

**Suffolk County Council  
Archaeological Service**

**Wren Cottage,  
East Bergholt,  
Suffolk  
EBG 038**

**Suffolk County Council  
Archaeological Service**

**Archaeological Record**

**SuffolkC1-56859**



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**Outbuilding at Wren Cottage,  
Gaston Street,  
East Bergholt, Suffolk**

(TM 070 346)

**An Archaeological Record**

*This report provides a written and photographic record at English Heritage (2006) Level 2 of an outbuilding in the rear garden of a listed town house. The report has been prepared to a brief written by the Archaeological Service of Suffolk County Council (Edward Martin, 11 February 2009, Ref. SpecHBR, WrenCottEBergholt2009) and is intended to fulfil a condition of planning permission for conversion (Babergh District Council application B/08/01559).*

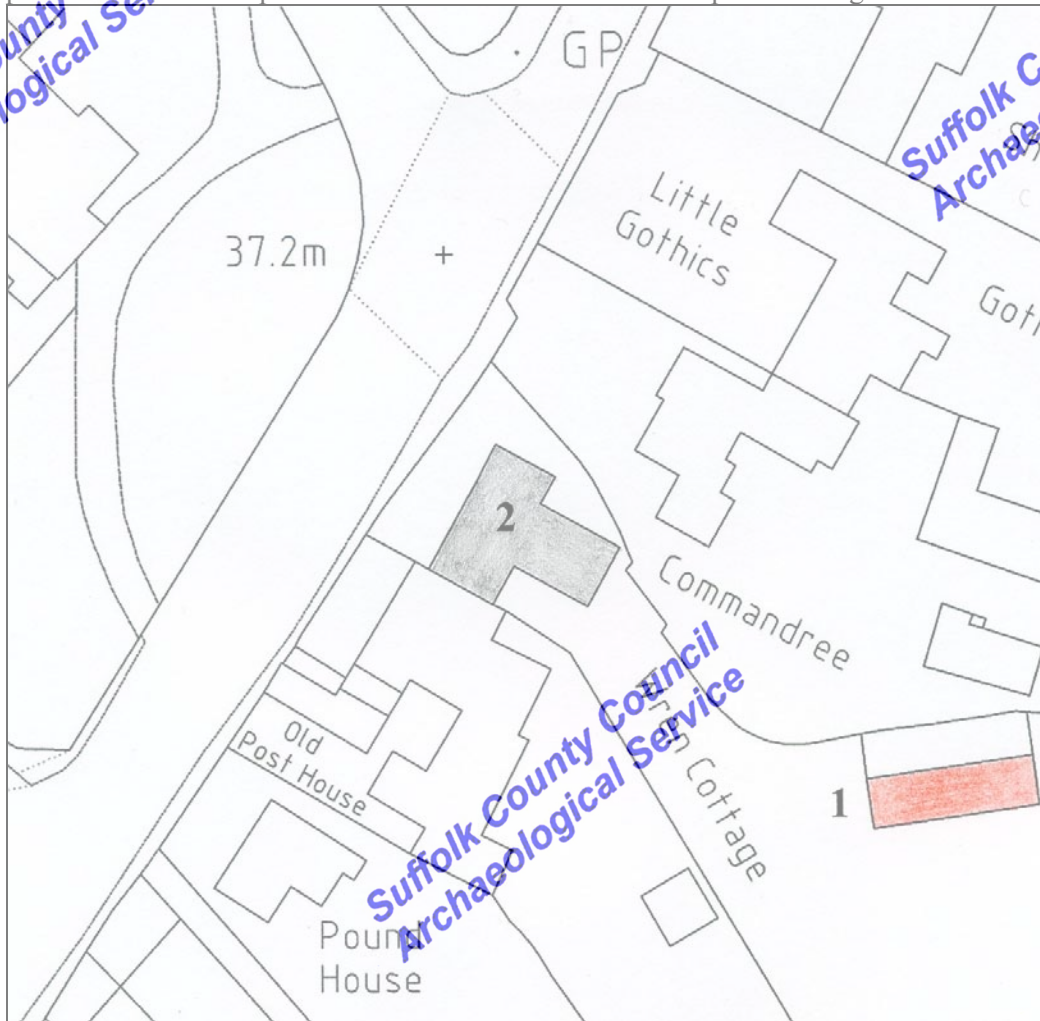
**Introduction**

The report is accompanied by a CD containing a full photographic record in the form of 63 digital images (Appendix 1) but also includes printed photographs of key features to illustrate the text (Appendix 2). Each image is separately described and includes a scale rod with half metre divisions wherever possible. The site was inspected on 24 February 2009.

**Summary**

Wren Cottage lies within the village envelope of East Bergholt approximately 200 metres NNW of St Mary's church. The house is listed at grade II, and consists of an 18<sup>th</sup> century front range with a single-storied kitchen wing of the late-17<sup>th</sup> century to the rear. The property's deeds suggest it was formerly the parish workhouse. The kitchen wing and extensive rear garden (then a meadow owned by the artist's father) are shown in a Constable painting of 1815 along with two thatched buildings forming a stackyard. These structures were replaced in or around 1853 by the present outbuilding, when the ground was purchased by the owner of Wren Cottage – an affluent tradesman. The outbuilding, which lies 32 metres ESE of the house, is an unusual single-storied timber-framed and weatherboarded structure with a slate roof and hipped gables. Its external boarding was apparently painted grey to reflect its then newly-fashionable roof covering, and its interior was divided into a stable, tack room and two vehicle sheds. The front elevation has been much altered, but a number of original horizontal sash windows survive, along with the shaped wainscot of its horse stalls: the curved rails terminate in finely turned posts with acorn finials in the 17<sup>th</sup> century style which may have re-used from the earlier building on the site. These stalls are rare and

impressive examples of their type, but the building is not of sufficient age or sufficiently well-preserved in other respects to meet the normal criteria for separate listing.



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**Figure 1**  
**Existing Ordnance Survey Site Plan**  
 Showing the outbuilding (1) in red to the east and Wren Cottage (2) in grey to the west

## Historic Context: Documentary & Cartographic Record

Wren Cottage lies within the village of East Bergholt on the eastern side of Gaston Street approximately 200 m NNW of St Mary's church. The house is listed at grade II, and is described in the Schedule as an 18<sup>th</sup> century structure with a single-storied kitchen wing of the late-17<sup>th</sup> century to the rear. At the time of the parish tithe survey in 1838 the cottage appears to have extended further to the south, and formed a 'House, shop and yard' owned by Mary Johnson and tenanted by Henry and C. Batley. Henry Batley is named as a 'linen and woollen draper, mercer, etc.' in White's Trade Directory of 1844. The mid-19<sup>th</sup> century deeds of the property in the possession of the present owner state that it was 'formerly used as a workhouse for the parish of East Bergholt'.

The tithe map (figure 2) shows only a small garden or yard surrounding the house, and the land to the east, which now belongs to the property and contains the outbuilding herein recorded, was in the separate ownership and occupation of Walter Clerk Esquire. Clerk owned several houses in the parish along with some 200 acres of land, most of which was let as a separate farm. He lived in a 'mansion' with a lawn, garden and 20 acres of land which he

held in hand. This house lay 75 m north-west of the church and was a very substantial brick residence built in 1774 by Golding Constable, John Constable's father, and the latter's birthplace. The family sold the house to Walter Clerk in 1819, and it was demolished soon after his death in 1839 (Tate Gallery website). The tithe map shows an empty plot of land on the site: it is now occupied by a garden and two modern houses, with a sign identifying it as the site of John Constable's childhood home. The area immediately behind the house is shown as a 'garden' of a little over an acre, and the land to the north as 'Stable Meadow' containing 1.25 acres. The map also shows a small yard framed by two parallel buildings in the north-eastern corner of this meadow described as a 'stackyard' of 33 perches in the apportionment.



**Figure 2**  
**East Bergholt Tithe Map, 1839**

The map is substantially damaged, but shows the church to bottom left and Wren Cottage (no. 599) top centre. The site of Golding Constable's mansion is numbered 637 and his flower garden 638. Stable Meadow (631) lies between the garden and Wren Cottage, with the 'stackyard' (partly damaged) framed by the thatched barn and possible stable in its north-eastern corner.

These buildings are shown in the background of John Constable's 1815 painting entitled 'Golding Constable's Flower Garden'; the southernmost structure is a three-bay thatched barn with a central, southern entrance and the northernmost a single-storied thatched building that may have been the eponymous stable (although the adjacent meadow may have taken its name from the more substantial stables which still survive immediately behind the site of the mansion). The weatherboarded walls of the barn are painted red/brown, closely resembling its brick rear lean-to, and illustrate the usual appearance of local farm buildings before the late-19<sup>th</sup> century advent of inexpensive tar as a by-product of town gas production. The single-

storied building appears to be a timber-framed structure with exposed studs and brick infill. Nothing remains of these two buildings, but the present outbuilding occupies the approximate site of the latter. Constable's painting also shows the present single-storied rear kitchen wing of Wren Cottage with its distinctive central chimney behind the boundary hedge. The painting is currently owned by Ipswich Borough Council.

Wren Cottage now includes the northern part of Stable Meadow, and its deeds refer to several purchases of adjacent land from the trustees of Walter Clerk including 'part of the Stable Paddock' with the stables and sheds adjoining its eastern end. The precise date of these purchases is not clear, but an indenture of 1853 is cited. The documentary evidence therefore suggests that Golding Constable's thatched barn and stackyard were replaced by the present slated stable range after the demolition of his mansion and the sub-division of its grounds between 1839 and 1853.

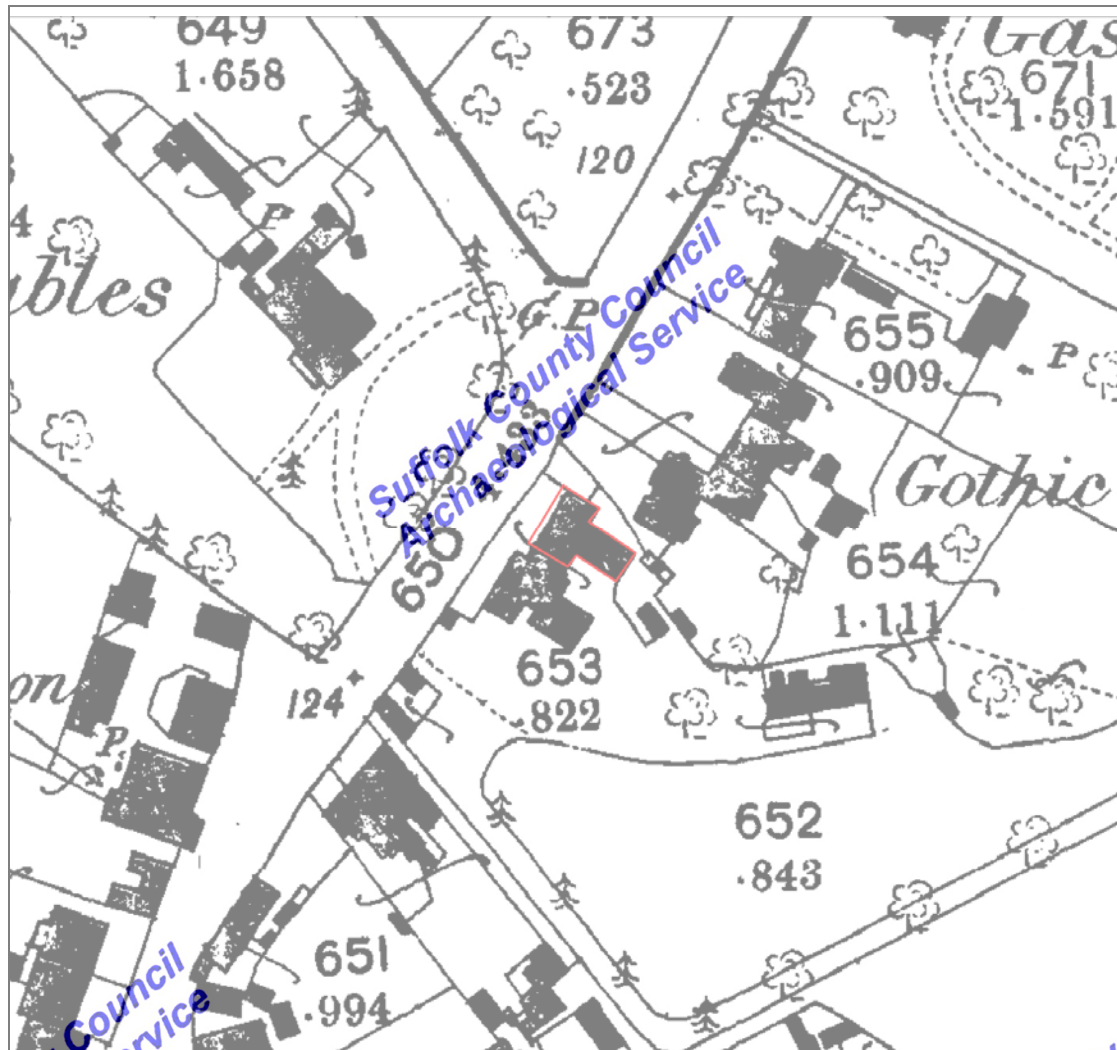


Figure 3  
 First Edition 25 inch Ordnance Survey of 1886, showing Wren Cottage outlined in red. The Stable Meadow of 1839 has been sub-divided and the present stable range has replaced the stackyard. A small yard adjoins the southern elevation of the stable at its western end, and three sheds which no longer survive project from its rear wall. The curved 19<sup>th</sup> century boundary to the south has been removed to form the present large garden, but its ridge remains visible in the lawn.

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Figure 4  
Second Edition 25 inch Ordnance Survey of 1903. The outbuilding is shown in more detail, with the present pump (P) in the corner of the stable yard. A fragment of the brick wall defining this yard still survives behind the pump.

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## Building Analysis

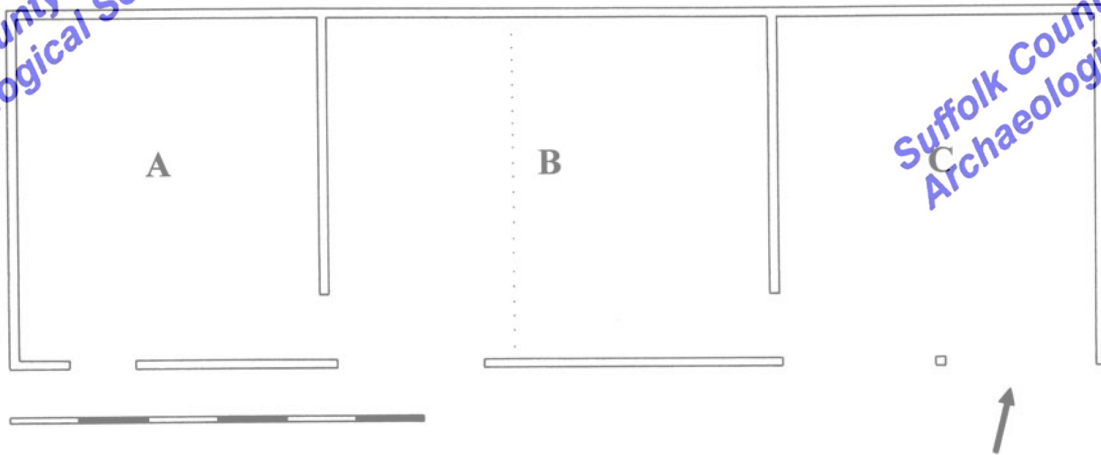


Figure 5  
Ground plan of the outbuilding showing its three existing compartments  
Scale in metres

- A. Stable with shaped wainscot and turned finials to stalls
- B. Enclosed shed, formerly sub-divided with a tack room to the west of dotted line
- C. Open shed, probably originally enclosed by doors to form a vehicle shed

### Proportions and Structure

The outbuilding lies in the rear garden of Wren Cottage, approximately 32 m ESE of the house. It extends to 15.8 m in length by 5.2 m in overall width (52 ft by 17) on an east-west axis and rises to 1.9 m (76 ins) at its eaves. The low-pitched clasped-purlin roof structure of machine-sawn softwood with nailed collars and a ridge board rises to 2.8 m (115 ins) at its apex and retains its original slate and hipped gables. An area of new slate above the western hip reveals the position of an original square-sectioned louver which ventilated the stable, as shown in a late-20<sup>th</sup> century photograph in the present owner's possession, but this has been removed. The external walls are clad chiefly in tarred weatherboarding, with some areas of modern fibreboard. Several sections of boarding have been renewed, but much is probably contemporary with the wall fabric and reveals a layer of probably original grey pigment beneath the later whitewash and tar. This grey colouring would have reflected the slated roof to create a strikingly uniform appearance. The stable to the west (A) is sealed by horizontal boarding, but the remaining walls consist of vertical boards nailed to horizontal rails which in turn are tenoned but not pegged to the wall posts. A pair of bolted knee-braces link the tie-beam which spans the open shed (C) to its central posts.

### Original Layout

The building was divided into four internal compartments, of which two have since been combined. The western compartment formed a stable of 4.3 m in length (14 ft) with double hung doors to the south and horizontal sash windows to front and rear. It was ventilated by a roof louver which has since been lost, but preserves the wainscot of its original stalls to the northern elevation and both side elevations. The side elevations are curved and terminate at split turned posts with acorn finials. The red-brown pigment of this wainscot contrasts with the whitewashed wall boarding and is likely to reflect the stable's original décor. A small external hatch was provided in the rear elevation to facilitate mucking out. The present floor tiles date only from the 20<sup>th</sup> century.



A doorway at the southern end of the stable's eastern elevation opened onto a tack room of 2.75 m (9 ft) in length, but its eastern partition is now missing and its position indicated only by stud notches in a tie-beam (as shown by a dotted line in figure 5). The tack room's southern wall has been removed to insert vehicle doors, and the remaining section of the same wall has also been heavily altered, leaving its original arrangement unclear. A modern roof shed has been built into the central area's north-eastern corner. The eastern end of the building now forms an open-sided shed of 4.75 m in length but is not shown as such on the Ordnance Survey of 1904 and was probably enclosed by doors to form a cart or vehicle shed. There are no mortises for horizontal rails in its front corner posts. The present internal doorway between this eastern shed and the central shed is secondary, and both spaces probably served the same purpose. The gault floor bricks which survive outside the stable appear to be original. A number of secondary doors and windows were inserted during the 20<sup>th</sup> century, but the building's distinctive external profile has remained intact.

### Historic Significance

The outbuilding is not shown on Constable's painting of 1815, or the tithe map of 1839, and was constructed in or around 1853 when the adjacent meadow was sub-divided. It probably contained a stable for driving horses, a tack room and two vehicle sheds. Despite extensive alterations to its front elevation the building retains its original slate roof and distinctive, elegant profile, along with historically interesting evidence of grey external pigment (matching its roof). The fittings of the stable are fine and increasingly rare examples of their type, with turned acorn-finials to the stall posts which reflect the style of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. It is possible that these turnings were re-used from the thatched building shown on the site in 1815. Despite its considerable interest, the structure is not sufficiently well preserved, nor of sufficient age or rarity to merit listing in its own right.

## Appendix 1 (on accompanying CD): Full Photographic Record

### Description of Photographs in Appendix 1

#### Photograph no.

1. General view of site from south-east showing Wren Cottage in background.
2. General view of site from south showing Wren Cottage to left (compare 1815 Constable painting 'Gold Constable's Flower Garden').
3. General view from south-east showing Wren Cottage to left and stable to right.
4. Rear elevation of Wren Cottage from south-east showing service wing to right (included for site context).
5. General view from south-west showing ridge of former field boundary in foreground.
6. Exterior from south-west.
7. Exterior from south-east.
8. External southern elevation showing stable to left and open lodge to right.
9. Detail of pump at western end of southern elevation, showing stable to right.
10. Stable door at western end of southern external elevation.
11. Detail of possibly original grey pigment beneath whitewash of southern external elevation.
12. Western end of southern external elevation in a late-20th century photograph in the owner's possession showing the original stable louver.
13. Detail of half-hung stable door from south-east.
14. Detail of iron handle of upper stable door.
15. Detail of iron strap hinge to stable door.
16. Detail of iron door latch with unusual fishtail catch to stable door.
17. Detail of horizontal sliding sash window to southern external elevation of stable.
18. Detail of secondary vehicle shed doors to former tack room in southern external elevation.
19. Detail of secondary windows to central shed in southern external elevation.
20. Detail of open-sided lodge at eastern end of southern elevation.
21. External elevation of eastern gable showing modern boarding.

22. Rear northern external elevation from north-east showing eastern gable to left.
23. Rear northern external elevation from north-west showing boundary hedge to left.
24. Western end of northern external elevation showing stable hatch beneath window.
25. Detail of hatch door in northern external elevation of stable.
26. Detail of horizontal sliding sash window in northern external elevation of stable.
27. External elevation of western gable.
28. Detail of pump at southern end of external elevation of western gable.
29. Internal northern elevation of stable (A) showing stall wainscot with western gable to left.
30. Detail of curved stall wainscot to internal western elevation.
31. Internal western elevation of stable showing southern entrance to left and stalls to right.
32. Detail of turned stall finial to western internal elevation.
33. Detail of turned western stall finial.
34. Internal eastern elevation of stable (A) showing curved wainscot to left.
35. Detail of turned stall finial to eastern elevation of stable.
36. Internal eastern elevation of stable showing door to former tack room to right.
37. Detail of re-used iron hay rack to eastern elevation of stable.
38. Southern internal elevation of stable showing external entrance to right.
39. Detail of stable ceiling from south-east showing circular ventilation apertures.
40. Detail of 20th century tiles to stable floor.
41. Interior of central shed (B) from east showing door to stable to left.
42. Interior of central shed from west showing tie-beam of former tack room partition.
43. Detail of tie-beam in central shed from west showing stud notches of removed tack room partition.
44. Detail of harness hooks to western internal elevation of central shed.
45. Detail of 20th century enclosed shed in north-eastern corner of central shed.
46. Northern internal elevation of central shed.

47. Internal southern elevation of central shed showing secondary doors.
48. Detail of original roof structure in central shed seen from east.
49. Internal southern elevation of open shed (C) showing secondary post.
50. Internal northern elevation of open shed showing board-and-rail construction.
51. Detail of board-and-rail construction of northern internal elevation of open shed.
52. Detail of bolted knee-brace to tie-beam in northern internal elevation of open shed.
53. Western internal elevation of open shed showing secondary door to central shed to left.
54. Detail of secondary door between open shed and central shed showing notch of removed stud.
55. Detail of brick floor to open shed from east showing door to central shed in rear.
56. Interior of open shed from west showing board-and-rail construction of eastern gable.
57. Internal north-eastern corner of open shed showing detail of board-and-rail construction.
58. Detail of board-and-rail fabric of northern elevation of open shed showing knee-brace to left.
59. Detail of clasped-purlin roof with nailed collars in open shed seen from east.
60. Detail of nailed roof collar of eastern hip seen from south-west.
61. Detail of 1815 Constable painting showing Wren Cottage to left and farm buildings on site of stable to right.
62. Detail of red barn and thatched brick building on site of stable as painted from southwest in 1815.
63. View of Wren Cottage (centre in pink) from Gaston Street to north-west. Included for site context

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Appendix 2 (pp. 12-16): Selected Printed Photographs

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A2.1 General view of site from south showing Wren Cottage with its single-storied rear wing to the left and the outbuilding to the right. Compare Constable's painting below.

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A2.2 Detail of John Constable's 1815 painting of 'Golding Constable's Flower Garden' showing Wren Cottage and its single-storied rear wing to the left (seen from slightly further to the west than in A2.1 above). The present outbuilding occupies the approximate site of the thatched, single-storied farm building behind the 'red' barn to the right

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A2.3 External southern elevation showing stable to left and open shed to right

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A2.4 Western end of southern external elevation as shown in a late-20th century photograph in the present owner's possession showing the original stable louver

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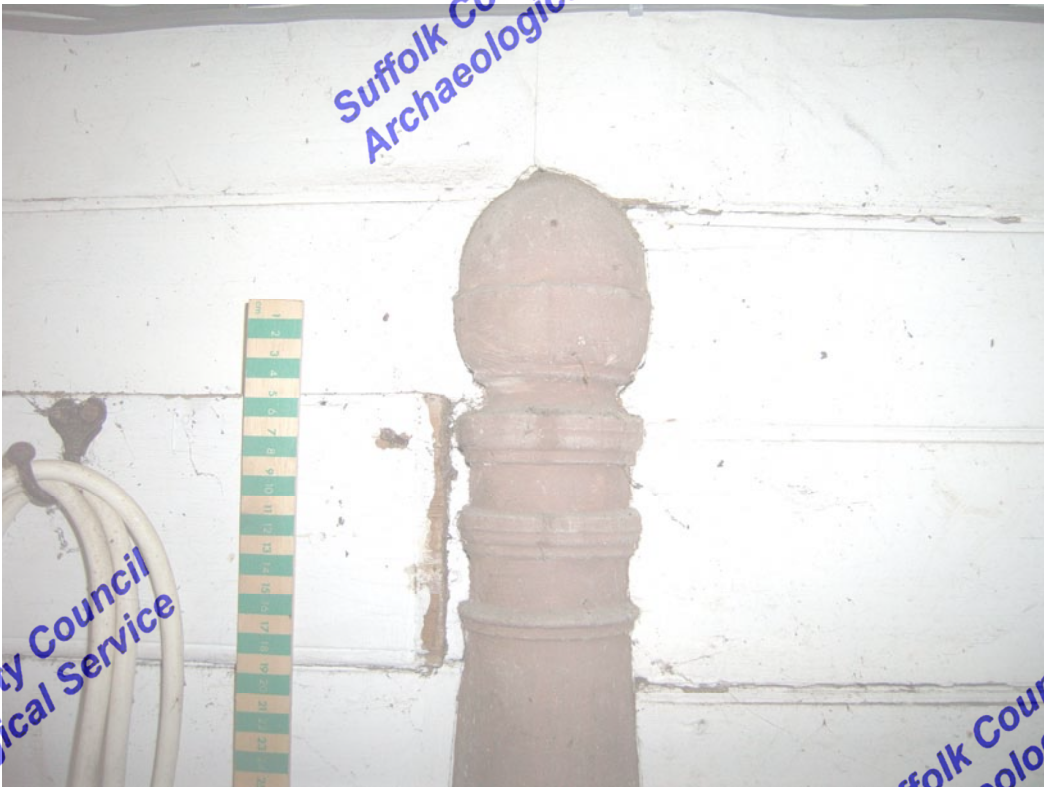
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A2.5 Detail of curved stall wainscot to internal western elevation of stable (A)

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A2.6 Detail of turned stall finial against internal western gable

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A2.7 Internal eastern elevation of stable (A) showing curved wainscot with turned finial and northern elevation to left

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A2.8 Detail of board-and-rail construction of northern internal elevation of open shed (C) with bolted knee-brace to tie-beam. Eastern gable to right

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A2.9 Detail of original clasped-purlin roof structure with nailed collars seen from east in open shed

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A2.10 Detail of Constable's 1815 painting 'Golding Constable's Flower Garden' showing the earlier buildings on the site. The weatherboarding of the barn is a red/brown colour and illustrates the usual appearance of Suffolk barns before the use of tar in the late-19<sup>th</sup> century

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