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Poplar Farm Barn, Poplar Farm, Linstead Parva, Suffolk

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Historic Building Record

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Poplar Farm Barn, Poplar Farm, Harleston Road, Linstead Parva, Suffolk

(TM 3239 7837)

An Archaeological Record

This report provides a written and photographic record at English Heritage (2006) Level 2 of a barn and associated farm buildings at Poplar Farm. The report has been prepared to a brief written by the Archaeological Service of Suffolk County Council (Dr Jess Tipper, 14th August 2008, Ref. /PoplarFarmBarn LinsteadParva2008) and is designed to fulfil a condition of planning permission for conversion (Mid Suffolk District Council, C/07/1902).

Introduction

The following report is accompanied by a CD containing a full photographic record in the form of 70 8.2 megapixel digital images (Appendix 1) but also includes printed photographs of key features (Appendix 2). Each digital image is separately described in the written report, and the CD includes the report in MS Word format. Where possible a white metre scale rod with centimetre sub-divisions was included in each photograph. The site was inspected on 19th September 2008 but the record includes five images taken by the present owners in *circa* 1990 before the barn was repaired and the adjoining brick shed converted for domestic use.

Summary

Poplar Farm adjoins a medieval green, now largely enclosed, and probably occupies a medieval site as its unlisted farmhouse contains part of a substantial 16th century timber frame. The holding was of modest proportions, containing 67 acres in 1840 along with 7 'common rights'. The outline of the farm buildings has changed very little since the Ordnance Survey of 1884, with a series of animal yards flanked by a barn and several sheds, but the northern half of the complex has already been converted for domestic use and precise analysis is hampered accordingly. The unlisted three-bay timber-framed barn is a good example of its type, dating from the early-18th century but consisting largely of re-used timbers. It retains much of its original clasped-purlin roof structure and several panels of wattle-and-daub. A narrow porch with an unusually wide and low door was added to the rear elevation later in the 18th century, along with a pair of lean-to sheds. A separate clay-lump shed was added in the mid-19th century. Although of considerable historic interest the farm buildings are not of sufficient age or sufficiently well-preserved to merit listing.

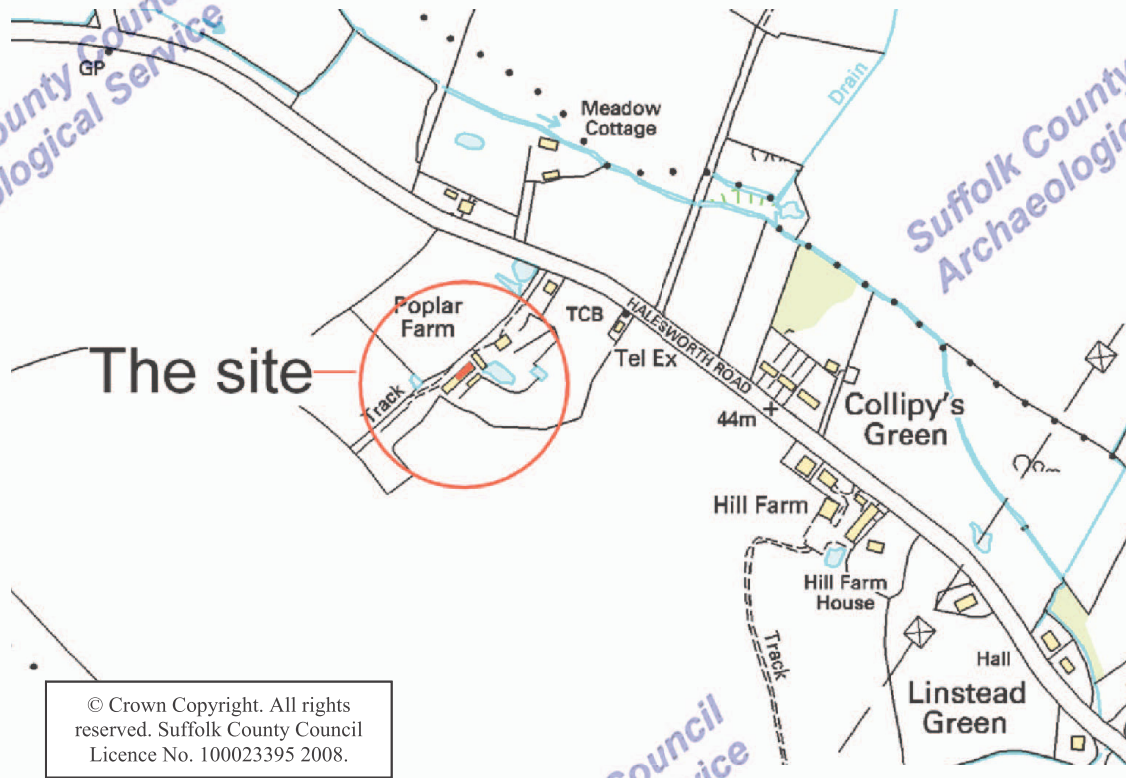


Figure 1

Location Plan, showing Poplar Farm to the south-west of Harleston Road (wrongly marked here as Halesworth Road). The original extent of Collipys Green is indicated by the wide corridor between the road and the dotted Chediston parish boundary to the north-east. The boundary with Linstead Magna is shown to the south-west.

Historic Context: Documentary & Cartographic Record

Poplar Farm lies along a farm drift or track to the south-east of a large medieval linear green which contained 19 acres at the time of the tithe survey in 1840 when it was known as Collipys Green. The green is now traversed by the B1123 between Halesworth and Harleston and is no longer apparent in the landscape. St Margaret's church lies approximately 1.5 km to the south-east, but Linstead Parva is a small, narrow parish of 554 acres (according to White's Suffolk Directory for 1844) between Chediston and Linstead Magna, and appears never to have possessed a nucleated settlement. It now contains only five listed buildings in addition to the 13th century church. None of the buildings at Poplar Farm are listed, but the farmhouse contains a good timber frame built in two phases during the 16th and early-17th centuries (and disguised in brick during the 19th century), and the site is therefore likely to have been occupied in the Middle Ages. (The size of the rural population in Suffolk did not recover from its pre-Black Death peak until the mid-17th century, and it was rare for farms to be established on new sites in the 16th century.)

Poplar farm was a modest tenanted holding of 67 acres in 1840, owned by James Voigate and occupied by Charles Dye (as detailed by the tithe survey). Charles Dye was listed as a farmer in White's Directory four years later. The holding contained a relatively high proportion of pasture land to arable by the standards of its day (approximately 17 acres, or 25%), in addition to 7 common rights, and any animal accommodation is more likely to have served cattle than horses. No more than two or three working horses at most would have been necessary for a farm of this size, on the usual ratio of one per 20-30 acres. Figure 2 shows the farm layout in 1840, which is still recognisable today. The great majority of Suffolk farms contained only a barn and stable at this period, as high corn prices had stimulated cereal

production since the Napoleonic wars, and were largely rebuilt in the mid-19th century when dairy and beef production became more viable (as the railways opened up new urban markets and grain prices fell after the Repeal of the Corn Laws in 1846). The quantity of local land suitable only for pasture probably allowed Poplar Farm to anticipate this revolution.



Figure 2

The site in 1840, redrawn from the Linstead Parva tithe map (Suffolk Record Office). The house is shown in red and the agricultural buildings in grey, with the 19-acre Collipys Green to the north-east. The existing barn and porch are shown, and possibly the converted brick shed (7), but not the clay-lump buildings (5 & 6). The land numbered 82 is named 'stackyard' on the apportionment and survives as an open area of ground. The remaining fields are named as follows: 70. Home Meadow; 71. Barn Meadow; 81. Stackyard Pightle (a local term for a small paddock); 83. House and Yards; 84. Hempland by Common (arable); 85. Barn Pightle.

The tithe map shows the barn and porch with a structure on the site of the brick shed which now adjoins its north-eastern gable (numbered 7 in figure 5). This shed was converted for separate domestic occupation some years ago and was not available for internal inspection, but photographs in the possession of the owners of Poplar Farm suggest that it may contain an 18th century timber frame behind its present exterior of mid-19th century brick. An additional shed to the north-west of the pond is also ostensibly of brick but it too has been much rebuilt in recent years and is of uncertain origin. The narrow structure which projected at an acute angle from the barn's south-eastern elevation in 1840 had been replaced by the present enclosed shed (no. 5 in figure 5) by the time of the First Edition Ordnance Survey in 1884. This map also shows the addition of the surviving open-sided shelter shed (6) which, like the enclosed shed, consists of clay lump (i.e. blocks of baked clay) and was probably added in the 1850s or 1860s. The enclosed yards are likely to have operated as cattle yards, and the proximity of the much-rebuilt shed to the pond suggests it may have formed a small stable. Given the extent of the late-20th century alterations on the site, however, any precise analysis of the farm layout is impossible.

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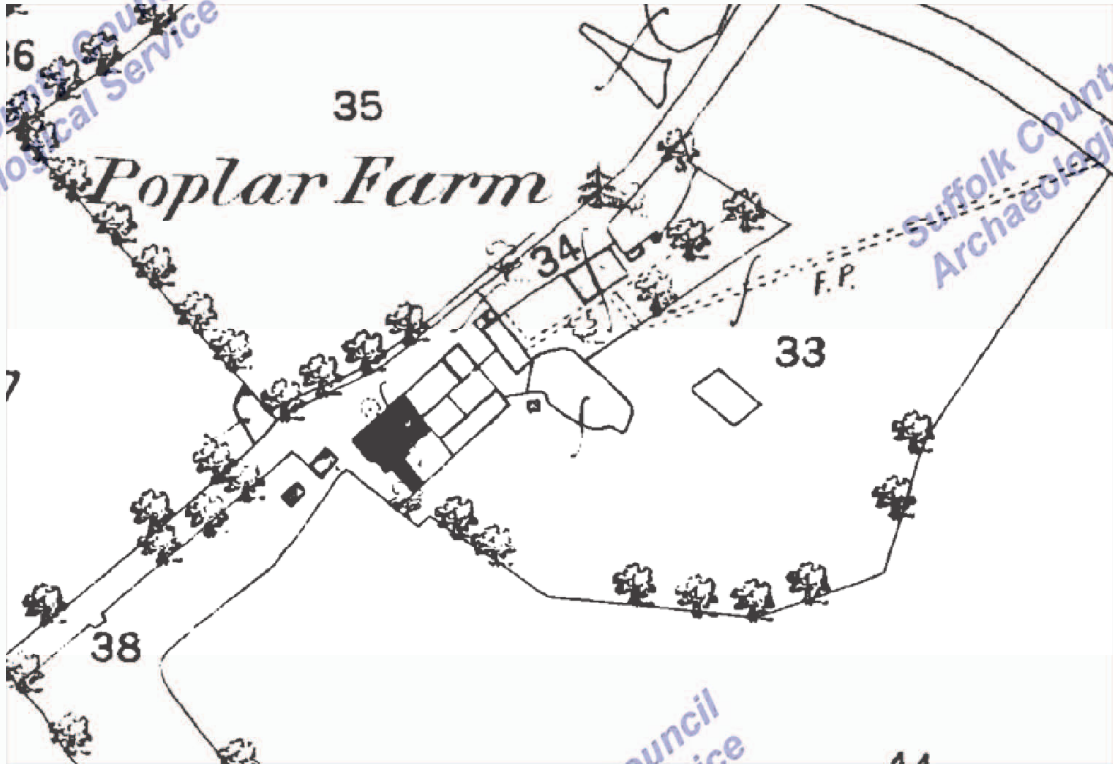


Figure 3
First Edition 25 inch Ordnance Survey of 1884, showing the present building layout.
The dotted circular feature outside the barn's north-western entrance is probably a horse mill

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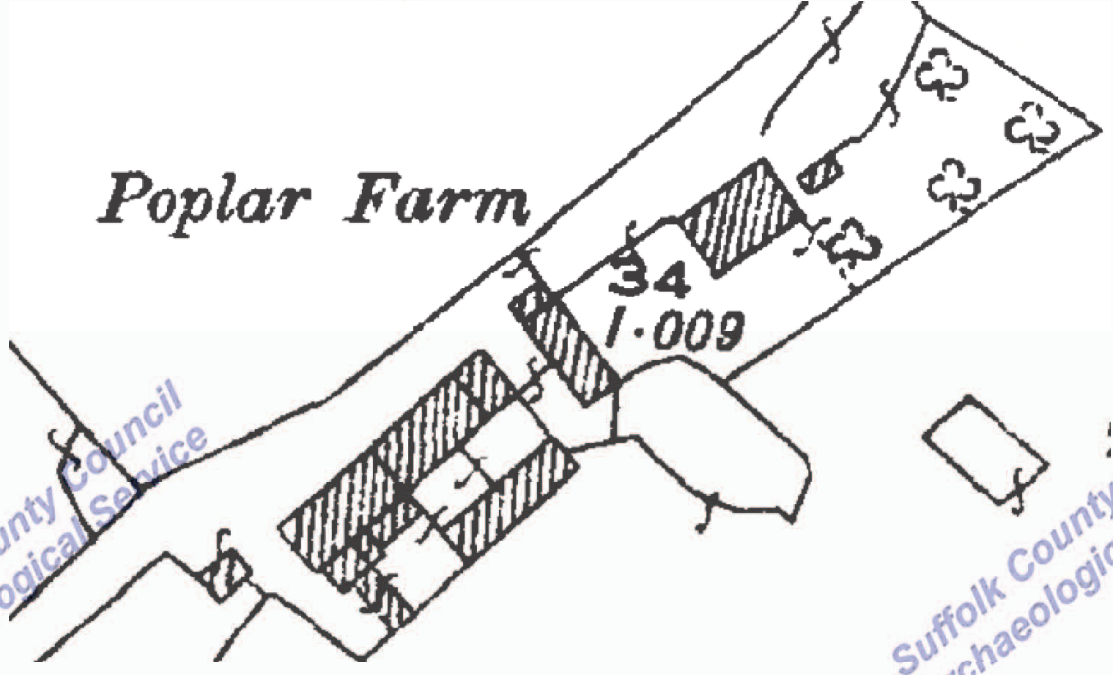


Figure 4
Second Edition 25 inch Ordnance Survey of 1905

Building Analysis

The following analysis is focused upon the barn but for the purpose of historic context also refers briefly to the adjoining brick and clay-lump sheds which have already been converted.

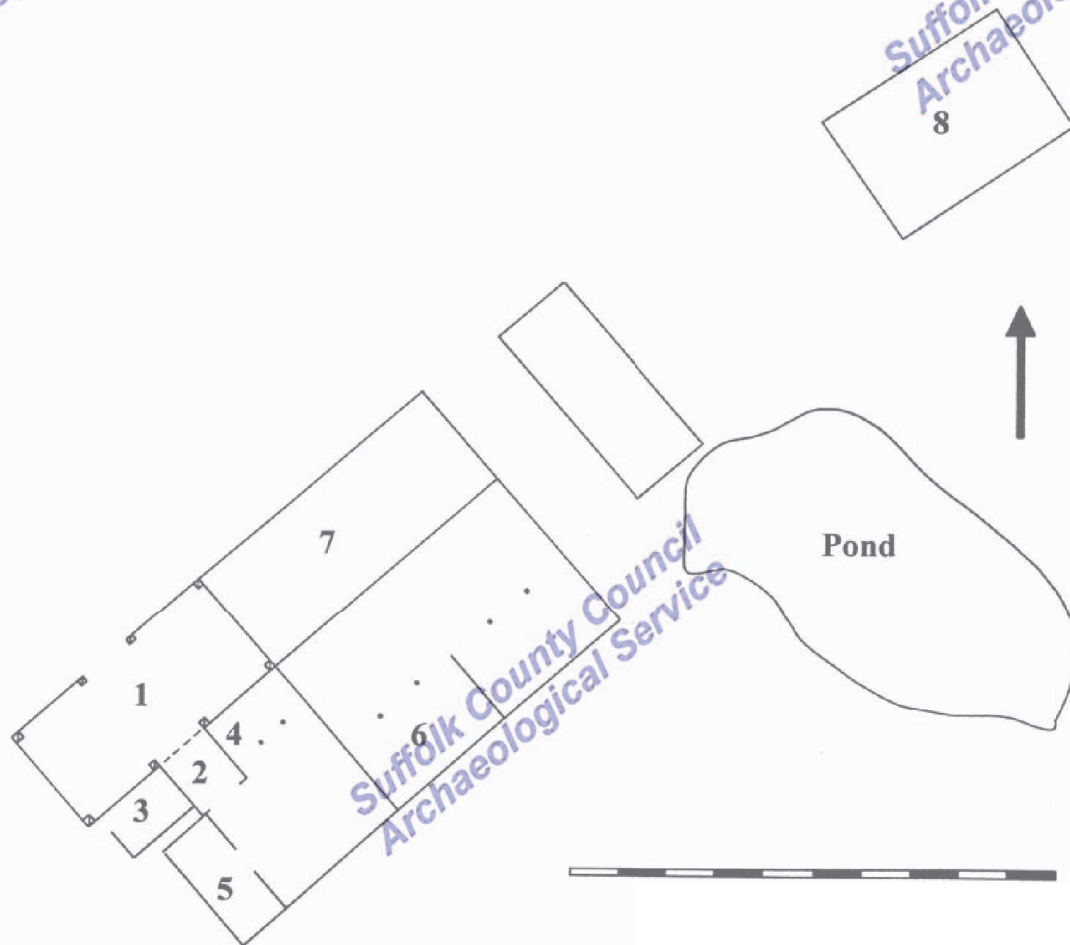


Figure 5

Schematic Block Plan of Farm Site

Identifying the individual buildings for ease of reference in the text & appendices
(Derived from Ordnance Survey. Scale in units of 3 metres/10 ft)

Key to Figure 5

1. Barn. Early-18th century timber-framed barn of three bays with entrance from north-west in narrow central bay. Originally with a small door in the rear south-eastern elevation. Much timber re-used from an early-17th century barn. Originally infilled with wattle-and-daub and rendered externally, but now weatherboarded.
2. Porch. Mid or late-18th century narrow porch added to rear of central bay. Originally with wide but low doorway in gable. Boarded floor.
3. Lean-to enclosed shed in southern angle of barn and porch. Probably 18th century but much altered.
4. Lean-to open-sided shed in northern angle of barn and porch. Probably 18th century but much altered.
5. Enclosed single-storied shed of mid-19th century clay lump.

6. Open-sided shelter shed of mid-19th century clay lump (not shown as open-sided on 19th century Ordnance Surveys and possibly converted from an enclosed shed).
7. Enclosed 1½ storey brick shed adjoining the barn's north-eastern gable. Already converted and not inspected internally, but designed as a cattle shed or stable. The north-eastern bay was separately partitioned and open to the north-west as a vehicle shed or cart lodge with a hay loft above reached by an external gable stair. Possibly a timber-framed structure of the 18th or early-19th century encased in mid-19th century brick.
8. Farmhouse. Timber-framed but encased in 19th century brick. 16th century bay of 1½ storeys to north of 17th century chimney and early-17th century bay of 2 storeys to south, with early-17th century central rear wing to west. The 16th century bay originally continued further to the north but was probably truncated during the 17th century remodelling. Not currently listed.

1. Barn

Structure

The barn at Poplar Farm is timber-framed structure of three bays on a north-east/south-west axis which extends to 15.25 m in length by 5.5 m in overall length (50 ft by 18 ft). Its walls contain diagonal primary braces which interrupt the vertical studs and are tenoned and pegged to the jowled storey posts and ground sills; the studs are nailed to the braces, but tenoned and pegged to the roof-plates and sills. Where not interrupted by braces the studs rise 3.2 metres (10½ ft) from plate to sill, and the internal walls rise a total of 3.6 m from the internal ground level to the roof-plates including a brick plinth of 23 cm (9 ins); the height of the plinth varies, however, and the ground level to the rear (south-east) is up to 0.5 m lower. The storey posts flanking the narrow central bay of 3.2 metres (10½ ft) are linked to the tie-beams by chamfered arch-braces which are pegged and tenoned at both ends. The outer bays are of equal length and unusually long at 5.6 m (18½ ft), but are spanned by 'flying' central tie-beams which are dovetailed and vertically pegged to the roof-plates but do not lie above a storey post (the south-western flying tie has been replaced, leaving only a stump of the original in the front elevation, but its north-eastern counterpart appears to be intact). The north-eastern half of the roof was rebuilt in the 20th century, but the original clasped-purlin structure with pegged collars survives elsewhere – although the purlins are fragmentary and secondary rails have been inserted. The roof is pitched at approximately 55 degrees and was designed for thatch, but is now covered in corrugated metal sheeting.

Re-used Timber and Date

A high proportion of the individual timbers were re-used from one or more earlier buildings as they contain mortises, rafter housings and other carpentry features that are irrelevant to their present positions. The principal rafters, for example, display empty mortises for wind-braces of early-17th century type immediately above the pegged mortises which secure pairs of rafter braces in the central bay (these braces are nailed to the inner faces of the rafters). The edge-halved-and-bridled scarf joints in the roof-plates are not usually found any later than the first quarter of the 17th century and in some cases relate to re-used timbers, but at least one example in the rear wall appears to link two sections of 'new' timber of the same period as the barn. These scarfs were presumably cut to match the re-used examples, as all other aspects of the carpentry (despite initial appearances) suggest an origin in the first quarter of the 18th century – or the final years of the 17th century at the earliest.

Infill

The barn is currently clad in weatherboarding, most of which was renewed in the 1990s, but a substantial area of original wattle-and-daub infill survives in the rear wall to the north-east of

the porch. The barn was initially rendered externally, as the exterior faces of the timbers are waney and unfinished. Such render was typically roughcast and whitewashed, but was often replaced by weatherboarding in the 19th century.

Layout

The roof-plate of the central bay in the north-western elevation contains no stud mortises and this bay has always operated as the principal entrance of the barn – as it does today. The roof-plate in the opposite, south-eastern elevation, in contrast, contains five empty mortises for studs which were probably removed when the porch was built later in the 18th century. Prior to the 19th century local barns rarely contained cart thoroughfares but reflected the likely original arrangement here, with full-height doors opposite a low, narrow rear door that was just sufficient to create a through-draught for threshing and winnowing.

2. Porch

The south-eastern porch is unusual in its narrow proportions and wide but low entrance door. It projected into an animal yard on slightly lower ground and was never used as a vehicle entrance. It spans the full width of the barn's central bay, including its storey posts, and extends to 3.65 m in width by 4.4 m in length (12 ft by 14½ ft). Its walls are constructed with pegged and tenoned primary braces in the same manner as the barn. The individual timbers are of smaller proportion than those of the barn, however, and are more typical of the 18th century, as they have not been re-used from older buildings. The roof contains butt-purlins rather than clasped-purlins and the structure is nailed rather than tenoned to the barn – indicating a secondary origin. A date in the mid or late-18th century is likely.

A number of diagonal braces have been inserted into the gable, but the mid-rail is original and contains a single pegged stud mortise on both sides of a wide central opening – now reduced to the proportions of a normal door by secondary framing. The porch contains an original or early boarded floor which may have served as a threshing floor, and it is possible that the barn's orientation changed when it was built; the more usual tall doors of a threshing floor were perhaps considered unnecessary as carts could not enter from the lower ground in the south-eastern animal yard. Porches were often designed with small doors purely as storage sheds or granaries, but such a function does not explain the width of the original door in this instance.

3 - 5. Ancillary Sheds

Lean-to sheds adjoin the south-eastern elevation of the barn on each side of the porch. Both retain their original butt-purlin roof structures and are probably contemporary with the porch, but in other respects have been much altered. The south-western shed is enclosed and contains a gable door and window, while its north-eastern counterpart is open-sided and evidently operated as a shelter shed in the animal yard. The long shed which projected at an acute angle to the south-east on the tithe map of 1840 was replaced soon afterwards by the present detached enclosed shed of clay lump with a red pantiled roof. This shed abuts the south-eastern corner of the porch and forms the south-western boundary of the yard. The central entrance door from the yard is probably an original feature, and much of the clay-lump construction still survives (albeit heavily repaired with concrete blocks) but no internal fixtures or fittings remain to indicate its purpose. Its small proportions and location suggest it was probably designed as a neat-house.

6-7. Converted Sheds

The buildings which form the north-eastern half of the farm complex are in separate occupation, having already been converted for domestic use, and were not inspected. They are discussed briefly for the purposes of site context.

The clay-lump and pantiled building to the south-east of the yard forms an open-sided animal shelter of standard form. It does not appear on the tithe map of 1840 but must have been built soon afterwards.

The brick building with pantiled roof to the north-west of the yard (7) contained double-hung doors to the south-east and windows to the north-west. A 20th century lean-to shelter shed extended along its south-eastern elevation but has been removed (as shown in photographs of *circa* 1990). The north-eastern bay was partitioned and contained a vehicle shed which opened onto the farm drift with a hay loft above with an external access stair against the gable. The building is said to have contained a milking parlour and stable, and was probably designed either as a stable or neat-house in its entirety. A building is shown on this site in 1840 and the mid-19th century brickwork may conceal a slightly earlier timber-framed interior. Alternatively, the present structure may have simply replaced an older shed on the same site.

Historic Significance

The barn is a good and largely intact structure of the early 18th century which in most respects is typical of its period in both carpentry and layout. The use of 16th century-style scarf joints at such a late date is rare, but not without precedent, and reflects the extensive re-use of older timber. The original arrangement of the later porch is also unusual, with its low but wide entrance door. Given the structure's relatively late period, however, and, more particularly, the loss of most wattle-and-daub and significant areas of the frame in the rear wall and roof, the building does not merit listing. The farm complex as a whole is an unusually complete 19th century example, which has changed very little since the first edition Ordnance Survey of 1884, but any precise analysis of its function and layout is now impossible as its northern half has already been converted.

Appendix 1 (on accompanying CD): Full Photographic Record

Description of Photographs in Appendix 1

Photograph no.

1. General view from paddock to south-east showing barn to left & shelter shed (6) to right.
2. General view from south-west showing barn in centre & former stack yard to right.
3. General view from north showing converted shed (7) to left with barn to right.
4. Exterior of barn from east showing shed (5) to left.
5. Exterior of barn from west showing lean-to shed (3) to right.
6. Exterior of barn from west showing original central entrance.
7. Exterior of barn from north showing shed (7) to left.
8. Exterior of barn from north-east showing converted shed (7) to right.
9. Exterior of barn from east showing porch to left and lean-to shelter (4) right.
10. Exterior of barn porch from south-east showing recent re-cladding.
11. Interior of lean-to shed (4) showing south-eastern elevation of barn.
12. Detail of brick plinth to barn within lean-to shed (4).
13. Interior of lean-to shed (4) from south-west showing barn to left.
14. Butt-purlin roof structure of lean-to shed (4) from south-west.
15. Barn. General view of interior from south-west showing intact tie-beam braces.
16. Barn. General view of interior from north-east showing porch to left.
17. Barn. Roof from south-west showing later structure to north-east of porch.
18. Barn. Roof from north-east showing original structure to south-west of porch.
19. Barn. Interior of north-eastern gable showing diagonal primary braces.
20. Barn. Detail of pegged joints of re-used braces with ground sill in north-eastern gable.
21. Barn. Interior of rear (south-eastern) wall showing original infill & porch to right.
22. Barn. Detail of original wattle-and-daub infill in rear wall.

23. Barn. Detail of original wattle-and-daub in rear wall showing primary brace.
24. Barn. Narrow central bay showing later porch (2) in rear south-eastern elevation.
25. Barn. Detail of rear central bay showing mortises of removed studs in roof-plate & roof bracing.
26. Barn. Rear wall showing porch & door to lean-to shed to left with scarf joint in roof-plate.
27. Barn. Detail of edge-halved-and-bridled scarf in roof plate.
28. Barn. Original clasped-purlin roof structure with later tie-beam & south-western gable to right.
29. Barn. Detail of original pegged tie-beam dovetail in rear roof-plate to south-west of porch.
30. Barn. Interior of south-western gable.
31. Barn. Internal front (north-western) elevation showing south-western gable to left.
32. Barn. Stump of original pegged tie-beam in front wall to south-west of porch.
33. Barn. Interior of original north-western entrance in central bay.
34. Barn. Original nailed roof braces above entrance with re-used principal rafters.
35. Barn. Internal front (north-western) elevation showing north-eastern gable to right.
36. Barn. Original chamfered tie-beam brace showing porch to right.
37. Barn. Detail of carpenters' marking-out lines to tie-beam brace showing porch to right.
38. Porch. Original roof structure showing empty stud mortises in rear wall of barn.
39. Porch. Roof structure showing south-eastern gable.
40. Porch. Interior of gable showing original mid-rail and blocked wide doorway.
41. Porch. Interior of gable showing original door jamb to left and later infill to right.
42. Porch. Detail of original right-hand door jamb mortise above present door.
43. Porch. Interior of south-western elevation.
44. Porch. Interior of north-eastern elevation.
45. Porch. Boarded floor from interior of barn.
46. Porch. Detail of boarded floor showing primary braces of north-eastern elevation.

47. Lean-to shed (3). Interior showing south-western entrance with barn to right.
48. Lean-to shed (3). Interior from south showing entrance to door barn.
49. Lean-to shed (3). Butt-purlin roof structure from north.
50. Lean-to shed (3). Exterior from south showing barn to left and porch to right.
51. Shed (5). Exterior from south showing block-work repair to original clay-lump fabric.
52. Shed (5). Exterior from north-east showing central entrance.
53. Shed (5). Detail of entrance door from north-east.
54. Shed (5). Interior from north-west showing rebuilt gable.
55. Shed (5). Interior from south-east showing original clay lump fabric to left.
56. Shed (5). Interior of south-western elevation showing original clay lump fabric.
57. Exterior of converted shed (7) from east.
58. South-western half of converted shed (7) showing barn to left.
59. North-eastern half of converted shed (7).
60. Shelter shed (6) from west.
61. Roof structure of shelter shed (6) from west.
62. Interior of shelter shed (7) showing original clay-lump fabric to south-eastern elevation.
63. Exterior of shelter shed (6) from paddock to south showing barn to left.
64. Rebuilt shed between house and yard from west.
65. Circa 1990. Farm complex from south showing barn to left.
66. Circa 1990. Farm complex from north-west showing barn to right.
67. Circa 1990. Farm yard from north-east showing lean-to shelter against shed (7) to right.
68. Circa 1990. Exterior of shed (7) showing former cart shed to left.
69. Circa 1990. Loft stair against north-eastern gable of shed (7) from west.
70. Circa 1990. Exterior of lean-to shed (3) and porch from south-west with shed (5) to right.

Appendix 2 (pp. 13-16): Selected Printed Photographs



A2.1 Exterior of barn from east showing narrow porch with detached clay-lump shed (5) to left, and converted animal shed (7) and shelter shed (6) to right



A2.2 Exterior of barn from west showing lean-to shed (3) to right and converted animal shed (7) to left

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A2.3 Exterior of barn from east showing porch to left and lean-to shelter shed (4) right

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A2.4 Barn Interior. Roof structure from north-east showing original tie-beams, arch-braces and clasped-purlins

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A2.5 Barn. Interior of rear (south-eastern) wall showing surviving panels of original wattle-and-daub infill with porch to right and north-eastern gable to left

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A2.6 Barn. Central bay with empty mortises of removed studs in roof-plate showing narrow later porch (2) with modern door in position of original wide door beneath original mid-rail

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A2.7 Circa 1990. Farm complex from south showing barn to left (uniting two photographs)



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A2.8 Circa 1990. Farm complex from north-west showing barn to right (uniting two photographs)

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A2.9 Circa 1990. Exterior of shed (7) before conversion showing former cart shed to left