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The Barn, Chippenhall Hall, Fressingfield, Suffolk FSF 063

Historic Building Record

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Leigh Alston MA (Oxon), Architectural Historian
on behalf of
Suffolk County Council Archaeological Service

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The Archaeological Service
(Field Projects Team)
Suffolk County Council, Shire Hall
Bury St Edmunds IP33 2AR
Tel. (01284) 352446

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The Barn, Chippenhall Hall, Fressingfield, Suffolk

(TM 280 759)

Historic Building Record

This report provides a written and photographic record at English Heritage (2006) Level 2 of a redundant barn. It has been prepared to a brief written by Suffolk County Council Archaeological Service (Edward Martin, dated 11 June 2009, Ref. SpecHBR(EM)_ChippenhallHall_Frassingfield_09) and is intended to fulfil a condition of planning permission for conversion (Mid Suffolk District Council application 1160/09).

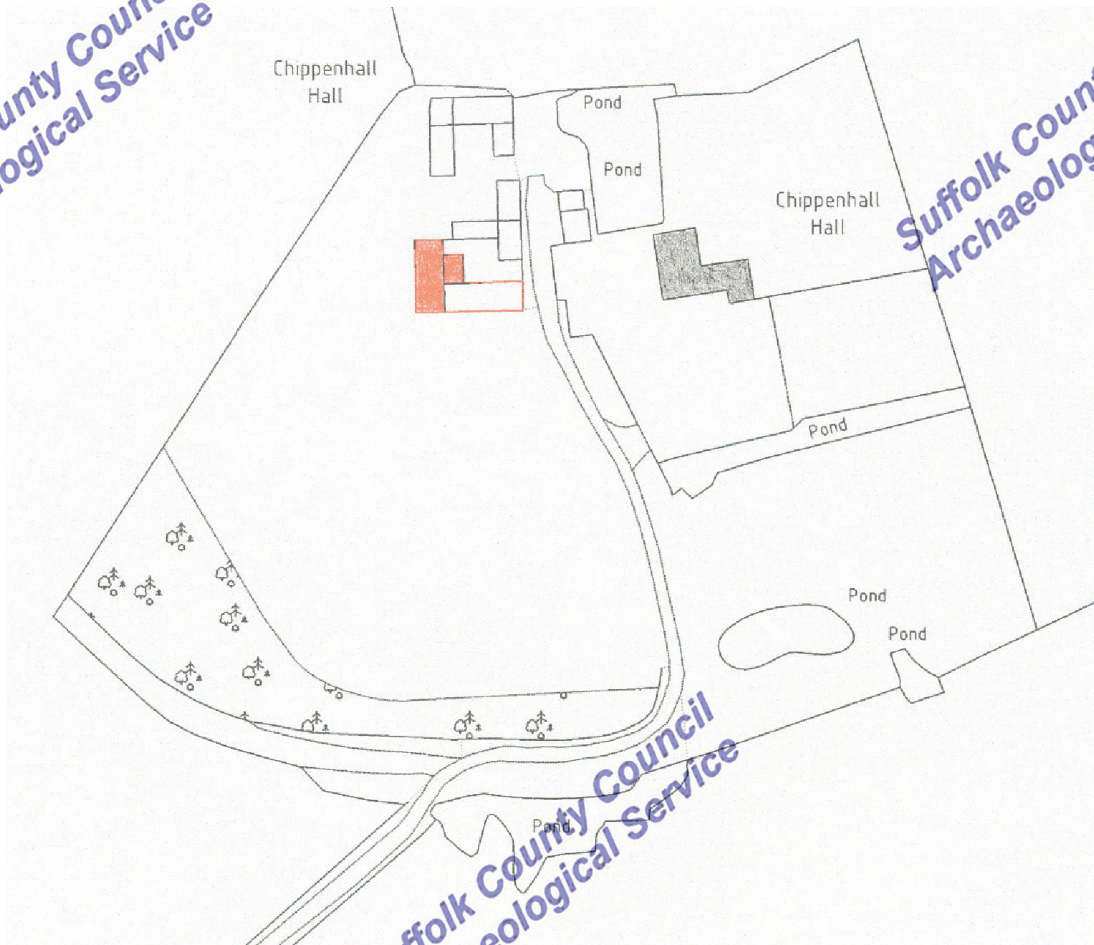
Introduction

The report is accompanied by a CD containing a photographic record in the form of 42 digital images (Appendix 1) but also includes printed photographs of key features to illustrate the text (Appendix 2). Three images in Appendix 1 and one in Appendix 2 are taken from an estate agent's brochure in the present owner's possession and show the farm complex before its recent conversion and partial demolition. 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 30th June 2009.

Summary

Chippenhall Hall lies in open arable countryside in the south-eastern corner of Fressingfield parish, approximately 2.5 km from the village centre and 500 m west of Chippenhall Green and the boundaries of Cratfield and Laxfield. The present timber-framed hall is listed at grade II as a 16th and 17th century structure but occupies the site of an important medieval manor which gave its name to the entire parish at Domesday (in which Fressingfield appears as 'Cybenhalla' and 'Cibbehala'). A reported excavation by Cambridge University to the south of the farmyard failed to find any evidence of a suspected Anglo-Saxon settlement.

The barn is a mid-19th century timber-framed, weatherboarded and pantiled structure of three bays which adjoined a small cattle yard towards the farmhouse on the east and was entered by double doors from the west. A lean-to porch with a low but wide doorway projects into the yard. The carpentry is typical of its period, with a tall brick plinth, bolted knee-braces and many re-used timbers which may have been salvaged from an earlier barn on the site (as shown on the tithe map of 1838). The barn formed part of an extensive 'model farm' of pantiled brick built by Sir Robert Shafto Adair whose Flixton Hall estate owned the 146 acre farm at the time. The historic interest of this Victorian complex had been lost by the time of inspection as most of its buildings had been converted or were undergoing conversion and were no longer recognisable. Conversion work to the barn was also well underway, with its plinth, northern gable and much of the roof already rebuilt, and a brick cattle shelter which formed the southern side of the adjacent yard had been demolished. Given the loss of its historic context as part of a model farm the barn was not of sufficient age or rarity to merit listing in its own right even before the commencement of conversion work, although it lay in close proximity to the manor house.



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Figure 1
Existing Ordnance Survey Site Plan
Showing the barn with its eastern lean-to porch in red, and outlining in red the demolished shed which formed the southern side of the adjoining yard. The farm buildings to the north of the barn had been recently converted or were undergoing conversion at the time of inspection.

Historic Context: Documentary & Cartographic Record

Chippenhall Hall lies on the southern crest of a hill in open arable countryside approximately 2.5 km south-east of Fressingfield village and 500 m west of Chippenhall Green and the boundaries of Cratfield and Laxfield parishes. The present timber-framed hall is listed at grade II as a 16th and 17th century structure (not inspected for the purpose of this report) but may be presumed to occupy the site of one of eight medieval manors in Fressingfield (W.A. Copinger, 'Manors of Suffolk', 1909). The holding appears to have been prominent at an early date, although of less importance in later centuries, as the several manors of the parish were recorded in Domesday as lying in Chippenhall rather than Fressingfield – with only a minor reference to the latter. The name is written variously as 'Cybenhalla' and 'Cibbehala', and was perhaps derived from 'Cibba's hall' (as Margaret Gelling suggests in 'Place Names in the Landscape', 1984, that Chippinghurst in Oxfordshire derives from 'Cibba's wooded hill'). It is understood from the present owner that a Cambridge University archaeological investigation occurred to the south of the barn some years ago without unearthing the Anglo-Saxon settlement it hoped to find. The curved farm track which defines the site on the west and south could represent the remains of a defensive feature, but any such settlement may well have been scattered on the margins of Chippenhall green, as it is today.

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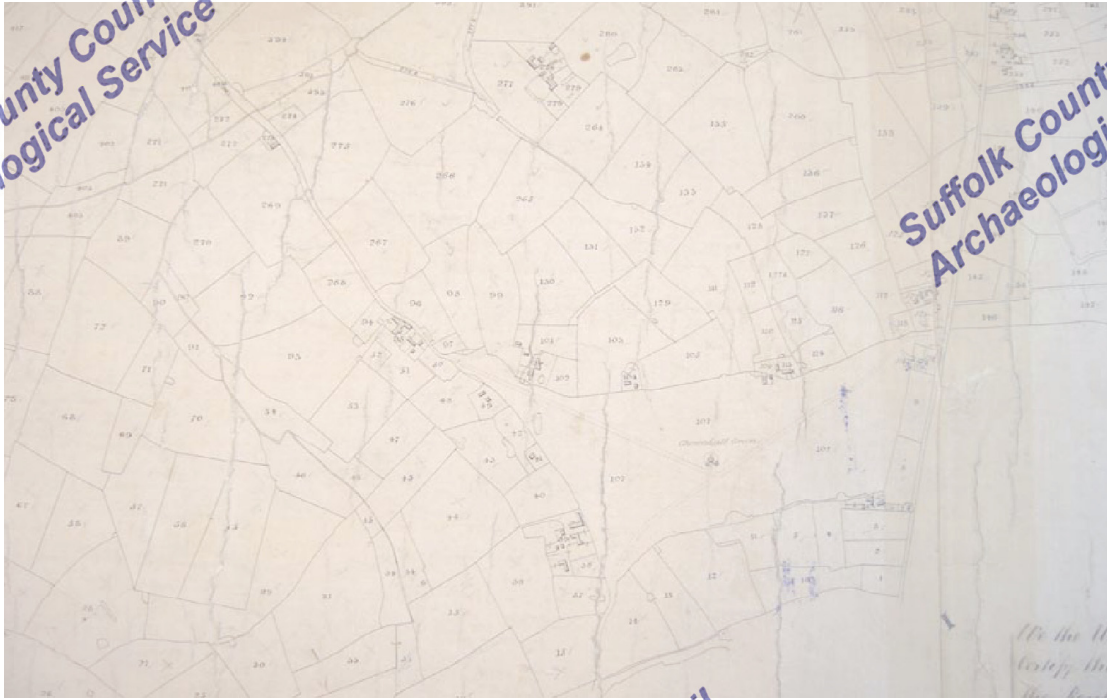


Figure 2.

Fressingfield Tithe Map of 1838 (SRQ Ipswich branch)
Chippenhall Hall is shown at top centre, with Chippenhall Green and the boundaries with Cratfield and Laxfield bottom right. North is oriented towards the top-right.

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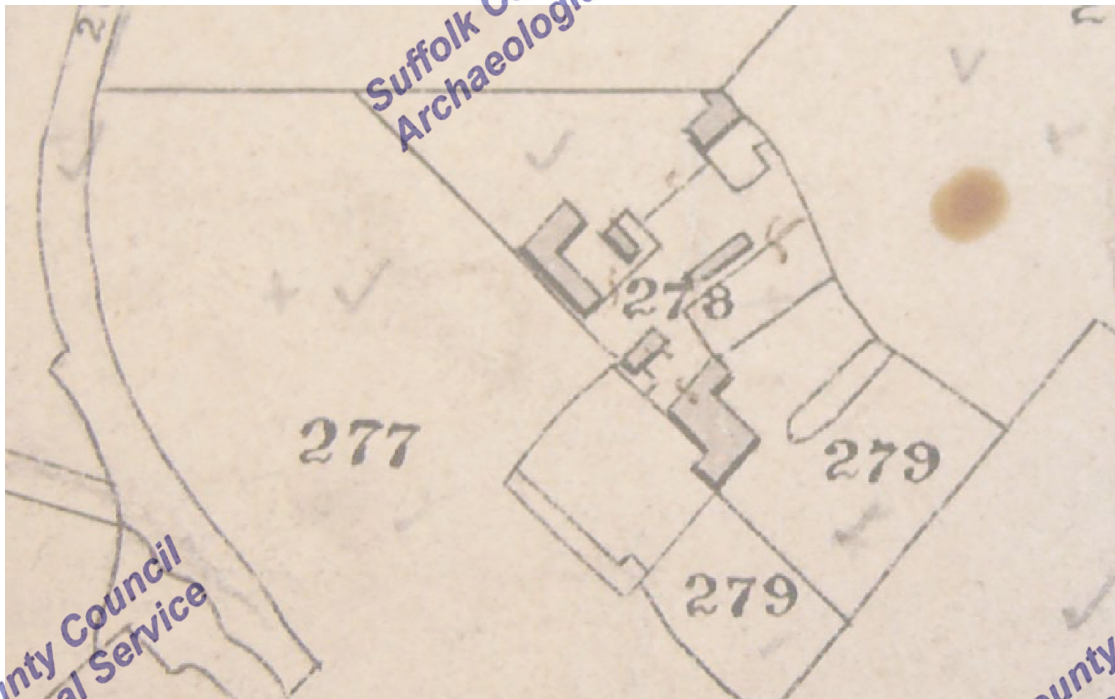


Figure 2a

Detail of 1838 tithe map

The area marked '278' is described as 'homestead' on the tithe apportionment, '279' as an orchard, '277' as Little Hill (pasture) and the fields to the north and west as 'Backhouse Meadow' and 'Bower Hill' respectively. The house is shown to the bottom right and the L-shaped barn & attached shed at top left. Although the barn occupies the same site as today, it lacks an eastern porch and is the existing structure's predecessor

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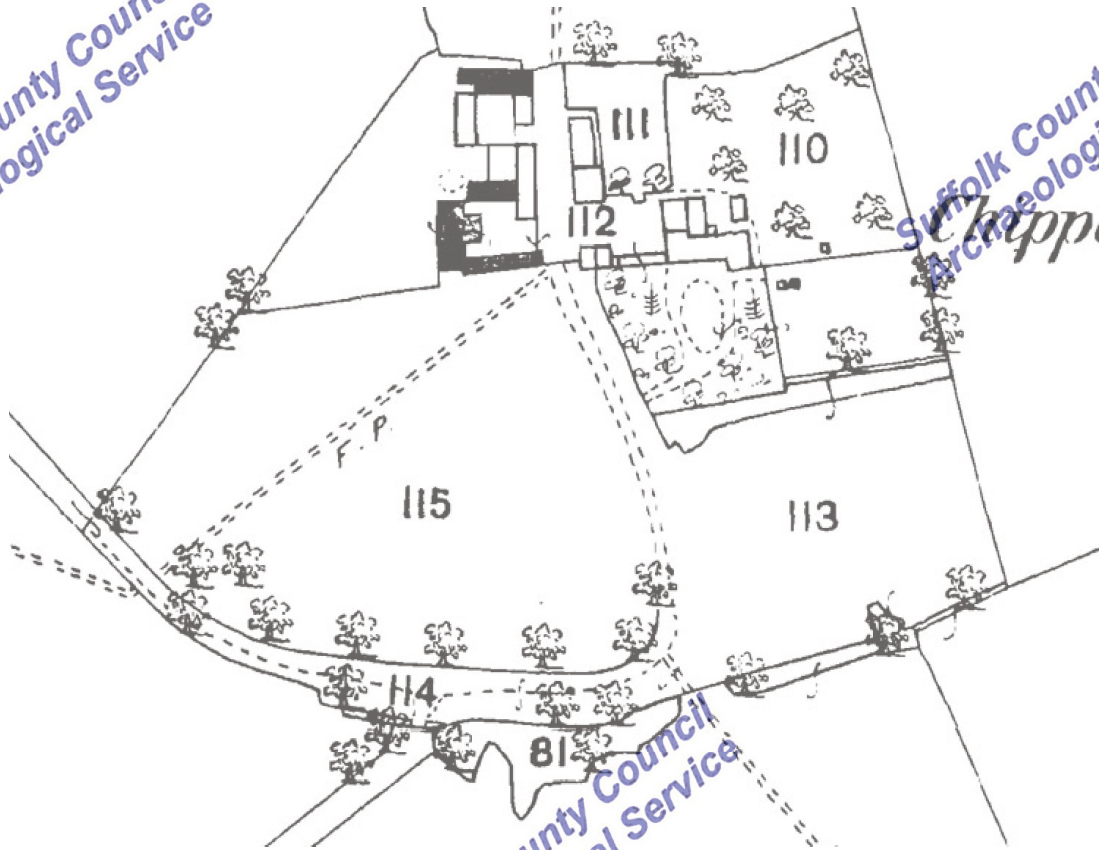


Figure 3

First edition 25 inch Ordnance Survey of 1884, showing a sophisticated new complex of mid-19th century farm buildings to the north of the barn. These have been recently converted and are no longer recognisable. The barn is clearly the present structure, with a central lean-to porch projecting from its eastern elevation into an enclosed cattle yard. The recently demolished shelter shed is shown to the south of the yard

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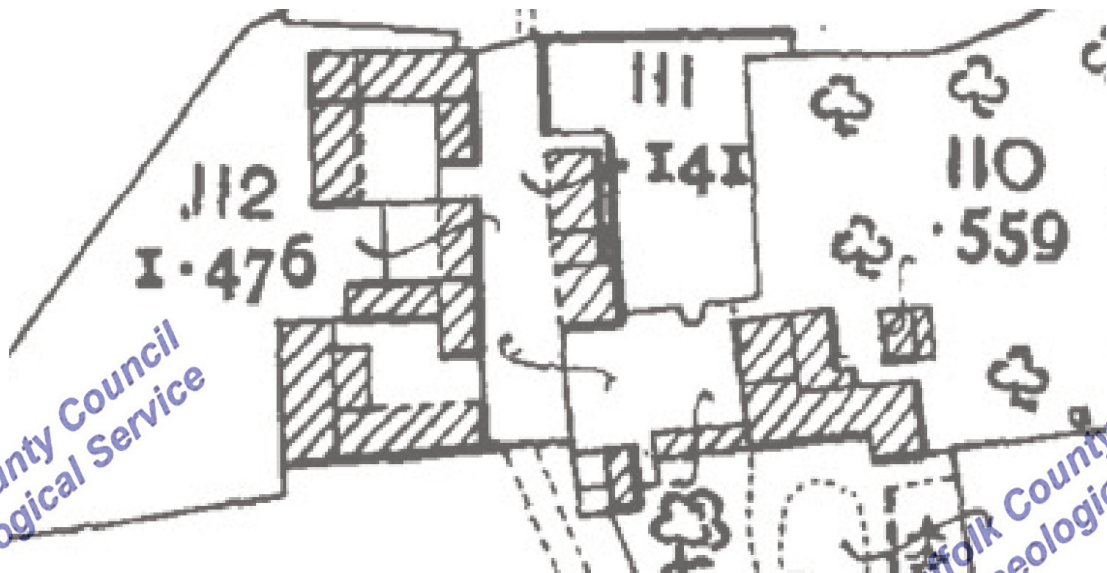


Figure 4

Second edition 25 inch Ordnance Survey of 1904, which uses broken lines to indicate open-sided structures. The demolished shed to the south of the yard was an open-sided cattle shelter shed, while the converted granary to the right of the central drift evidently contained a cartlodge on its lower storey.



Figure 5

Third edition 25 inch Ordnance Survey of 1927, showing little change since 1904. Photographic and anecdotal evidence suggests the mid-19th century farm complex survived largely intact until its conversion in recent years

Copinger notes that the manor was given in Saxon times by Manning, son of Swarting, to the Abbey of St Edmunds and remained in their possession until the Reformation. William de Chepenhale and Edward de Chepenhale held it from the Abbey in 1296, and the tenancy later passed to the Ufford family. The Barbour family held the manor from 1561 until 1695, and it was purchased shortly before 1827 by Alexander Adair of Flixton Hall near Bungay (a 60-room Jacobean mansion 10 km to the north, demolished in 1952). At the time of the Fressingfield tithe survey the property formed a respectable but modest tenanted farm of 146 acres (approximately a third pasture and two-thirds arable) belonging to William Adair Esquire and occupied by Hannah Roope. White's Directory of 1844 locates Hannah Rope (sic) at 'Chepen hall', and notes that Sir Robert Shafto Adair had succeeded as lord of Chepenhall manor; the farm remained in the family's ownership until the 20th century, and was probably sold with 20 other farms belonging to the Flixton estate in 1948. The Adair family became Barons Waveney in the late-19th century.

The 1838 tithe map shows an L-shaped building on the site of the present barn and the recently demolished shelter shed outlined in figure 1. The eastern porch is not shown however, and as this appears to be contemporary with the barn it seems likely that the map depicts an earlier barn on the same site. The present arrangement is clearly shown on the first edition Ordnance Survey of 1884 however (figure 3), along with a sophisticated complex of new farm buildings immediately to the north. Many local farmyards were similarly refurbished in the 1850s and 1860s as intensive cereal production was replaced by mixed animal husbandry after the price of grain fell sharply (thanks to the Repeal of the Corn Laws in 1846). These buildings had been converted and heavily altered by the time of inspection, but photographs in the owner's possession suggest they were typical single-storied red brick structures of the period with pantiled roofs. A stable with a hay loft and unusual arched gable vents lay to the north-east of the yard complex and is said to have retained historic fixtures and fittings such as a manger and hay rack before conversion. It is also understood from the present owner that the barn yard was used in the 1970s to film a television drama based on the murder of Maria Martin in the Red Barn at Polstead.

Building Analysis

M.B. Demolished Eastern Shed

Conversion work on the barn was already well underway at the time of inspection, with substantial areas rebuilt in cement blocks. The shed which formed the southern side of a small cattle yard to the east of the barn had been demolished, but photographs taken prior to demolition (such as A2.8) along with 19th century maps and a number of roof trusses piled nearby suggest that it formed a mid-19th century cattle shelter shed with an open arcade to the north; it extended to approximately 16.75 m in length by 5.5 m in width (55 ft by 18) and consisted of red brick with a pantiled roof of prefabricated roof trusses incorporating iron king posts. The shed and barn appear to have formed a unified and sophisticated 'model farm' of the 1850s or 1860s, but the remaining buildings on the site had been converted or were in an advanced state of conversion at the time of inspection and were no longer recognisable.

Proportions and Structure

The barn is a timber-framed structure of three principal bays on a north-south axis which extends to 15.25 m in length by 6.1 m in overall width (50 ft by 28 ft). The roof-plates lie 4.75 m (15.5 ft) above the present earth floor which appears to have been recently lowered by as much as 60 cm (2 ft), and the sills rest on a tall plinth of 1.2 m (4 ft) that now consists of modern cement blocks but was previously of red brick (as shown in A2.8). The external bays are of equal length, with 5.5 m (18 ft) between their storey posts, but each contains a central intermediate post above which recent tie-beams have been inserted. The central entrance bay extends to 3.5 m (11.5 ft) in length and would have contained a threshing floor of which no trace remains. A lean-to porch projects by 2.9 m (9.5 ft) from the eastern elevation of this bay, and extends by a further 2.4 m (8 ft) to the north. This porch is almost certainly contemporary with the barn but may be a slightly later addition if the latter was built with full-height doors to front and rear (until the late 19th century, when vehicle thoroughfares became common, most local barns contained small rear doors opposite their main entrances, and there are no mortises in this instance for such a door in the main barn).

The framing consists chiefly of oak and elm and incorporates 'primary' diagonal braces which interrupt the small vertical studs (averaging 9 cm in width by 6 cm in depth or 3.5 ins by 2.5) and the storey posts are secured to the tie-beams by bolted knee-braces. With the exception of the posts flanking the central bay the principal wall posts are re-used timbers from one or more structures of the 17th century or earlier, and display various mortises that do not relate to their present locations. The southern tie-beam contains arch-brace mortises, but there are no corresponding mortises in its storey posts and the barn was designed with knee-braces from the outset. Areas of original tarred weatherboarding survive to the external southern gable, but most had been replaced prior to inspection and the barn was clad in plastic sheeting. The northern gable had been entirely rebuilt in cement blocks. The principal trusses of the original butt-purlin roof with pegged collars also survived, but the common rafters had been renewed in tall-sectioned softwood with a ridge-board. The relatively low pitch of the roof suggests that its recently removed covering of pantiles was original.

Date

The wall framing is typical of the early- to mid-19th century, with narrow studs interrupted by pegged primary braces, and the presence of bolted knee-braces rather than arch-braces demonstrate that it cannot pre-date *circa* 1820. The tall plinths indicate a date in the latter part of the possible range, although the well-carpentered butt-purlin roof points in the opposite direction. A building is shown on the same site in 1838, but this lacks the eastern porch which appears to be contemporary with the structure and the barn was probably built in the 1850s or

1860s when the entire farmyard was refurbished. The re-used timbers may have been salvaged from the older barn on the site.

Original Layout and Function

The barn contained full-height doors in the central bay of its western elevation (facing away from the farmhouse) although these had been removed before inspection. The roof plates and unjowled storey posts of both the eastern and western elevations contain bolted knee-braces with no evidence of separate door jambs, and a nailed central block to the west held the vertical bar to which the doors were secured. The eastern elevation opened onto a lean-to porch with the usual smaller door onto the adjacent cattle yard (approximately 3 m in height to the roof-plate of the lean-to and 2.2 m in width – its jambs had been renewed shortly before inspection). The central bay probably contained a threshing floor, although barns of this period often served chiefly as stores and milling areas for cattle feed and in some cases grain bins were placed alongside the yard entrance (where the lean-to porch extends alongside the northern bay).

Historic Significance

The barn previously formed part of an historically interesting ‘model farm’ of the mid-19th century, reflecting the latest agricultural fashions of its day and probably one of a number of similar examples on the Flixton estate. The significance of the site had been largely lost by the time of inspection as both the barn and the rest of the complex had been either demolished or converted beyond recognition. The barn is a typical mid-19th century example but given the loss of its historic context the structure was not of sufficient age or rarity to merit listing in its own right even before the commencement of conversion work.

Appendix 1 (on accompanying CD): Full Photographic Record

Description of Photographs in Appendix 1

Photograph no.

1. General view from south-west, showing house to right with barn in centre & new development in rear.
2. General view of site from drive to south showing house to right and barn yard to left.
3. Southern facade of grade II-listed house (included for site context).
4. General view of site from west showing barn to right & new development to left.
5. General view of site from north, showing previously converted stable complex.
6. General view of farm drift from south showing converted granary to right.
7. General view of farm complex from south-east, showing barn to left.
8. Remains of eastern yard from south-east showing yard wall and converted stable to right.
9. Converted shed and stable to north of yard from north-east, showing yard wall to left.
10. Eastern yard from south-east, showing site of demolished southern shed to left.
11. External eastern elevation of barn showing lean-to porch in centre.
12. General view of barn and yard from south.
13. Site of demolished southern yard shed from west, showing house in rear.
14. External southern gable.
15. Detail of weatherboarding to external southern gable.
16. External western elevation showing original central entrance.
17. Exterior of eastern lean-to porch from south-east.
18. A-frame roof trusses of demolished southern yard shed (stacked near barn).
19. General view of barn interior from south showing central entrance to left.
20. General view of barn interior from north showing lean-to porch of central bay to left.
21. Butt-purlin roof structure from south showing re-used tie-beam with arch-brace mortises.

22. Butt-purlin roof structure of barn from north, showing original bolted knee-braces.

23. Interior of southern gable showing original primary bracing.

24. Detail of primary wall bracing and re-used south-eastern corner post.

25. Internal western elevation of southern bay, showing recently rebuilt plinth.

26. Interior of central western bay showing original knee-braces of entrance.

27. Detail of bolted knee-brace to south of entrance showing scarf joint in roof-plate.

28. Internal western elevation of northern bay showing recently rebuilt northern gable to right.

29. Detail of pegged junction of central stud and braces with western sill of northern bay.

30. Northern internal gable showing re-used tie-beam with arch-brace mortises.

31. Eastern internal elevation of northern bay.

32. Internal eastern elevation of central bay showing access to lean-to porch.

33. Detail of bolted knee brace and scarf joint to north of lean-to porch.

34. Detail of bolted knee brace and scarf joint to south of lean-to porch.

35. Eastern internal elevation of southern bay from north-west, showing lean-to porch to left.

36. Interior of lean-to porch from south showing new boarding to barn to left.

37. Interior of lean-to porch from north showing secondary yard door with barn to right.

38. Interior of barn seen from lean-to porch to north-east.

39. Interior of lean-to porch showing position of original wide door in eastern elevation.

40. Exterior of barn and southern yard shed from south-east before demolition.

41. Exterior of barn and southern yard shed from south-west before demolition.

42. North-eastern corner of farm complex before conversion, showing reputed stable to left.

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Appendix 2 (pp. 11-14): Selected Printed Photographs

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A2.1 General view from south-west, showing house to right with barn in centre & new development in rear

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A2.2 Eastern yard from south-east, showing site of demolished southern shed to left

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A2.3 External western elevation showing original central entrance

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A2.4 General view of barn interior from south showing central entrance to left with recently rebuilt northern gable in rear

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A2.5 Butt-purlin roof structure from south showing re-used tie-beam with arch-brace mortises.

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A2.6 Internal eastern elevation of central bay showing access to lean-to porch and position of original external door (jambs and lintel renewed).

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A2.7 Detail of original bolted knee-braces, pegged and tenoned primary brace and face-halved and bladed scarf joint to north of lean-to porch

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A2.8 Exterior of barn and southern yard shed from south-east before demolition (photograph from estate agent brochure in possession of owner)