

**Brook Barn,  
Wortham,  
Suffolk  
WTM 046**

**Historic Building Record**

Suffolkc1-62616



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*on behalf of*  
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# **Brook Barn, Mellis Road, Wortham, Suffolk**

**(TM 085 765)**

## **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, Ref. SpecHBR(EM)\_BrookBarn\_Wortham\_09) and is intended to fulfil a condition of planning permission for conversion (Mid Suffolk District Council application 2163/06/FUL).*

### **Introduction**

The report is accompanied by a CD containing a photographic record in the form of 40 digital images (Appendix 1) but also includes printed photographs of key features to illustrate the text (Appendix 2). 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 7<sup>th</sup> July 2009.

### **Summary**

Brook Barn lies in a field on the western side of Mellis Road at the southern edge of Wortham parish, approximately 50 metres from its boundary with Burgate. The barn no longer has any obvious association with a farmhouse, but at the time of the tithe survey in 1838 it formed part of a smallholding of just 4.75 acres belonging to a farmhouse on the opposite side of the road (now an ostensibly modern building known as Pilgrims Cottage). The general area is marked on 19<sup>th</sup> century Ordnance Surveys as 'The Brook', and may represent a medieval green settlement alongside the eponymous parish boundary stream.

The barn is a well-preserved timber-framed structure of three bays which extends to 9.9 m in length by 5.5 m in overall width (32.5 ft by 18 ft) and dates from the late-18<sup>th</sup> or early-19<sup>th</sup> century. It was probably built to exploit the extensive local enclosure of former common land in response to the high price of grain during the Napoleonic wars. Of the various attached sheds and yards shown on 19<sup>th</sup> century maps only a small and extensively rebuilt former cow shed of clay-lump now remains, along with a 20<sup>th</sup> century lean-to of corrugated iron. The barn was re-roofed and re-rendered in the late-20<sup>th</sup> century, but retains rare evidence of its original, narrow rear doorway and a complete threshing floor of Gault brick set in rammed chalk. The elm framing is also largely complete, with all four arch-braces of the central bay intact, and many rafters of the original clasped-purlin structure are stored inside the building. Small barns of this period are rare in Suffolk, particularly in anything resembling their original condition, as most were either demolished or mutilated by the insertion of vehicle thoroughfares in the late-19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. The building is accordingly of considerable historic interest, and in my view merits listing at grade II despite the loss of its original roof (which could possibly be reconstructed from its remaining timbers).



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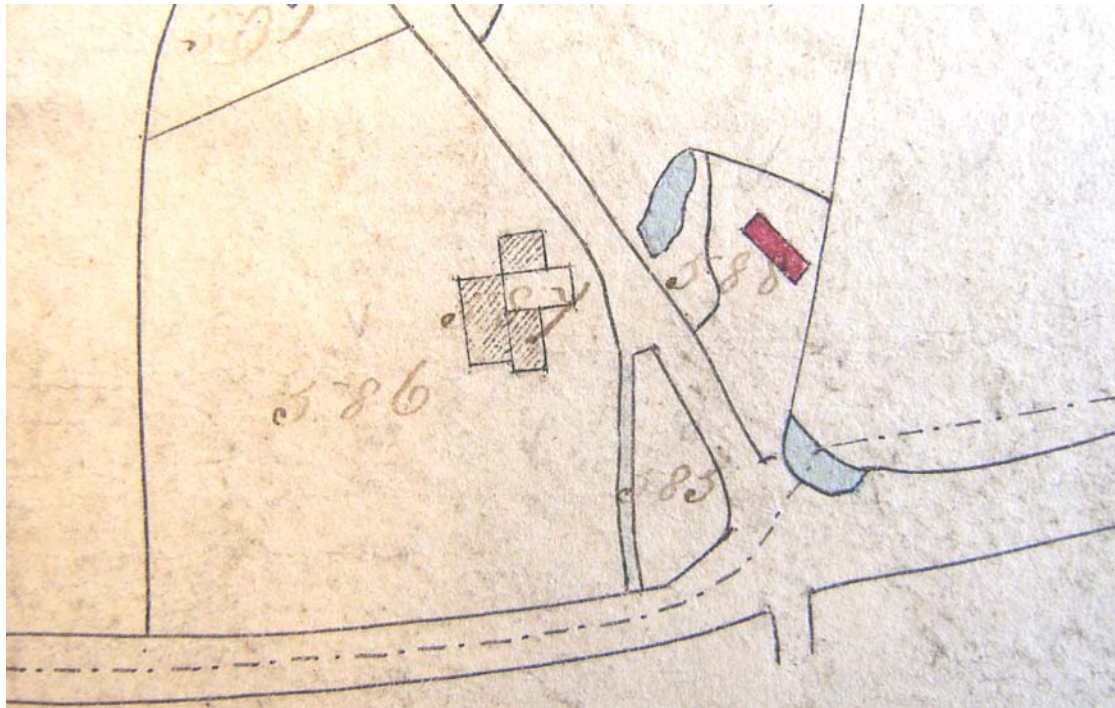
**Figure 1**

**Existing Ordnance Survey Site Plan**

**Outlining the barn in red (with the clay lump shed projecting to the east and the 20<sup>th</sup> century lean-to shed to the south) and showing Mellis Road and Pilgrims Cottage to the east. The boundary with Burgate parish follows the stream and track to the south**

## **Historic Context: Documentary & Cartographic Record**

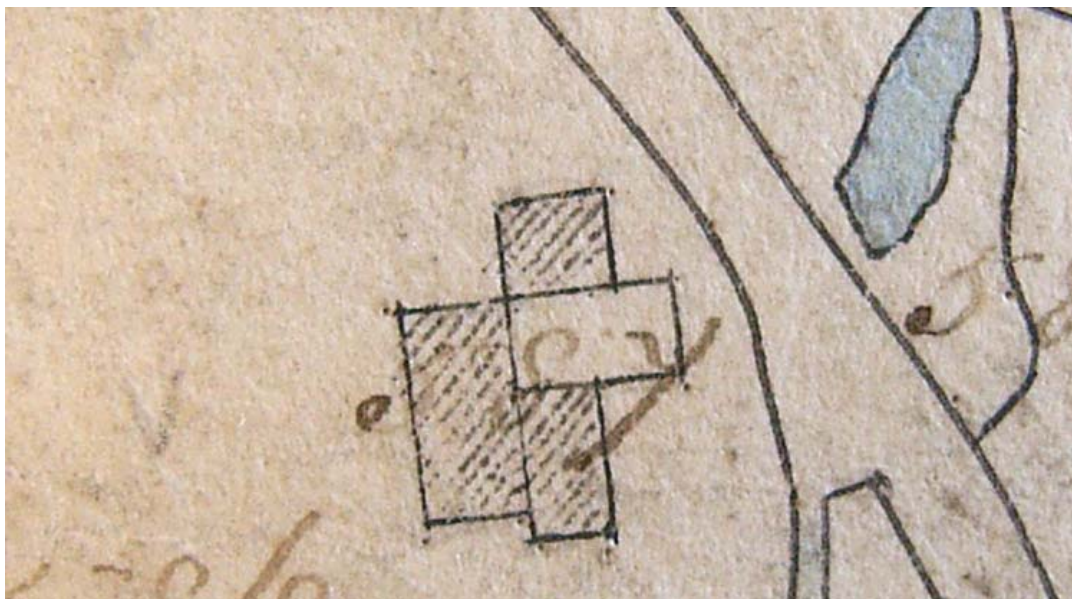
Brook Barn lies in open arable countryside at the southern edge of Wortham parish, approximately 50 m north of the brook and green lane which define its boundary with Burgate. The barn lies in a field on the western edge of Mellis Road and has no obvious association with a farmhouse. At the time of the Wortham tithe survey in 1838 it belonged to a house on the opposite side of the road which is now known as Pilgrims Cottage and appears to be a modern reconstruction (photo A1.4). The property formed an owner-occupied smallholding of 4.75 acres belonging to John Roper, which included the ‘barn and yard’ (587 on the tithe map, as shown in figure 2), along with the arable field in which the barn lay and another adjoining the farmhouse on the north (586 and 589 respectively, each containing a little over 2 acres). John Roper is listed as a farmer in Whites Trade Directory of 1844 and does not appear to have been engaged in any other business. The 18<sup>th</sup> century barn is clearly present on the tithe map, and on the Ordnance Surveys of 1886, 1904 and 1927, but its various attached yards and sheds differed slightly in each case as shown in figures 3-5. There is no evidence of the open-sided shelters associated with the cattle yards that were usually attached to barns in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century (as indicated by broken lines on the Ordnance Surveys), and the small size of the holding may have precluded the keeping of livestock in any numbers. The purpose of the clay-lump shed to the south of the yard is uncertain, as its remains are highly fragmentary, but it may have formed a cow shed at least one of the associated structures was presumably designed as a small stable.



**Figure 2.**

**Wortham Tithe Map of 1838 (SRO Ipswich branch)**

The barn (587) is shown to the left, with a narrow yard and two smaller sheds to the right – one of which appears to obstruct the barn's entrance. The cottage, now known as Pilgrims Cottage, to which the barn and surrounding 4.75 acres of land belonged is shown on the opposite (eastern) side of the road (588). The adjoining field (586) is named only as 'field' on the tithe apportionment. The dotted line to the south marks the boundary with Burgate parish. The small triangular area of pasture which adjoins the crossroads to the south (585) resembles a small green or tye, and suggests the site may have been settled in the Middle Ages.



**Figure 2a**  
**Detail of 1838 tithe map**



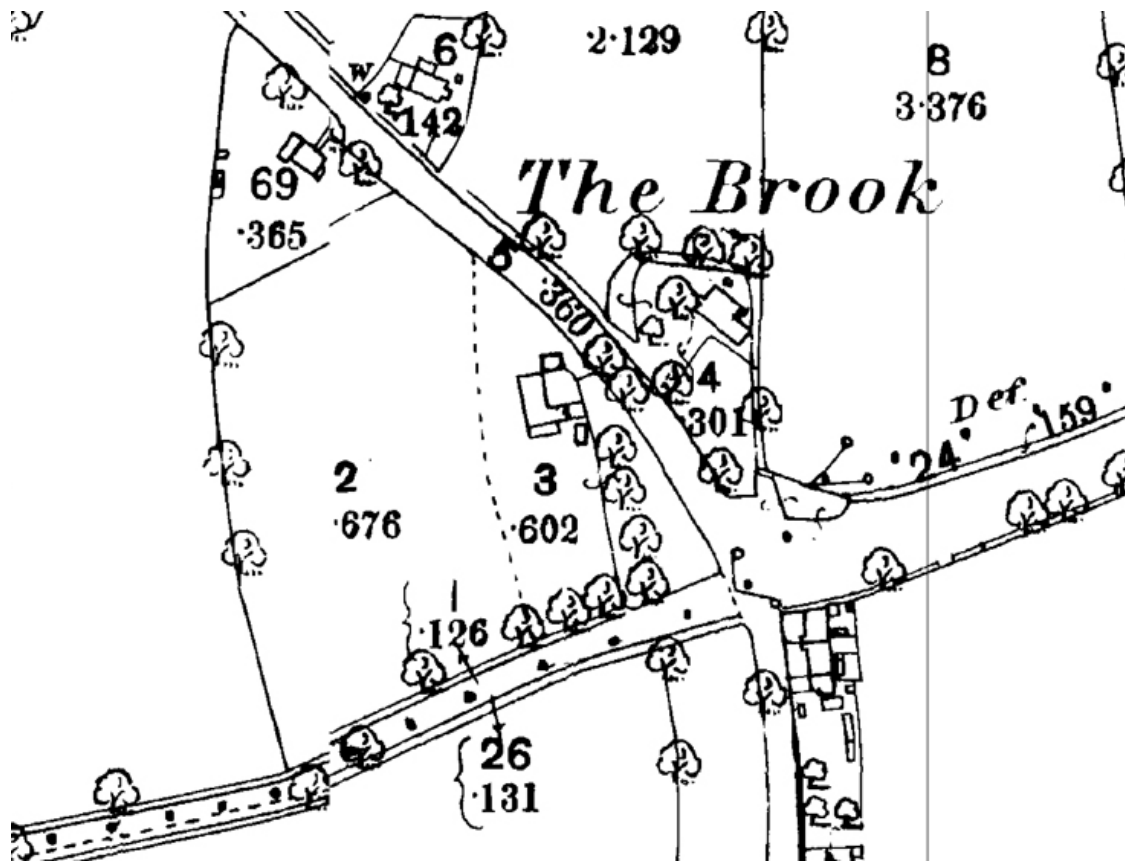


Figure 3  
 First edition 25 inch Ordnance Survey of 1886, which marks the general area as 'The Brook'. The yard had been enlarged since 1838 and the surviving clay-lump shed which projects from the southern end of the barn's eastern elevation is shown for the first time.

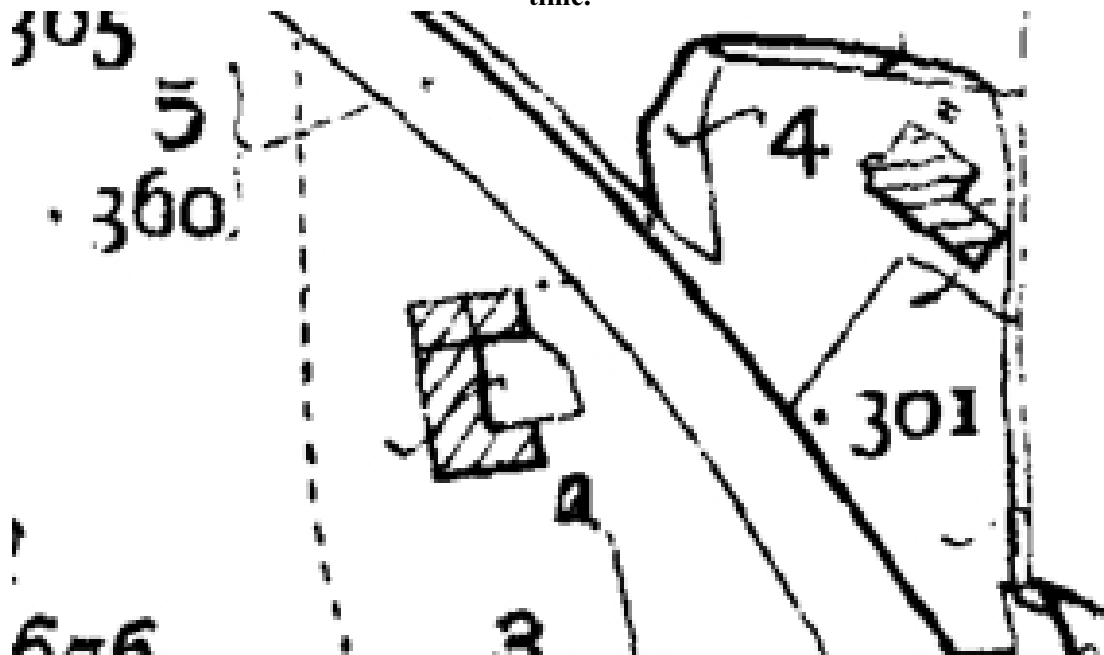


Figure 4  
 Second edition 25 inch Ordnance Survey of 1904, showing a newly constructed shed against the barn's northern gable

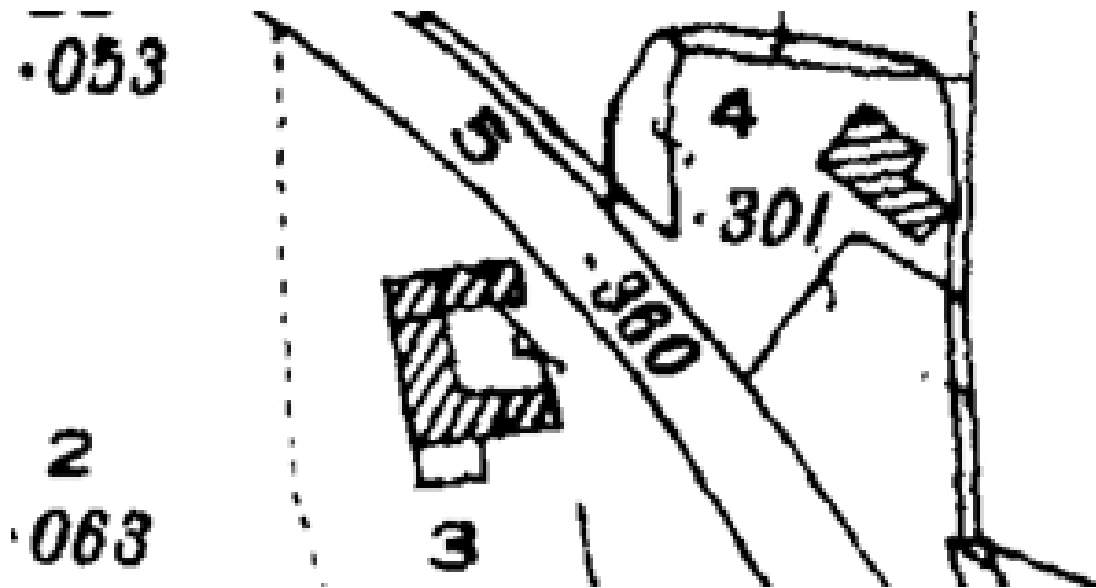


Figure 5

Third edition 25 inch Ordnance Survey of 1927, showing the northern sheds extending further to the east than in 1904, and a new yard against the barn's southern gable (the site of which is now occupied by a mid-20<sup>th</sup> century corrugated iron lean-to shed).

## Building Analysis

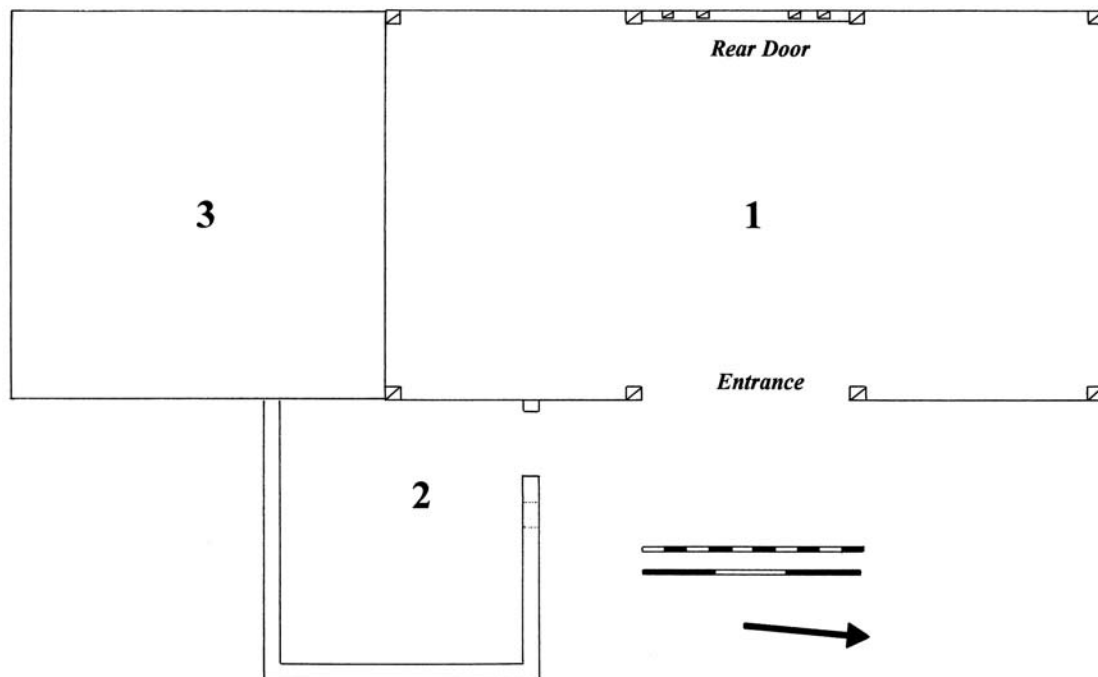


Figure 6

Block Plan of Barn (scales in feet (top) and metres)

1. Late-18<sup>th</sup> century 3-bay timber-framed barn with central entrance to east and narrow, low rear door to west
2. Mid-19<sup>th</sup> century clay lump shed. Much altered, but possibly built as a small cow shed
3. Mid-20<sup>th</sup> century lean-to open shed of corrugated iron (Of no historic significance and not discussed below)

## 1. Barn

*N.B. Figure 7 shows a reconstruction of the original front and rear elevations, and does not include evidence of later alterations.*

### Proportions and Structure

The barn is a timber-framed structure of three bays on a north-south axis which extends to 9.9 m in length by 5.5 m in overall width (32.5 ft by 18 ft). The roof-plates lie 3.2 m (10.5 ft) above an ostensibly original internal floor of rammed chalk, including a 15 cm (6 in) shallow plinth of red brick. The external bays are of equal length, with 3.2 m between their storey posts, but at 2.9 m (9.5 ft) the central bay is slightly narrower and contains a threshing floor of Gault brick that also appears to be original. The floor bricks measure 23 cm in length by 6 cm in width and 10 cm in depth (9 ins by 2.5 by 4) and are laid in a random linear (longitudinal) pattern. The framing consists chiefly of 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) but the storey posts are jowled and arch-braced to the tie-beams in the medieval tradition. The frame is well carpentered, without obvious re-use of secondhand material, and the studs and braces are fully tenoned and pegged to the frame. The tie-beam braces flanking the central bay are neatly numbered with Roman numerals on the south and 'C'-shaped stamps to the north ('I' to the west and 'II' to the east) and the roof-plates contain face-halved and bladed scarf joints. The exterior is now clad in late-20<sup>th</sup> century cement render on metal lath, but would have been either weatherboarded or rendered in lime originally. The present corrugated iron roof structure is a replacement of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, but a number of rafters from a clasped-purlin roof with pegged collars were lodged on the tie-beams and piled in the north-eastern internal corner at the time of inspection. The original roof may have been steeply pitched for thatch, but this is now impossible to determine. The gable tie-beams do not contain stud pegs in their upper surfaces, and both gables were probably hipped (the existing weatherboarded vertical gables date from the 20<sup>th</sup> century).

### Date

The wall framing is typical of the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, with narrow studs interrupted by pegged primary braces, and the presence of arch-braces rather than bolted knee-braces suggests it is unlikely to post-date the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> century by more than a decade or two at most. The building appears on the Wortham tithe map of 1838, and was probably built in *circa* 1800 in response to the high price of grain during the Napoleonic wars, which saw much former common land in the region enclosed for agriculture.

### Original Layout and Function

The barn contained full-height doors in the central bay of its eastern elevation facing the nearby road and former farmhouse, as shown in figures 6 and 7. The present doors in the same position are replacements of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, but the absence of stud mortises in the roof-plates confirm the layout is original. There is no evidence of separate jambs. The rear (western) elevation of the same bay contains a mid-rail 1.2 m (4 ft) below the roof-plate which forms the lintel of a smaller door of 1.8 m in height by 1.2 m in width (6 ft by 3.5 ft) as show in figure 7. This door is now blocked by two studs but the rest of the frame is unusually intact as no vehicle thoroughfare was inserted during late-19<sup>th</sup> century. The storey posts of the central bay interrupt the ground sills and the studs flanking the rear door appear to be embedded in the threshing floor. The southern jamb of this door retains a pair of iron hinge pintles to its internal surface.



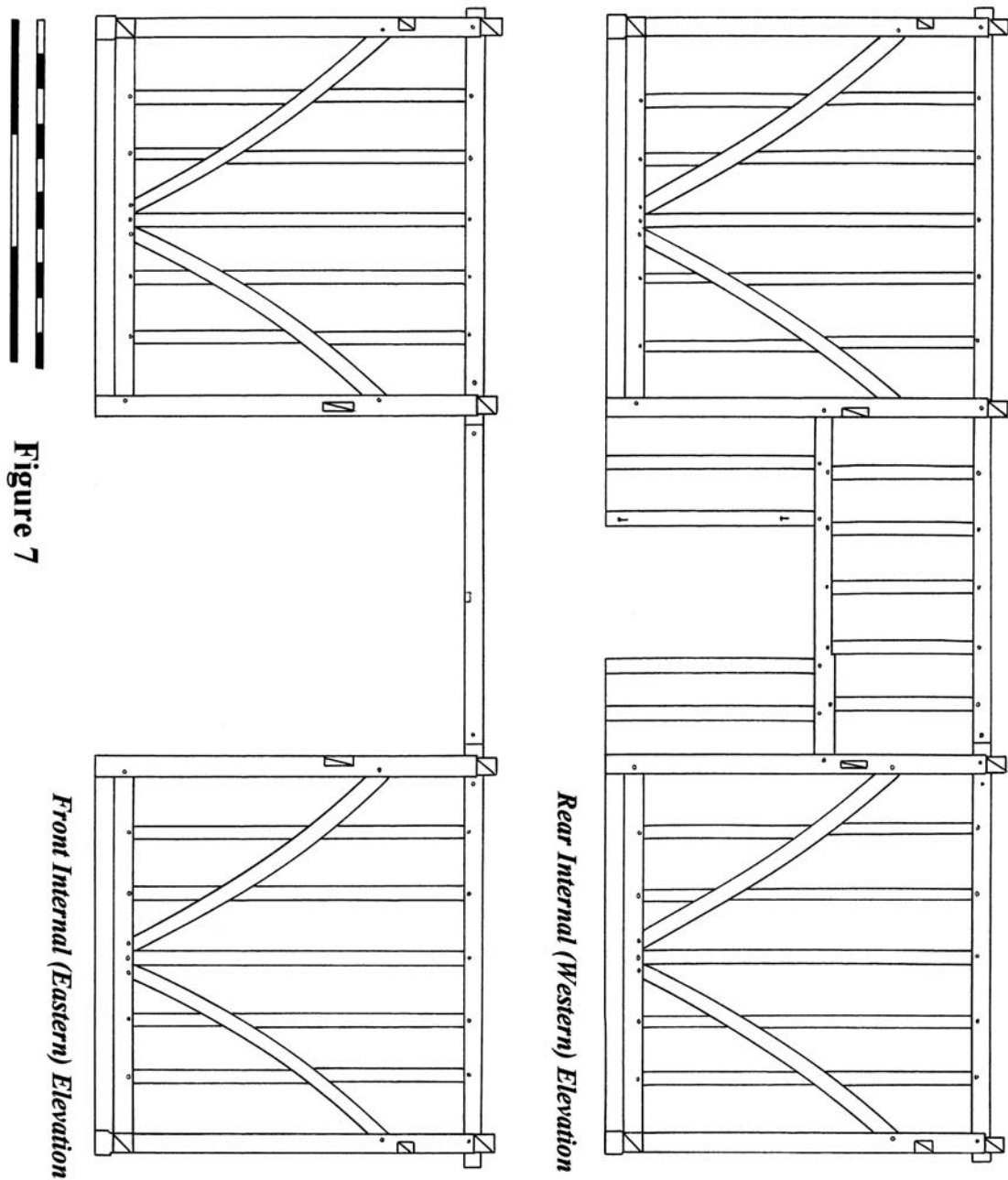


Figure 7

**Alterations**

With the exception of its roof and external cladding the barn’s framing remains largely intact. Both tie-beams and all four arch-braces survive, along with most of the wall fabric. There is evidence of secondary doors on both sides of the central posts in the two gables, and another immediately north of the eastern entrance. The gable doors presumably opened onto the demolished secondary sheds shown on late-19<sup>th</sup> century maps. These apertures have been blocked and rendered externally, along with the rear door, and a small number of timbers elsewhere have been repaired in softwood.

**2. Clay Lump Shed**

The shed which projects from the southern end of the barn’s eastern elevation overlaps the 20<sup>th</sup> century lean-to against its gable and extends to 3.9 m in length by 3.75 m in overall width on an east-west axis (13 ft by 12). Its walls rise to 2.2 m (7 ft) and consist of externally

rendered clay lump with individual blocks measuring 45 cm in length by 15 in height and 23 cm in thickness (18 ins by 6 by 9). It was extensively rebuilt with concrete blocks and brickwork during the 20<sup>th</sup> century, leaving only the eastern gable and the eastern half of the northern elevation intact, and its roof is a modern replacement. Given the extent of its alterations the shed's original purpose is unclear, but its small size suggests it may have operated as a cow shed or loose box. A small, blocked aperture of approximately 1 m in height and half a metre in width (3 ft by 18 ins) in its northern elevation resembles the 'calf-creeps' often found in 19<sup>th</sup> century cow sheds. The building is shown on the Ordnance Survey of 1886 but not the tithe map of 1838 and probably dates from the 1850s or 1860s when clay lump was often used locally to build inexpensive animal accommodation after the Repeal of the Corn Laws in 1846.

### **Historic Significance**

Brook Barn is an unusually intact example of a small 'Napoleonic barn' of the late-18<sup>th</sup> or early-19<sup>th</sup> century. Its timber-framed walls are largely complete and both its narrow rear door and tie-beam braces, which are typical of pre-19<sup>th</sup> century barns, represent rare survivals that were often destroyed elsewhere by the subsequent insertion of vehicle thoroughfares. The original floor of rammed chalk with a Gault brick threshing floor in the central bay is also an uncommon survival, and the barn is accordingly of considerable historic interest. In my view the building is sufficiently well preserved and of sufficient local rarity to merit listing at grade II, although the replacement of its roof has devalued the case; it should be noted, however, that much of the original roof structure still survives and could probably be replaced. The mid-19<sup>th</sup> century clay-lump shed has been extensively rebuilt and is no longer of historic interest.

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

### **Description of Photographs in Appendix 1**

#### **Photograph no.**

1. General view of site from south-west showing isolated location of barn at field edge.
2. General view of site from Burgate parish boundary stream to south-east.
3. General view from Mellis Road to south-east, showing barn to left.
4. Facade of Pilgrim Cottage (former farmhouse opposite barn) from Mellis Road to south-west.
5. General view of barn from Mellis Road to east.
6. Exterior from east showing barn to right and clay-lump shed to left.
7. Exterior from south-east showing clay-lump shed to right and lean-to shed to left with barn in rear.
8. Exterior from south-west showing lean-to shed against southern gable of barn.
9. Exterior from north-west showing modern render and corrugated iron roofing.
10. Interior of lean-to shed showing southern external gable of barn.
11. Interior of lean-to shed from west showing brick corner of clay-lump shed.
12. Interior of lean-to shed from east showing southern gable of barn to right.
13. Interior of clay-lump shed showing original fabric to eastern gable.
14. Interior of clay-lump shed showing concrete blocks of rebuilt southern elevation.
15. Interior of clay-lump shed from south showing original fabric to right & blocked hatch in centre.
16. Interior of clay-lump shed showing northern door with 20th century brickwork to right.
17. 20th century roof structure of clay lump shed from south, showing eastern gable to right.
18. General internal view of barn from north showing original arch braces.
19. General internal view of barn from south showing original arch-braces & central entrance to right.
20. 20th century roof structure of barn from east showing original rafters lodged on tie-beams.

21. Internal southern gable showing primary braces cut and renewed to both sides of central post.
22. Internal northern gable showing primary braces cut for apparent doors beside central post.
23. Internal western elevation of barn showing southern gable to left.
24. Internal western elevation of barn showing northern gable to right.
25. Internal elevation of central bay showing intact lintel of blocked western door.
26. Detail of blocked central door in western internal elevation, showing original jambs right & left.
27. Detail of iron hinge pintle to southern jamb of original western door.
28. Detail of western door showing iron pintle to left and brick threshing floor.
29. Detail of original tie-beam brace in south-western corner of central bay.
30. Detail of carpenter's numeral (I) to south-western arch-brace of central bay.
31. Detail of face-halved scarf joint & storey post in north-western corner of central bay.
32. Detail of bark to storey post in north-western corner of central bay.
33. Internal eastern elevation showing northern gable to left.
34. Internal eastern elevation showing southern gable to right.
35. Detail of roof-plate above original full-height entrance in central bay of eastern elevation.
36. Detail of carpenter's numeral (CC) to arch-brace in north-eastern corner of central bay.
37. Detail of carpenter's numeral (II) in south-eastern corner of central bay.
38. Brick threshing floor of central bay seen from south-west.
39. Detail of brick threshing floor from eastern entrance.
40. Detail of threshing floor showing scale of Gault bricks.

**Appendix 2 (pp. 12-15): Selected Printed Photographs**



A2.1 General view of site from south-west showing isolated location of barn at field edge



A2.2 General view of barn from Mellis Road to east, showing modern doors to the original barn entrance and the clay-lump shed to the left





A2.3 Exterior from south-east showing clay-lump shed to right and lean-to shed to left with southern gable of barn in centre



A2.4 Exterior from north-west showing modern render and corrugated iron roofing





A2.5 General internal view of barn from north showing original arch braces to southern tie-beam, with original chalk floor and primary wall bracing.



A2.6 General internal view of barn from south showing original arch-braces & central entrance to right. The roof structure is modern but a number of original rafters are lodged on the tie-beams and leaning against the northern gable.





A2.7 Internal bay of western internal elevation showing the original lintel of the rear door (the door now blocked by the central pair of narrow studs, but the jambs intact)



A2.8 Gault brick threshing floor of the central bay seen from south-west, with the original rammed chalk floor of the southern bay to the right