

**Barn and Outbuildings at
Mulletts Farm,
Barking, Suffolk
BRK 128**

Historic Building Record

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Barn and Outbuildings at Mulletts Farm, Willisham Road, Barking Tye, Suffolk

(TM 065 516)

Historic Building Record

This report provides a record at English Heritage (2006) Level 2 of a redundant barn and outbuildings in the curtilage of a grade II-listed former farmhouse. It has been prepared to a specification by Edward Martin of Suffolk County Council's Archaeological Service dated 5th July 2012, and is intended to fulfil a condition of planning permission for conversion (Mid Suffolk District Council application 0527/12).

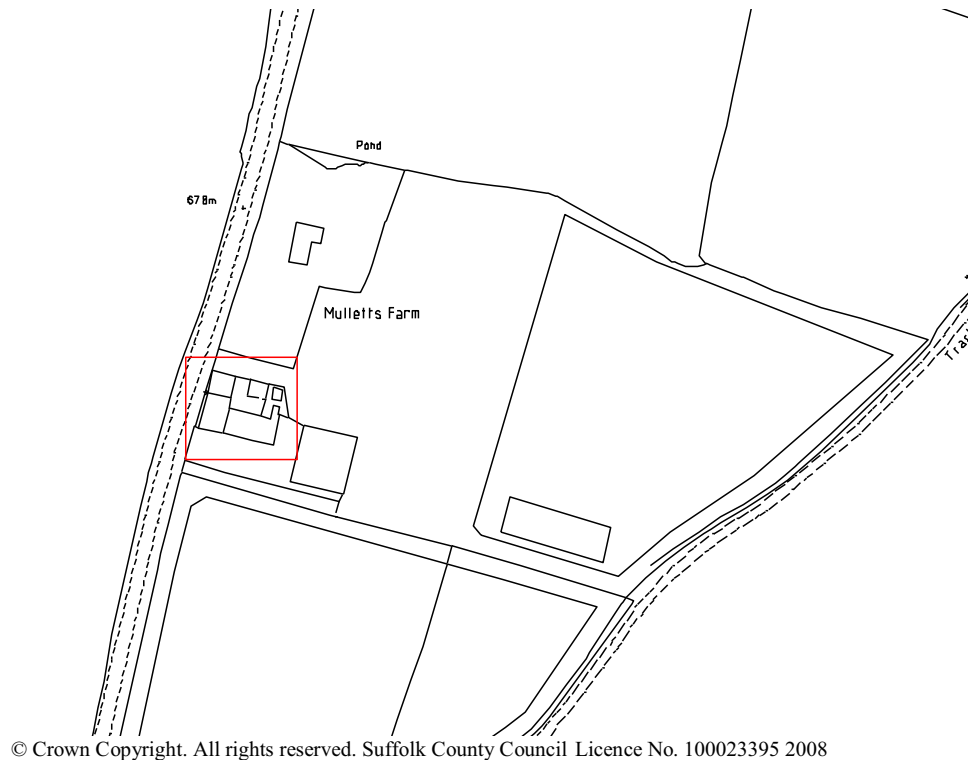
Introduction

The report is accompanied by a CD containing a full photographic record in the form of 54 digital images of 21 megapixels (Appendix 1), but also includes 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 28th February 2013.

Summary

Mulletts Farm lies in open countryside on the eastern side of the Willisham Road approximately 400 m south of Barking Tye. The farmhouse to the north of the site is a grade II-listed timber-framed hall house of the late-15th century and the three-bay threshing barn, which lies 50 m to the south of its service gable, is a broadly contemporary structure of the early to mid-16th century. At the time of the Barking tithe survey in 1842 the farm was a modest tenanted holding of 46.5 acres owned by John Harper and occupied by the eponymous Samuel Mullett.

The oak frame of the barn was originally infilled with wattle-and-daub and rendered externally, but the building was extensively renovated in recent years and is now clad in stained modern weatherboarding with a corrugated iron roof. Both gables were rebuilt in the 19th century, and the shallow-pitched roof structure is a 20th century replacement, but the rest of the framing is relatively intact, retaining all four arch-braces flanking the central entrance bay and two internal wall braces with unusual ogee curves. The building was entered by double doors from the south (facing away from the house) and preserves evidence of a small original door to the rear that was sufficient to create a through-draught for threshing and winnowing but not to admit vehicles. A number of gault bricks salvaged from a 19th century threshing floor have been set into the modern concrete floor. The heavy scantlings of the individual studs suggests a date in the first half of the 16th century, as do the long edge-halved and bridled scarf joints in the roof-plates, and the barn is of considerable historic interest given its relationship to a farmhouse of similar period. Due to the loss of its original roof, however, it does not meet the strict English Heritage criteria for listing in its own right. A number of mid-19th century sheds attached to the barn consisted in part of shuttered clay (as opposed to clay-lump) but were substantially rebuilt in the mid-20th century and had been largely demolished prior to inspection.



**Figure 1. Modern Ordnance Survey
Enclosing the complex of farm buildings in red and showing the grade II-listed
farmhouse to the north and the Willisham Road to the west.**

Documentary and Cartographic Evidence

Mulletts Farm lies in open countryside on the eastern side of the Willisham Road approximately 400 m south of Barking Tye. The farm buildings form a separate complex 50 m south of the farmhouse, which is a grade II-listed timber-framed and rendered structure described as ‘probably 16th century or earlier’ in the English Heritage Schedule. It in fact dates from the late-15th century and contains a well preserved open hall with a sooted crown-post roof flanked by a parlour on the north and a service bay to the south. The three-bay barn is broadly contemporary and is unusual both in its orientation (facing away from the house) and its distance.

At the time of the Barking tithe survey in 1842 the farm was a modest tenanted holding of 46.5 chiefly arable acres (with just 5.5 acres of pasture) owned by John Harper and occupied by Samuel Mullett – from whom its present name derives. He was recorded as a farmer in White’s Suffolk Directory of 1844, but had disappeared by the edition of 1855. The various buildings on the site were described only as ‘buildings and yards’ in the tithe apportionment (plot 611 in figure 2), with ‘Home Meadow’ on the east (612) and ‘Barn Field’ to the south (614). The map depicts the barn with its rear (northern) lean-to and a detached structure that no longer survives to the rear, and shows a large pond between the house and its farm buildings. This detached structure had been demolished by 1886, and the existing enclosed yard had appeared with a range of roadside sheds and an open-sided shelter-shed to the north. Many local farms were refurbished in a similar manner during the mid-19th century as the system of yard-based mixed animal husbandry known as Victorian High Farming replaced the intensive cereal-based agriculture of the early-19th century. The new buildings consisted partly of shuttered clay (as opposed to clay lump) and survived in outline until shortly before inspection, but appeared to have been much rebuilt in cement block-work during the mid and late-20th century and the barn was refurbished as a fencing showroom in or about the 1990s.



Figure 2. The area of Barking Tye as depicted on the Barking tithe map of 1842, showing north towards the top left-hand corner and Mulletts Farm to the right (Suffolk Record Office).

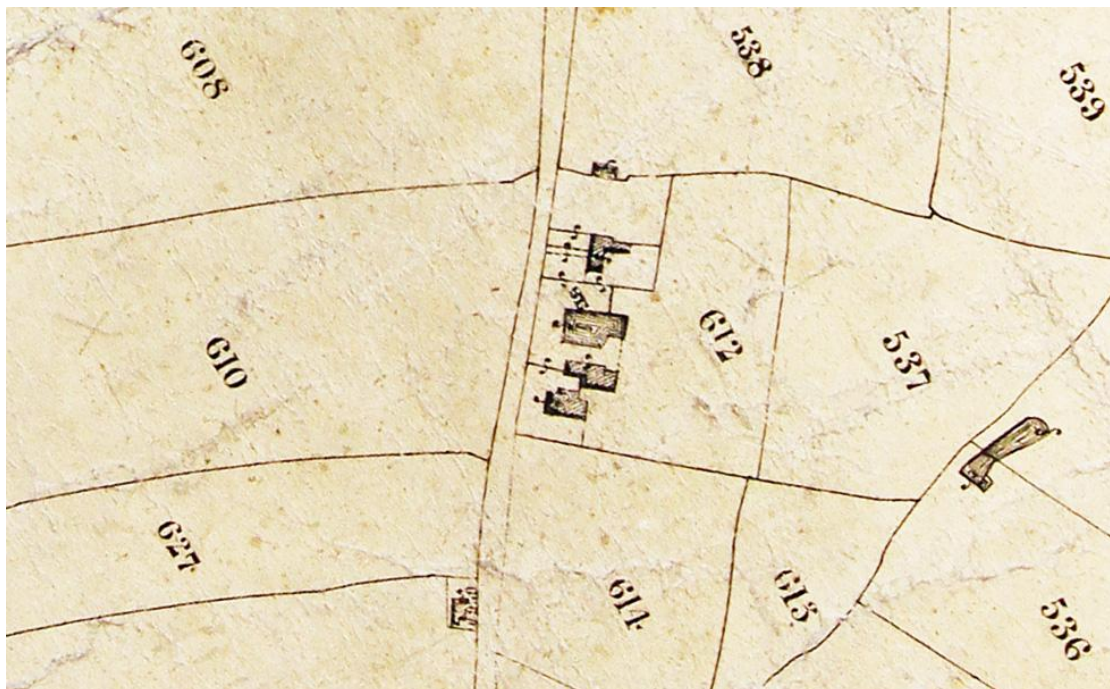


Figure 2a. Detail of the 1842 tithe map, reoriented to show north in the usual direction. The barn is shown to the south of the site with its rear lean-to and (probably) an additional small shed adjoining its western gable. The farm was occupied by Samuel Mullet and the site is described in the apportionment as ‘buildings and yards’ (611) with ‘Home Meadow’ (612) on the east.

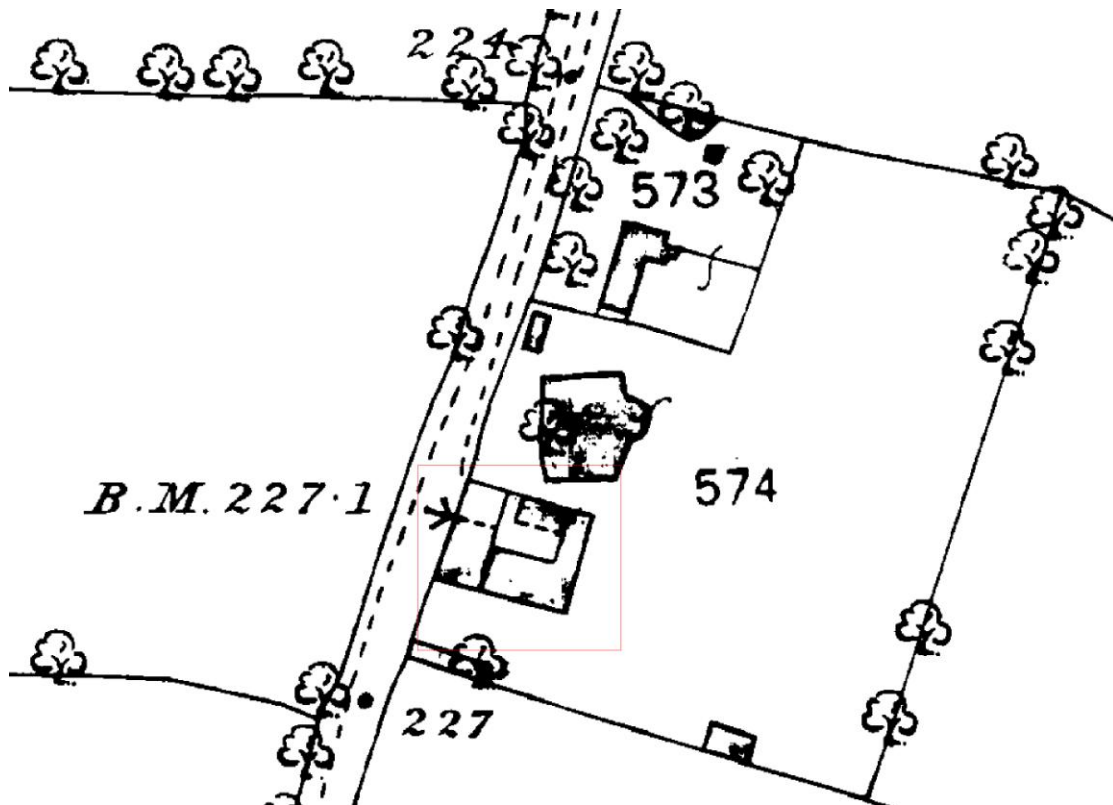


Figure 3. The First edition 25 inch Ordnance Survey of 1886. The recently demolished clay-walled sheds to the west the barn had appeared since 1842, with an open-sided shelter-shed to the north (indicated by the broken line of its southern elevation).

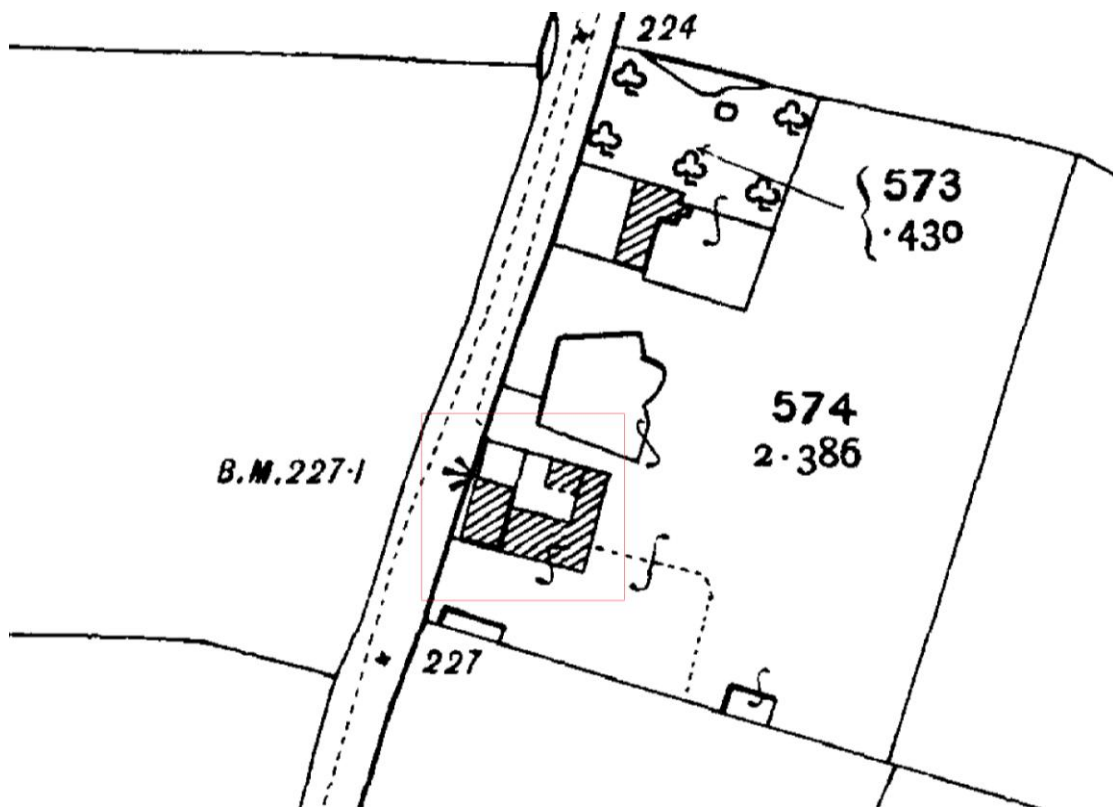


Figure 4. The Second Edition 25 inch Ordnance Survey of 1904, showing little change since 1886.

Building Analysis

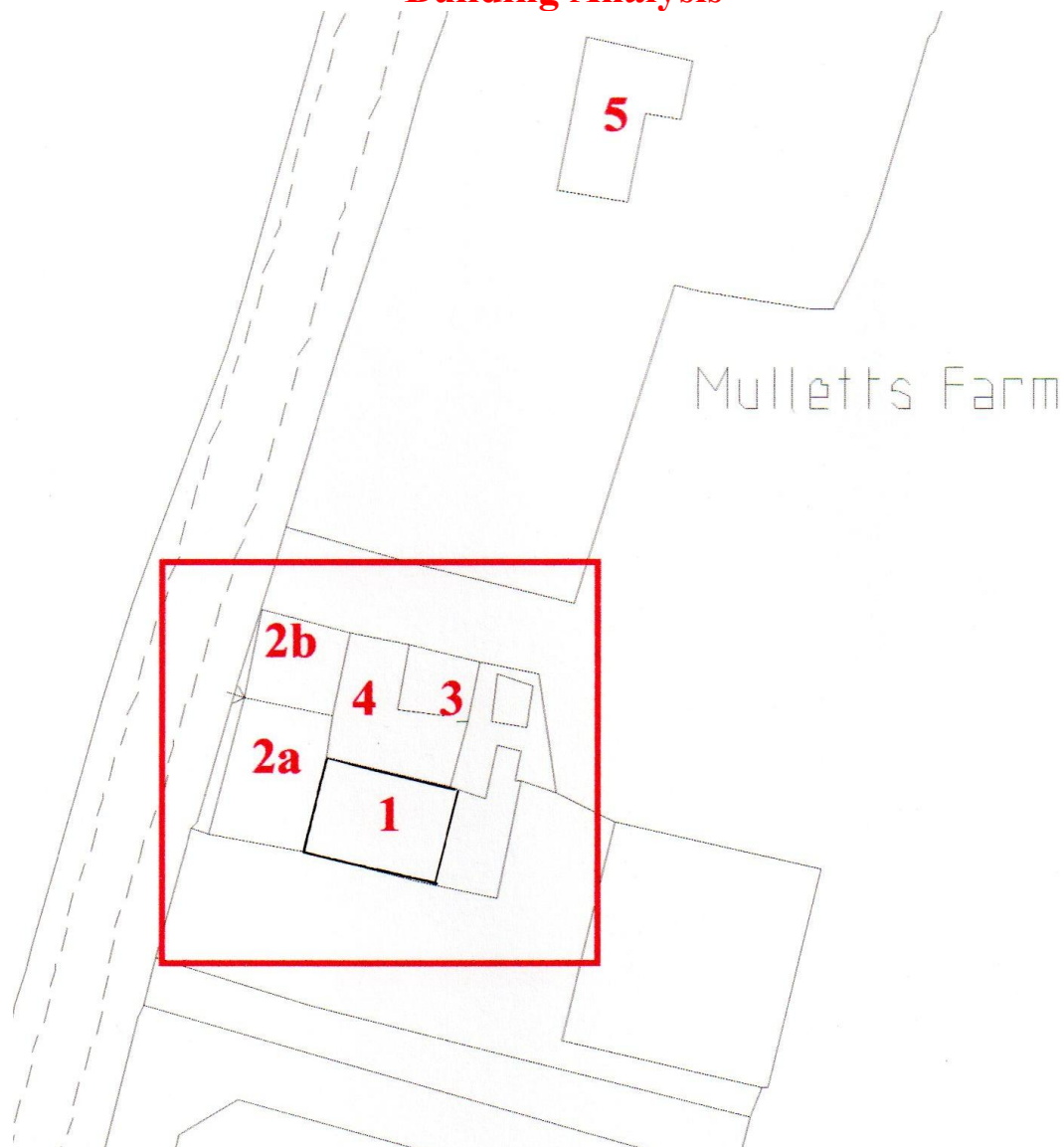


Figure 5

Ground plan of the farm buildings identifying each area with a number for ease of reference in the text and photographic record.

Key

1. An early- to mid- 16th century timber-framed and weatherboarded threshing barn in three bays with a 20th century shallow-pitched roof of corrugated iron. Entered from the south with evidence of a small rear door facing the farmhouse. A rear (northern) lean-to was probably added before the end of the 16th century but was widened and largely rebuilt in the 19th century. Both gables were also rebuilt in the 19th century but the open trusses and the rest of the wall framing survives largely intact with all but one stud at least partly intact. The barn was originally infilled with wattle-and-daub and rendered externally with clay.
2. A mid-19th century roadside shed consisting partly of shuttered clay with brick dressing. The northern section (2b) was rebuilt in cement block-work during the mid-20th century and the rest had been largely demolished prior to inspection leaving only fragments of the outer walls intact.

3. **An open-sided cattle shelter-shed shown on the Ordnance Survey of 1886 but rebuilt in cement block-work, corrugated iron and re-used telegraph poles during the mid-20th century to leave only a section of 19th century brickwork in the western gable.**
4. **A cattle yard enclosed by cement block walls of the mid-20th century.**
5. **A grade II-listed timber-framed and rendered farmhouse consisting of a late-15th century open hall with a heavily sooted crown-post roof (the rectangular crown-post with chamfered edges and (missing) braces to the collar purlin only) flanked by a parlour bay on the north and a service bay on the south. A later chimney has been inserted into the cross-passage and the service bay converted into a parlour.**

The 16th century barn is of particular historic interest and is discussed further below.

Proportions and Structure

The barn is framed in the typical late-medieval manner with two outer bays flanking a narrower central bay which contained the threshing floor. The original building was exceptionally wide for a single-span structure, extending to 44 feet in overall length by 22 feet 3 inches in total width (13.5 m by 6.8 m), with a central bay of 12 feet and outer bays of 14 feet 6 inches (3.7 m and 4.4 m respectively). The wall studs are of heavy scantling, ranging from 7 to 9 inches in width by 4 in depth (18 cm to 23 by 10) and were not interrupted by mid-rails but rose an impressive 11 feet (3.4 m) between the ground sills and roof-plates. The scale of the barn indicates a builder of some substance, reflecting the Yeoman quality of the contemporary house, but the quality of the oak timber is variable, with numerous distortions and waney edges to the studs. Internally trenched braces rose to the roof-plates and gable tie-beams from all four corner posts, although both gables were entirely rebuilt in the 19th century. The two open trusses of arch-braced tie-beams survive intact, but the present low-pitched roof is modern. There is no obvious sign of mortises for crown or queen posts in the upper surfaces of the tie-beams and the nature of the original roof is uncertain; it may have contained only collared rafters with hipped gablets, but given its excessive width (which might have been expected to require additional support) it is likely to have included side purlins. The missing roof would probably have possessed a pitch of between 55 and 60 degrees for straw thatch. The ground sills would have rested on shallow plinths of flint or brick, and the modern concrete floor, which conceals all but a small section of ostensibly original ground sill in the rear wall, must lie at least 12 inches above the height of its predecessor.

Original Layout

The central bay of the southern elevation was designed with large entrance doors spanning its full width and height, and the intact roof-plate contains double-pegged mortises for door jambs against the storey posts. The northern roof-plate of the same bay, in contrast, contains empty mortises for five equally-spaced wall studs which have since been removed, and would originally have possessed only a narrow, low doorway facing the farmhouse. The central mortise is slightly smaller than its neighbours as it would have secured only a short stud interrupted by the door lintel. A similar small doorway still survives in the late-16th century rear lean-to. Prior to the 19th century it was entirely normal for local barns to possess small rear doors of this kind, sufficient to create a through-draught for threshing and winnowing, but all evidence was usually destroyed by the subsequent insertion of cart thoroughfares. The

central bay would have possessed a threshing floor, but the existing brick floor is set in concrete and is a modern feature consisting of re-used material from the previous floor.

Infill and Cladding

The barn is now clad in 20th century stained weatherboarding but the frame was originally infilled with wattle-and-daub and rendered externally, with only its internal timbers exposed to view. The external surfaces of the studs are not weathered and are roughly finished, retaining substantial areas of bark, and the notches which secured the wattle frames are now visible in the sides of the wall timbers as no original infill remains. An area of external boarding in the rear lean-to is an addition of the 18 or 19th centuries which re-uses a pair of early hatches or shutters.

Date

The barn is difficult to date closely in the absence of its roof. Both roof-plates contain long edge-halved and bridled scarf joints with double-pegged tenons as usually found in the final quarter of the 15th century and the first quarter of the 16th, and such a date is consistent with the heavy scantling of the timbers. However the absence of any apparent crown or queen post mortises in the tie-beams suggests the presence of a side-purlin roof of mid or late-16th century type. A date in the second quarter of the 16th century presents a likely compromise, but the building may be contemporary with the sooted open hall in the farmhouse which is a relatively late example of its type.

Condition of Structure

The timber-framed front and rear walls of the barn are substantially intact, retaining all but one of their original studs (the penultimate western stud of the southern elevation), excepting only the central bay where the framing was probably removed when the lean-to was added in the late-16th century. The ogee-curved internal braces are lacking from the front, southern elevation but intact to the rear, and the lower extremities of the same elevation have been cut to insert a recent brick plinth and sill. Both gables were entirely rebuilt in the 19th century and the roof is modern, but features survive intact that are usually lacking from similar barns elsewhere, such as the tie-beam braces and the roof-plate above the entrance. The internal deal boarding to the northern elevation of the western bay is a 19th century addition and displays a number of complex incised marks usually associated with imported Baltic timber.

Lean-to

A lean-to was added to the rear, northern elevation in the late-16th century to widen the building by a further 9 feet. The new roof-plate contains edge-halved-and-bridled scarf joints of standard 16th century type (quickly superseded by face-halved scarfs in the 17th century) and evidence of an original central door opposite the entrance (3 feet wide by approximately 5 feet 6 ins high). Good early boarding survives in the lean-to sheds flanking the midstrey, which probably operated as granaries, but almost all the studs and tie-beams are 19th century or modern replacements and the structure was probably widened in the 19th century retaining its original roof-plate.

Historic Significance

The barn at Mulletts Farm is a relatively early example of a three-bay threshing barn and in some respects is unusually well preserved. Few barns of this scale retain all their arch-braces and evidence of original narrow doors in their rear elevations, with most destroyed by the insertion of bolted knee-braces and cart thoroughfares in the 19th century. The structure is also

unusually wide, at over 22 feet (where 18 feet or less is the norm), and within a century was extended to almost 32 feet by the addition of its rear lean-to. The barn's historic interest is increased by its proximity to a contemporary or near-contemporary farmhouse of precisely the same length (44 feet), and illustrates the type of barn such a house would possess. The sooted domestic open hall extends to 20.5 feet in length and contains a plain crown-post in its roof, suggesting an owner of the middle rank, but at 18 feet the building is considerably narrower than its barn. While the barn is of undoubted historic interest, however, the loss of both its roof and gables renders it ineligible for listing in own right (according to the English Heritage criteria).

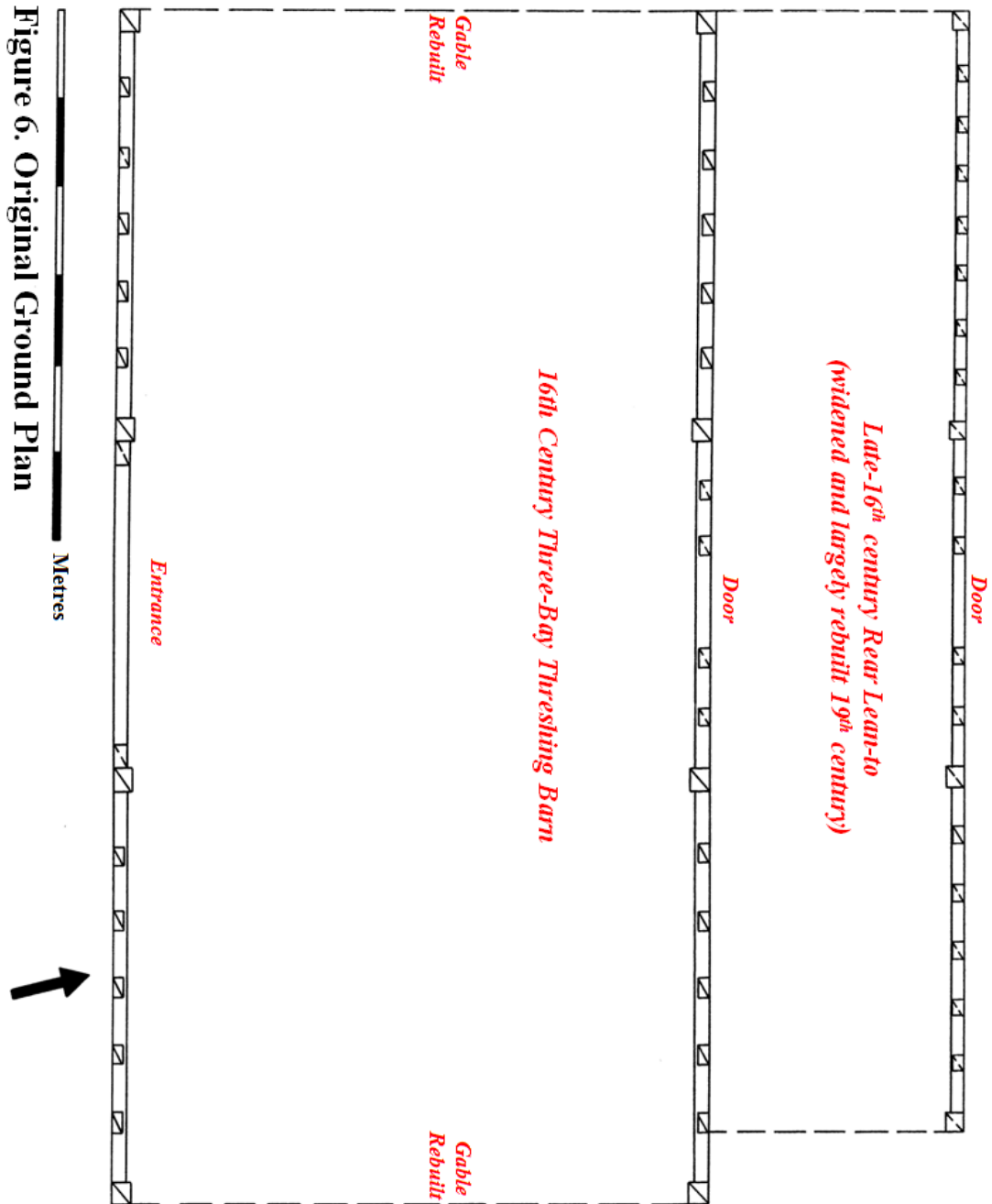


Figure 6. Original Ground Plan

Appendix 1 (on accompanying CD): Full Photographic Record

Descriptions of Photographs in Appendix 1

Photograph no.

1. General view of site from Willisham Road to west showing weatherboarded barn (1) to right & farmhouse (5) in rear to left.
2. Western exterior of barn (1) showing remains of shuttered clay wall of demolished shed (2a) in foreground.
3. Tarred western exterior of shuttered clay wall of demolished shed (2a).
4. Detail from south of partly demolished western wall of shuttered clay shed (2a) with no trace of clay lump blocks.
5. Detail from north-west of remains of demolished western wall of shuttered clay shed (2a) with no trace of clay lump blocks.
6. Interior from west of demolished shed (2) showing cement blocks of northern section (2b) to left & barn (1) to right.
7. Site of demolished shuttered clay shed (2) from south, showing barn (1) to right and Willisham Road to left.
8. Interior from north of demolished shed (2) showing red-brick dressing with infill of shuttered clay to south & cement blocks to north.
9. Exterior of complex from north showing entrance to yard (4) to left & demolished shed (2) to right.
10. Western interior of demolished shed (2) showing shuttered clay fabric to left (2a) & cement block-work (2b) to right.
11. Yard (4) from west showing 20th century open-sided shelter (3) to left.
12. Southern exterior of open-sided shelter-shed (3) with 20th century cladding and re-used telegraph poles.
13. Interior of open shed (3) showing 20th century rafters, studwork and block-work with remnant of earlier brick western wall in rear.
14. Northern exterior of barn (1) showing corrugated iron roofing and modern cladding of rear lean-to.
15. Exterior of barn from east showing scar of recently demolished shed with farmhouse (5) in rear to right.
16. Eastern external gable showing scar of recently demolished shed with later rear lean-to on right.
17. Southern exterior of barn (1) showing recent stained weatherboarding and brick plinth with site of demolished shed (2a) to left.

18. Southern interior of barn (1) showing original central entrance flanked by original studwork lacking internal braces.
19. General view of barn interior from east showing intact arch-braces flanking central entrance bay.
20. General view of barn interior from west showing intact arch-braces flanking central entrance bay.
21. Interior of barn from south-west showing later rear lean-to on left and modern floor made from recycled bricks of threshing floor.
22. Completely rebuilt eastern internal gable (including tie-beam) with original wall brace mortises in corner posts.
23. Southern interior of eastern bay with original studs trenched for internal corner brace to left & later nailed brace to right.
24. Internal south-eastern corner post showing mortises for internal braces to left and right (later studs in gable to left).
25. Southern interior of eastern bay showing notches & waney exteriors for original wattle-and-daub with external render.
26. Detail of southern roof-plate of eastern bay showing long edge-halved & bridled scarf joint with double pegs.
27. Interior of modern southern entrance showing modern plinth and pegged mortises for original door jambs adjoining storey posts.
28. Detail of roof-plate of central southern bay with double-pegged mortises of original door jambs to left and right.
29. Southern interior of western bay showing four original studs with trenches for internal corner brace to right and modern repairs.
30. Completely rebuilt western internal gable (including tie-beam) with original corner posts to left & right.
31. Northern interior of western bay showing deal Baltic boarding concealing original studs.
32. Northern interior of central bay showing stud mortises of original rear wall with central door in later lean-to beyond.
33. Northern roof-plate of central bay showing smaller central mortise for short stud initially interrupted by low, narrow rear door.
34. Detail of edge-halved and bridled scarf joint of 15th and 16th century type with double pegs to tenons.
35. Northern interior of eastern bay showing original ogee-curved internal brace and possibly original but unpegged ground sill.

36. Northern interior of eastern bay showing original ogee-curved internal brace with mortise in corner post for gable brace to right.
37. Detail of incised carpenter's Roman numeral to northern internal brace of eastern bay.
38. Eastern profile of original open truss to west of threshing bay showing lack of post mortises in tie-beam & later roof structure above.
39. 20th century softwood roof structure of barn from east showing later iron straps to tie-beam.
40. Detail of Baltic timber mark to internal northern boards of western bay.
41. Detail of second Baltic timber mark to internal northern boards of western bay.
42. Interior from west of later lean-to adjoining northern elevation of barn.
43. Northern exterior of eastern bay from later lean-to showing re-cycled shutters or hatches used as cladding.
44. Interior of northern lean-to from east showing re-used shutters or hatches used as cladding to left.
45. Eastern internal gable of northern lean-to.
46. Northern interior of eastern bay of lean-to showing short section of possibly original sill and one stud to left.
47. Northern interior of central bay of lean-to showing gap in roof-plate mortises for original central door.
48. Detail of edge-halved and bridled scarf joint with single face vertical peg in roof-plate of central bay of lean-to.
49. Northern interior of western bay of lean-to showing roof-plate with evenly spaced pegged studs mortises but renewed studs.
50. Detail of edge-halved and bridled scarf joint with single face vertical peg in roof-plate of western bay of lean-to.
51. Interior from east of lean-to adjoining northern elevation of barn, probably of 16th century origin but later increased in width.
52. Western internal gable of later lean-to adjoining northern exterior of barn.
53. Northern exterior of western bay of barn from later lean-to showing original ogee-curved internal wall brace.
54. Detail of original studs with ogee-curved internal wall brace of northern exterior of western bay.

Photographic Appendix 2 follows on pages 12-18

Appendix 2 (pp. 12-18): Selected Printed Photographs



Illus. 1. The site from Willisham Road to the west, showing the barn (1) to the right, the grade II-listed farmhouse to the left and the remains of the mid-19th century shed of shuttered clay (2) in the foreground.



Illus. 2. A detail from the south of the partly demolished tarred western wall of the shuttered clay shed (2a) adjoining the barn's western gable. There is no trace of clay lump blocks within the fabric.



Illus. 3. The southern exterior of the barn (1) showing its modern brick plinth and stained weatherboarding. The central doors are also modern but occupy the same position as the original full-height doors which faced away from the farmhouse.



Illus. 4. The southern exterior of the open-sided shelter-shed (3) to the rear (north) of the barn (1). This is shown on the historic Ordnance Surveys but with the exception of its western brick wall (left) was entirely rebuilt in the mid-20th century with re-used telegraph poles and cement block-work.



Illus. 5. The rear (northern) exterior of the barn (1) from the enclosed yard (4) showing the corrugated iron roof and recent weatherboarding of the later rear lean-to.



Illus. 6. The barn (1) from the east showing the scar of a recently demolished shed adjoining its gable with its rear lean-to and the shelter-shed (3) and farmhouse (5) visible to the right.



Illus. 7. The southern interior of the three-bay threshing barn (1) showing its central entrance doors flanked by original arch-braced tie-beams. The roof-plate contains mortises for the jambs of a slightly narrower original entrance. The studs of the outer bays have been truncated at their bases but with the exception of the penultimate stud on the right all are original and are trenched for missing internally trenched braces that reflected those of the northern wall. The diagonal brace on the left is secondary.



Illus. 8. The interior of the barn from the east showing the profiles of its original arch-braced tie-beams. Both gables were entirely rebuilt in the 19th century and the roof is a 20th century replacement. The original roof is likely to have been steeply pitched at 55 degrees for thatch.



Illus. 9. The interior from the south-west showing the later rear lean-to on the left and the modern concrete floor with a central panel made from gault bricks that are understood to have been salvaged from the remains of a threshing floor.



Illus. 10. A detail of the northern roof-plate of the central bay showing the 15th or 16th century type edge-halved and bridled scarf joint with double tenon pegs to the left and the studs of the removed back wall to the right. The mortise on the extreme right is central to the bay and is significantly smaller than its counterparts, having secured a short stud above the lintel of the original low, narrow rear doorway. The knee-brace on the left is a nailed insertion.



Illus. 11. The northern interior of the eastern bay showing an original ogee-curved internal brace with a mortise in the corner post for a matching brace in the rebuilt gable. Note the unusually distorted nature of the oak studs.



Illus. 12. A detail of an incised carpenter's Roman numeral to the northern internal brace of the eastern bay (to the right in illus. 11 above).



Illus. 13. The central bay of the rear (northern) lean-to with a modern door slightly to the left of the original. The roof-plate appears to belong to a 16th century structure, with edge-halved and bridled scarf joints beneath the tie-beams to left and right, but all but one or two studs have been replaced and the original lean-to was probably widened in the 19th century.



Illus. 14. The northern exterior of the western bay from the later lean-to, showing the intact original studs with an ogee-curved internal wall brace reflecting that of illus 11. The internal boarding is a 19th century addition, and the studs were formerly infilled with wattle-and-daub and rendered externally.