

**The Limes,  
Wattisfield,  
Suffolk  
WSF 058**

**Historic Building Record**

Suffolkc1-64650



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

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

**August 2009**

# **‘Barn’ at The Limes, The Street, Wattisfield, Suffolk,**

**(TM 010 741)**

## **Historic Building Record**

*This report provides a written and photographic record at English Heritage (2006) Level 2 of an outbuilding referred to for planning purposes as a barn in the curtilage of a grade II-listed house. It has been prepared to a brief written by Suffolk County Council Archaeological Service (Edward Martin, dated 23 June 2009, Ref. SpecHBR(EM)\_TheLimes\_Wattisfield\_09) and is intended to fulfil a condition of planning permission for conversion (Mid Suffolk District Council application 3765/08).*

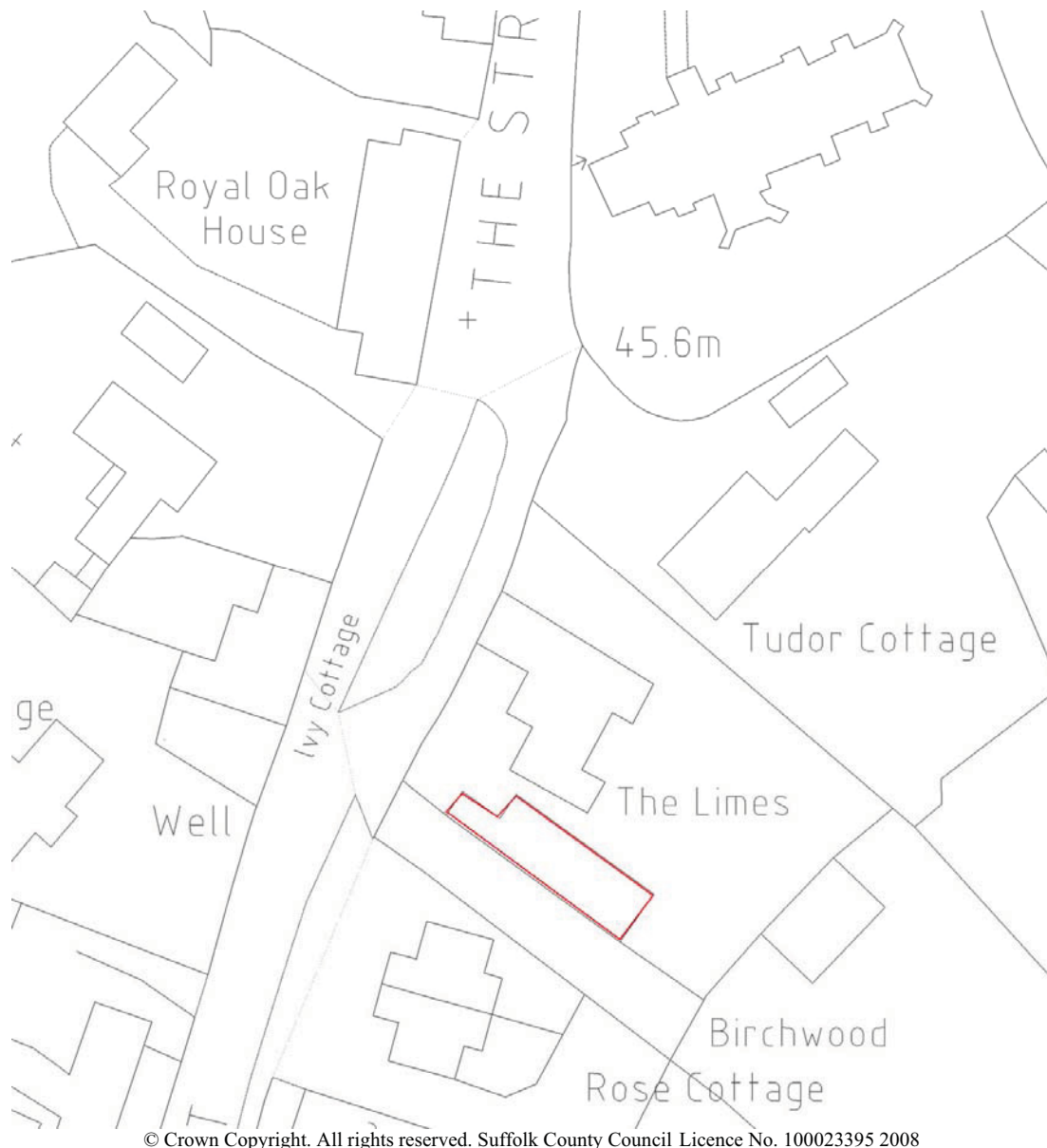
### **Introduction**

The report is accompanied by a CD containing a photographic record in the form of 72 digital images (Appendix 1) but also includes printed photographs of key features to illustrate the text (Appendix 2). Eight images were taken by the building contractor in January 2008 before conversion work began. Each image is described in a separate schedule and wherever possible includes a scale rod with half-metre divisions in red and white. The green tint in some photographs was caused by a translucent tarpaulin of the same colour which covered part of the roof when the site was inspected on 7<sup>th</sup> July 2009.

### **Summary**

The ‘barn’ at The Limes is a timber-framed and rendered outbuilding of the late-15<sup>th</sup> or 16<sup>th</sup> century which lies in close proximity to the service gable of an ostensibly contemporary domestic house and almost certainly represents a rare and historically important detached kitchen. The house is parallel with the main street in the centre of the medieval settlement, just 25 m south of St Margaret’s church, but the outbuilding is aligned at right-angles. Its original structure contained three unequal bays and extended to 10.5 m in length by 5 m in overall width (34.5 ft by 16.25 ft), and its external walls rose to 3.5 m at the roof-plates (11.5 ft). Precise analysis is hampered by the concealment of key evidence behind 20<sup>th</sup> century render, but the building appears to have contained a two-bay open hall to the rear (east) with a cross-passage adjoining an undivided service bay to the west. The loft of the service bay extended over the central bay to create a ‘boot-shaped’ hall heated by an open hearth – as indicated by heavy sooting to the timbers of the eastern bay. Any evidence of the hall window is hidden, but it did not rise to the roof-plates in the usual manner.

A new ceiling of tall-sectioned joists was inserted in the mid-17<sup>th</sup> century, when a brick chimney was added to the eastern gable and the western bay was extended by 1.2 m – possibly to convert the kitchen into the independent cottage shown on the tithe map of 1838. Subsequent changes included the rebuilding of the entire rear (southern) elevation in brick and the replacement of the roof in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, leaving only the original northern elevation, service partition and part of the eastern gable intact. Despite its rarity and historic interest the extent of these changes is arguably too great for the building to merit listing in its own right, particularly as it already enjoys some protection within the curtilage of The Limes (which is listed at grade II). It is strongly recommended that any additional evidence which comes to light during the current programme of conversion should be properly recorded.



**Figure 1**  
**Current Ordnance Survey Site Plan**  
**Outlining in red the outbuilding to the south of The Limes, and showing the close proximity of St Margaret's church to the north**

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

The Limes is a timber-framed and rendered domestic house which adjoins the eastern side of Watisfield's principal street 25 m south of St Margaret's church. The house is listed at grade II and appears to consist of a 16<sup>th</sup> century floored hall with a service bay to the south and a parlour bay with a western extension of the early-17<sup>th</sup> century to the north. The detached outbuilding which forms the subject of this report lies at right-angles to the house and road, 3.8 m south of the former's southern gable (excluding a 19<sup>th</sup> or 20<sup>th</sup> century lean-to attached to the same gable, which reduces the distance to just 1.5 m).

The Watisfield parish tithe map of 1838 shows the outbuilding as a separate domestic property, described in the accompanying apportionment as a 'cottage and garden' owned by Thomas Thornhill Esquire and occupied by James Farrow. The Limes was owned by the same





**Figure 2**  
Wattisfield parish tithe map of 1838 (showing north and the modern A134 to the right).



**Figure 2a**  
Detail of 1838 tithe map, showing the distinctive L-shaped outline of The Limes (24a) and the outbuilding as a separate cottage (25a) with an outbuilding attached to its eastern gable and a detached outbuilding (presumably a privy) in the eastern corner of its yard.

individual but occupied by 'Whitmore'. Thomas Thornhill owned a total of 7 tenanted cottages in the parish, including that between The Limes and the churchyard (23a), together with an outlying farm and maltings of 90 acres occupied by William Farrow (now Beech Tree Farm on the Hinderclay road). The field to the west of the site (299) was named as a 'barn and meadow', and the outbuildings to the south (299a) as 'buildings and yard'. Thornhill, 'Whitmore' and James Farrow are not named in White's Suffolk Directory of 1844, but William Farrow is listed as a farmer and maltster and Josiah Farrow as a cattle dealer; the occupant of the outbuilding 1838 may well have been linked with a cattle dealing business on the adjoining land. The colour convention of the map uses red to indicate the domestic part of his cottage and grey to indicate what was probably a boarded outbuilding attached to its eastern gable and a detached shed in the yard.

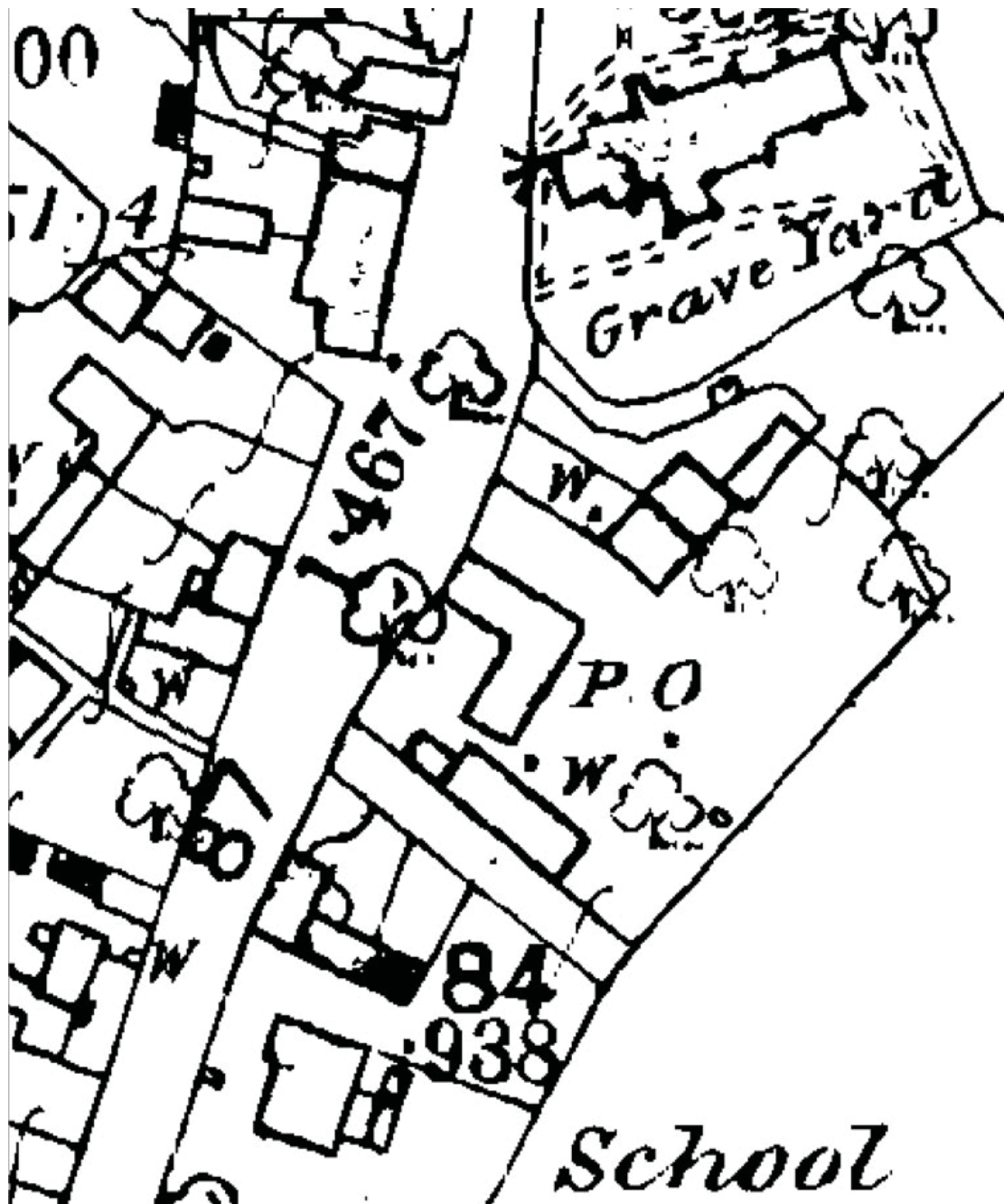


Figure 3  
First edition 25 inch Ordnance Survey of 1886, showing the layout of the site much as it remains today. The Limes is marked as the village Post Office.



By the time of the first edition 25 inch Ordnance Survey in 1886 the layout of the site had been transformed, with the outbuilding now an ancillary structure in the grounds of The Limes and a new school and field access to the south. The existing narrow shed had been added to its eastern gable and the detached outbuilding shown to the west in 1838 had been demolished. The description of The Limes in the Schedule of Listed Buildings notes that its eastern wing formerly contained a shop, and the map identifies it as the village Post Office. The situation had altered little by 1904 (figure 4), although the southern lean-to had been added to the main house and new detached sheds had replaced those of 1838.

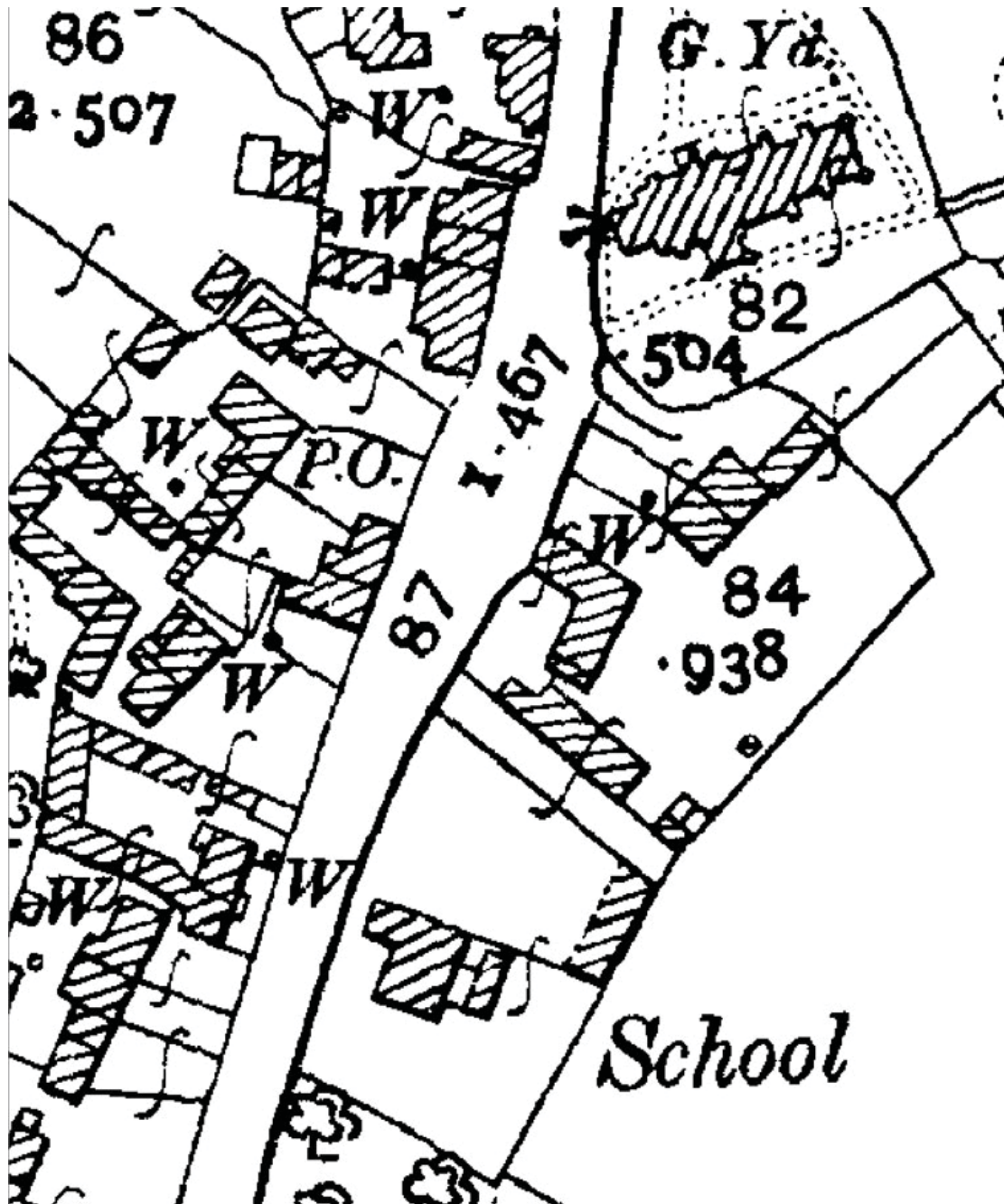
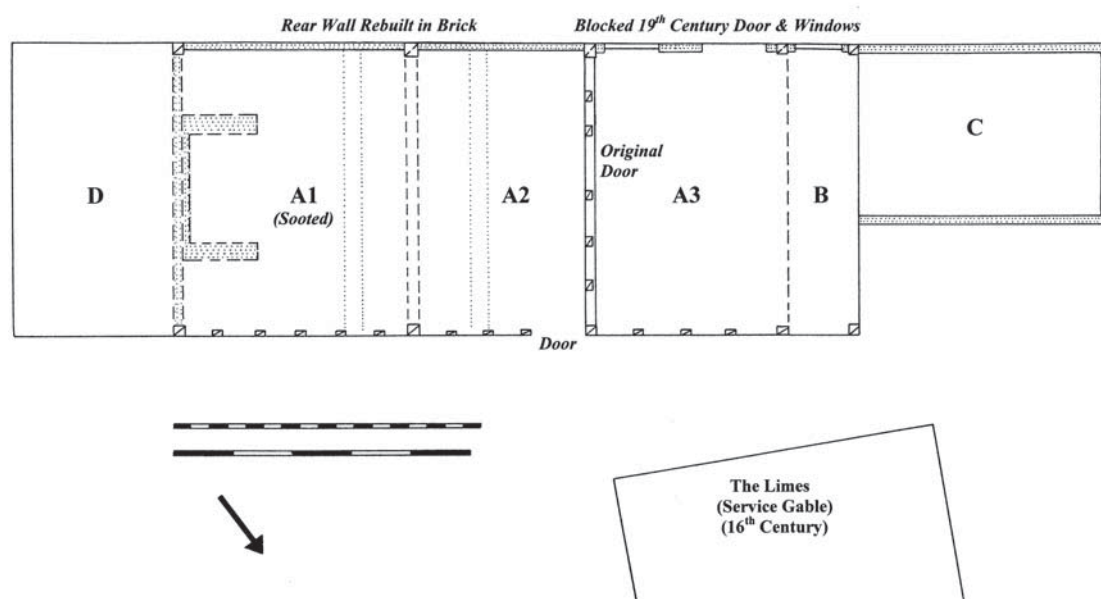


Figure 4

The Second Edition 25 inch Ordnance Survey of 1904, showing the new lean-to against the southern gable of The Limes and new outbuildings in the rear yard. The Post Office had moved to the opposite side of the street.

## Building Analysis



**Figure A**

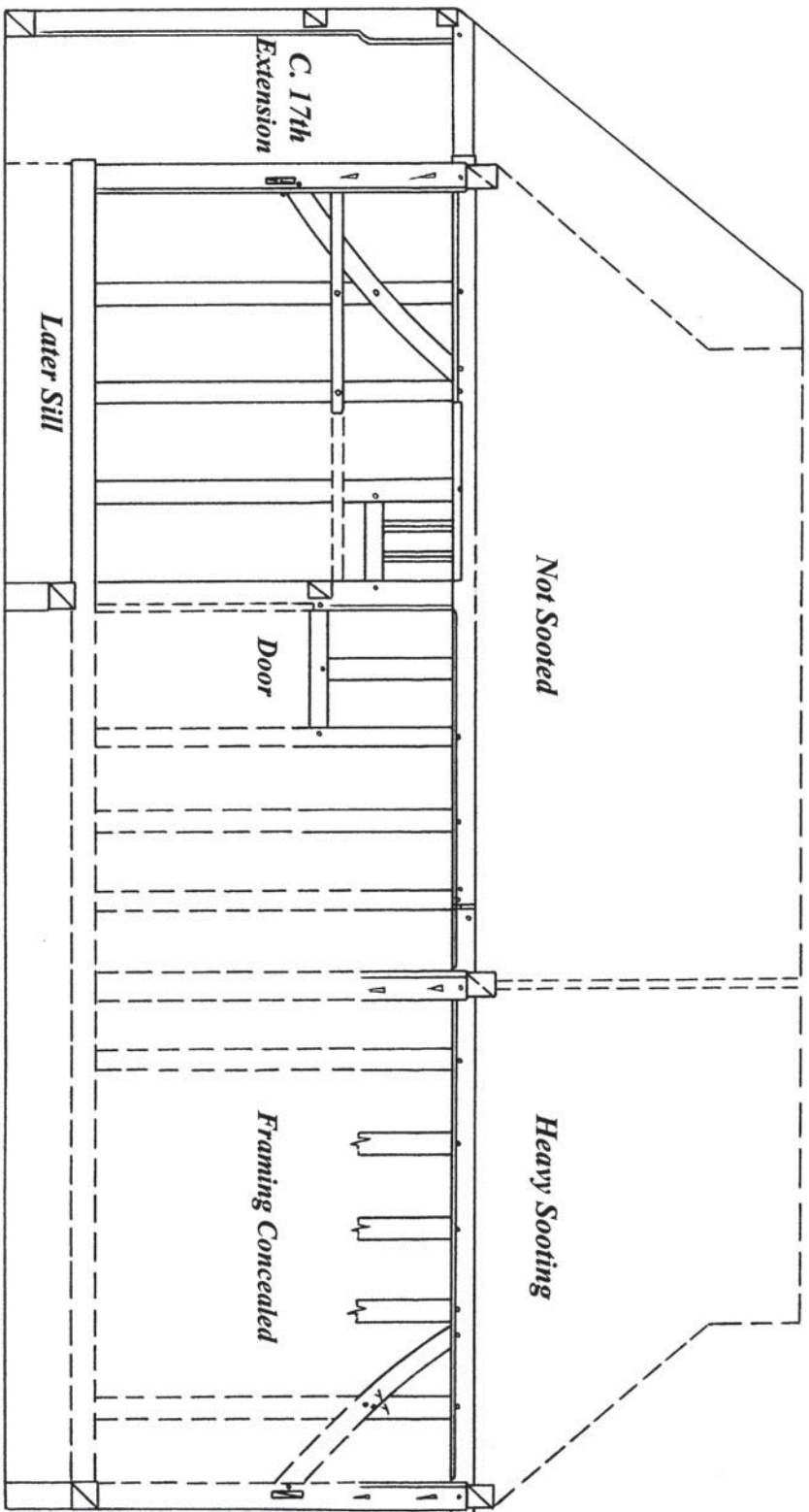
Ground Plan of the outbuilding identifying its three bays and several extensions with letters for ease of reference in the text and photographic record. Scales in feet (top) and metres

### Key

- A** Three-bay timber-framed detached bake-house or house of late-15<sup>th</sup> or early-16<sup>th</sup> century, divided as follows:
  - A1.** Eastern bay with heavily sooted timbers and later brick chimney against eastern gable. Originally an open hall containing an open heath.
  - A2.** Central bay with northern entrance door in cross-passage position, originally fully or partly divided from the sooted eastern bay and probably containing a ceiling.
  - A3.** Western bay divided from the central bay by an original partition with a blocked doorway to south of centre. This partition rose only the height of an original ceiling.
- B.** Narrow 17<sup>th</sup> century extension to original western gable.
- C.** Single-storied 19<sup>th</sup> century brick and flint vehicle shed.
- D.** Single-storied 19<sup>th</sup> century brick and studwork animal or storage sheds adjoining eastern gable.

### N.B.

*Building work was well underway at the time of inspection, with the external structure largely concealed by scaffolding and all internal ceilings removed.*



**Figure B. Internal Northern Elevation**



## 1. The Original Building

### Proportions and Structure

The outbuilding at The Limes is aligned on an approximately east-west axis at right-angles to Wattisfield Street and to the adjacent 16<sup>th</sup> century house. Its original timber-framed structure contains three unequal bays and extends to 10.5 m in length by 5 m in overall width (34.5 ft by 16.25 ft). The external walls rise to 3.5 m at their roof-plates (11.5 ft), and consist of uninterrupted studs 2.75 m in height (9 ft) and approximately 15 cm by 10 cm in section (6 ins by 4) on a secondary ground sill and brick plinth. The timbers are fully framed with jowled storey posts, pegged mortise-and-tenon joints and internally trenched braces rising both longitudinally and laterally from all four corner posts as shown in figure B. The existing clasped-purlin softwood roof structure incorporates nailed collars with a ridge-board and is a shallow-pitched replacement of the mid or late-19<sup>th</sup> century that was probably designed for the glazed pantiles with which it was covered in January 2008 (before the present process of conversion began). There is no evidence of the original roof structure as only the tie-beam of the eastern gable now survives (with bird's mouth housings for hip rafters). The walls appear to have been externally rendered from the outset as the outer surfaces of the timbers are waney and unfinished, and fragments of original wattle-and-daub infill remain intact in the northern elevation; the southern elevation was entirely rebuilt in red brick during the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the western gable removed when the building was extended in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, and the eastern gable partly rebuilt in brick during the 17<sup>th</sup> century to leave only the corner braces and tie-beam *in situ*.

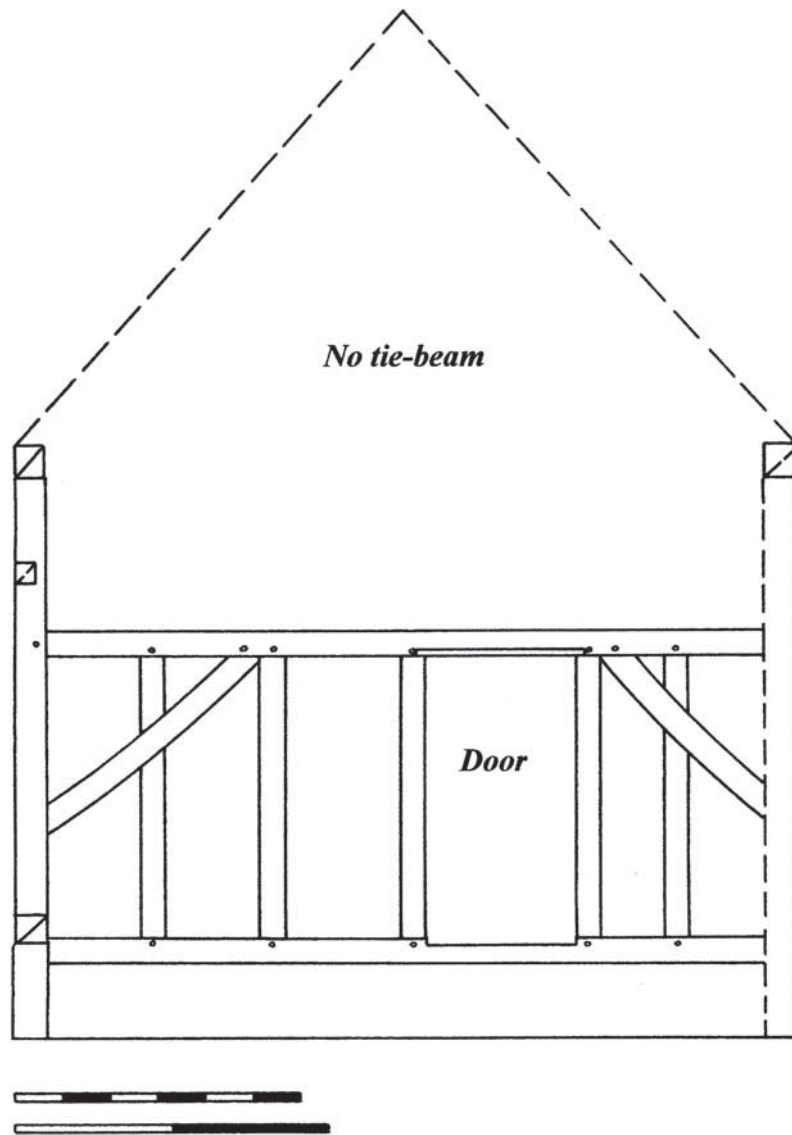
### Date

Close dating is difficult given the building's abnormal layout (as described below), the absence of decorative features and the loss of the original roof. The sophisticated scarf joint in the central bay is a short face-halved example which is no longer than its blades and in which the eastern blade is housed (i.e. it does not extend to the soffit of the roof-plate). Face-halved scarfs came into common usage only during the 17<sup>th</sup> century but short versions such as this can be found in the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries – albeit more typically in ground sills and jetty timbers. Given its carpentry and the presence of an open hearth the building probably dates from the late-15<sup>th</sup> or early-16<sup>th</sup> century, but a slightly earlier origin cannot be ruled out.

### Layout and Function

Analysis of the building's original layout is hampered by the loss of its southern elevation and western gable, and by the extent to which the surviving timbers of the northern elevation are hidden by secondary render beneath the height of the recently removed 17<sup>th</sup> century ceiling. It is clear, however, that it did not adhere to the standard pattern of 16<sup>th</sup> century domestic houses which contained a heated central hall flanked by a pair of service rooms on one side and a parlour on the other.

The eastern bay of 3.75 m in internal length (12.5 ft) contained an open hearth and the exposed original studs of the northern elevation are thickly sooted in the highly distinctive manner of medieval open halls (two unsooted studs are later replacements). There is no evidence of the usual hall window however, but unfortunately only the upper 75 cm (30 ins) of the elevation is exposed and any evidence of a window beneath this level was hidden by 20<sup>th</sup> century render at the time of inspection. The sooting does not extend from the eastern bay (A1) to the central bay (A2) and there is evidence of a missing lateral partition between them: the jowled storey post is notched for the staves of wattle-and-daub and is clearly sooted to its eastern edge but not its western. The eastern gable has been rebuilt in brick, but its internal corner braces survive and its tie-beam contains evidence of a hipped roof and five evenly spaced studs; there is no suggestion that the building continued further in this direction.



**Figure C**  
**Reconstruction of Internal Partition between bays A2 and A3 (seen from west)**

The northern elevation of the central bay, which extends to 2.8 m in internal length (9 ft 3 ins), preserves the frame of an original entrance door against its western storey post (in the same position as the present doorway). This door was 90 cm in width (36 ins) and does not appear to have possessed an arched head. The western bay of 3 m in length (10 ft) contained a ceiling, as indicated by the presence of a clamp and a loft window beneath the roof-plate; the window contained two diamond mullions and an internal sliding shutter (as shown by a rebate in the roof-plate). The partition between the central and western bays is largely intact, and contained a single door of 94 cm in width (37 ins) to the south of its centre, as shown in figure C, with trenched braces to its western elevation. This partition did not extend above the height of the ceiling, and the missing joists would have been lodged on its mid-rail 96 cm (38 ins) below the roof-plates.

Despite the limited evidence it would appear the original building reflected the standard domestic layout of the late Middle Ages in possessing a cross-passage and a service bay (A3) but differed substantially in the arrangement of its open hall. It is not entirely certain whether the ceiling of the service bay extended into the central bay, or whether it terminated at the

service partition and formed an open loft reached by ladder from the cross-passage (in a manner associated with Welsh houses and sometimes termed a ‘crog-loft’). However the absence of a tie-beam from the storey posts of the service partition (and the corresponding lack of jowls) was clearly intended to facilitate first-floor access and is more consistent with the presence of a loft which spanned both the service and central bays; the lack of soot from the central bay also indicates that it was floored over, with only the eastern bay (A1) open to the roof. The most likely interpretation of the evidence is that the building contained a ‘boot-shaped’ open hall of two bays where the low-end (western) bay was floored over and partitioned from the high-end (eastern) bay above the level of its ceiling but where the two were undivided beneath. The storey post between bays A1 and A2 would reveal an empty binding joist mortise if this analysis is correct, with evidence of a partition above but not below, and any opportunity should be taken to investigate this timber when its render is removed.

Although it formed a separate cottage in the early-19<sup>th</sup> century, as shown on the tithe map (figure 2), the outbuilding’s abnormal layout and close proximity to the service gable of a broadly contemporary house of standard domestic plan (12.5 ft or 3.8 m), strongly suggests it was designed as the ancillary bake-house and kitchen of The Limes. ‘Boot-shaped’ halls were intended to maximise storage space in conjunction with small open halls, but are rare in domestic contexts: the only example known to the author in Suffolk formed part of a semi-detached tenement at 11-13 Stoke Road in Nayland. The form is more usually associated with multi-purpose outbuildings often termed kitchens today but typically referred to in early documents as bake-houses and brew-houses. A similar example from Chiddingstone in Kent has been reconstructed at the Weald-and-Downland Open Air Museum in Singleton, West Sussex. The absence of a normal hall window, rising to the roof-plate, supports this non-domestic interpretation, and any opportunity to establish the proportions of the actual window should also be taken when the relevant studs are exposed.

## **2. Later Additions and Alterations**

The outbuilding was extensively altered in the mid-17<sup>th</sup> century when a new ceiling was inserted into the central and eastern bays and the western bay was extended by 1.2 m (4 ft) as shown in figure B. The new timber-framed gable incorporated a mid-rail with a central window of 1.5 m (6 ft) in width beneath, and the jowls of its corner posts were aligned at right-angles of those in the original structure in order to form a hip. The earlier western gable was evidently removed and the extension created a larger ‘service’ room of 4.25 m (14 ft). The new ceiling consisted of tall-sectioned joists tenoned to a pair of binding joists with neatly cut chamfers and lamb’s tongue stops. These binding joists survived at the time of inspection, but the common joists had been removed to leave the lower storey entirely open to the roof (they are shown in photo A2.5 below – the only internal photograph which pre-dates the current building work). The eastern gable was rebuilt in brick at much the same time, leaving only the tie-beam and wall braces of the original structure intact; its remaining brickwork preserves the sooted outline of a demolished central flue, and the foundations of the piers of a corresponding 17<sup>th</sup> century fireplace were visible in the clay floor at the time of inspection (as shown in figure A). The new extension, ceiling and gable chimney of the 17<sup>th</sup> century may reflect the conversion of the former kitchen to a domestic house in its own right.

The southern elevation was entirely rebuilt in red brick laid in English bond during the late-18<sup>th</sup> or early-19<sup>th</sup> century, and the ends of the 17<sup>th</sup> century binding joists were supported on internal piers. The new wall lacked both doors and windows in the central and eastern bays, but the southern wall of the western compartment (bays A3 and B) was entered by a central door flanked by windows to both sides (the easternmost of which also lit the upper storey). These features had been blocked with recent masonry at the time of inspection. The present internal link between the western and eastern halves of the building cuts a brace of 18<sup>th</sup> or 19<sup>th</sup> century appearance nailed against the western elevation of the original service partition, and it

appears that for some time the two halves were not connected internally: the western end of the building was entered from the south, with neither door nor window to the north, and the eastern end was entered from the yard of The Limes and was 'blind' to the south. The tithe map shows the building adjoining a farm yard to the south, and it is not clear how this curious arrangement can be reconciled with its identification as an independent cottage.

The mid-19<sup>th</sup> century saw the addition of a narrow, single-storied vehicle shed of brick and flint rubble against the western gable, and of a pair of brick and timber-clad sheds to the east (D). The Flemish bond of these sheds contrasts with the English bond of the rebuilt southern elevation. The present clasped-purlin roof structure with nailed collars and a ridge board was built at the same time, and the northern elevation of the eastern compartment provided with a pair of doors and glazed metal-framed windows. Photographic evidence of 2008 suggests the eastern bays had recently operated as a general storage shed for The Limes, but the western part of the building was ostensibly a separate shed linked only to the field access which it adjoined on the south. Several incised apotropaic symbols in the form of concentric circles survive on the southern internal elevation of this shed with others in black pigment on the internal partition; these were intended to avert evil and are often found in 19<sup>th</sup> century stables and store rooms.

### **Historic Significance**

The outbuilding is an historically important timber-framed structure of the late-15<sup>th</sup> or 16<sup>th</sup> century that almost certainly represents a rare detached kitchen with a 'boot-shaped' open hall. No other example of this type has yet been discovered in Suffolk, and the current conversion work should be monitored to ensure the surviving frame is recorded as fully as possible. Despite the building's historic importance it has arguably been too extensively altered to merit listing in its own right, with only the front elevation and internal service partition now extant, particularly as its proximity to a grade II-listed house already affords a measure of protection.



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

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

#### **Photograph no.**

1. General view from south-east showing the outbuilding to left, The Limes in the centre and St Margaret's church to the right.
2. General view from The Street to south-west showing St Margaret's churchyard in the rear & The Limes to right.
3. General view from south-west showing St Margaret's church to left, The Limes in the centre & the outbuilding to right.
4. General view from The Street to west showing The Limes to left & outbuilding to right.
5. General view of The Limes from The Street to north-west.
6. General view of The Limes from rear garden to south-east showing St Margaret's church to right & outbuilding to left.
7. General view from south-east showing field access with outbuilding to right.
8. Northern external elevation of outbuilding showing proximity of The Limes to right.
9. Detail of junction between outbuilding (left) and The Limes from south-east.
10. Exterior from west showing The Limes to left & front shed (C) in foreground.
11. Exterior of front shed (C) from north.
12. Detail of southern external elevation showing junction with rear shed (D) to right.
13. Exterior of southern elevation showing blocked door & windows to areas B & A3.
14. Detail of blocked door (right) & window in southern external elevation.
15. Exterior of rear shed (D) from east.
16. Detail of boarded shed (D) from east showing internal partition.
17. External eastern gable from shed (D) showing original internal braces.
18. Detail of eastern external gable showing original tie-beam & braces.
19. Detail of original northern internal brace in external elevation of eastern gable.
20. Interior of eastern shed (D) from west, showing entrance doors.

21. External northern elevation showing entrance door to right.
22. Detail of external northern elevation showing existing entrance to right.
23. Detail of windows in external northern elevation.
24. Detail of entrance door in northern external elevation.
25. Detail of entrance door in northern elevation seen from interior to east.
26. Detail of latch to northern entrance door.
27. General view of interior from east showing 17th century secondary ceiling joists.
28. General view of interior from west showing position of former fireplace.
29. Internal eastern gable showing recently rebuilt chimney.
30. Detail of eastern gable chimney showing foundation of southern pier of demolished fireplace.
31. Southern internal elevation (rebuilt in 19th century brick).
32. Eastern end of southern internal elevation, showing brick pier beneath 17th century binding joist.
33. Detail of lamb's tongue chamfer stop to 17th century inserted binding joist.
34. Detail of binding joist showing empty mortises of tall-sectioned common joists.
35. Roof structure from west (rebuilt 19th century).
36. Internal northern elevation of central bay A2 showing lintel of original door.
37. Detail of original door lintel in northern internal elevation (bay A2).
38. Northern internal elevation showing storey post between bays A2 (left) & A1.
39. Detail of storey post dividing sooted studs of bay A1 (right) from unsoted studs of A2 left.
40. Detail of wattle and daub infill in northern internal elevation (bay A2).
41. Detail of original scarf joint in northern roof plate of bay A2.
42. Detail of scarf joint in bay A2 (short face-halved joint with housed blade).
43. Detail of storey post between bays A2 & A1 showing carpenter's numeral & daub notch.
44. Detail of jowled storey post between bays A2 and A1 showed sooted right-hand edge.
45. Northern internal elevation of eastern bay A1.

46. Detail of sooted upper studs of northern internal elevation of eastern bay (A1).
47. Detail of heavily sooted stud and roof-plate in northern internal elevation of bay A1.
48. Detail of heavily sooted stud in bay A1.
49. Detail of internal corner bay of eastern bay (A1) showing tenon of possible former chimney lintel.
50. Detail of heavily sooted internal corner brace in northern elevation of eastern bay (A1).
51. Original 'service' partition seen from west (bay A3) showing blocked original door to right.
52. Detail of concentric apotropaic circles in black to western elevation of 'service' partition.
53. Internal northern elevation of western bay (A3) showing extension (B) to left.
54. Detail of northern internal elevation of 17th century extension (B) showing original gable right.
55. Detail of internal corner brace and ceiling clamp in northern internal elevation of bay A3.
56. Internal northern elevation of western bay (A3) showing original service partition to right.
57. Southern internal elevation of bays A3 & B showing blocked 19th century door and windows.
58. Detail of incised apotropaic circles in internal render to west of window in bay A3.
59. Detail of incised apotropaic circles to west of door in southern elevation of bay A3.
60. Detail of apotropaic circles to west of door in southern elevation of bay A3.
61. Western internal elevation showing 17th century gable studs & access to western shed (C).
62. Internal north-western corner showing access to western shed (C) to left.
63. Interior from east of western shed (C) showing external vehicle doors.
64. Interior of western shed (C) from west showing 'service' partition in rear.
65. January 2008. Exterior from north-east, showing eastern shed (D) to left.
66. January 2008. External eastern elevation of shed D showing double-hung doors.
67. January 2008. External northern elevation from north-east.

- 68. January 2008. Western end of northern elevation showing entrance door.
- 69. January 2008. External western gable showing western shed (C) to right.
- 70. January 2008. Exterior of southern elevation from field access to south-west.
- 71. January 2008. Detail of southern external elevation showing blocked door and window to bay A3.
- 72. January 2008 Interior of bays A2 & A3 from west showing intact ceiling and eastern gable in rear.



## Appendix 2 (pp. 15-22): Selected Printed Photographs



A2.1 General view of site from south-east showing the proximity of the outbuilding (left) to The Limes in the centre and St Margaret's church to the right



A2.2 General view of site from The Street to west showing The Limes to left & the outbuilding to the right (adjoining a field access on the south)





A2.3 Northern external elevation of outbuilding showing proximity of The Limes to right



A2.4 General view of interior from west showing binding joists of 17<sup>th</sup> century inserted ceiling and position of former fireplace against eastern gable (green tint caused by colour of tarpaulin covering stripped roof)





A2.5 Similar view to A2.4 above taken in January 2008 before building work commenced (i.e. general view of interior from west showing eastern gable and intact 17<sup>th</sup> century ceiling).



A2.6 Eastern end of northern internal elevation (bay A1) showing heavily sooted studs and internal corner brace – the lower part of the timber frame is hidden by 19<sup>th</sup> century render.





A2.7 Detail of jowled storey post dividing the sooted studs of bay A1 (right) from the unsooted studs of the central bay A2 (left). The storey post is sooted to its right-hand edge only, and contains notches for the wattle and daub of a missing lateral partition.



A2.8 Detail of unusual scarf joint in northern roof plate of central bay (A2). (Short face-halved joint with housed blade.)





A2.9 Original 'service' partition seen from west (bay A3) showing existing door to left and blocked original door to right (the diagonal brace is secondary).



A2.10 Internal northern elevation of western bay (A3) showing original service partition to right and narrow 17<sup>th</sup> century extension (B) to left.





A2.11 Southern internal elevation of bays A3 (left) & B showing blocked 19th century door flanked by incised apotropaic circles and windows.



A2.12 Detail of apotropaic circles to west of door in southern elevation of bay A3.