

**Barn at Mill Hill Farm,
Darsham, Suffolk
DAR 029**

Historic Building Record

OASIS ID: Suffolkc1-770414



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February 2014

Barn at Mill Hill Farm, Westleton Road, Darsham, Suffolk

(TM 421 692)

Heritage Asset Assessment

This report provides an archaeological record and analysis at English Heritage (2006) Level 2 of a redundant brick barn. It has been prepared to a specification dated 31 January 2014 by Dr Richard Hoggett of Suffolk County Council's Archaeological Service and is intended to fulfil a condition of planning consent for conversion (Suffolk Coastal District Council application DC/13/3021/FUL).

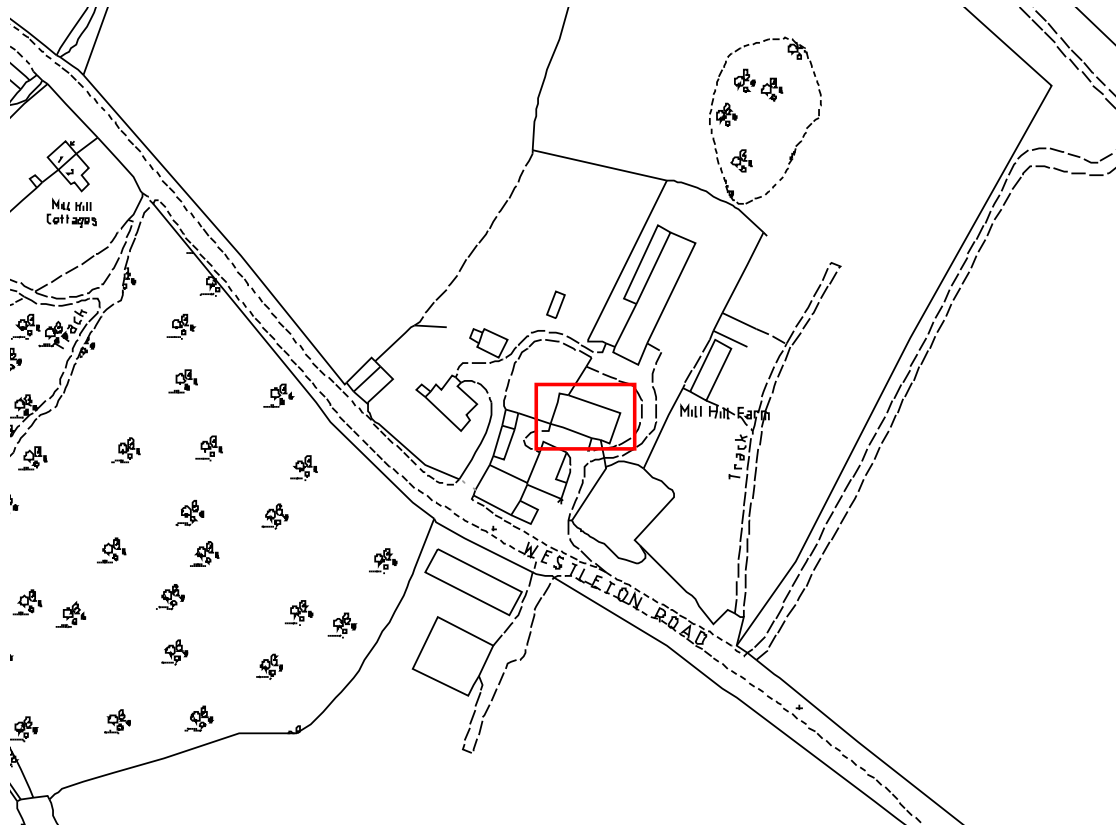
Introduction

The report is accompanied by a CD containing a full photographic record in the form of 42 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 6th February 2014.

Summary

Mill Hill Farm lies on high ground to the north of the road between Yoxford and Westleton, approximately 0.7 km south of Darsham parish church. Hodskinson's Map of Suffolk in 1783 depicts a windmill on the opposite side of the road, but this had been demolished by the mid-19th century and the property was known as Gravelpit Farm until a change of name in the 1960s or 70s. At the time of the tithe survey in 1843 it was one of two rented holdings amounting to 205 acres on the estate of Charles Purvis Esquire of Darsham House, 400 m to the north-east.

The former threshing barn is an imposing and well preserved late-Georgian structure built to a high standard in red brick with a pantiled roof. It may be contemporary with the facade of the adjacent farmhouse which is understood to bear the date 1780, and it is certainly no later than the beginning of the 19th century. The front and rear walls are pierced by ventilation loops arranged in patterns of three-over-three and the central southern entrance facing the road is an original feature, although the present doors are decayed 19th century replacements and one jamb has been renewed. The oak roof structure is fully tenoned and pegged, consisting of staggered butt-purlins with primary rafter braces in the end-bays, and survives completely intact. The internal floors are of modern concrete with no trace of the boarded or brick threshing floor that would have occupied the central bay. A lean-to rear porch with integral grain bins was added to the northern elevation in the mid-19th century, destroying the small rear door of the original barn. Weatherboarded lean-to sheds lay on both sides of this porch, but only one now remains and has been largely rebuilt. Cartographic evidence and the erratic bonding of the barn's western gable suggest it was designed to abut a contemporary or earlier building that probably operated as a stable, but this was demolished in the late-20th century. During the late-19th century a grain floor was inserted into the southern half of the barn, supported by massive deal joists cut into the brickwork, but most of this has since been removed. The barn is of considerable historic and visual interest, reflecting the agricultural revolution of the late-18th and early-19th centuries, but the extent of its alterations may mean that it fails to meet the strict English Heritage criteria for listing at grade II.



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Figure 1. Current Ordnance Survey

The rectangular outline of the barn is enclosed in red. A lean-to shed in the building's north-eastern corner had been demolished prior to inspection.

Documentary and Cartographic Evidence

Mill Hill Farm lies on the northern side of the road between Yoxford and Westleton approximately 0.7 km south of Darsham parish church. The site is on the rise of a hill and Hodkinson's Map of Suffolk in 1783 shows an eponymous windmill on the opposite side of the road – although it had been demolished by 1843 (figures 2 & 3), and the farm appears to have been known as Gravelpit Farm until the second half of the 20th century. The farmhouse has a neat red-brick facade of the late-18th or early-19th century which is consistent with the date 1780 incised into a brick (as reported by the farm's owner), although its asymmetrical pattern of windows and non-central entrance suggests the presence of older fabric within. The brick barn to the east of the house can also be dated on stylistic grounds to the late-18th or early-19th century and may well be contemporary with the facade. No buildings on the site are listed.

At the time of the Darsham tithe survey in 1843 the farm belonged to Charles Purvis Esquire, the owner of Darsham House 400 m to the north-east, and was occupied by Joseph Gooda (sic) in conjunction with Home Farm a further 400 m to the north-east. Purvis, or perhaps a forebear of the same name, was also recorded on Hodkinson's map, and Gooda was listed as a farmer in White's Suffolk Directory of 1844. Mill Hill Farm and Home Farm contained a total of 205 acres of which approximately a third was pasture and the rest arable. The tithe apportionment names the site only as 'house and yards' (plot 82), with no reference to individual structures. The barn adjoined a pigstye (a traditional term for a paddock) on the north (plot 83) with a small orchard (84) to the west and 'Bullock Shed Hill' on the southern side of the road (i.e. to the south-east of the area labelled Mill Hill in figure 3).

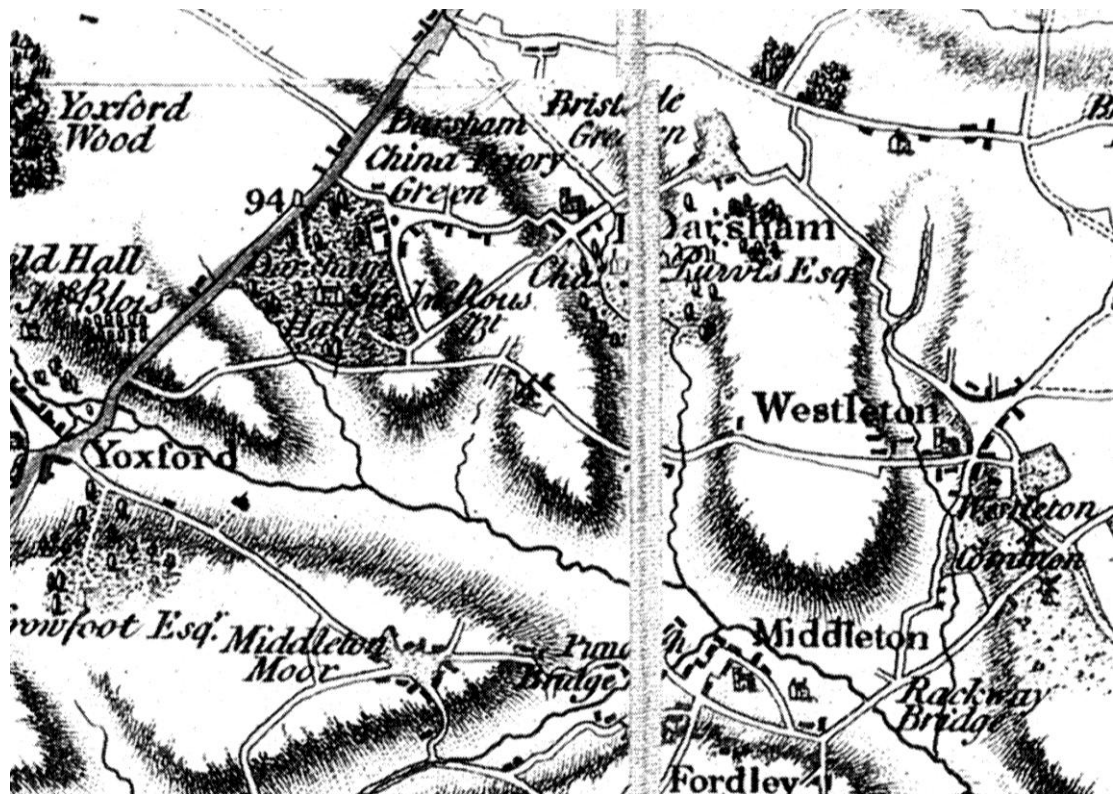


Figure 2. Hodkinson's Map of Suffolk in 1783. An eponymous windmill is depicted on the site of the modern farm buildings to the south of Westleton Road, immediately opposite the barn (in the centre of this detail). The vertical feature is a join in the map.



Figure 3. The farm on the Darsham tithe map of 1843. The T-shaped farmhouse in red lies to the west of the large rectangular barn, which extends further west than at present and was probably adjoined by a stable that no longer survives. Its narrow proportions indicate that its rear (northern) lean-to porch and sheds had not yet been added. The circular feature in pencil beneath the lettering may indicate the site of the mill, which is not depicted and had evidently been demolished since 1783.

The farm was depicted only as a stylised L-shaped block in 1783, but the 1843 tithe map clearly shows the T-shaped farmhouse in red and the present brick barn in grey. Maps of this period typically distinguished dwelling houses from outbuildings in this manner. The long, narrow proportions of the barn indicate that it lacked its existing rear extensions and continued further in the direction of the house. In all probability the remaining barn adjoined a stable that no longer survives. East Anglian barns were often abutted by stables in this way, usually formed by separate structures but in some cases contained within the same fabric as the barn. The large pond to the south-east of the site was omitted from the tithe map, although many were shown in blue elsewhere in the parish, and it may have been dug as part of the mid-19th century alterations.

By the time of the first edition Ordnance Survey in 1884 the barn had acquired its northern porch and adjoining sheds, as indicated by its greater width relative to the probable stable, to which a range of narrow sheds had been added on the west. A new red-brick shed had also been built to the south of the barn (illus 1 below). Most local farms were expanded in a similar manner during the mid-19th century as mixed animal husbandry replaced the intensive cereal cultivation of the Napoleonic period when grain prices were artificially high. By 1904 the stable had also been provided with a narrow northern extension, reflecting those of the barn. This stable and its adjoining western sheds were still shown on the Ordnance Survey of 1982 but had been demolished prior to inspection, and the large shed adjoining the road to the south had been rebuilt in cement block-work.

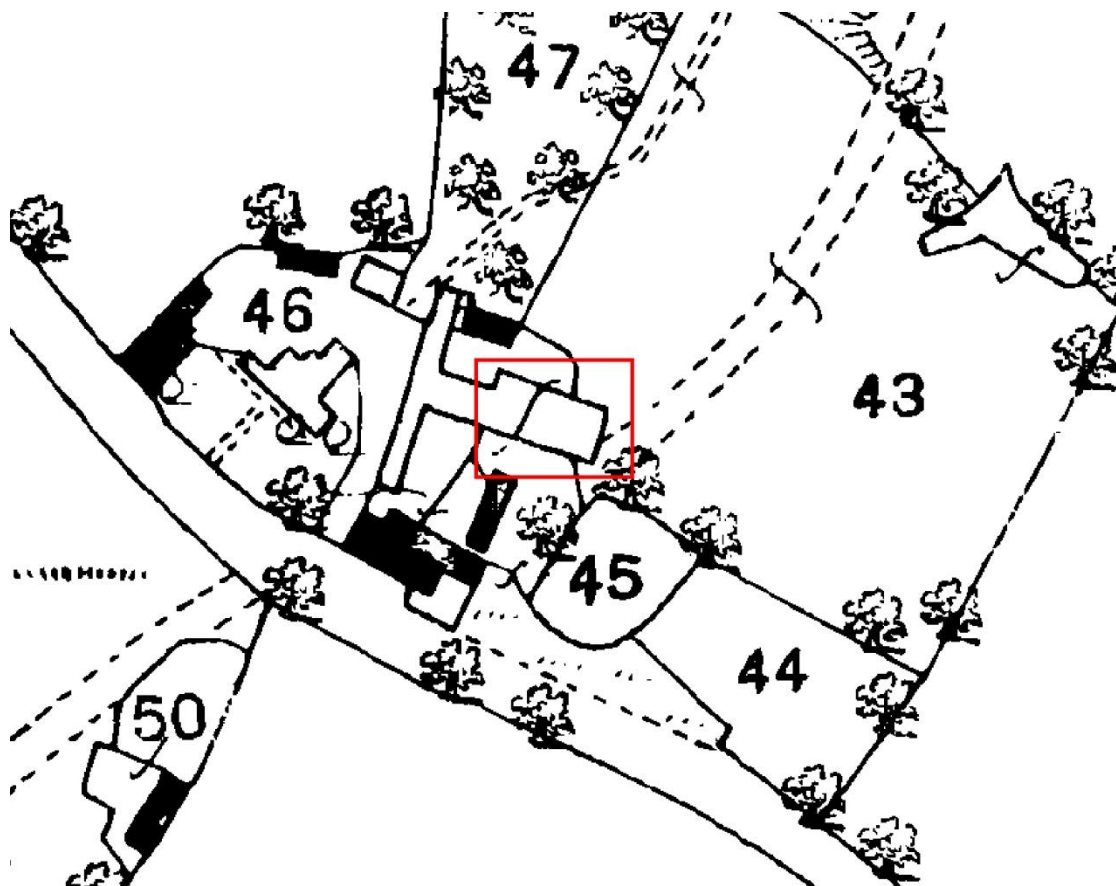


Figure 4. The First Edition 25 inch Ordnance Survey of 1884. The barn is now wider than in 1843 after the addition its lean-to porch and adjoining sheds, but the probable stable against its western gable retains its original narrow proportions. The surviving red-brick shed to the south of the barn had also been built since 1843 (illus. 1 below). The farm is not named on the map but the cottages to the north were labelled Gravelpit Cottages.

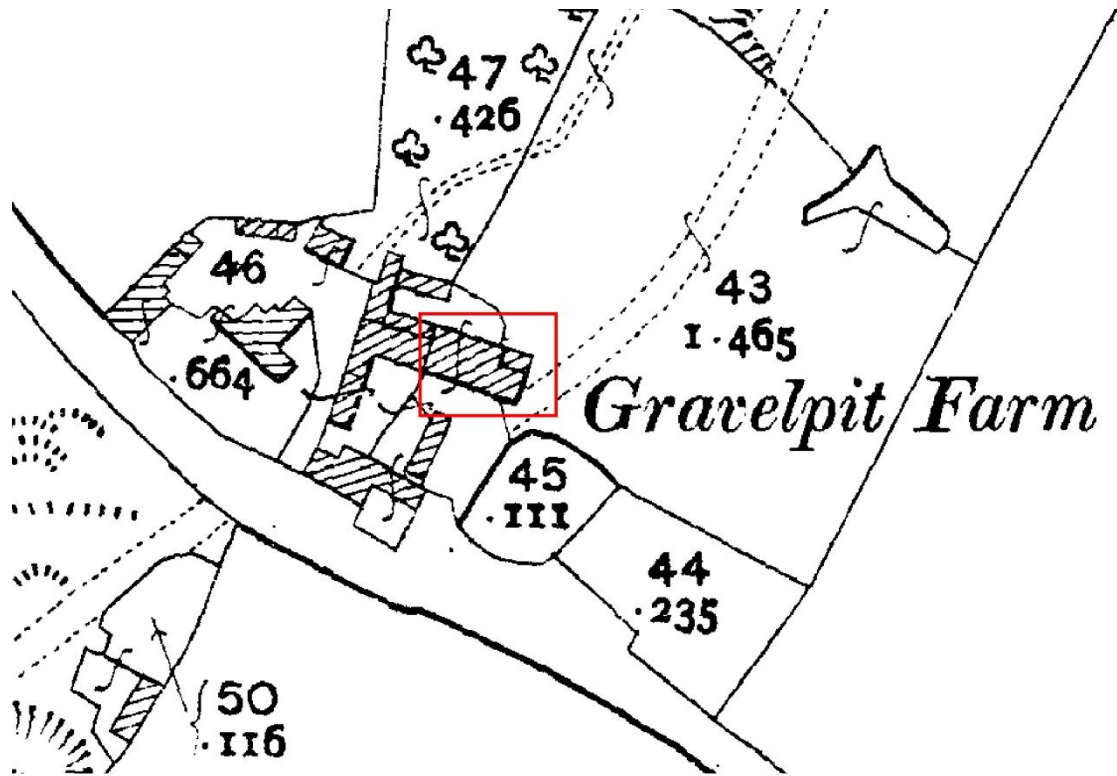


Figure 5. Second Edition 25 inch Ordnance Survey of 1904. A rear lean-to had been added to the north of the probable stable since 1884. The recently demolished lean-to in the barn's north-eastern corner is clearly outlined, although its counterpart to the north-west is not. The site continued to be known as Gravelpit Farm into the 1960s but was labelled Mill Hill Farm on the Ordnance Survey of 1976 (not included here), at which time the building adjoining the barn's western gable still survived much as in 1904.

Building Analysis

Proportions, fabric and date

The barn at Mill Hill Farm is a red brick and pantiled structure on an approximately east-west axis which extends to a total of 18.9 m in length by 6.7 m in width (62 ft by 22 ft). A secondary lean-to porch projects by a further 2.75 m (9 ft) from the rear (northern) elevation. The walls rise to 4.2 m (14 ft) from the internal floor of 20th century concrete, but reach a maximum external height of 4.6 m (15.25 ft) where the ground slopes away at the western end of the southern elevation. At 35 cm (14 in) thick they are substantially built in Flemish bond, i.e. alternating headers and stretchers but with random interruptions, particularly in the western gable where entire courses of headers and stretchers can be seen. The poor bonding of this gable suggests it was not designed to be visible externally, and was built against an earlier stable or other structure as indicated by the cartographic evidence above. The high quality struck pointing of the original back wall has been preserved within the porch. The barn's interior is ventilated by a series of six loops in both the northern and southern elevations, but not the gables, each arranged in a group of three over three at a height of 2.75 m (9ft).

The fully intact and original oak roof structure consists of two tiers of staggered butt-purlins with collared principal rafters and diagonal primary braces which interrupt the common rafters of both end-bays. All joints are fully tenoned and pegged, and the roof gables consist of weatherboarded studwork rather than brick (the weatherboarding renewed in the 20th century). The relatively shallow pitch of approximately 48 degrees is consistent with the present roof covering of pantiles; thatch is usually found with steeper pitches of 55 degree or more, but cannot be ruled out. The wall and roof fabric is typical of the late-18th and early-19th centuries in Suffolk, reflecting the agricultural improvements of that period which saw large areas of local heath and common land enclosed to form new arable. It closely resembles the external brickwork and pantiled roof of the nearby farmhouse, which is understood to bear the date 1780 incised into a brick (as reported by the owner), and both house and barn may well have been built in this year.

Original layout and function

The barn is a typical threshing barn with an original entrance in the centre of its southern elevation facing a yard adjoining the road. This entrance extends to 3.6 m (11.75 ft) in width, excluding the jambs from which decayed 19th century doors now hang, and would have opened onto a brick or boarded threshing floor of which no trace is currently visible beneath 20th century concrete. The western jamb appears to be contemporary with the fabric, with an original bolted knee-brace linking it to the tie-beam, but the eastern jamb is a replacement. The storage areas of 7.3 m (24 ft) to east and west were initially open to the roof, much as they remain today. The rear door in the northern elevation would have been little larger than a normal house door when the barn was first built; sufficient to create a through-draught for threshing and winnowing but not to admit vehicles. Small rear doors of this kind were common until the 19th century, when cart thoroughfares were inserted into older barns and incorporated as standard features of new ones. Any evidence of its original proportions was destroyed by the insertion of the present opening when the rear porch was added in the mid-19th century.

Later alterations and condition

The barn survives in largely original condition, with the notable exception of its lean-to rear porch which is an addition of the mid-19th century. It was not present at the time of the 1843

tithe survey, as detailed above, but was probably built before the 1860s with 23 cm (9 in) thick walls laid in Monk bond (alternating headers and pairs of stretchers). Porches of this kind were not designed to shelter the principal entrance but to extend the length of the threshing floor and to provide space for grain storage on both sides. At 2.5 m (8 ft) in width the new rear door was probably wider than its predecessor but of similar height, and is still flanked by attached internal posts containing vertical grooves for the boarded grain bins that have otherwise been removed. This brick porch was probably flanked by contemporary lean-to sheds of weatherboarded studwork but of these only the westernmost now remains with an open-ended western gable and renewed late-20th century fabric.

A loft was inserted into the entire western half of the barn in the late-19th century using massive tall-sectioned deal joists with Baltic timber marks that spanned the width of the structure and were secured by vertical apertures cut into the brickwork. The apertures of the northern elevation, which were hidden by the lean-to shed and porch, penetrate the full thickness of the wall. Lofts of this kind were common additions to local barns and were used to store grain and other animal feed, sometimes with milling and other grain preparation machines mounted both above and below. Only a narrow section now survives against the western gable and this supports a new floor of 20th century axial joists. A hole has been crudely cut in the brickwork of the back wall to link the interiors of the main barn and the eastern section of the porch, perhaps to accommodate the drive of a machine.

Historic Significance

The barn at Mill Hill Farm is a large and imposing late-Georgian structure built to a high standard in brick by the owner of nearby Darsham House to which the farm belonged. It may well be contemporary with the adjacent farmhouse, which is understood to bear the date 1780. Although its rear elevation was altered by the addition of a lean-to porch in the mid-19th century the southern facade remains completely intact, with an attractive array of ventilation loops. The building is accordingly of considerable historic and visual interest, reflecting the agricultural revolution of the late-18th and early-19th centuries. A very similar nearby brick barn with the incised date 1767 was recently listed by English Heritage at grade II (Upper Barn in Ufford, SCCAS HBR October 2012) but this retained an original entrance porch with unusual side-granaries and the case for listing at Mill Hill Farm while strong is less conclusive.

Appendix 1 (on accompanying CD): Full Photographic Record

Descriptions of Photographs in Appendix 1

Photograph no.

1. General view of site from Westleton Road to south-east showing barn on right.
2. General view of site from south showing pond in centre and barn in rear to left.
3. Southern facade of former farmhouse reported to contain date 1780 incised in brickwork. Included for site context.
4. Rear of former farmhouse seen from barn to east. Included for site context.
5. General view of barn from south showing much altered 19th century brick shed to left.
6. Southern facade of barn showing pantiled roof and original central entrance with decayed doors & six three-over-three ventilation loops.
7. Exterior from south-west showing recent weatherboarding to roof & less regular Flemish bond to gable.
8. Western external gable with later lean-to shed to left & random pattern of brick bonding.
9. Western end of northern exterior from later lean-to shed, showing original loops and later joist apertures.
10. Interior from west of lean-to shed showing painted external brickwork & weatherboarding of northern porch in centre.
11. Northern (rear) exterior with recent weatherboarded studwork of north-western lean-to shed to right & brick lean-to porch in centre.
12. Exterior of secondary northern lean-to shed showing Monk bond with closers (quarter-bricks) respecting present doorway.
13. Exterior from north-east showing Flemish bond to eastern gable with secondary lean-to rear porch to right.
14. Eastern exterior of northern lean-to porch showing Monk bond and straight joint abutting main barn to left.
15. Interior from east of northern lean-to shed showing oak post of former grain bin to right.
16. Northern exterior of barn from later lean-to porch showing original ventilation loops & later apertures for internal loft joists.
17. Detail of external northern brickwork from later porch showing remnants of high-quality incised pointing & 1947 P. SAKER graffiti.

18. Northern exterior from later porch showing secondary aperture interrupting brickwork on both sides.
19. Interior from west of northern lean-to shed showing oak post of former grain bin to left.
20. Northern exterior of barn from lean-to porch showing original ventilation loops & later aperture possibly for a machinery drive shaft.
21. Northern interior of lean-to porch showing attached posts with vertical grooves for grain bins flanking entrance.
22. Interior of barn from west showing later lean-to rear porch to left and original ventilation loops to front and rear.
23. Northern (rear) interior of barn showing secondary central aperture to porch replacing original small door.
24. Northern interior of eastern half of barn showing three original blocks of ventilation loops with later aperture to left.
25. Northern interior of eastern half of barn showing original staggered butt-purlin roof with primary rafter brace in end-bay to right.
26. Interior of barn from east showing original roof structure and later lean-to rear porch to right.
27. Detail from east of intact original oak roof structure of staggered butt-purlins with pegged collars.
28. Eastern internal gable of barn showing absence of ventilation loops.
29. Eastern internal roof gable of barn showing original weatherboarded studwork and primary braces interrupting rafters.
30. Southern interior of eastern half of barn showing three original blocks of ventilation loops with entrance to right.
31. Southern interior of eastern half of barn showing original staggered butt-purlin roof with primary rafter brace in end-bay to left.
32. Southern (front) interior of barn showing original central entrance to threshing bay to left & later lean-to porch to right.
33. Detail of original ventilation loops in southern interior of eastern half of barn.
34. Southern entrance showing probably original jamb and bolted knee-brace to right with scar of missing brace in roof-plate to left.
35. Southern interior of western half of barn showing three original blocks of ventilation loops with remnant of later loft to right.
36. Southern interior of western half of barn showing crudely cut apertures for later loft with remnant to right.

37. Remnant of secondary loft adjoining western internal gable showing recent axial joists above. Viewed from north.
38. Western internal gable showing large deal lateral joists of later loft with Baltic timber marks & secondary door to right.
39. Northern interior of western half of barn showing remnant of secondary loft adjoining gable.
40. Western internal roof gable of barn showing original weatherboarded studwork and primary braces interrupting rafters.
41. Northern interior of western half of barn showing three blocks of ventilation loops with apertures for later loft joists beneath.
42. Interior of barn from west showing later rear lean-to porch with shallower roof pitch to left.

Photographic Appendix 2 follows on pp. 11-16

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



Illus. 1. A general view of the site from Westleton Road to the south showing the much altered 19th century brick shed to the left with the barn in the rear.



Illus. 2. The barn's well-preserved southern facade with three groups of original ventilation loops on each side of the central entrance. The fragmentary half-hung doors are replacements of the late-19th or early-20th century.



Illus. 3. The rear (northern) exterior showing the central lean-to brick porch added in the mid-19th century to increase the length of the threshing floor and provide grain storage bins on each side. The weatherboarded studwork to the right was renewed in the 20th century.



Illus. 4. The barn from the north-east showing the original weatherboarded studwork of the roof gable. An aperture in the brickwork of the northern elevation is likely to have secured the tie-beam of a second weatherboarded lean-to shed as depicted on the historic Ordnance Surveys but subsequently demolished.



Illus. 5. The western half of the secondary lean-to rear porch, with the grooved wooden post of a grain bin still attached to the northern wall on the right. The entrance to the barn on the left has been cut through the brickwork and is secondary, having replaced a smaller original back door.



Illus. 6. The northern (rear) interior of the original threshing barn showing the secondary central aperture adjoining the rear porch with three groups of ventilation loops on each side. A hole has been cut through the wall to the right of the porch in recent years, perhaps to accommodate a drive shaft.



Illus. 7. The intact, original oak roof structure consisting of two tiers of staggered butt-purlins with pegged collars. This form of roof is typical of the late-18th and early-19th centuries in Suffolk.



Illus. 8. The interior from the east showing the original central entrance to the threshing bay on the left and the later aperture to the porch on the right.



Illus. 9. The southern entrance flanked by ventilation loops arranged in groups of three over three. The right-hand (western) door jamb and bolted knee-brace appear to be original, but the left-hand jamb is a replacement and its knee-brace has been removed. There is no evidence of a threshing floor but it may survive beneath modern concrete.



Illus. 10. The western end of the southern interior showing the remnant of a late-19th century loft adjoining the western gable on the right. A series of crudely cut apertures for missing joists can be seen in both the front and rear walls of the entire western half of the barn. A new floor of 20th century axial softwood joists is visible above the 19th century lateral joists.



Illus. 11. The unusually intact staggered butt-purlin roof structure in the eastern half of the barn, looking south, with original primary braces interrupting the rafters in the end-bay to the left. The roof of the western half is identical.



Illus. 12. The former farmhouse to the west of the barn, viewed from Westleton Road to the south. This building is reported to contain the date 1780 incised into its brickwork and may well be contemporary with the barn – although its asymmetry suggests the brick facade may conceal earlier fabric. Included for site context.

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OASIS ID: suffolkc1-170414

Project details

Project name	Historic building recording of the barn at Mill Hill Farm, Darsham
Short description of the project	Mill Hill Farm lies on high ground 0.7 km south of Darsham church when surveyed in 1843 it was one of two rented holdings amounting to 205 acres on the estate of Charles Purvis. The former threshing barn is a late-Georgian structure well-built in red brick with a pantiled roof. It may be contemporary with the facade of the adjacent farmhouse which bears the date 1780. The front and rear walls are pierced by ventilation loops arranged in patterns of three-over-three and the central southern entrance is an original feature, although the present doors are C19th replacements. The roof structure is fully tenoned and pegged, consisting of staggered butt-purlins with primary rafter braces in the end-bays, and survives intact. The floors are concrete with no trace of the threshing floor that would have occupied the central bay. A lean-to rear porch with integral grain bins was added to the northern elevation in the mid-C19th, destroying the original rear door. Weatherboarded lean-to sheds lay on both sides of this porch, but only one now remains. Cartographic evidence and the erratic bonding of the barn's western gable suggest it was designed to abut a contemporary or earlier building, which was demolished in the late-C20th. During the late-C19th a grain floor was inserted into the southern half of the barn, supported by joists cut into the brickwork which have since been removed. The barn is of considerable historic and visual interest, reflecting the agricultural revolution of the late-18th and early-19th centuries.
Project dates	Start: 06-02-2014 End: 19-02-2014
Previous/future work	No / No
Any associated project reference codes	DAR 029 - Sitecode
Type of project	Building Recording
Site status	None
Current Land use	Other 2 - In use as a building
Monument type	BARN Post Medieval
Significant Finds	NONE None
Methods & techniques	"Photographic Survey"
Prompt	Planning condition

Project location

Country	England
Site location	SUFFOLK SUFFOLK COASTAL DARSHAM DAR 029 Mill Hill Farm, Westleton Road, Darsham

Study area 100.00 Square metres
 Site coordinates TM 421 692 52.2669780679 1.54862844691 52 16 01 N 001 32 55 E Point
 Height OD / Depth Min: 18.00m Max: 18.50m

Project creators

Name of Organisation Suffolk County Council Archaeological Service
 Project brief originator Local Planning Authority (with/without advice from County/District Archaeologist)
 Project design originator Richard Hoggett
 Project director/manager David Gill
 Project supervisor Leigh Alston
 Type of sponsor/funding body Land owner

Project archives

Physical Archive Exists? No
 Digital Archive recipient Suffolk County Council Archaeological Service
 Digital Contents "Survey"
 Digital Media available "Images raster / digital photography", "Text"
 Paper Archive recipient Suffolk County Council Archaeological Service
 Paper Contents "Survey"
 Paper Media available "Report"

Project bibliography 1

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