

**Barn at
Potash Farm,
Kenton, Suffolk
KNN 019**

Heritage Asset Assessment

OASIS ID: Suffolkc1-135958



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October 2012

Barn at Potash Farm, Eye Road, Kenton, Suffolk

(TM 190 667)

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 28th March 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 60 digital images of 21 megapixels (Appendix 1), but also contains 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 4th October 2012.

Summary

Potash Farm adjoins the eastern side of the Eye Road at the northern edge of Kenton parish and is the first property in the village street when approaching from this direction. The former farmhouse is a grade II-listed building with a large and imposing late-Georgian red-brick facade and the barn lies on the road just 11 m to the north. At the time of the 1839 Kenton tithe survey the farm was an owner-occupied holding with a modest 21.5 acres of arable land in the parish, but given the scale of the house and barn it is likely that more lay across the nearby boundary with Bedingfield. The timber-framed barn consists of two thatched and weatherboarded wings adjoining corner-to-corner at right-angles to create a highly distinctive and picturesque external appearance that forms a landmark at the entrance to the village and is accordingly of considerable local significance. This unusual configuration was caused by the mid-20th century demolition of the central and northern bays of a standard three-bay threshing barn, leaving only its large porch and southern bay extant. The barn dated from the late-18th or early-19th century and was broadly contemporary with the house facade, while the porch was added a few years later. The present southern wing also includes a stable with a hay loft that was added to the barn's southern gable before 1839, along with a pantiled lean-to shed – both features being shown on the tithe map. The resulting fragment contains no fewer than four late-18th and early-19th century timber frames of different phases, and is accordingly of some historic significance as it illustrates the often complex development of East Anglian farm buildings. When the threshing bay was demolished it was replaced by a small corrugated iron lean-to shed attached to the porch, but this is not visible from the road. The structure was altered again as part of a heavy restoration and partial conversion during the last quarter of the 20th century which stripped the interior of much historic fabric and character. Most of the external weatherboarding dates only from this period, and incorporates a number of incongruous glazed windows that are currently screened by bushes. As a result of these changes, and despite its age and traditional appearance, the building is unlikely to meet the English Heritage criteria for listing in its own right.

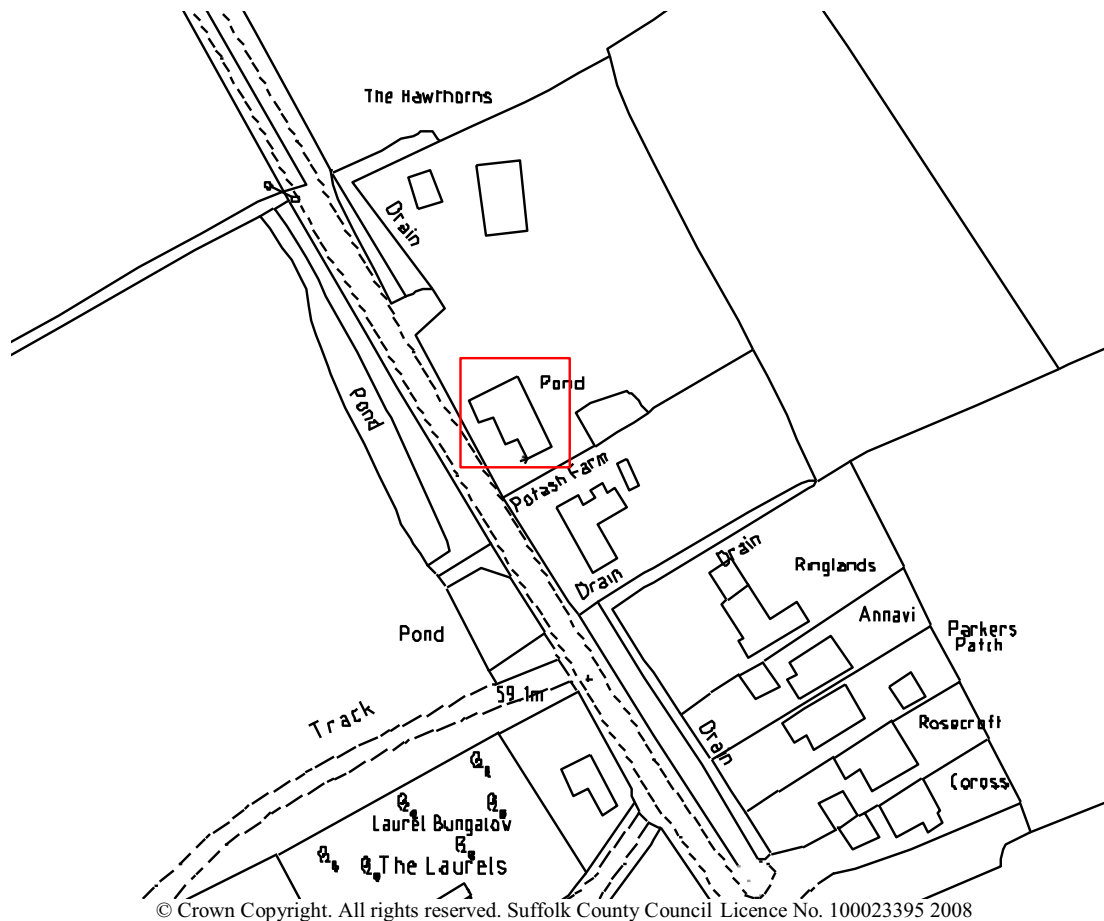


Figure 1
Modern Ordnance Survey
Enclosing the barn in red and showing the grade II-listed farmhouse immediately to the south. The boundary with Bedingfield parish lies at the northern end of the linear pond opposite the barn. See figure 5 for more detail.

Documentary and Cartographic Evidence

Potash Farm adjoins the eastern side of the Eye Road at the northern edge of Kenton parish and is the first visible house in the village street when approaching from this direction. Given the unusual and imposing facades of the former farmhouse and the barn, both of which adjoin the road, the property makes an important contribution to the architectural character of the settlement. The house is reported to contain a substantial timber frame of the 17th century or before, but is dated to *circa* 1790 in the Schedule of Listed Buildings on the basis of its fine late-Georgian red-brick exterior (illus. 1 below). It was not inspected for the purpose of this report. The barn is not listed separately but lies within the curtilage of the house, just 11 m (37 ft) to the north.

At the time of the 1839 Kenton tithe survey Potash Farm was owned and occupied by John Clarke, with a modest 21.5 acres of arable land in the parish. Given the large scale of the house it is likely that more land lay across the boundary with Bedingfield parish which adjoined 'Great Potash Field' on the north, although Clarke may have supplemented his income by producing potash. The site was described in the schedule as 'farmhouse, yards, garden and premises' (plot 17 in figure 2), with a pigstye (i.e. a paddock) to the north (18) and 'Potash Field' on the east.



Figure 2. Potash Farm as depicted on the Kenton tithe map of 1839. The barn is shown with much the same distinctive outline as today but extending further to the north. The corner of Bedingfield parish is marked by a dotted line in the top left-hand corner.

The layout of the site has remained unusually constant since 1839, when the tithe map depicted the barn with much the same outline as it retains today. The western entrance porch (structure 1 in figure 5) was clearly shown, along with the thatched southern range (2 & 3) and the pantiled lean-to shed in their return angle (4). The main barn to the east of the porch appeared wider than at present, and another range projected to the north. Tithe surveys were not always accurate in every detail, unlike the 25 inch Ordnance Survey of 1885 which shows a similar but subtly different profile (figure 3). The porch, southern range and pantiled lean-to are all as they remain, but an extra bay extends to the north of the porch with a separate shed beyond, and a smaller structure reflects the porch to the rear (east). This is fully consistent with the building's probable origin as a three-bay threshing barn entered by a gabled western porch with a slightly shorter gabled or lean-to porch on the east. The additional shed to the north may have been a cow-shed serving the adjoining pasture and replacing the detached building shown in 1839. The proximity of the farm pond to the south suggests the southern end of the complex (3) operated as a stable as the structural evidence of an original loft also suggests; (stables usually lay in close proximity to horse ponds). The situation was unchanged in 1904 (figure 4), apart from a small additional shed in the angle of the porch and the (now missing) northern bay of the threshing barn. This shed probably formed a small granary of a type often seen elsewhere and explains the evidence for a blocked access door at the eastern end of the porch's northern wall. A larger scale map of 1957 appears to show the same outline but may not have been fully re-surveyed, while the northern range had disappeared by the time of the new 25 inch Ordnance Survey of 1976 (not included) which illustrates the present truncated arrangement. The threshing bay, northern bay and rear porch of the 19th century barn seem to have been demolished in the mid-20th century, but the relatively recent appearance of much of the external weatherboarding and internal chipboard cladding indicates another major refurbishment amounting to a partial conversion by a previous owner in the 1970s or 1980s.

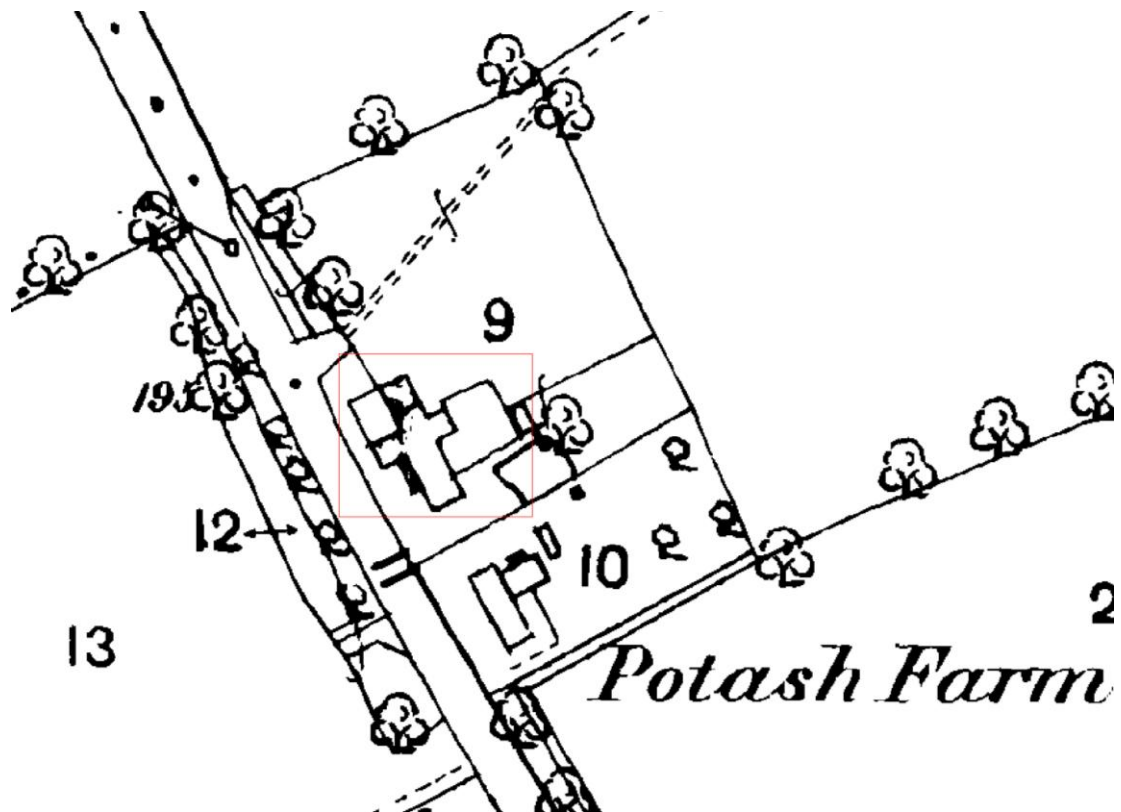


Figure 3. First Edition 25 inch Ordnance Survey of 1885. The barn appears to possess a typical cross-shaped profile with an additional bay to the north and a rear porch to the east. An additional structure projected into the northern paddock and may have been a single-storied cow-shed.

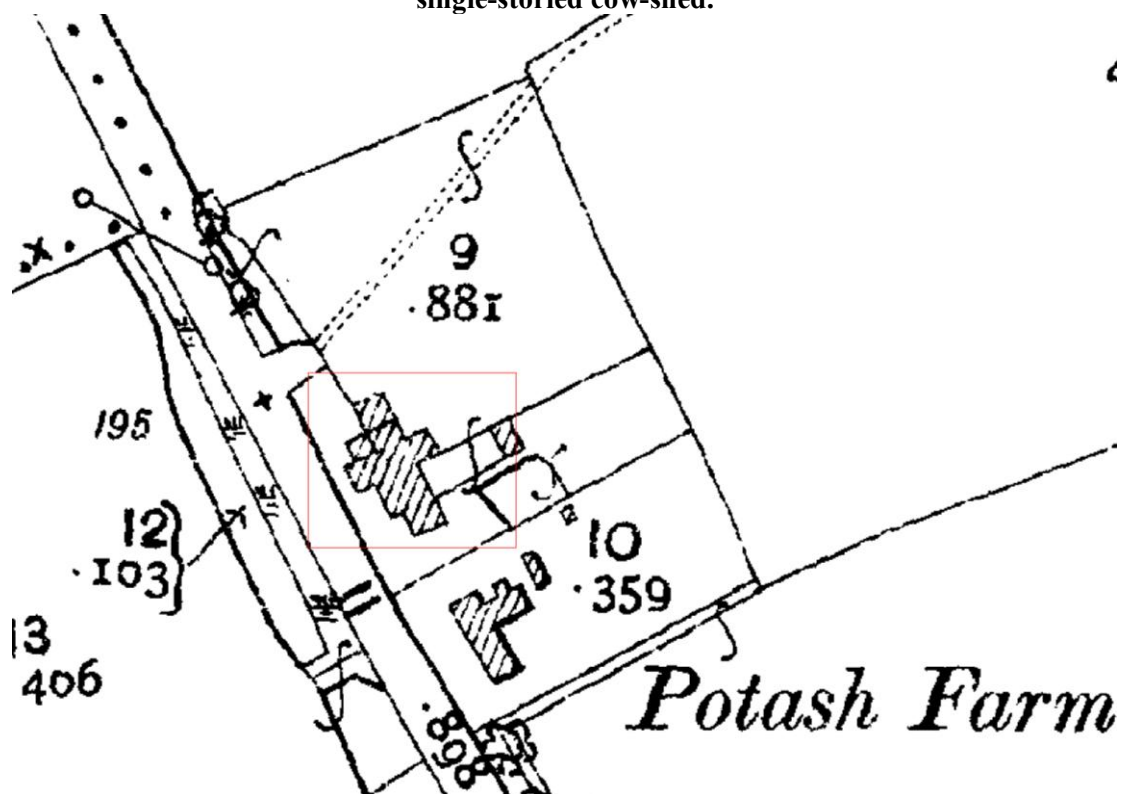


Figure 4. The Second Edition 25 inch Ordnance Survey of 1904, showing a new small shed in the angle of the present porch and the now-demolished northern bay of the barn.

Building Analysis

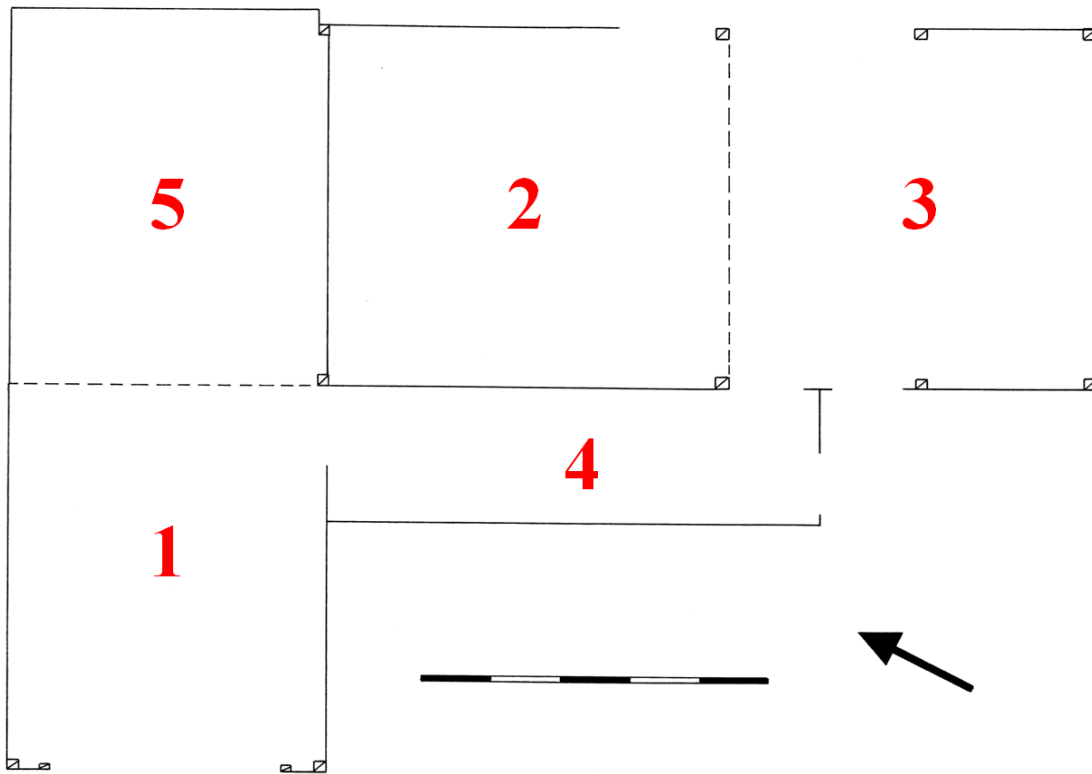


Figure 5

Block plan of the barn identifying each component structure with a number for ease of reference in the text and photographic record.

Areas 1 & 5 form a single space, as do areas 2 and 3.

Not fully surveyed. Scale in metres.

Key

1. An early-19th century timber-framed, weatherboarded and thatched barn porch with good late-19th century half-hung doors to the west. Probably *circa* 1830 and shown on the tithe map of 1839. Intact clasped-purlin roof with nailed collars, tenoned but un-pegged studs interrupted by straight primary braces that are pegged to the wall posts. Evidence of a blocked door at the eastern end of the northern elevation. The framing largely intact but the weatherboarding renewed in the late-20th century when glazed windows were inserted to the south.
2. A single surviving bay of a late-18th or early-19th century timber-framed, weatherboarded and thatched barn (probably of three bays) originally entered by the porch (1). Divided by a later studwork partition from the site of its threshing floor (now occupied by a 20th century lean-to shed, 5). The bolted knee-braces of the former open truss are probably original but the tie-beam is a replacement. The wall studs are tenoned and pegged to the roof plates but concealed by late-20th century boarding beneath an inserted 20th century ceiling. Good original unpainted weatherboarding to the western exterior (protected within the lean-to shed, 4) with some tarred boarding to the east but the lower storey now with 20th century inserted glazed windows and door. Now open to the former stable (3) on the ground floor. The original gable tie-beam with empty stud mortises remains *in situ* in the loft. Some rafters of the clasped-purlin roof

are intact to the east but the collars have been removed and many timbers renewed in late-20th century softwood. The rest of the barn was demolished in the mid-20th century, but part of the western roof-plate still projects by approximately 1.2 m into the porch (1).

3. An early to mid-19th century timber-framed, weatherboarded and thatched structure built as an extension to the southern gable of the threshing barn. Probably designed as a stable with a hay loft but the ceiling rebuilt in the 20th century (with the exception of one binding joist) and the ground-floor walls either concealed by modern boarding or destroyed by the insertion of vehicle doors and glazed windows in the 20th century. The presence of separate doors in the eastern elevation indicates the lower storey was until very recently divided from the southern bay of the barn (2) but they are now united. The roof gable contains a 19th century loft loading door but the framing beneath the tie-beam has been replaced in softwood and the front (western) side of the roof has also been rebuilt. The original rafters with two purlins survive to the east but the collars have been lost. The original studs are tenoned but not pegged to the roof-plates, in contrast to the adjoining barn, and are interrupted by curved primary braces nailed to the wall posts.
4. A 19th century timber-framed and weatherboarded shed with a pantiled roof. Internally linked to both the porch (1) and stable (3) and possibly designed as a grain store and/or tack room. The weatherboarding was renewed in the 20th century when glazed windows were inserted into the western elevation. The interior preserves the unpainted original weatherboarding of the barn.
5. A mid-20th century single-storied shed with a corrugated iron roof forming a lean-to against the eastern gable of the porch (1) and replacing the 19th century barn to which the porch gave access. Open internally to the porch with concrete floors throughout, and entered by sliding glazed doors to the east. Probably built as a vehicle shed or workshop.

Development

At first sight the barn at Potash Farm could be mistaken for a single timber-framed structure with uniform weatherboarding and thatch. Its two wings, adjoining each other corner-to-corner at right-angles, create a highly distinctive and picturesque appearance that defines the northern entrance to the linear village of Kenton, while the less traditional glazed windows of a partial conversion in the 1970s or 1980s are obscured by vegetation. In fact, however, the two thatched wings consist of three phases of construction, all with different types of framing as detailed above, although all date from a short period between the end of the 18th century and the tithe map of 1839.

The original building was almost certainly a typical Suffolk barn of three bays with a central threshing floor on an approximately north-south axis (parallel to the road). The framing of its remaining southern bay (2) consists of narrow studs that are fully pegged and tenoned to the roof-plates with no evidence of wall braces in the exposed fabric above the inserted 20th century ceiling. Braces may, however, lie hidden behind the modern internal boarding of the lower storey. This would normally indicate a date in the 18th century but the storey posts lack jowls and were linked to the (replaced) tie-beam against the threshing bay by bolted knee-braces (in a manner more typical of the early-19th century) so an origin at the end of the 18th century or the beginning of the 19th is more likely. It may well be contemporary with the present facade of the grade II-listed house. The extant southern bay is 4.9 m in length by a

relatively modest 5.2 m in total width (16 ft by 17 ft), so the entire barn was probably around 14 m or 47 ft in length.

Soon after it was built the barn's central threshing bay of 4.5 m (15 ft) was provided with a long western porch (1) to extend the length of the threshing floor by 5.5 m (18 ft). This porch is very similar in its structure to the barn, but its studs are not pegged to the roof-plates and it cannot be of precisely the same date. The western doorway is framed by original bolted knee-braces but the present doors, while good, traditional examples, appear to be replacements of the late-19th century. The 19th century maps above suggest that a smaller porch, perhaps in the form of a lean-to, also projected to the rear. Around the same time – probably shortly afterwards but possibly a little before – an extension of the same height (3.4 m or 11 ft) was added to the barn's southern gable (3). This has been heavily altered on the ground floor but many East Anglian barns possessed stables with hay lofts of identical configuration and the new structure of 6 m or 20 ft in length was almost certainly designed for this purpose – particularly as it lies close to the house and the farm's pond (required to water the horses). The junction between the two roofs can be seen clearly in the loft which was later extended into the southern bay of the barn, as the latter's roof-plates form shaped terminals where they abut the new plates of the stable. The framing also differs significantly, with unpegged studs in the stable interrupted by curved primary braces nailed to the wall posts as opposed to the pegged studs of the barn. The narrow western lean-to shed (4) was probably added with the stable to form a tack room or possibly a granary linked to the porch (or both if an internal partition has been removed). This shed has preserved the impressively wide boards used to clad the original barn; although they overlap, indicating they were intended as external rather than internal, these boards bear neither paint nor tar and illustrate a common appearance of East Anglian barn before tar became readily available as a by-product of town gas production in the late 19th century.

At some point in the mid-20th century the northern bay of the barn was demolished along with its central threshing bay, the eastern porch and an additional structure adjoining its northern gable as shown on early maps. The present corrugated iron lean-to was built on the site of the threshing bay, creating the building's highly unusual appearance. The reason for this dramatic loss is unknown, but it may have been caused by fire, collapse, or simply the need for economy given the increasing expense of maintenance and new thatch. Other alterations of the same period, and during an extensive restoration and partial conversion during the 1970s or 1980s, have destroyed much of the remaining building's internal historic character. A ceiling was inserted into the southern bay of the barn, the original ceiling of the stable was almost entirely rebuilt in softwood cut with a circular saw (except one binding joist that is probably original); the partition between the two structures was removed and the ground-floor walls clad in sheet-boarding. The removal of the partition appears to have occurred very recently as the late-20th century doors and windows of the eastern elevation clearly opened into two compartments rather than the large, single area of today. Much of the external weatherboarding was also renewed, leaving small sections of heavily tarred cladding of historic character beneath the eaves to the east, and large windows were inserted throughout. Various garden shrubs have conspired to obscure these windows from the road and prevent them from marring the building's otherwise traditional facade.

Historic Significance

The chief historic interest of the barn lies in its highly distinctive external appearance, which creates a landmark at the entrance to Kenton village and complements the broadly contemporary grade II-listed Georgian facade of the nearby farmhouse. Ironically, its unusual nature, with two thatched roofs abutting corner-to-corner, was created by the demolition of the central and northern bays of a standard barn in the mid-20th century, leaving only its porch and southern range standing. The resulting fragment contains no fewer than four late-18th and

early-19th century timber frames of different phases, and is accordingly of some significance in illustrating the often complex development of local farm buildings; but it was heavily altered once again during a major restoration and partial conversion during the last quarter of the 20th century which stripped the interior of much historic character. Most of the external weatherboarding dates only from this period. As a result of these changes, and despite its age and traditional exterior, the building is unlikely to meet the 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. General view of site from Eye Road to south showing grade II-listed farmhouse to right with barn in rear to left.
2. General view of site from Eye Road to north showing barn to left with grade II-listed farmhouse in rear to right.
3. General view of site from rear (east) showing barn to right and grade II-listed farmhouse to left.
4. General view of barn from east showing its close proximity to farm pond in foreground.
5. General view from north-east showing close proximity of barn to right and grade II-listed farmhouse in rear to left.
6. Western facade of grade II-listed farmhouse from Eye Road showing fine Georgian brick facade.
7. Exterior from Eye Road to west showing gable of entrance porch (1) to left with southern range (2 & 3) to right.
8. Exterior from Eye Road to south-west showing distinctive L-shaped profile of thatched roofs.
9. Exterior from north showing slight racking to roof of porch (1) with 20th century lean-to (5) on site of original barn to left.
10. External detail of good 19th century half-hung barn doors in western gable of porch (1) showing 20th century weatherboarding elsewhere.
11. Exterior of porch (1) from south-west showing 20th century glazed window in southern side-wall to right.
12. Exterior from south-west showing pantiled lean-to shed (4) in angle of porch (1) & southern range (2 & 3).
13. Western exterior of former stable (3) showing 20th century weatherboarding with half-hung door and cat hole to left.
14. Southern external gable of lean-to shed (4) showing door and 20th century weatherboarding with cat hole to right.
15. Southern gable of former stable (3) showing 19th century weatherboarding with loft loading hatch in roof gable.
16. Detail of southern gable showing 19th century weatherboarding and loft loading hatch.

17. Exterior from south-east showing new thatch with some original weatherboarding above 20th century doors to eastern elevation.
18. Eastern exterior of southern range (2 & 3) showing 20th century doors and windows with 19th century tarred boarding above.
19. Eastern exterior of former stable (3) showing waney 19th century tarred weatherboarding above recent doors and windows.
20. Eastern exterior of threshing barn (2) showing waney 19th century tarred weatherboarding above recent windows.
21. Exterior from north-east showing 20th century corrugated iron lean-to (5) at junction of thatched porch (1) and southern range (2 & 3).
22. Interior from east of 20th century lean-to shed (5) looking towards 19th century barn porch (1).
23. Interior from east of 19th century barn porch (1) showing original wall framing and roof structure with 20th century windows to left.
24. Interior of 19th century barn doors in western gable of porch (1) showing original jambs with knee-braces & un-jowled corner posts.
25. Northern interior of porch (1) showing largely original un-pegged studs with diagonal primary braces & possible door to right.
26. Clapsed-purlin northern roof structure of porch (1) showing nailed collars & central tie-beam without braces.
27. Southern interior of porch (1) showing modern window and boarding concealing studwork & lean-to shed (5) to left.
28. Clapsed-purlin southern roof structure of porch (1) showing rough-hewn rafters, nailed collars & central tie-beam without braces.
29. Interior of porch (1) from west showing junction with 20th century shed (5) on site of demolished threshing barn.
30. Detail from west of junction between porch (1) & lean-to shed (5) showing fragment of original barn's roof-plate to right.
31. Northern interior of porch (1) showing lean-to shed (5) on site of original barn's threshing bay.
32. Southern interior of lean-to shed (5) showing blocked door to southern range (2 & 3) & porch (1) to right.
33. Interior of 20th century lean-to shed (5) from west showing sliding glazed doors & boarded partition to southern range (2 & 3) right.
34. Interior of southern range (2 & 3) from north showing modern boarding concealing ceiling joists and wall framing.

35. Western interior of southern bay of barn (2) showing position of original gable to left.
36. Southern interior of former stable (3) showing door to lean-to shed (4) to right & possibly original binding joist to left.
37. Northern interior of southern range (2 & 3) showing 20th century doors and windows with fragments of original framing.
38. Interior of southern range (2 & 3) from south showing modern boarding concealing wall fabric & 20th century softwood joists.
39. Interior of lean-to shed (4) from south showing 20th century windows to left and boarding southern bay of barn (2) right.
40. Interior of lean-to shed (4) from north showing original weatherboarding of southern bay of barn (2) to left.
41. Northern interior of southern bay of barn (2) showing bolted knee-braces of original open truss to demolished threshing floor.
42. Detail of original bolted knee-brace and later tie-beam & partition to northern interior of extant southern bay of barn (2).
43. Eastern interior of southern bay of barn (2) showing original roof plate with narrow pegged wall studs & removed roof collars.
44. Rebuilt western roof of southern bay of barn (2) showing original studs and trench in rafter for missing collar and purlin.
45. Eastern roof of southern bay of barn (2) showing junction with former stable (3) above original gable tie-beam to right.
46. Eastern interior of southern bay of barn (2) showing studs pegged to roof-plate with no evidence of wall braces & gable tie to right.
47. Western interior of southern bay of barn (2) showing studs pegged to roof-plate with no evidence of wall braces & gable tie to left.
48. Tie-beam of former southern gable of southern bay of barn (2) from north-west, showing empty pegged stud mortises & modern braces.
49. Detail from south of original gable tie-beam of southern bay of barn (2) showing pegged stud mortises with later brace to corner post.
50. Detail from south-west of junction secured by iron plate between two roof-plates of southern bay of barn (2) left & former stable (3).
51. Detail from south-east of junction between two roof-plates of southern bay of barn (2) right & former stable (3) to left.
52. Detail of upper surface of tie-beam between southern bay of barn (2) and former stable (3) showing un-pegged stud mortises of gable.

53. Eastern interior of former stable (3) showing original rafters with stump of removed original roof collar to right (with flash).
54. Eastern interior of former stable (3) showing original rafters with stump of removed original roof collar to right (no flash).
55. Eastern interior of former stable (3) showing roof-plate with un-pegged studs and convex primary braces nailed to central post.
56. Detail of convex primary braces nailed to post of eastern interior of former stable (3).
57. Western interior of former stable (3) showing rebuilt roof & un-pegged studs with convex primary braces nailed to post.
58. Western roof of former stable (3) showing original rafters adjoining southern gable to left & new rafters to right.
59. Eastern roof of former stable (3) showing original rafters & two ostensibly original purlins but lacking collars.
60. Internal southern gable of former stable (3) showing loading door of loft framed by 20th century softwood & new studs under tie-beam.

Photographic Appendix 2 follows on pp. 13-19

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



Illus. 1. A general view of the site from the Eye Road to the south showing the imposing Georgian brick facade of the grade II-listed farmhouse to the right with the barn in the rear to the left.



Illus. 2. A general view from the Eye Road to the north, showing the barn's porch (1) to the left and the farmhouse in the rear. The majority of the barn which this porch once abutted has been demolished, resulting in a highly distinctive building which forms the entrance to the village when approaching from this direction and makes a very significant contribution to the local landscape.



Illus. 3. The barn from the south-west, showing its distinctive L-shaped profile with two substantial thatched roofs adjoining corner-to-corner at right-angles. The pantiled western lean-to shed (4) is visible in the centre. The thatch is recent and most of the weatherboarding in this elevation was renewed as part of a heavy mid- to late-20th century refurbishment. A number of modern windows which would otherwise detract from its traditional appearance are hidden by shrubs.



Illus. 4. The barn southern range from the south-east, showing the left loading hatch and the 19th or early-20th century weatherboarding which survives in the southern gable.



Illus. 5. The eastern exterior of the southern range, which consists of the southern bay of a late-18th or early-19th century threshing barn to the right of the scale rod (2) and an early-19th century former stable (3) to its left. The various ground-floor doors and windows were inserted during the 20th century but good, heavily tarred and waney-edged weatherboarding survives above.



Illus. 6. The unusual appearance of the building from the north-east. A mid-20th century lean-to shed with a corrugated iron roof (5) occupies the site of the demolished threshing bay of the original barn, with the surviving early-19th century porch (1) to the right and the barn's southern end-bay (2) and the former stable (3) to the left.



Illus. 7. The interior from the east of the 19th century porch (1). The wall framing is largely original, although cut by modern windows to the left and partly hidden by boarding. The barn doors are good late-19th century half-hung examples with original bolted knee-braces framing the doorway.



Illus. 8. The intact original clapped-purlin roof structure of the porch (1) showing its nailed collars and a central tie-beam without braces. These features are typical of the early-19th century.



Illus. 9. The porch (1) from the west showing its junction with the 20th century lean-to shed (5) which replaced the threshing barn into which the porch initially opened. A short surviving section of the demolished barn's roof-plate is visible at top right (it continues into the remaining southern bay from which the lean-to is divided by a later boarded partition).



Illus. 10. The interior from the south of the 19th century lean-to shed (4) in the angle of the porch (1) and the southern bay of the barn (2). The windows to the left are insertions of the 20th century but the impressively wide boards to the right appear to be original to the barn.



Illus. 11. The undivided ground-floor of the southern range from the south, showing the wall framing largely hidden by late-20th century boarding. The ceiling of the former stable (3) in the foreground was renewed in the 20th century, although one binding joist may be original. The door to the left opens onto the lean-to shed (4) which may have served as a tack room. The partition between the stable and the southern bay of the barn (2) has been removed and its position is indicated by the scale rod and corresponding new softwood in the ceiling.



Illus. 12. The internal northern gable of the southern bay of the original barn (2) showing the later partition dividing it from the site of the demolished threshing floor. The tie-beam has been renewed but the bolted knee-braces of the formerly open truss (to right and left) appear to remain *in situ*. The floor is a 20th century insertion.



Illus. 13. The eastern roof structure of the southern bay of the original threshing barn (2) showing the tie-beam containing the empty pegged mortises of its original southern gable to the right – with the roof of the later stable (3) beyond. The studs of the barn are pegged to the roof plate while those of the stable are not. The clasped-purlin roof is partly original but its collars have been removed and the various struts are modern.



Illus. 14. The western interior of the former stable (3) showing the recently replaced rafters and purlins in the roof with the corner of the original barn (2) with a shaped terminal to its roof-plate on the right. The distinctively curved primary wall braces to the left are nailed to the post and the studs are tenoned but not pegged to the roof-plates unlike those of the earlier barn.