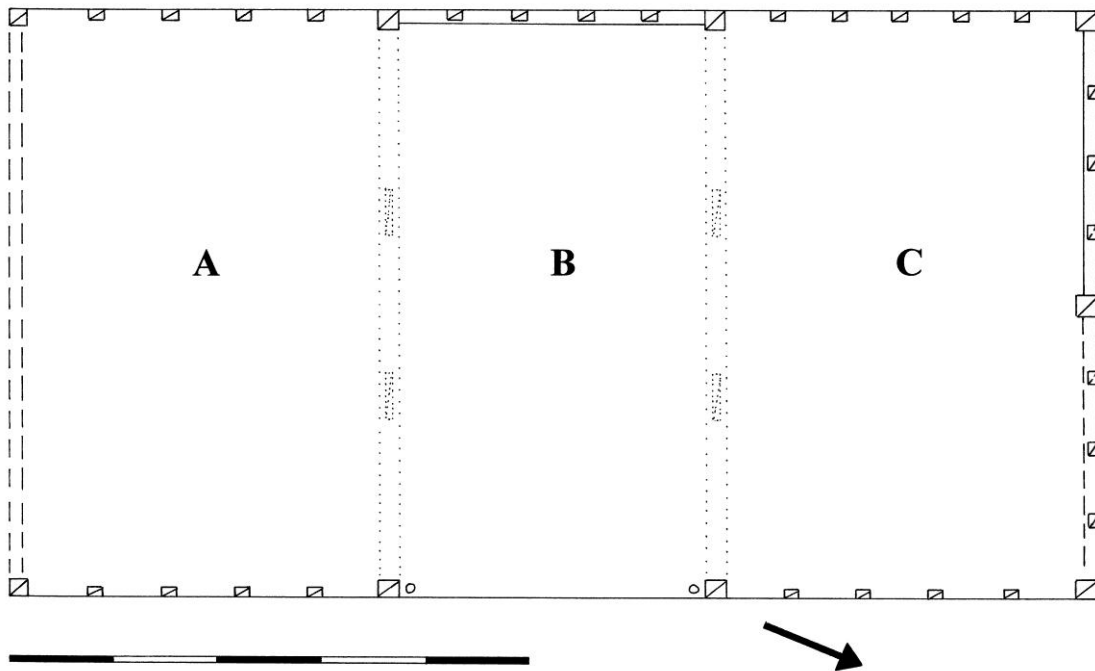


Figure 5

Ground plan of the barn identifying each of its three bays with a letter for ease of reference in the text and photographic record. The studs are shown *above* the mid-rails. The southern bay (A) was divided from the rest in the 19th century and converted into a shed with a first-floor granary.

Scale in metres.

Proportions, Structure and Date

The barn is a timber-framed and weatherboarded structure of three bays which extends to 10.4 m in length by 5.6 m in overall width (34 ft by 18.5 ft) on a NNW-SSE axis (simplified to north-south for the purpose of this report). Its walls rise to 2.75 m (9 ft) at their roof-plates above the present internal concrete floor but there is evidence to suggest the ground has risen (or the barn sunk) by as much as 0.6 m or 2 ft (i.e. the low height of the original mid-rail to the rear of the central bay, as described below).

The walls consist of uniform oak studs of 13 cm by 8 cm (5 in by 3 in) that are fully pegged and tenoned to the principals. Externally trenched braces link the jowled storey posts to the roof-plates and gable tie-beams, and heavy arch-braces rise to the tie-beams of the open trusses. Unlike the main elevations, where the studs rise from the (later) ground sills to the roof-plates, the gables contain mid-rails interrupted by central posts; the southern gable was rebuilt in the 19th century but was probably identical to its northern counterpart. There is no evidence of original studwork above the northern tie-beam and the original roof is likely to have been hipped and thatched – but the present shallow-pitched pantiled roof is a replacement of the mid-19th century: it consists of clasped-purlins with nailed collars and a ridge-board, and retains its original reed fleaking beneath the tiles, but includes some principal rafters belonging to a clasped-purlin structure with wind-braces that were probably re-used from the original. There are no mortises for crown or queen posts in the tie-beams, and the framing is typical of the late-16th or early-17th centuries. The scarf joints in the roof-plates of bays A and C (to the west and east respectively) are of the 16th century edge-halved

and bridled form rather than the face-halved variety normally found from the beginning of the 17th century, and a date of *circa* 1600 can be suggested with some confidence. Many local barns were rebuilt during the agricultural boom driven by the population expansion and price inflation of that period.

Layout and Function

The barn originally formed a typical three-bay threshing barn with a central entrance to the east and a small rear door to the west. The position of the main entrance is indicated by circular holes at both ends of the eastern roof plate of the central bay (B); these held the 'pin' hinges of the barn doors which avoided the need for expensive iron strap hinges (i.e. wooden dowels projected from the outer edges of the doors to serve as pivots). Early barns were provided with small rear doors, sufficient to create a through-draught for threshing and winnowing but not to admit vehicles, and the studs beneath the roof-plate of the western elevation are original. The present mid-rail here is secondary, but the posts contain large, double-pegged mortises for an original rail immediately beneath. This rail lay only 1.2 m above the present floor (4 ft) but would have served as a door lintel and must have been higher initially. The internal floor has risen by some 0.6 m or 2 ft with respect to the roof-plates – probably by a combination of ground deposition and decay to the base of the frame (the present ground sills and brick plinths are 19th century insertions). There is no obvious sign of a brick or boarded threshing floor but archaeological evidence may be preserved beneath the modern concrete. An exposed area of brick flooring in the northern bay dates only from the 19th century and may relate to the barn's partial conversion into a stable or bier as it contains a lateral drain. A threshing barn of this scale would normally be found on a middle-sized farm of some 30-60 acres, and would not be expected on the small 4-acre holding associated with Hill House in 1843. It seems likely that a larger contemporary land holding was broken up between the 16th and 19th centuries, leaving the barn to serve only the 2.5 acre meadow adjoining on the north. This earlier farmstead may have been based at Sycamore Cottage (2 Broad Street) which adjoins the eastern yard from which the barn has always been approached.

Later Alterations

The original framing is unusually well-preserved, apart from its roof and the loss of height indicated by the rear mid-rail. All four tie-beam braces flanking the threshing bay survive intact, having escaped the normal replacement with bolted knee-braces in the 19th century, and almost all the wall bracing is *in situ*. A number of secondary studs were nailed between the originals in the 18th or 19th century, probably when the original external cladding of plaster was replaced by weatherboarding. The northern gable has lost the eastern section of its mid-rail and a number of studs have been removed to accommodate doors and windows at various periods. A number of rails nailed to the walls of the northern bay indicate the sometime presence of a loft served by a loading hatch in the roof gable, and this probably relates to the brick floor mentioned above. Lofts were often used as milling platforms for the preparation of animal feed, and the small hatch in the centre of the bay's eastern elevation may have been intended to light the bagging process beneath.

The most significant alteration occurred in the southern bay (A) which was separated from the rest of the barn in the mid-19th century by a brick and studwork partition to form a shed with a loft above. The southern gable was rebuilt entirely with a tall brick plinth that extended to the western elevation, and the loft was designed as a granary with an external gable stair (as shown today by the outline of the blocked first-floor door). The precise purpose of the lower storey is unclear but it was probably a vehicle shed with a brick floor - much as it remains today. The plastered wall of the loft's northern wall is of special historic interest as it contains a number of deeply incised interlocking circles forming apotropaic (evil-averting) symbols of a type commonly found in local houses from the 17th century until the 19th century and

intended to ward off evil spirits such as witches and their familiars. They are particularly common on the walls of granaries where a little ‘bad luck’ in form of rot or infestation could prove particularly costly.

Historic Significance

Despite the replacement of its roof in the 19th century the barn remains an unusually well-preserved three-bay threshing barn of *circa* 1600 with much of its original fabric intact. Although it was owned in conjunction with a nearby townhouse in 1843 it is likely to have formed part of a larger medieval farmstead on or near the site of Sycamore Cottage which adjoins the yard from which the barn was always approached. Early urban barns such as this, lying within 50 metres of an important market place, are rare survivals and offer important insight into the nature of the built environment of medieval and Tudor Britain. Given this special point of historic interest and the quality of its original frame the barn in my view meets the strict English Heritage criteria for listing at grade II.

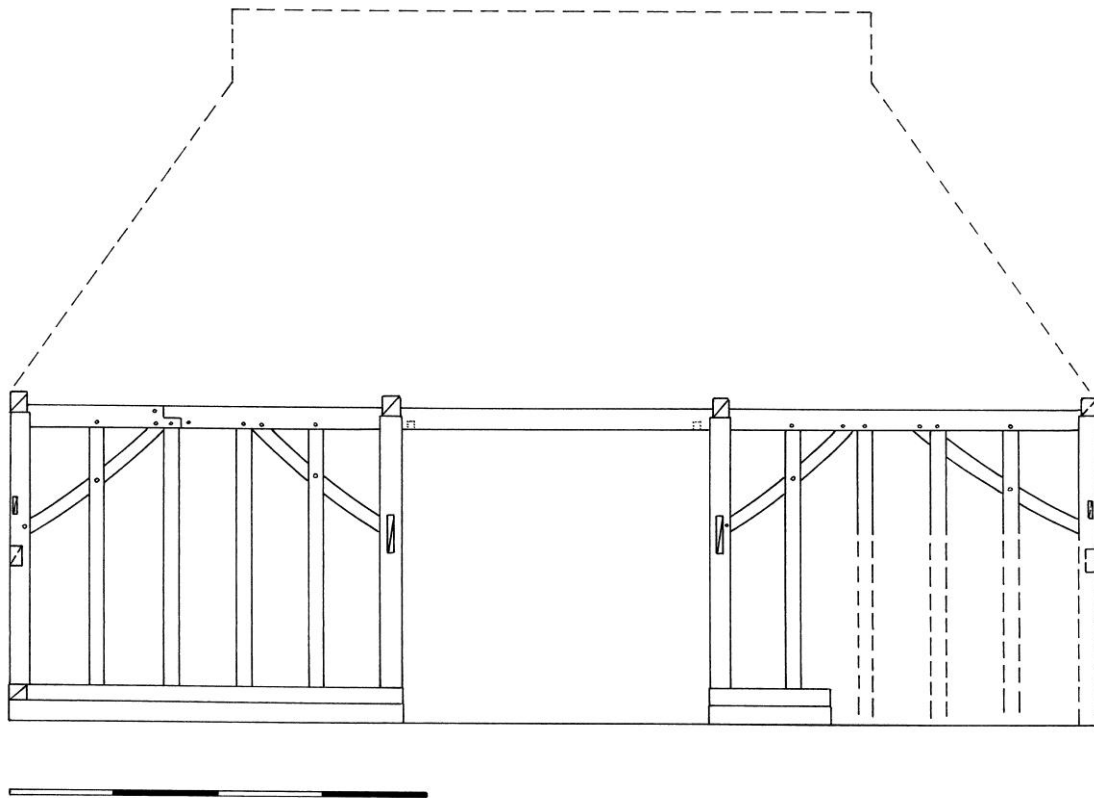


Figure 6
Front (eastern) internal elevation showing the remaining original frame but omitting later insertions. Scale in metres.

Appendix 1 (on accompanying CD): Full Photographic Record

Descriptions of Photographs in Appendix 1

Photograph no.

1. General view from Market Hill showing Hill House to left with Sycamore Cottage and entrance to Broad Street to right.
2. Hill House from Market Hill to south-east showing entrance to Broad Street and Sycamore Cottage to right.
3. Sycamore Cottage (2 Broad Street) from south-east showing site entrance & Little Lane to right.
4. Site entrance from Broad Street to east showing roof of barn in rear to left & entrance to Little Lane to right.
5. Site entrance from Broad Street to east (occupied by red car) showing Sycamore Cottage (2 Broad St) to left & Little Lane to right.
6. Site entrance from Broad Street to north-east showing Sycamore Cottage (2 Broad Street) to left.
7. Entrance to site from east showing 19th century or earlier boundary wall to right and modern fence of Sycamore Cottage to left.
8. Entrance to site from east showing 19th century or earlier boundary wall to left and modern fence of Sycamore Cottage to right.
9. General view of site from north-west showing proximity of barn to rear gables of Hill House in rear to right.
10. Yard to east of barn seen from north, showing barn to right with Sycamore Cottage in centre and Hill House in rear to right.
11. General view of site from east showing proximity of barn to right and serpentine wall of Hill House to left.
12. Detail of serpentine wall of Hill House from site of barn to north-east.
13. General view of site from west showing southern gable of barn to left with Hill House to right and Sycamore Cottage in centre.
14. Eastern facade of barn showing doors of original central entrance in bay B (reduced in height) and to later shed (bay A) to left.
15. Eastern exterior of southern bay (A) showing 20th century double doors with remains of tarred 19th century weatherboarding.
16. Detail of eastern exterior showing hatch in northern bay (C) to right and 20th century central doors (bay B) to left.

17. Detail of heavily tarred 19th century weatherboarding to eastern exterior showing iron pintle of earlier full-height barn doors to left.
18. Detail of 19th century hatch in eastern exterior of northern bay (C).
19. Northern external gable showing secondary hatch in roof gable and glazed window beneath.
20. Rear (western) exterior from north-west showing stripes of glazed pantiles in roof with rear gables of hill house in rear to right.
21. Southern end of western exterior showing tall 19th century brick plinth of end-bay (A) to right.
22. Western exterior of southern bay (A) showing tall 19th century brick plinth with blocked aperture to left & 20th century stained cladding above.
23. Southern external gable from south-east showing tall 19th century brick plinth with 20th century weatherboarding above.
24. Interior of open central & northern bays (B & C) from east showing intact arch-braced open trusses to left and right.
25. 19th century clasped-purlin roof structure of southern bays (B & C) from east showing reed fleaking beneath pantiles.
26. Interior of northern bays (B & C) from north showing intact late-16th or early-17th century arch-braced open trusses.
27. Arch-braced open truss between bays C & B from north showing rebuilt 19th century roof with re-used possibly original timbers.
28. Intact arch-braced truss between bays B & A from north showing 19th century brick and studwork partition.
29. Rear (western) interior of northern bays (B & C) showing later (raised) mid-rail in central threshing bay (B) to left.
30. Rear (western) interior of central threshing bay (B) showing original studs above later mid-rail with mortises for original beneath.
31. Detail of south-western storey post of threshing bay (B) showing pegged mortise of original mid-rail beneath present rail.
32. Detail of north-western storey post of threshing bay (B) showing pegged mortise of original mid-rail beneath present rail.
33. Western interior of northern bay (C) showing intact original studs and externally trenched braces (section missing to right).
34. Detail of externally trenched brace in south-western corner of northern bay (C).
35. Section of 19th century brick floor and drain in north-western corner of bay exposed beneath concrete floor elsewhere.

36. Northern internal gable showing intact wall braces, central post and left-hand mid-rail with a mix of original and later studs.
37. Interior of open central & northern bays (C & B) from west showing intact arch-braced open trusses to right.
38. Eastern interior of northern bay (C) showing intact pegged studs and braces with 19th century studs nailed in between.
39. Detail of soffit of eastern roof-plate in northern bay (C) showing 16th century type edge-halved and bridled scarf joint.
40. Detail of eastern roof-plate in northern bay (C) showing 16th century type edge-halved and bridled scarf joint.
41. Eastern interior of central threshing bay (B) showing lower 20th century doors and evidence of original full-height doors.
42. Detail of eastern roof-plate in central bay (B) showing cylindrical housing of pin hinge of original doors to left.
43. Detail of eastern roof-plate in central bay (B) showing cylindrical housing of pin hinge of original doors to right.
44. Detail of northern face of south-eastern storey post of central bay (B) showing incised carpenter's numeral II.
45. Interior from east of southern bay (A) showing 19th century lower brickwork and ceiling with loft stair to right.
46. Interior from west of southern bay (A) showing 19th century lower brickwork and ceiling with loft stair to left.
47. Internal southern gable showing 19th century brickwork and ceiling with 20th century vehicle doors to left.
48. Internal southern roof gable showing rebuilt 19th century studwork with blocked external door to probable granary.
49. Western interior of loft above southern bay (A) showing 19th century roof with original roof-plate & studwork beneath.
50. Original roof-plate and studwork with external brace of western interior of southern bay (A) above 19th century loft floor.
51. Detail of western roof-plate of southern bay (A) showing 16th century type edge-halved and bridled scarf joint.
52. Eastern interior of loft above southern bay (A) showing 19th century roof with original roof-plate & studwork beneath.
53. Original roof-plate and studwork with external braces of eastern interior of southern bay (A) above 19th century loft floor.

54. Southern side of internal loft partition between bays A and B showing apotropaic circles to right of scale rod.
55. Detail of incised apotropaic circles and 'daisy-wheels' to southern side of internal partition of loft in bay A.

Photographic Appendix 2 follows on pages 13-19

Appendix 2 (pp. 13-19): Selected Printed Photographs



Illus. 1. Hill House to which the barn belonged in the 19th century, seen from the market hill to the south-east. The building is listed at grade II and said to date from the early-18th century behind its early-19th century facade. The barn lies behind Sycamore Cottage at the entrance to Broad Street on the right.



Illus. 2. The site entrance (occupied by a red car) seen from Broad Street to the north-east, showing the walled yard of Sycamore Cottage (2 Broad Street) to the left and the entrance to Little Lane on the right. The roof of the barn is visible behind the car.



Illus. 3. The barn from the north-west showing its proximity to the rear gables of Hill House to the right. The glazed window and hatch of the northern gable to the left date are 19th century insertions and much of the weatherboarding was renewed in the 20th century. The small central doorway to the threshing bay (B) has been blocked.



Illus. 4. The metalled yard in front of the barn seen from the north, showing the eastern facade of the barn to the right with the fenced yard of Sycamore Cottage in the centre and the gables of Hill House in the rear. It is unclear to which of the adjoining properties the barn originally belonged: Sycamore cottage is not listed but its proportions suggest it may be a contemporary structure of *circa* 1600.



Illus. 5. The eastern facade of the barn showing the 20th century doors in the position of the original central entrance (bay B) with evidence of taller 19th century doors in the same position. The southern bay (A) to the left was converted into a separate shed with a first-floor granary in the 19th century but its present doors also date only from the 20th century. The pantiles are an alteration of the 19th century and probably replaced a steeply-pitched thatched roof. Sections of heavily tarred weatherboarding survive from the 19th century but most has been renewed.



Illus. 6. The two intact arch-braced open trusses seen from the northern gable, with the 19th century brick and studwork partition of the southern bay (A) in the rear. The 19th century roof retains its original reed fleaking beneath the tiles.



Illus. 7. The rear (western) interior of the two northern bays (B & C), showing the largely original timber framing with externally trenched wall braces. The horizontal mid-rail of the central bay (B) to the left is secondary, but the storey posts contain mortises for a lower predecessor that would have formed the lintel of a small rear door. The low height of these mortises (1.2 m or 4 ft above the present concrete floor) indicates the ground level has risen by as much as 0.6 m – or the walls have been reduced to the same extent.



Illus. 8. A section of 19th century brick flooring with a lateral drain exposed beneath the 20th century concrete floor in the north-western corner of the barn (i.e. in bay C, viewed from the east). This end of the barn have been used as a stable at some point.



Illus. 9. The eastern interior of the two northern bays (C & B) showing the position of the original entrance to the right and the intact studwork of bay C to the left (with narrow secondary studs nailed in between).



Illus. 10. A detail of the soffit (underside) of the eastern roof-plate in the northern bay (C) showing the tenon of a 16th century type edge-halved and bridled scarf joint. The halving is short at approximately 13 cm (5 ins) in length and the joint was secured by a bolted internal plate in the 19th century.



Illus. 11. A detail of the eastern roof-plate in the central bay (B) showing the cylindrical housing for the pin hinge of the original barn doors to the right. An identical feature lies to the left of the bay. The studwork beneath is modern.



Illus. 12. The interior from the east of the southern bay (A) showing its 19th century brick walls and ceiling with a 20th century loft stair to the right. The feet of the original studs are visible above the brickwork in the rear (western) wall. This area was initially open to the rest of the barn but has a 19th century brick floor and was probably converted into a vehicle or storage shed with a granary above.



Illus. 13. The eastern interior of the loft above the southern bay (A) showing the 19th century whitewashed roof and rebuilt southern gable with a blocked original (19th century) external door in the southern gable to the right. This door would have been reached by an external stair and suggests the loft operated as a granary. The apotropaic (i.e. evil-averting) symbols in illus. 14 below are on the internal plaster wall to the left.



Illus. 14. A detail of the large, boldly incised apotropaic interlocking circles and 'daisy-wheels' to the northern internal partition of the loft in bay A. Such features are often found in granaries and are believed to have been intended to protect the vital grain from harm.