

**The Willows,
South Elmham All Saints,
Suffolk**

Suffolk County Council
Archaeological Service

Suffolk County Council
Archaeological Service

Archaeological Record



Suffolk County Council
Archaeological Service

Suffolk County Council
Archaeological Service

**Leigh Alston MA (Oxon)
Architectural Historian
4 Nayland Road
Bures St Mary
Suffolk CO8 5BX**

Suffolk County Council
Archaeological Service

February 2008

Leigh A. Alston MA (Oxon)
Architectural Historian

**4 Nayland Road
Bures St Mary
Suffolk CO8 5BX**

Tel. (01787) 228016

E-Mail: leigh.alston@virgin.net

**The Barn,
The Willows, The Common,
South Elmham All Saints,
Suffolk**

(TM 3402 8274)

Archaeological Record

This report provides a written and photographic record at English Heritage (2006) Level 3 of a redundant barn that formerly belonged to the adjacent farmhouse known as The Willows but is now in separate ownership. It has been prepared to a brief designed by the Archaeological Service of Suffolk County Council (Dr Jess Tipper, ref: /BarnatTheWillows-SouthElmhamAllSaints2008, dated 7 January 2008) and is intended to fulfil a condition of planning permission for domestic conversion (Waveney District Council Application DC/07/0401/FUL).

Introduction

The following written report is accompanied by a CD containing a full photographic record in the form of 8.2 megapixel digital images (Appendix 1) but includes printed photographs of key features (Appendix 2). Each digital image is separately described in the written report, and the CD also includes the report in MS Word format. The buildings were inspected on 11 January 2008, when the accompanying photographs were taken; wherever practical a white metre rod with centimetre subdivisions has been included for scale purposes. The drawings use broken lines to indicate missing or concealed timbers, with scales in feet and metres.

Summary

The Willows is a substantial timber-framed listed farmhouse of the late-16th or early-17th century with a 19th century facade on the north-western edge of All Saints Common. The contemporary grade II-listed timber-framed and weatherboarded barn that forms the subject of this report lies immediately south-east of the house but is now in separate ownership. The

barn is typical of its period and region, with two bays of equal length flanking a narrow central bay which contains evidence of an original south-eastern entrance door. The oak framing remains largely intact, along with a roof structure of double butt-purlins and wind braces, although the studs of the north-western gable were entirely removed when the barn was extended by 6 feet (1.8 m) in the 19th century. Fragments of original wattle-and-daub infill and external render still survive, but most was replaced by the present tarred weatherboarding in the 19th century and any evidence of the rear door was lost when a new full-height doorway was inserted at the same time. The early structure is of modest proportions, extending to 41 feet in length by 19.5 feet in overall width (12.5 m by 5.9) with uninterrupted studs rising 12 feet (3.6 m) from ground sill to roof-plate. The steeply pitched roof was designed for thatch but is now covered with galvanised corrugated iron. A good red brick stable with a hayloft and arched Mock-Gothic fenestration was built against the south-eastern gable in the early-19th century, and an apparent cattle yard with open-sided shelters added to the south-west, but conversion work was well underway at the time of inspection and few agricultural fixtures or fittings remained.



Figure 1.

Existing Site Plan, showing the listed barn with its various extensions and lean-to additions in the centre of a large farm complex. The farmhouse lies to the north-east and faces the considerable expanse of All Saints Common to the east. The yards and buildings to the north-west and south-west are of 20th century origin.

Historic Site Context: Cartographic Record

The Willows adjoins the north-western corner of the large, triangular area of common grazing land known as All Saints Common, 1km east of the Norman church of All Saints. The substantial farmhouse is listed at grade II, and described in the schedule as a late-16th or early-17th century timber-framed structure re-faced in the 19th century with mathematical tiles and provided with a matching new white brick cross-wing at the same time. The house faces the Common, as shown in photo A2.1, but the adjacent barn is aligned at right-angles approximately 10 metres from its south-western gable. The parish tithe map of 1839 and the subsequent 25 inch Ordnance Surveys illustrate the development of the site as follows:



Figure 2. Tithe Map, All Saints and St Nicholas South Elmham, 1839 (SRO Ipswich)

The Ordnance Survey of c.1886 shows the outline of the barn unaltered from 1839 (figs. 3 & 2 respectively), and the surviving brick stable (5) and shelter sheds (8 & 9) were evidently built shortly before the first of the two surveys. Most Suffolk farmyards were altered and extended during the mid-19th century to accommodate cattle, but given the proximity of the Common animal husbandry is likely to have been an important feature of local agriculture well before it spread to the rest of the county. The farmhouse, in contrast, was extended and presumably re-faced between 1839 and 1886 (the north-eastern cross-wing is shown in figure 3 but not figure 2).

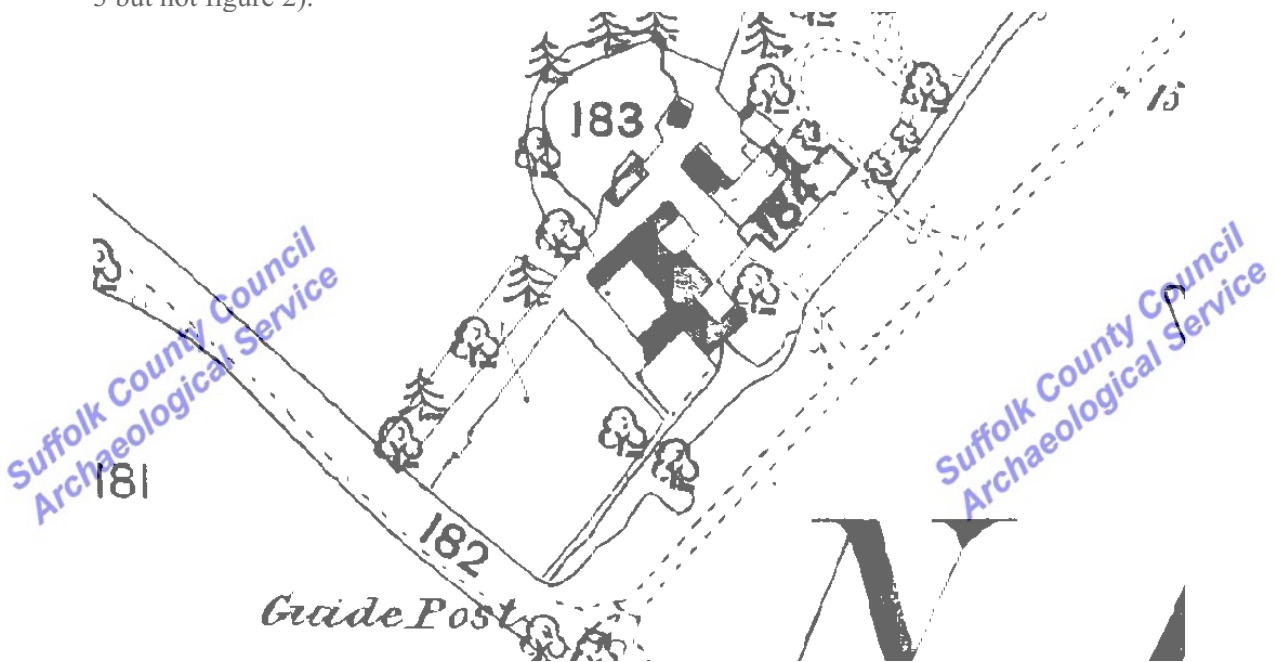


Figure 3. First Edition Ordnance Survey, c.1886

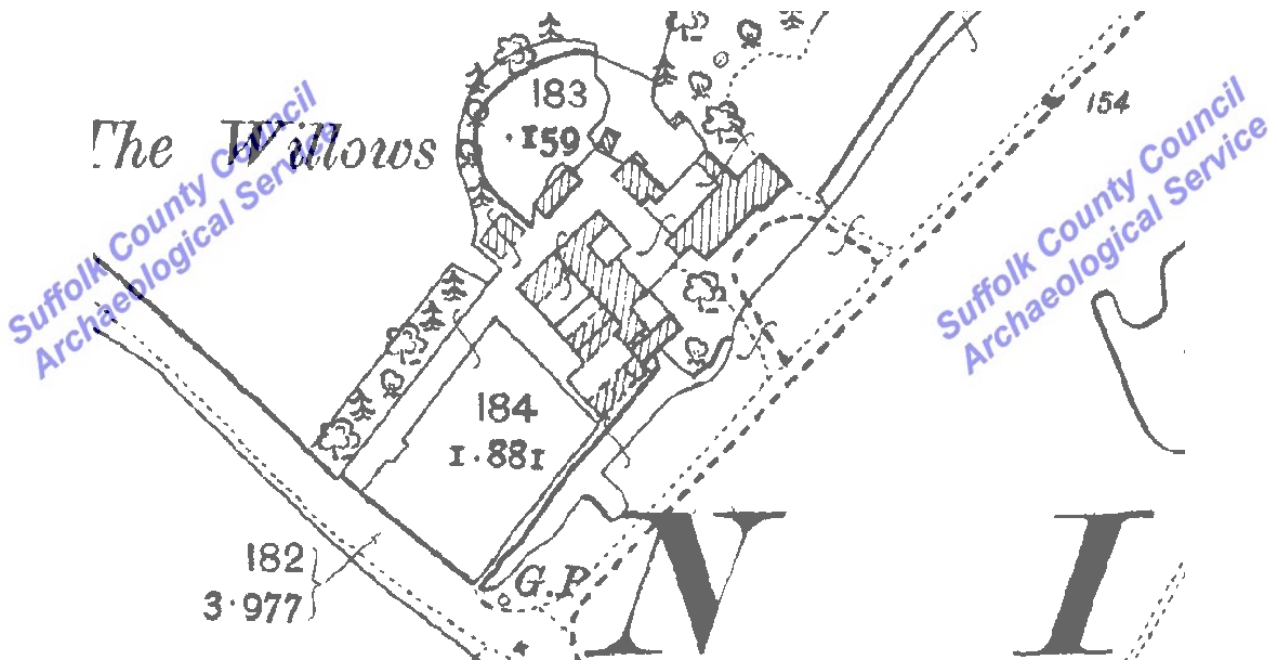


Figure 4. Second Edition 25 inch Ordnance Survey, c.1904

The Ordnance Survey of 1904 shows the barn complex in greater detail, using broken lines to indicate open-sided structures such as the four shelter-sheds adjoining the south-western yards. The large yard against the barn contains a central partition, and was probably used for cattle, while the yards adjoining the brick stable to the south were horse yards. The north western shelter was rebuilt in the late-20th century and the various other structures shown here but absent from figure 6 below appear to have been demolished shortly before inspection took place.

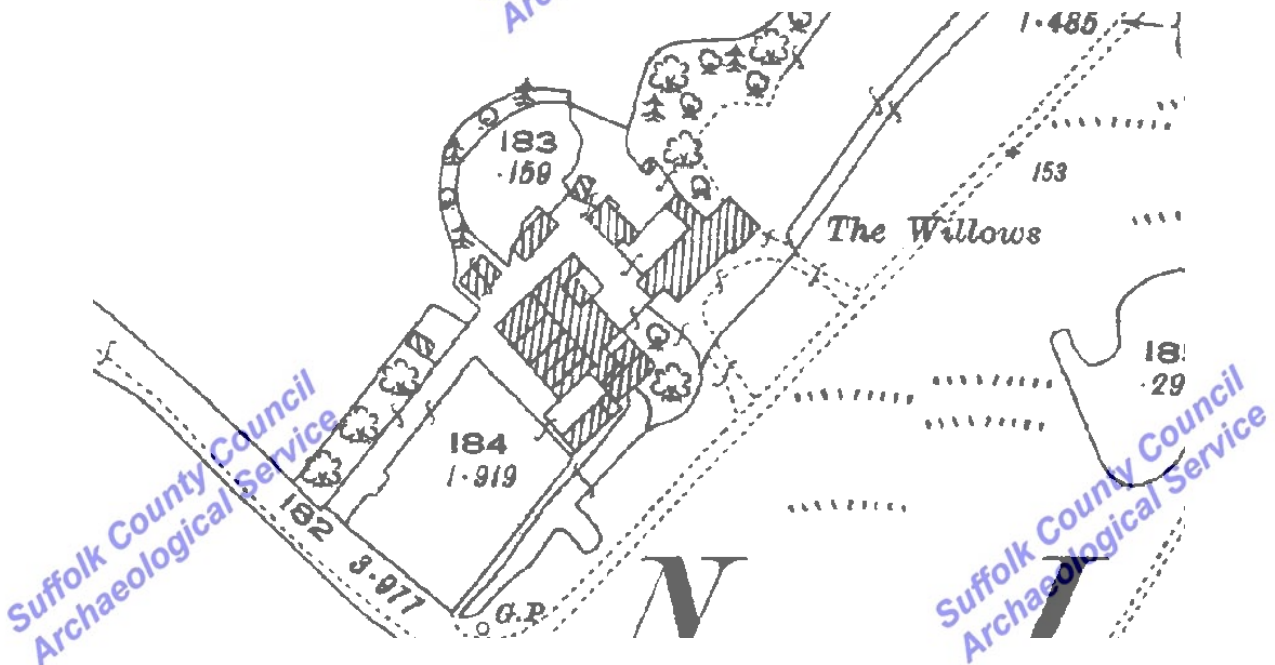


Figure 5. Third Edition 25 inch Ordnance Survey, c.1925

By 1925 the cattle yards to the south-west were shaded and had been roofed over, while new structures which no longer survive had been erected in the smaller yards to the north-east. The pond behind the house was drained and built over in the mid-20th century, and block-work pig sheds were built to the south.

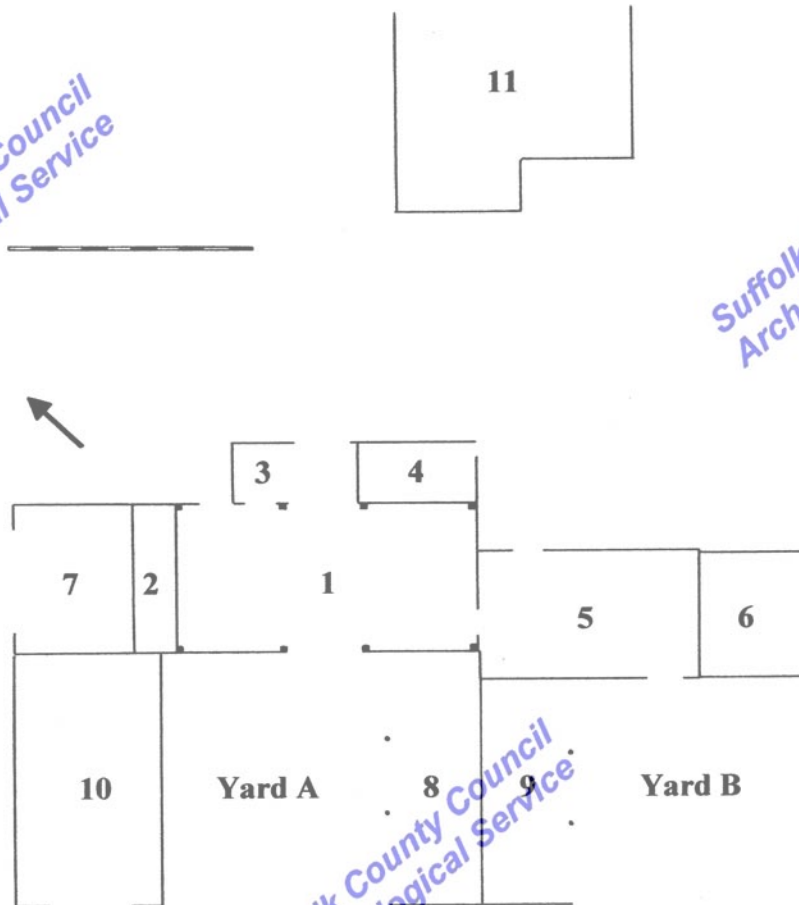


Figure 6. Block Plan of Site (showing the original extent of the barn with reference to its various surviving extensions and additions). Scale in metres.

1. The Barn. Late-16th or early-17th century timber-framed and weatherboarded barn of three bays with original central entrance facing gable of farmhouse to north-east. Formerly thatched and externally rendered.
2. Extension of 6 feet (1.8m) to main barn, removing original north-western gable studs. Early-19th century.
3. Lean-to addition to north-eastern elevation forming open shed adjacent to entrance. Early-19th century.
4. Lean-to addition to north-eastern elevation forming enclosed shed entered from stable yard to south-east. Possibly a tack room. Early-19th century
5. Brick stable with hay loft or granary against south-eastern gable of barn. Early-19th century (probably 1820s or 1830s).
6. Small brick shed added to south-eastern gable of stable. Much altered and partly demolished. Probably part of a missing structure which projected towards the farmhouse.
7. Lean-to extension to north-western gable of barn. Early-19th century
- 8/9. A pair of open-sided timber-framed shelter sheds with brick gable and studwork axial partition, built as one structure but serving opposing yards (i.e. Cattle Yard A and Horse Yard B).
10. Modern shed on the site of an open-sided shelter shed shown in figures 3-5.
11. Farmhouse (aligned at right-angles to barn). Listed as late-16th or early-17th century and probably contemporary with barn. Now in separate ownership and not inspected, but apparently oriented with service gable towards barn

Building Analysis

The following account focuses on the original timber-framed structure of the listed barn and does not include drawings or detailed analysis of its various 19th century extensions and additions (which had been extensively altered or demolished prior to inspection).

Proportions and Framing

The barn is aligned on a north-west/south-east axis at right-angles to the adjacent farmhouse and to the margin of All Saints Common. Its timber-framed structure extends to 41 feet in overall length by 19.5 feet in width (excluding its subsequent extension), and rises to 13 feet at its eaves (12.5 m by 5.9 by 3.9). It comprises two outer bays, each of 14 feet between the neatly jowled and chamfered storey posts, and a central bay of 10 feet (4.3 and 3.0 metres respectively). The individual studs rise 12 feet from the ground sills to the roof-plates, and are secured to both with pegged mortise-and-tenon joints in the medieval tradition. Heavy arch-braces link the horizontal tie-beams and storey posts, and internally trenched wall braces rise to the roof-plates and tie-beams from all four corner posts (although several are now lacking, as indicated by broken lines in the drawings). The studs measure 6 ins by 3.5 on average (15 cms by 9), with some slightly smaller, but two studs in the south-eastern gable extend to 9 ins (23 cms) by 3.5 and are distinctly curved, as are several studs of normal proportions in the eastern bay of the south-western elevation. The studs of the north-eastern elevation bear a complete sequence of carpenters' marks in the form of Roman numerals; each is marked on the inner face close to its junction with the ground sill. The south-western studs have been truncated or concealed by internal boarding, and evidence of similar marking is absent accordingly. The roof-plate of the central bay in the north-eastern elevation, facing the farmhouse, lacks stud mortises and contains circular housings for timber door posts (pivoting in the form of 'pin' hinges to save ironwork in a style typical of northern East Anglia but rarely found in the south). The original roof-plate of the rear, south-western elevation has been removed to accommodate a secondary full-height door, and there is no evidence of the small door that probably existed in its central bay. The frame is reasonably intact, although only the eastern bay of the north-eastern elevation retains its original ground sill on a low secondary plinth of red brick (the others having been removed or replaced) and both gables have been substantially altered: the studs of the western gable were entirely removed to leave only the tie-beam and roof-collar *in situ* when the barn was extended by 6 feet in the 19th century (using thin, nailed timber with straight, primary bracing) and only the aforementioned curved studs of the eastern gable escaped rebuilding in a similar style.

Roof Structure and Infill

The roof structure is pitched at 55 degrees (or possibly slightly more) for thatch but is now covered with galvanised corrugated iron or a similar material. It consists of two tiers of butt-purlins with a full complement of small, cranked wind braces, although several of the latter are now missing. The common rafters have been much re-arranged and altered and it is unclear which remain *in situ*. The outer bays contain central intermediate principal rafters which are pegged directly to the roof-plates to create a roof of five bays. The roof-plates contain edge-halved-and-bridled scarf joints of the standard 16th century type which was replaced by the face-halved-and-bladed joint in the early-17th century. The studs are not notched or grooved for infill staves, and the small areas of original wattle-and-daub which remain in the north-eastern elevation are secured by large split poles nailed to their external surfaces. An area of daub in the eastern bay which may be secondary contains re-used timbers bored with circular holes in the manner of hay racks. The original external daub preserved within the lean-to extension (3) is roughcast and whitewashed, and reveals the external appearance of the entire barn prior to the addition of tarred weatherboarding in the 19th century.

Historic Assessment

The barn at The Willows is typical of many late-16th and early-17th century examples that survive in Suffolk, reflecting the agricultural boom of that period (chiefly in response to rapid population growth and consequent price inflation). Its fabric has been depleted by later extension and partial rebuilding, but sufficient remains to reconstruct its original layout as described above (with the notable exception – as usual – of its central rear bay). Its roof is of standard form, but retains more of its wind-braces than many examples elsewhere and presents a visually attractive appearance in consequence (although in utilitarian structures such as barns these braces were designed primarily for structural stability rather than decorative effect). The survival of both original tie-beams and all four arch-braces is unusual, as many were removed to accommodate modern grain bins and farm equipment.

The Stable and Other 19th Century Additions

The brick stable which adjoins the south-eastern gable of the barn is an addition of the early-19th century that appears on the tithe map of 1839 (figure 2). It contains arched windows in the Mock Gothic taste but had been heavily altered prior to inspection, including the loss of its entire hay loft of granary floor, and its historic interest has diminished accordingly. The present doorway to the enclosed southern yard (formerly with a shelter shed to the east as well as the west) is an alteration which blocked an earlier door and arched window of which evidence remains in the brickwork. With the exception of three harness hooks on the same wall no fittings remain. The small shed adjoining the stable's south-eastern gable had lost its roof prior to inspection and contained evidence of earlier remodelling to its north-western elevation; it probably formed part of the long range shown in figures 2-5 which projected towards the farmhouse but was demolished prior to inspection (its roof scar is visible on the stable wall in photo A2.4). The lean-to additions against the north-western gable and north-eastern elevation of the barn also date from the early-19th century, consisting of sawn, nailed timber with straight primary bracing of that period, but lack relevant fixtures or fittings. The enclosed shed (4) was apparently entered only from the former enclosed yard in front of the stable and may have operated as a tack or harness room. The open-sided shelter sheds which divided the two southern yards had been partly converted prior to inspection, but also suggest the barn underwent the usual major phase of 19th century refurbishment to provide new animal accommodation shortly before the tithe survey of 1839. The shed marked 10 in figure 6 is of recent construction but occupies the site of another open-sided shelter shown on early maps.

Suffolk County Council
Archaeological Service

Suffolk County Council
Archaeological Service

Suffolk County Council
Archaeological Service

Suffolk County Council
Archaeological Service

Suffolk County Council
Archaeological Service

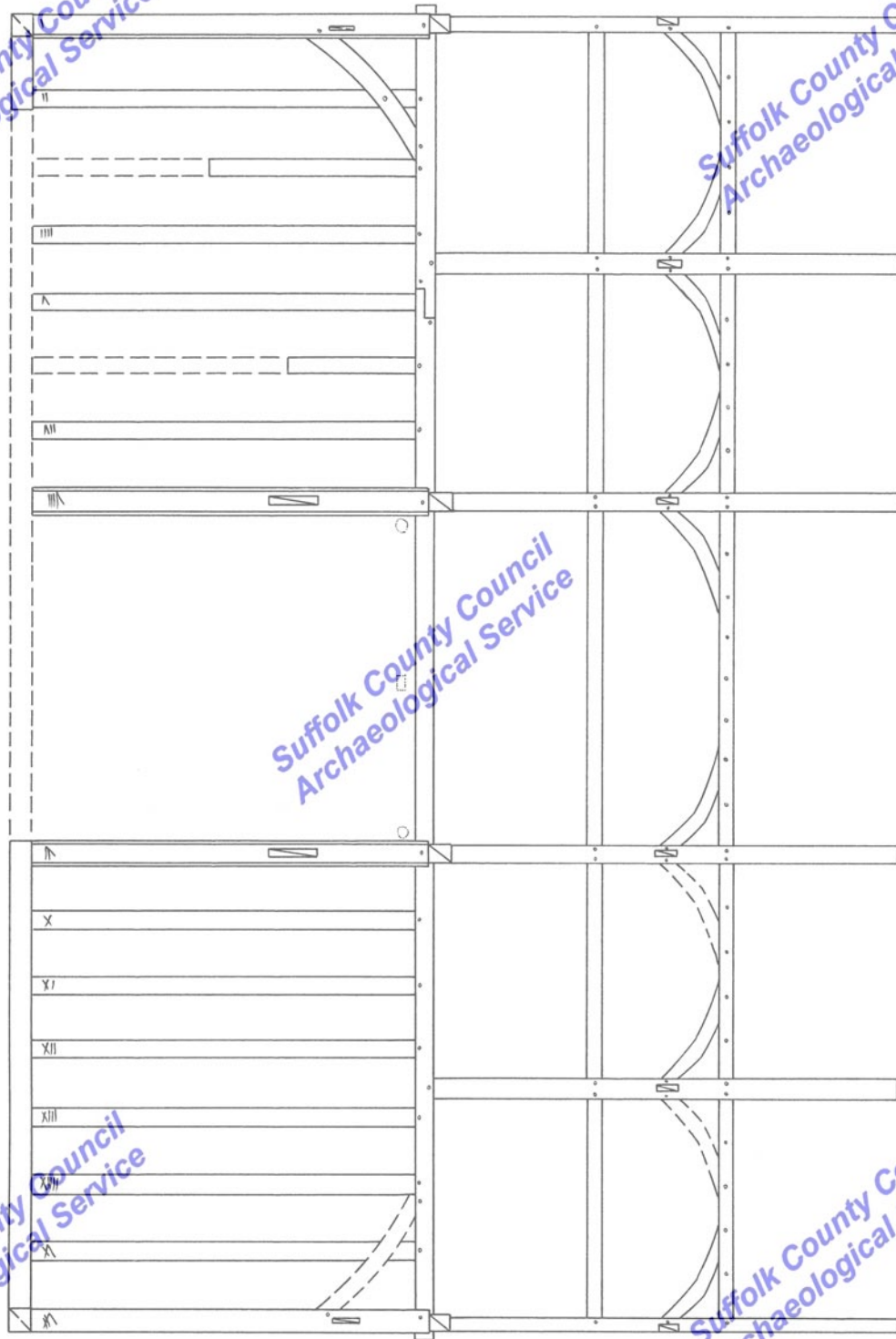


Figure 7

Internal elevation of north-eastern façade with principal roof timbers
Note evidence of original central door, with circular housings in roof-plate soffit

Suffolk County Council
Archaeological Service

Suffolk County Council
Archaeological Service

Suffolk County Council
Archaeological Service

Suffolk County Council
Archaeological Service

Suffolk County Council
Archaeological Service

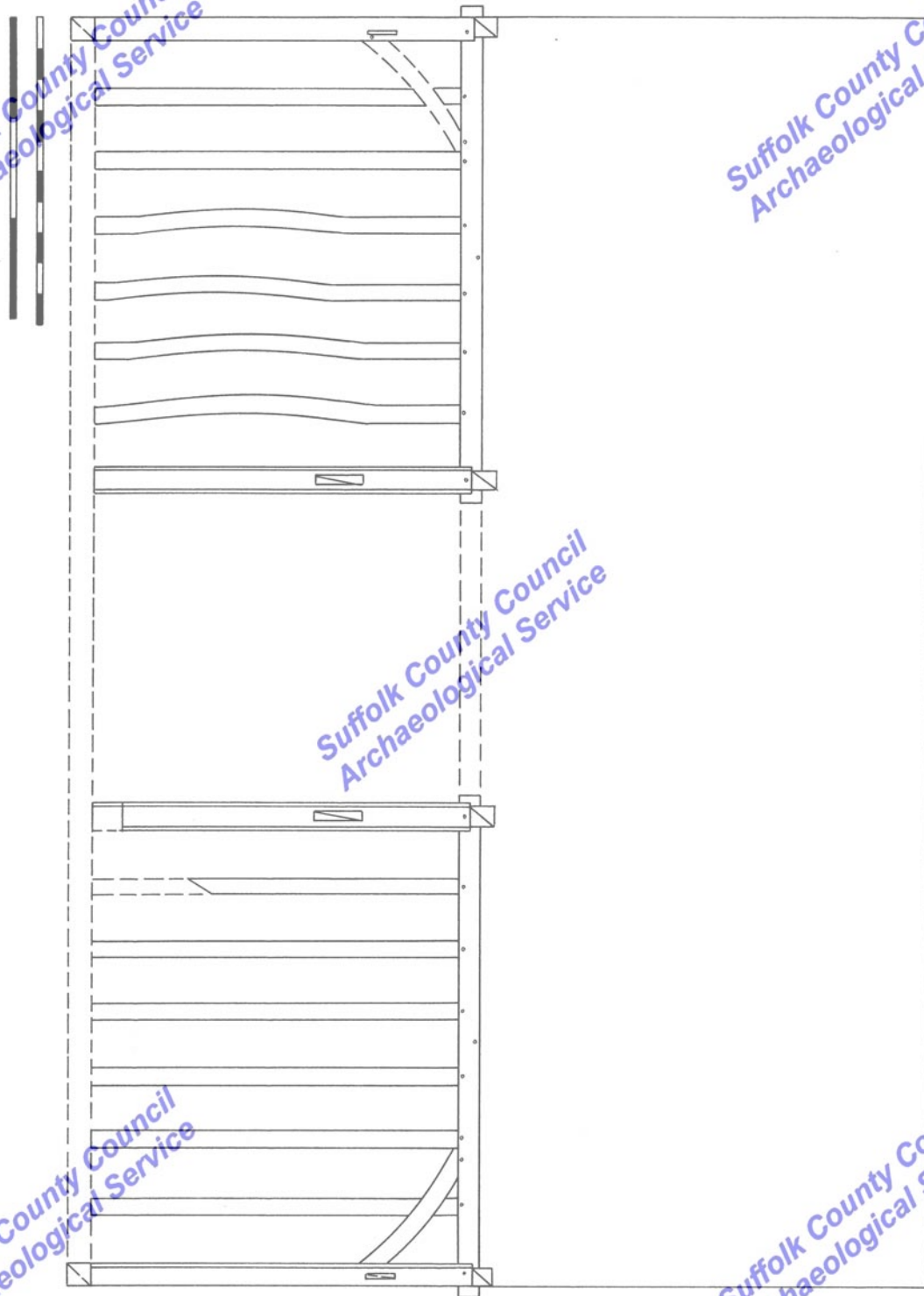


Figure 8
Internal elevation of south-western rear elevation
Framing of central bay destroyed by insertion of secondary entrance to Yard A

Suffolk County Council
Archaeological Service

Suffolk County Council
Archaeological Service

Suffolk County Council
Archaeological Service

Suffolk County Council
Archaeological Service

Suffolk County Council
Archaeological Service

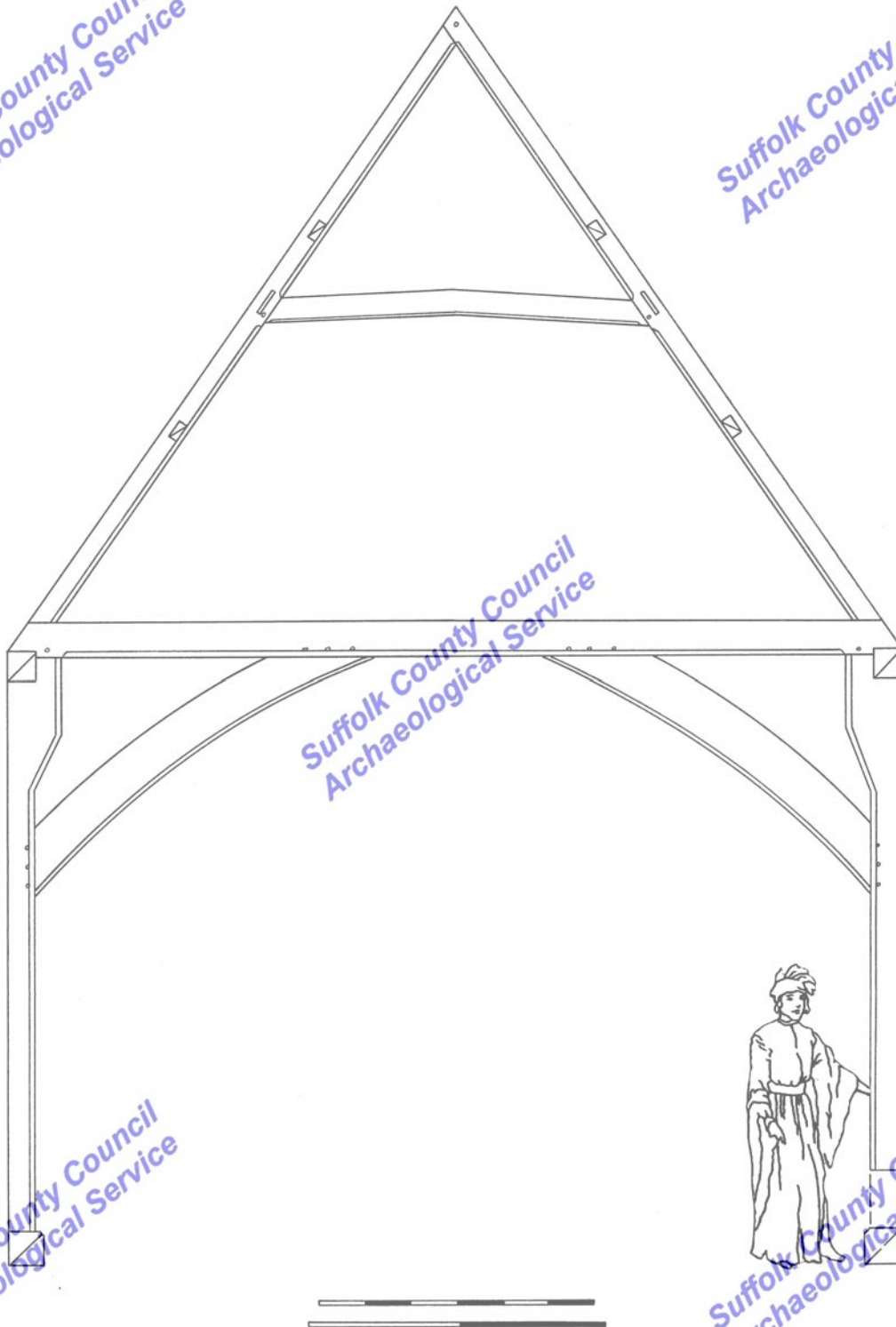


Figure 9
Open Truss from North-west
With 6ft tall figure for scale

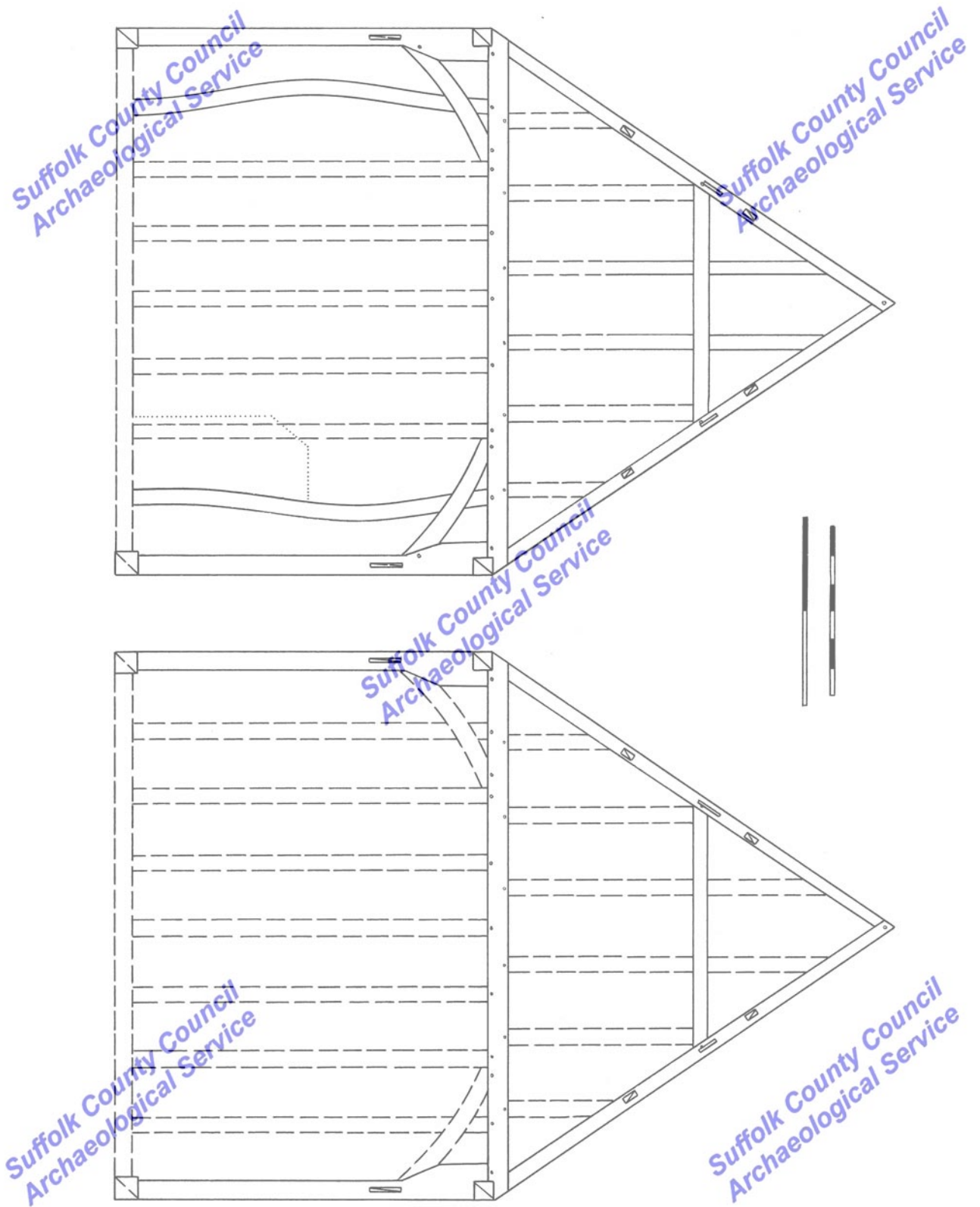


Figure 10
Internal elevations of south-eastern (top) and north-western gables

Appendix 1 (on accompanying CD): Full Photographic Record

Description of Photographs in Appendix 1

Photograph no.

1. General view of site from All Saints Common to south-east, showing barn to left of house.
2. General view of site from road to south showing barn behind Yard B.
3. General view of site from south-west showing 20th century shed to right.
4. General view of site from west showing barn behind Yard A with Shed (10) in foreground.
5. Exterior from south-west showing Yard A in foreground.
6. Exterior from south showing Stable (5) with Shelter (9) left.
7. Exterior from Yard B to south showing Shed (6) with Stable (5) left.
8. Exterior from south-east showing gables of Shed (6) Stable (5) and Barn (1).
9. Exterior from east showing Stable (5) to left.
10. Exterior from north-east showing door and windows of Stable (5).
11. Detail of window and door in north-eastern facade of Stable (5).
12. Exterior from east showing Lean-to (4) against original barn facade.
13. Exterior from north showing recent boundary fence to farmhouse left.
14. Exterior from west showing gable Lean-to (7) with farmhouse to left.
15. Interior of Shed (8) showing western corner of Stable (5).
16. Interior of Shed (8) from north-east showing conversion work in progress.
17. Interior of Lean-to (7) showing north-western gable of extended barn to left.
18. Interior of Stable (5) showing south-eastern gable of Barn.
19. Interior of Stable (5) looking to south-eastern gable.
20. Interior of Stable (5) looking west showing remains of hay loft partition & harness hooks.
21. Interior of Stable (5) showing door in north-eastern elevation.
22. Interior of Stable (5) showing blocked arched window to left of south-western door.

23. Interior of Shed (6) showing south-eastern gable of Stable (5).
24. Interior of Shed (6) showing south-eastern gable.
25. Exterior of Stable (5) showing blocked arched window & door from Yard B.
26. Interior of barn. General view to north-west.
27. Interior of barn. General view to south-east.
28. Interior of Extension (2) from south-west showing original barn gable to right.
29. Interior of Extension (2) from north-east showing original barn gable to left.
30. Roof of Extension (2) showing original barn gable to right.
31. Western bay of north-eastern internal elevation showing original infill to right.
32. Detail of original wattle-and-daub infill of western bay.
33. Detail of original external daub from within Lean-to (3).
34. Detail of original daub construction from Lean-to (3).
35. Interior of Lean-to (3) from south-east.
36. Detail of tenoned principal rafter and roof-plate in western bay.
37. Detail of edge-halved-and-bridled scarf joint in western bay.
38. Detail of Roman carpenter's numeral to stud of western bay (no. VII).
39. Detail of Roman numeral to western post of midstrey (no. VIII).
40. Central bay of north-eastern elevation showing original entrance.
41. Detail of 'pin' door hinge in north-eastern roof-plate of central bay.
42. Interior of eastern bay of north-eastern elevation showing intact studwork.
43. Detail of apparent re-used hay rack bar in infill of eastern bay.
44. Interior of south-eastern gable showing original curved outermost studs.
45. Interior of eastern bay in south-western elevation showing original curved studs.
46. Interior of central bay in south-western elevation (roof-plate cut).
47. Interior of western bay in south-western elevation.
48. Detail of internal wall brace in western corner (missing gable to right).
49. Profile of original tie-beam braces seen from west.

50. Butt Purlin roof structure from west.
51. Detail of butt purlin roof structure.
52. Detail of roof apex showing later ridge board.
53. Roof structure showing all four original tie-beam braces from west.
54. Roof structure. Eastern half showing missing wind braces.
55. Roof Structure. Central bay showing original wind braces.
56. Roof structure. Western half showing original north-western gable to right.
57. Interior of Lean-to (3) from north-west, showing original entrance to right.
58. Interior of Lean-to Shed (4) from south-east.
59. Interior of Lean-to Shed (4) from north-west showing blocked door to left.
60. Interior of Lean-to Shed (4) from south showing external window.

Suffolk County Council
Archaeological Service

Suffolk County Council
Archaeological Service

Appendix 2 (pp. 16-19): Selected Printed Photographs



A2.1 General view of site from All Saints Common to south-east, showing barn to left of former farmhouse.



A2.2 General view of site from west showing barn behind Yard A with Shed (10) in foreground



A2.3 Exterior from south showing 19th century brick Stable (5) with Shelter (9) left



A2.4 Exterior from east showing Stable (5) to left with barn in rear. Note scar of demolished building which projected to north-east



A2.5 roof structure of barn (double butt-purlin with wind braces). Western half showing original north-western gable to right (studwork removed)



A2.6 Roof structure showing all four original tie-beam braces from west



A2.7 Western bay of north-eastern internal elevation showing original wattle-and-daub infill to right.



A2.8 Detail of Roman carpenter's numeral to interior base of stud in western bay (no. VII)