

**Barn at
Elmer Farm,
Finningham, Suffolk
FNN 020**

Heritage Asset Assessment

OASIS ID: Suffolkc1-135661



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Barn at Elmer Farm, Walsham Road, Finningham, Suffolk

(TM 0459 7092)

Heritage Asset Assessment

This report provides a record and analysis at English Heritage (2006) Level 2 of a redundant barn in the curtilage of a grade II-listed former farmhouse. It has been prepared to a specification written by Edward Martin of Suffolk County Council's Archaeological Service dated 30th July 2012, and is intended to inform an application for conversion to Mid Suffolk District Council.

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 contains 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 4th October 2012.

Summary

Elmer Farm lies in open countryside on the southern side of the road to Walsham-le-Willows, approximately 2.5 km north-west of Finningham village. The former farmhouse is a grade II-listed thatched structure 50 m east of the barn, and a second listed building (previously the Black Horse Public House) lies in close proximity to the west. Until its enclosure to create new farmland in 1804 the site adjoined a large medieval green known as Allwood Green on the north, and a rare fragment of this still survives in the lawn between the farmhouse and the modern road. The weatherboarded barn is shown on the Finningham tithe map of 1839 and was probably built in or immediately after 1804 when the farm was almost doubled in size from 12 to 22 acres. Built in four bays it is of relatively narrow proportions at 4.9 m (16 ft), reflecting the modest scale of the owner-occupied holding, but is of particular historic interest as it retains an original stable at the eastern end of a three-bay threshing barn. Integral stables of this kind were once common in Suffolk but most were removed to enlarge the main barn in the late-19th and 20th centuries. The internal partition survives largely intact, along with the roughly hewn joists of a hay loft with a hay-drop against the partition and a central entrance in the external gable. The hay rack and manger have been removed. The lean-to rear porch adjoining the threshing bay is also unusual as it appears to have been provided only with a side door – but this almost certainly relates to the location of a pond shown on 19th century maps which would have obstructed a central doorway in the normal position. A series of sheds were added to the southern elevation in the mid-19th century to form a cattle yard, but these were much altered or rebuilt in the 20th century and subsequently demolished. With the exception of its roof, which was replaced in the 20th century and covered with corrugated iron, the timber frame is unusually complete, retaining all four arch-braces to its tie-beams, and the building is a good example of a 'Napoleonic' barn built in response to the high price of grain during the French wars and the resulting enclosure of Allwood Green. As such it is of regional importance to the history of Suffolk's landscape and agriculture, but given the loss of its roof is unlikely to meet the strict English Heritage criteria for listing in its own right.

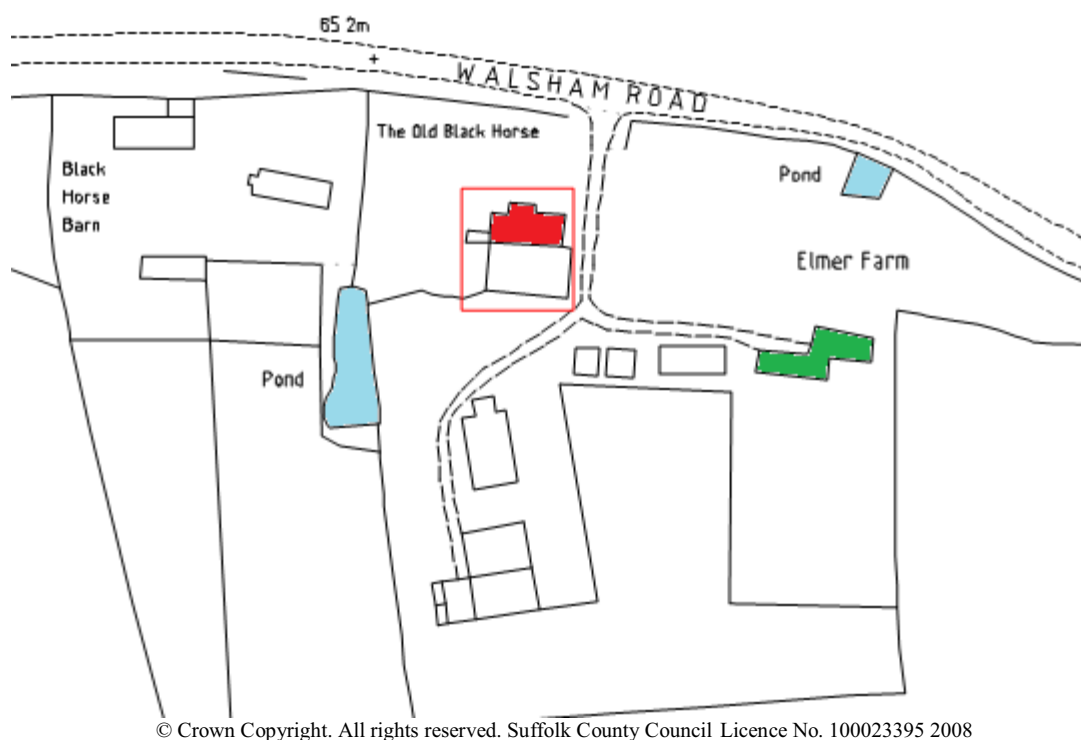


Figure 1
Modern Ordnance Survey
 Showing the barn in red and the grade II-listed former farmhouse in green.
 See figure 7 for more detail.

Documentary and Cartographic Evidence

Elmer Farm lies in open arable countryside on the southern side of the road to Walsham-le-Willows, approximately 2.5 km north-west of Finningham village. The site consists of a timber-framed and weatherboarded barn (the subject of this report) adjoining the entrance from Walsham Road, a grade II-listed 1.5 storied timber-framed, rendered and thatched former farmhouse 50 m to the east and a series of 20th century outbuildings to the south. The farmhouse is a typical early-17th century structure of modest proportions (now much extended) with a central hall flanked by a high-end chimney and parlour to the east and a service bay to the west. The barn is slightly closer to the neighbouring house on the west: a more substantial grade II-listed thatched building which is dated in the English Heritage schedule to the late-16th century and until recently operated as the Black Horse Public House.

The site formerly adjoined the southern edge of Allwood Green, a large medieval common of more than one square kilometre, as shown on Hodkinson's County map of 1783 (figure 2). Many such greens existed in Suffolk during the Middle Ages, often on heavy clay land at parish margins, and are thought to have been created by the clearance of the last vestiges of ancient wildwood in the 12th and 13th centuries. Local farmers probably retained the common rights they had enjoyed in the woodland when it became pasture through over grazing or clear-felling, and the name of Allwood Green lends support to this hypothesis. A supposed early medieval ringwork or moated mound in the middle of the green, some 500 m north of Elmer Farm, may indicated the earlier site of a windmill shown slightly to the east in 1783. Medieval post mills were often anchored in mounds surrounded by circular ditches, but alternative explanations include a stronghold within the wood.



Figure 2. A detail of Hodskinson's Map of Suffolk in 1783, showing Elmer Farm and the Black Horse PH as a cluster of buildings adjoining a slight central bulge in the southern edge of Allwood Green. A windmill lies a short distance from the medieval ringwork.

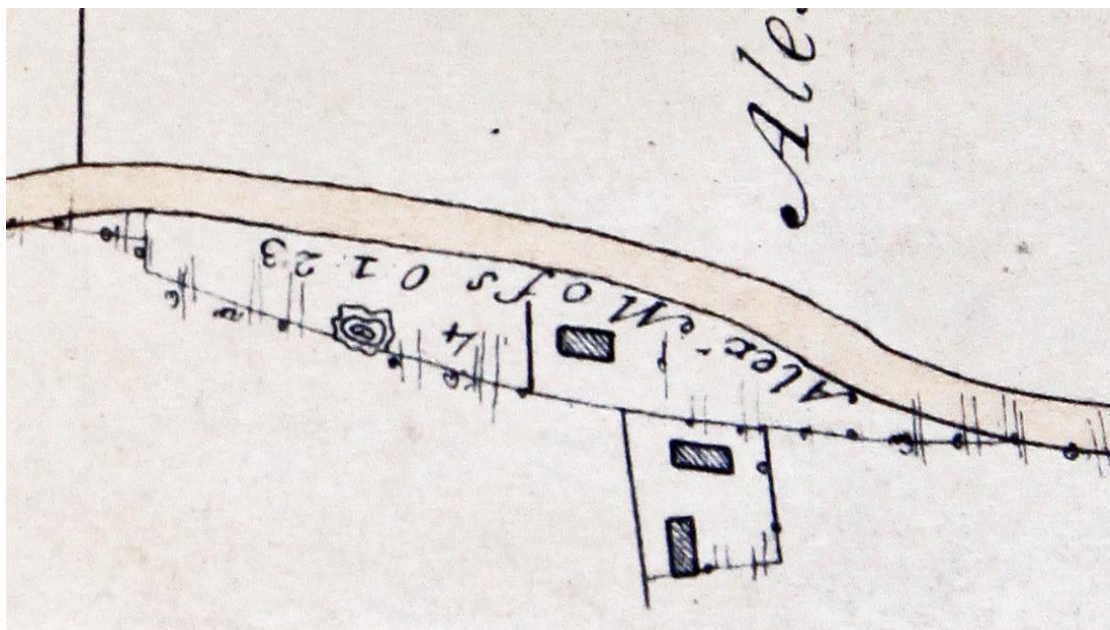


Figure 3. The 1804 enclosure map of Finningham (SRO 150/1/2.2). The map shows the remaining strip of Allwood Green between the Walsham road to the north and its medieval boundary to the south. Elmer Farmhouse and a detached outbuilding lie to the right, but the Black Horse and other buildings south of the green's margin are not depicted and it is therefore unclear whether the present barn existed at this time. The additional structure on the green had been demolished by 1839 (figure 4).



Figure 4. The Finningham tithe map of 1839 (SRO). Elmer farmhouse and its detached rear outbuilding had not altered since 1834 (plot 307) but the structure on the former green (308) had been demolished and the present barn is shown in plot 309. The late-16th century Black Horse PH (then a farm of 35 acres) lies in plot 314 to the west, and the fields 324-326 represent the newly enclosed arable land belonging to Elmer Farm.

A high proportion of the region's greens were enclosed during the last quarter of the 18th century and the first quarter of the 19th in response to the new fashion for agricultural efficiency and the high price of grain during the Napoleonic wars (when grain imports were severely restricted). Allwood Green was no exception, and was converted into arable fields in 1804 when an enclosure map was drawn up to record the new 'allotments'. A little under 10 acres immediately opposite Elmer Farm was awarded to its then owner, Alexander Moss, along with almost half an acre that had represented a slight irregularity in the green's southern boundary and was divided from the rest by the course of the Walsham road (plot 308). This fragment now forms the front lawn of Elmer farmhouse and is a rare survivor of the medieval landscape. Moss's farm amounted to a modest but respectable 22.5 acres at the time of the tithe survey in 1839 and was evidently almost doubled in size by the green's enclosure. It is highly likely that he would have required a new barn to cope with this addition, but it is impossible to say whether or not the present structure existed in 1804 as the enclosure map failed to show any buildings beyond the margin of the green – including those belonging to the Black Horse which in 1839 was a tenanted farm of 35 acres. Elmer Farmhouse was shown, however, along with an outbuilding at right-angles to the rear (south), presumably as it belonged to an individual concerned in the process documented by the survey. An additional building lay on the green to the north-west of the house, but this had disappeared by 1839 (figure 4) and it is tempting to suggest it represented an earlier barn or stable which the present barn replaced in or soon after 1804. The tithe apportionment fails to name the individual fields and describes the house only as 'homestead', but identifies the former green (308) as an orchard with three 'meadows' (309, 312 and 313) to the south. The barn is not specifically mentioned, and is depicted with a simple rectangular outline omitting its northern lean-to porch which may have been disguised by additional lean-to sheds or (more probably) was too small for the cartographer to include.

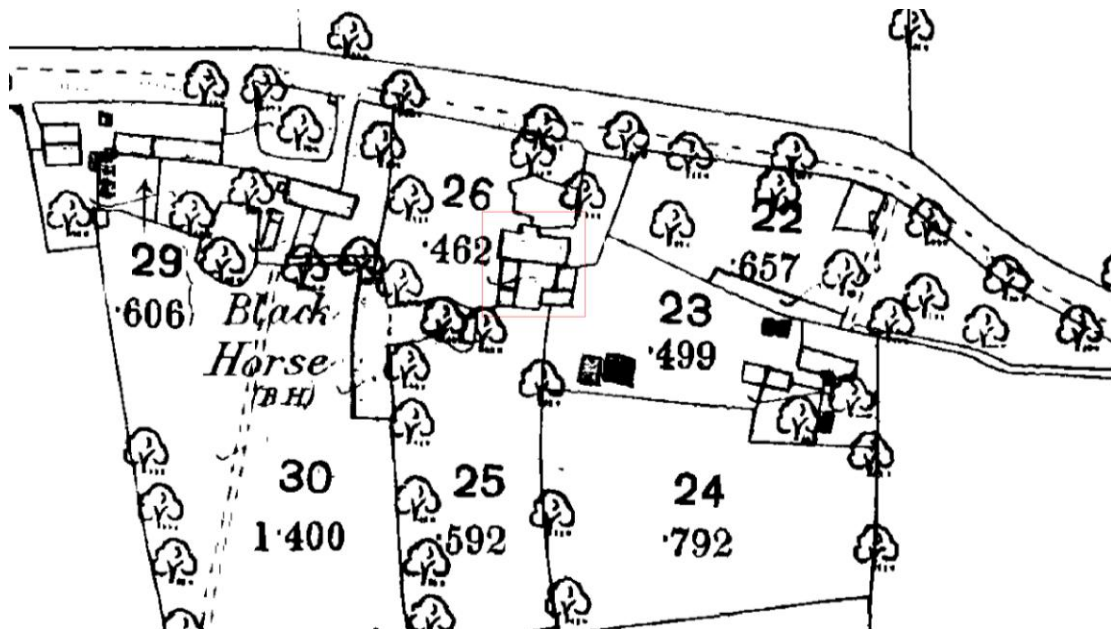


Figure 5. First Edition 25 inch Ordnance Survey of 1886, showing the barn in the centre with its northern porch adjoining a pond and a new series of sheds forming a yard to the south. The stable door in the barn's eastern gable is linked to the road by a small paddock beside the pond – the presence of which probably explains the absence of a northern door in the rear porch.

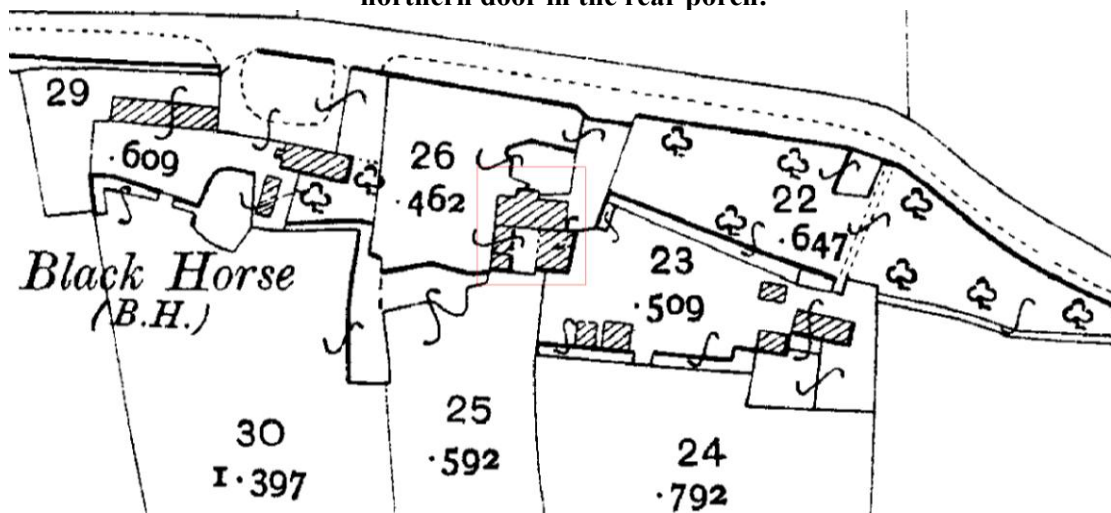


Figure 6. The Second Edition 25 inch Ordnance Survey of 1904. The shed to the east of the yard adjoining the barn had been enlarged since 1886 and the broken line of its western elevation indicates an open-sided cattle shelter-shed.

By the time of the highly detailed 25 inch Ordnance Survey of 1886 the barn was clearly depicted with its northern porch in close proximity to a large pond – which explains the unusual absence of a central rear door to the threshing floor (figure 5). A series of sheds had been added to the southern elevation and a small paddock adjoining the pond linked the stable in the barn's eastern bay to the Walsham road. Most local barns were similarly provided with southern sheds to form cattle yards during the 1850s and 60s as grain prices fell and mixed animal husbandry replaced the intensive cereal farming of the early-19th century. The eastern shed had been enlarged by 1904 (figure 6) and was shown as a shelter-shed with an open-sided eastern elevation, but it is unclear how much of this survived in 1974 (illus. 1 below) and how much had been rebuilt in the 20th century. Only a slight declivity now marks the site of the pond.

Building Analysis

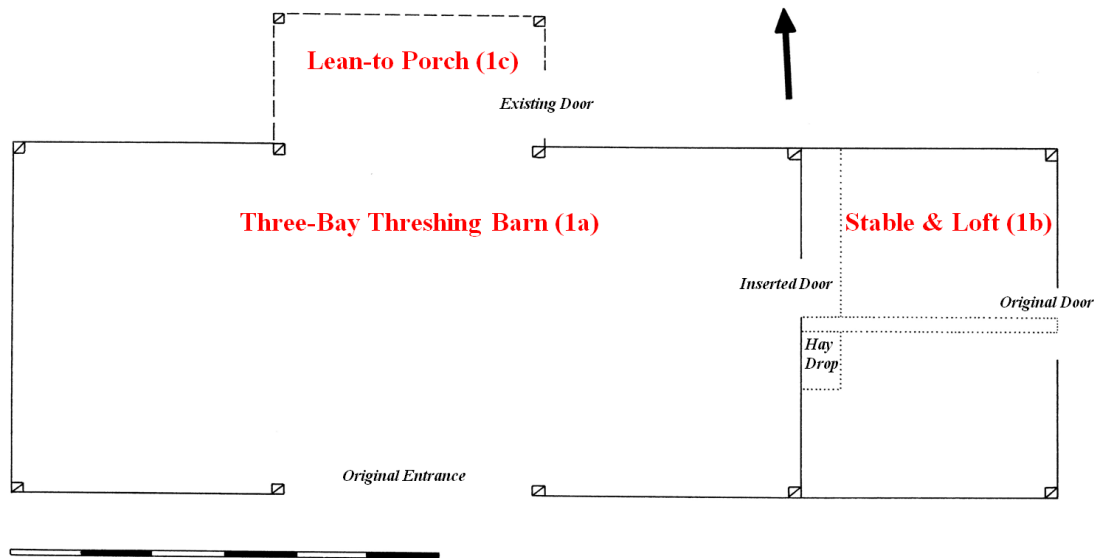


Figure 7
Block plan of the barn identifying each area with a number for ease of reference in the text and photographic record.
Scale in metres.

Threshing Barn with Integral Stable and loft, circa 1804

Proportions, Structure and Date

The barn at Elmer Farm is a timber-framed and weatherboarded structure in four bays on an approximately east-west axis which extends to 14.6 m in length by 4.9 m in total width (48 ft by 16 ft). The walls rise to 3.2 m (10.5 ft) at their roof-plates above the internal concrete floor and incorporate a brick plinth of 0.75 m which contains a high proportion of re-used brick of 16th or 17th century appearance laid in Flemish bond. The wall studs are tenoned and pegged to the plates and ground sills, but nailed to the diagonal primary braces which are themselves tenoned and pegged to the storey posts and sills. The tie-beams of the open trusses flanking the threshing bay are arch-braced to the jowled storey posts, with the braces set flush to their inner edges (facing the threshing bay) and neatly incised with carpenters' numerals. The present corrugated iron roof structure is a mid-20th century softwood replacement of the original, which would almost certainly have been steeply pitched for thatch. These carpentry features are consistent with a late-18th or early-19th century origin and the barn is highly likely to have been built in conjunction with the enclosure of Allwood Green in 1804 which doubled the size of the farm.

Original Layout and Alterations

The barn is divided by an original internal partition of boarded studwork into two compartments: a three-bay threshing barn with a central entrance to the west (1a) and a single-bay stable with a hay loft to the east (1b). The threshing barn extends to a total of 10.1 m (36 ft) in length and the stable to 3.5 m (11.75 ft). There is no trace of a threshing floor but evidence may survive beneath the 20th century concrete. The southern entrance doors have also been lost and the roof-plate above renewed in 20th century softwood but its position is not in doubt as the intact plate in the opposite wall preserves a pair of original braces linking it to the adjoining storey posts; these would have obstructed the main entrance, and are invariably found in rear elevations adjoining a porch. Lean-to rear porches of the kind found here (1c)

were designed to extend the length of the threshing floor rather than to shelter an entrance, but usually possess small doors opposite the main entrance to create a through-draught for threshing and winnowing. Vehicle thoroughfares were rarely provided until the advent of mechanical threshing in the mid and late-19th century. In this instance the porch walls have been completely rebuilt in 20th century cement block-work, but its roof-plate contains an uninterrupted series of mortise pegs that suggests the present eastern side-door is an original feature. The absence of a door in the normal position can be explained by its close proximity to a large pond as shown on the historic Ordnance Surveys above. This is an unusual and distinctive feature of the building.

The stable was entered by a central door in its eastern gable and was initially linked to the Walsham road by a narrow paddock adjoining the horse pond. This door still exists although a secondary door now allows access from the threshing barn. The sill beams and roof-plates, which contain face-halved and bladed scarf joints, continue through the junction between the two compartments and the stable is undoubtedly original to the fabric; a step in the external northern plinth which might suggest otherwise appears to have been caused by the partial rebuilding of plinth in the building's north-eastern corner. The original hay loft ceiling consists of roughly hewn joists lodged on a central axial joist and supported by clamps (rails) nailed and pegged to the side elevations. It contains a hay-drop of 0.55 m in width (22 ins) against the internal partition as shown in figure 7 (i.e. an aperture to allow hay from the loft to be dropped into the hay rack attached to the wall beneath). The hay-drop has been partly blocked by secondary floorboards, but original boards to the south indicate that it did not extend the full width of the stable, terminating 1.5 m (5 ft) from the southern wall. The remains of an internal loft ladder can still be seen at the same end of the eastern gable, and it seems probable that a boarded partition formed a small tack room at this end of the space. There is no longer any trace of this partition, and the rack and manger have also been removed. Despite these losses the stable is unusually intact as most were removed in the late-19th and 20th centuries to increase the size of the main barn.

The internal partition against the threshing barn now terminates at the tie-beam, but initially continued into the missing roof as the tie-beam contains a series of un-pegged stud mortises in its upper surface. There is no evidence of an external loft loading-hatch, but one may have existed in the absent roof gable. The tie-beam of the same gable contains a series of horizontal dowel holes that penetrate the timber and may have attached an external pentice board or a canopy of some form above the stable's entrance. The holes respect the length of the timber and the width of the building and there is nothing to suggest the tie-beam has been re-used from elsewhere (such as a ladder or hay rack) – but this is an unusual feature. The external tarred weatherboarding consists of narrow softwood and appears to have been replaced in the 20th century. Its southern elevation bears the scars of the two wide sheds shown on the aerial photograph of 1974 (illus. 1 below), but in their final form these are unlikely to have pre-dated the mid-20th century. An area of charred timber in the south-eastern corner of the threshing barn bears witness to a localised fire that post-dated the new roof, but in general the framing is exceptionally complete.

Historic Significance

The barn at Elmer Farm is of considerable historic significance as a good 'Napoleonic' barn associated with the enclosure of the adjoining Allwood Green in 1804 – which doubled the size of the farm. The integral stable is a typical East Anglian feature, rarely found elsewhere, and the building is of importance to the history of Suffolk's landscape and the development of its agriculture. Although the building's wall fabric, internal partition and hay loft survive unusually intact, the loss of its roof means that it is unlikely to meet the strict English Heritage criteria for listing in its own right.

Appendix 1 (on accompanying CD): Full Photographic Record

Descriptions of Photographs in Appendix 1

Photograph no.

1. Aerial view of site from north-east in 1974 showing the barn to the right, Elmer farmhouse left & the green in foreground.
2. Aerial view of the barn from north-east in 1974 showing the demolished single-storied sheds to the south.
3. General view of site from Walsham Road to east showing barn to left & site of Allwood Green to right.
4. Former site of Allwood Green from site entrance to west showing Cromwell's Plantation concealing medieval ringwork to right.
5. Barn from site entrance to north showing remnant of Allwood Green to right.
6. General view of site from south-west showing barn to left and grade II-listed former farmhouse to right.
7. General view of site from remnant of Allwood Green to east showing barn in centre rear & listed 17th century farmhouse to left.
8. Remnant of Allwood Green from east showing roadside pond to right, house to left & barn in centre rear.
9. Northern exterior showing step in brick plinth to left and lean-to porch (1c) to right.
10. Northern exterior showing step in brick plinth corresponding to internal stable partition.
11. Northern exterior from east showing side door in cement-block lean-to porch (1c) with 20th century weatherboarding to left.
12. Northern exterior from west showing cement-block fabric of lean-to porch (1c) to left & modern weatherboarding to barn.
13. Western external gable showing 20th century deal weatherboarding and failing brick plinth with pond declivity to left.
14. Southern exterior showing 20th century cladding with roof scars of demolished sheds & entrance in central bay.
15. Southern exterior of brick plinth showing re-used bricks and recent patch repair.
16. Eastern external gable showing original stable door respected by brickwork of rebuilt plinth to right.
17. General internal view of the barn from the west showing the intact arch-braces of the entrance bay.

18. General internal view of the barn from the east showing the intact arch-braces of the entrance bay & lean-to rear porch (1c).
19. The late-20th century softwood roof structure seen from the west.
20. Internal eastern gable of the threshing barn (1a) showing the later door to the stable (1b) cutting a wall brace.
21. Detail of the north-eastern corner of the threshing barn (1a) showing the jowled post, pegged primary wall braces & scarf joint.
22. Detail of the south-eastern corner of the threshing barn (1a) showing evidence of fire damage affecting modern roof.
23. Southern interior of eastern bay of threshing barn (1a) showing charred framing to left and partly renewed post to right.
24. Detail of southern storey post to east of entrance showing waney edge & bark with new timber below brace.
25. Western bay of barn showing intact arch-braced tie-beam with incised carpenters' numerals in foreground.
26. Detail from east of incised numeral II to southern arch-brace of tie-beam to west of entrance bay.
27. Detail from east of incised numeral III to northern arch-brace of tie-beam to west of entrance bay.
28. Renewed southern roof-plate of entrance bay of threshing barn (1a) with iron brackets for bar of missing doors.
29. Southern interior of threshing barn (1a) showing entrance in central bay.
30. Southern interior of western bay of threshing barn (1a) showing internal brick wall of 20th century grain bin.
31. Internal western gable showing intact wall framing with internal brick wall of 20th century grain bins.
32. Northern interior of western bay showing face-halved and bladed scarf joint in roof-plate to right.
33. Detail of face-halved and bladed scarf joint in northern roof-plate of western bay.
34. Northern interior of threshing barn (1a) showing braced roof-plate adjoining central lean-to porch (1c).
35. Northern roof-plate adjoining lean-to porch (1c) showing original tenoned & pegged braces from storey posts.
36. Northern interior of eastern bay showing primary braces tenoned and pegged to ground sill.

37. Detail of junction between primary wall braces and northern ground sill of eastern bay showing pegged mortises.
38. Detail of northern roof-plate of eastern bay showing face-halved and bridge scarf joint with waney jowl of storey post to left.
39. Northern interior of lean-to porch (1c) showing 20th century block-work concealing roof-plate.
40. Eastern side-wall of lean-to porch (1c) showing modern door cutting tie-beam.
41. Western side-wall of lean-to porch (1c) showing tie-beam lapped & nailed to storey post of barn to left.
42. Eastern interior of stable (1b) showing original central door respected by wall framing.
43. Southern interior of stable (1b) showing remains of loft ladder to left & cladding of internal partition to barn (1a) to right.
44. Detail of nailed loft ladder in south-eastern internal corner of stable (1b) showing one rung extant.
45. Interior of stable (1b) from east showing position of manger beneath hay drop & later door to barn (1a).
46. Northern interior of stable (1b) showing clamp supporting ceiling joists & hay drop to left.
47. Original ceiling joists of stable (1b) from south showing hay drop against internal partition to left.
48. Original ceiling joists of stable (1b) from north showing partly blocked partial hay drop against internal partition to right.
49. Original rough-wood ceiling joists lodged on axial joists of stable (1b) seen from north-western corner with hay drop to right.
50. Hay loft above stable (1b) from west showing gable tie-beam with dowel holes possibly to secure an external pentice board.
51. Northern interior of hay loft above stable (1b) showing integral roof-plate with that of barn (1a).
52. Southern interior of hay loft above stable (1b) showing face-halved & bladed scarf joist to right.
53. Internal south-eastern corner of hay loft above stable (1b) showing ladder trap & dowel holes in gable tie-beam.
54. Internal north-eastern corner of hay loft above stable (1b) showing unusual dowel holes in gable tie-beam to right.

Photographic Appendix 2 follows on pp. 11-16

Appendix 2 (pp. 11-16): Selected Printed Photographs



Illus. 1. A 1974 aerial view of the site from the north-east showing the barn to the right, the grade II-listed thatched 17th century former farmhouse to the left and the remains of the medieval Allwood Green in the foreground. The two single-storied 20th century sheds adjoining the barn's southern elevation have since been demolished.



Illus. 2. The northern exterior of the barn from the remains of Allwood Green showing its corrugated iron roof, 20th century weatherboarding and cement-block lean-to porch (1c) with a modern door in its eastern side-elevation.



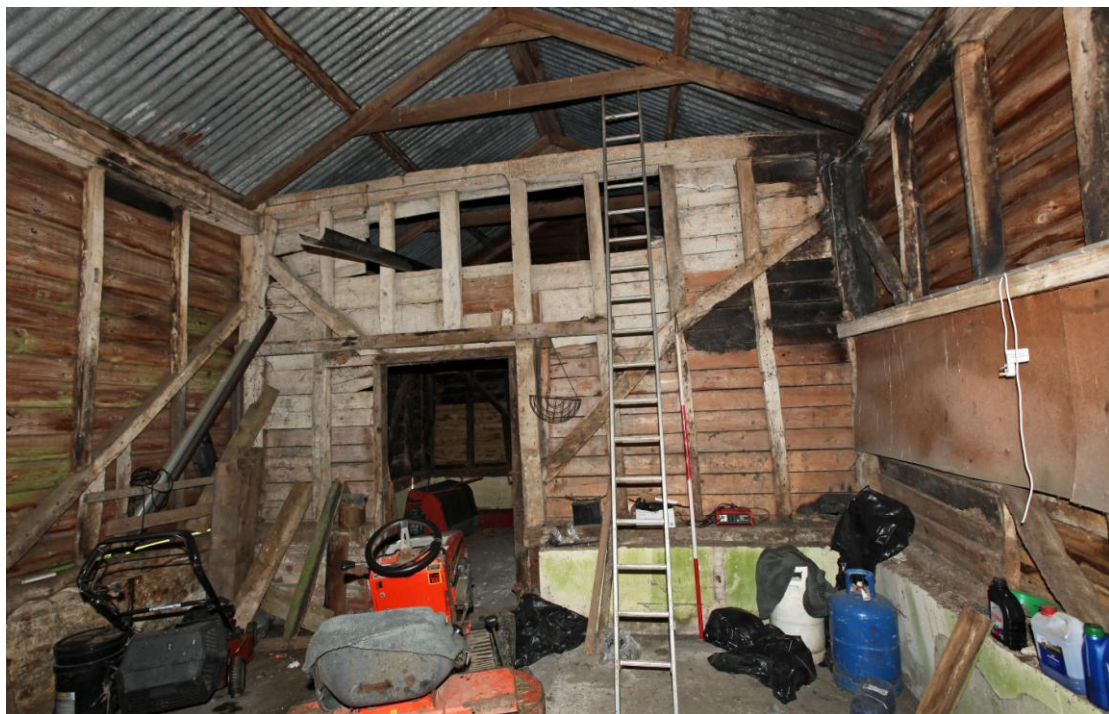
Illus. 3. The southern exterior bearing the roof scars of the two demolished 20th century sheds shown in illus. 1 above with the original entrance in the central bay of the threshing barn (1a) to the left (lacking its doors).



Illus. 4. The eastern external gable showing the original entrance to the stable (1b) which is respected by the rebuilt brick plinth to the right. The original plinth to the left is cement-rendered and consists largely of re-used 16th and 17th century bricks.



Illus. 5. A general view of the three-bay threshing barn (1a) from the west showing its intact tie-beam braces and mid-20th century softwood roof structure. The lean-to rear porch (1c) adjoins the central bay to the left but the threshing floor has been replaced or covered by concrete. The roof-plate above the original southern entrance to the right was replaced in the 20th century.



Illus. 6. The internal eastern gable of the threshing barn (1a) showing the later door to the stable (1b) which interrupts a tenoned and pegged diagonal wall brace. The blackened timbers to the right are charred due to a recent localised fire which affected the 20th century roof. The tie-beam contains un-pegged mortises in its upper surface for a full-height partition between the barn and hay loft.



Illus. 7. The southern interior of the threshing barn (1a) showing the original entrance in the central bay (lacking its doors and roof-plate) with the brick internal walls of a 20th century grain bin in the western bay to the right. The wall framing survives largely intact with primary braces that are tenoned and pegged to the jowled storey posts and ground sills.



Illus. 8. A detail of the northern roof-plate of the threshing barn (1a) adjoining its central lean-to porch (1c), showing the original tenoned & pegged braces from the storey posts. These braces demonstrate that a porch must have existed here from the outset, although the present structure has been rebuilt in cement block-work and its roof-plate (which may be a re-used timber) contains no evidence of a central door.



Illus. 9. The interior of the original stable bay (1b) from the east, showing the position of the missing manger and hay rack beneath the partial hay drop adjoining the internal partition against the threshing barn (1a) – now cut by a later connecting door.



Illus. 10. The northern interior of the stable (1b) showing its original framing and the clamp (rail) which supports the ends of the original ceiling joists with the hay drop (aperture in ceiling) to the left.



Illus. 11. The original ceiling joists of the stable (1b) from the north, showing the partly blocked hay drop above the missing hay rack against the internal partition to the right. The whitewashed floorboards adjoining the southern elevation appear to be original, and the hay drop did not span the entire width of the building. The original tapered strut to the right is one of two that survive.



Illus. 12. The internal north-eastern corner of the hay loft above the stable (1b) showing the unusual series of dowel holes in the tie-beam of the eastern gable to the right. These penetrate the timber and may have been intended to secure an external pentice board or canopy above the stable's entrance. There is nothing to suggest the timber is re-used.