

**Barn at Valley Farm Cottage,  
Higham,  
Suffolk  
HGM 022**

**Historic Building Record**

Suffolkc1-66229



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*on behalf of*  
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**October 2009**

**Barn at  
Valley Farm Cottage,  
Hadleigh Road,  
Higham, Suffolk,**

(TM 0307 3618)

## **Historic Building Record**

*This report provides a written and photographic record at English Heritage (2006) Level 2 of a redundant historic farm building. It has been prepared to a brief written by Suffolk County Council Archaeological Service (Edward Martin, dated 17 September 2009, Ref. SpecHBR(EM)\_ValleyFmCott\_Higham\_09) and is intended to fulfil a condition of planning permission for conversion (Babergh District Council application B/07/00094/FUL).*

### **Introduction**

The report is accompanied by a CD containing a photographic record in the form of 44 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 8<sup>th</sup> October 2009.

### **Summary**

Valley Farm Cottage lies in a narrow, tree-lined valley overlooking the floodplain of the River Brett approximately 1 km north of Higham parish church. Until the construction of a new house on higher ground to the south in 1926 the 'Cottage' was the main farmhouse on a small tenanted holding of 31¼ acres which belonged in 1832 to the Tendring Hall estate. The house is a timber-framed structure of the early-16<sup>th</sup> century and the farm probably occupies a medieval site.

The barn is a timber-framed and weatherboarded structure with a slate roof which lies at the entrance to the valley approximately 100 m east of the house. It was built as a stable rather than a barn in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century on the site of an earlier building, and rises to only 2.4 m at its eaves. The interior was originally divided into two compartments with a single entrance from an enclosed southern yard and contained a narrow feed store with an external loading hatch adjoining the farm track to the north. Features of this kind were known locally as chaff houses or chaff boxes and were often found in small stables of this kind which lacked hay lofts. The rear elevation reveals the outline of a high hay rack and manger, but these no longer survive.

The building formed part of a small complex of contemporary yards and buildings that probably included a normal grain barn to the east, but these were demolished in *circa* 1926 when an artistic community was established on the site by the present owner's grandparents. The stable was converted into an artist's studio and is still known as 'studio barn', although it was most recently used as a garage. Despite this conversion the building remains a good and largely intact example of a single-storied mid-19<sup>th</sup> century stable but does merit listing in its own right. It is arguably of greater historic interest for its association with a local school of artists which included Sir Cedric Morris and Vivien Gribble (who illustrated Thomas Hardy).



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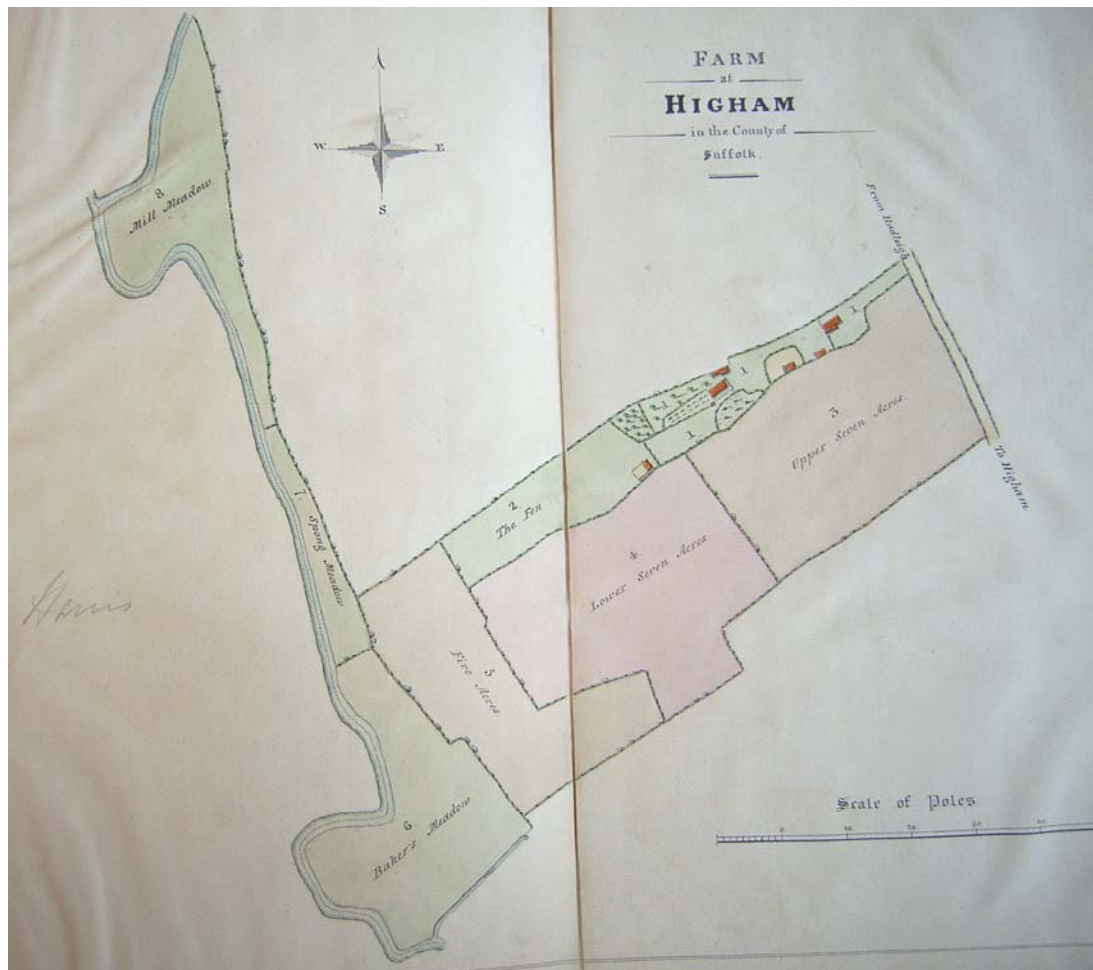
**Figure 1**

**Current Ordnance Survey Site Plan**

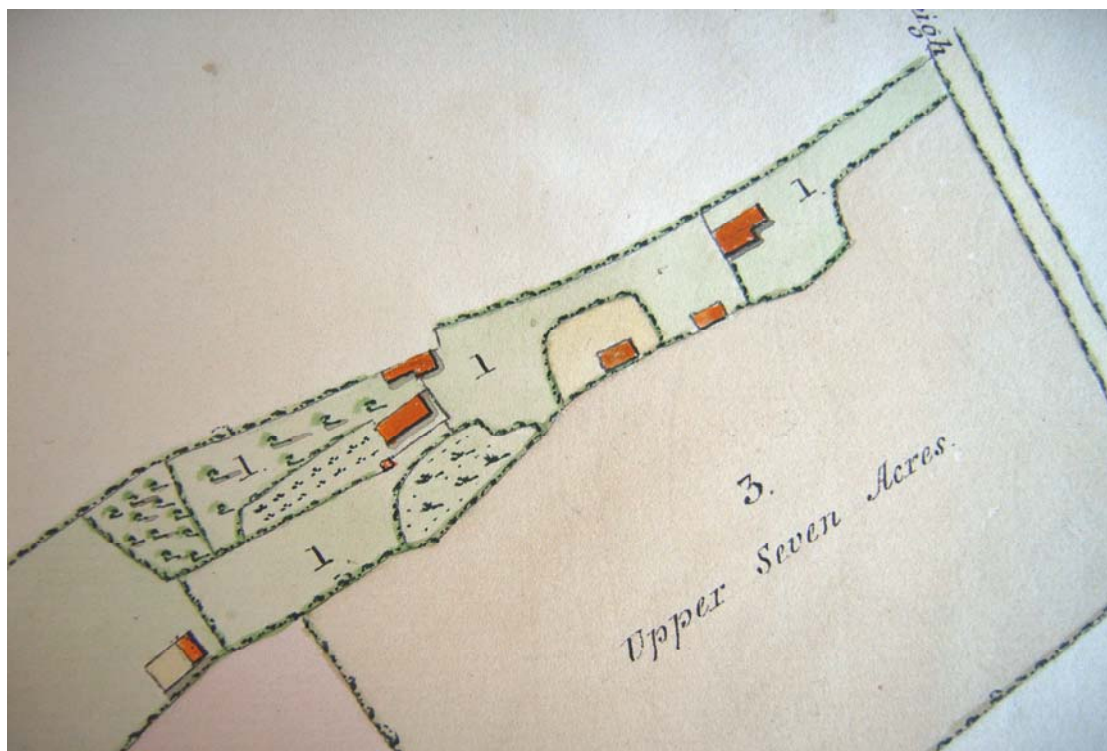
**Showing the barn in red and enclosing the house (shaded grey) and a 19<sup>th</sup> century rear brick outbuilding in a red square. Hadleigh Road in visible in the top right-hand corner, and the new Valley Farm of 1926 at bottom centre.**

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

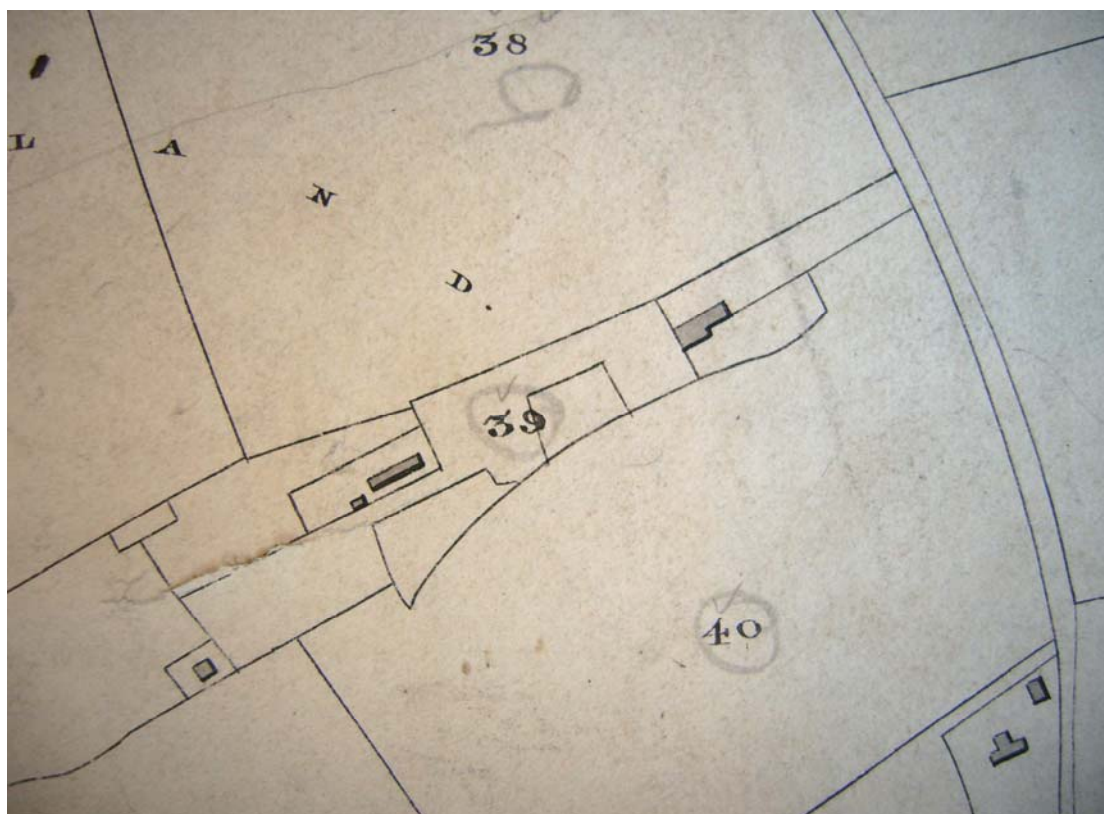
Valley Farm Cottage lies approximately 1 km north of Higham parish church in a narrow, tree-lined valley descending from the Hadleigh Road on the east to the broad floodplain of the River Brett on the west. The timber-framed and rendered house is not listed, but is an early-16<sup>th</sup> century structure of considerable historic interest with a central hall of two bays which retains part of its crown-post roof and an original parlour bay to the east; the service bay to the west was demolished and replaced by the present chimney and parlour in the early-17<sup>th</sup> century. Given the early date of the building it seems likely that the site is of medieval origin (few rural tenements were erected on new sites between the Black Death of 1349 and the recovery of the population in the early-17<sup>th</sup> century). Valley Farm Cottage was a farmhouse until 1926 when the present Valley Farm was built on higher ground to the south (approached by a separate track from the Hadleigh Road). The new house is understood to have been built by the grandparents of Mr Nick Marno, the present owner of Valley Farm Cottage, (Douglas Doyle Jones and Vivien Gribble), who were professional artists and established an artistic community on the site: Valley Farm Cottage was used to accommodate guests and the barn which forms the subject of this report was converted into a studio. The latter is still known as Studio Barn, but was used as a garage by a recent tenant (who inserted a vehicle door in its eastern gable). The community had links with Sir Cedric Morris of Pound Farm 750 m to the north, and was presumably attracted to the site by its exceptional views across the valleys of the Brett, Box and Stour to the west and south-west. Many of the mature trees which now enclose the buildings and limit the view were planted by Mr Doyle Jones.



**Figure 2**  
Plan of Valley Farm drawn in 1832 with detail of buildings below (ISRO HA 108/10/5)



The farm is shown in a plan of 1832, when it contained just over 31¾ acres and formed one of many tenanted holdings on the estate of Sir Joshua Rowley of Tendring Hall in neighbouring Stoke-by-Nayland. The Tendring estate expanded rapidly by piecemeal purchase in the early-19<sup>th</sup> century, and the date of the plan probably relates to Sir Joshua's purchase of the property, which would have been small even by the standards of its day; many local holdings contained approximately 30 acres in the Middle Ages (i.e. a virgate, or one quarter of the Domesday carucate of 120 acres) and the farm boundary could have remained unaltered for centuries. A 19<sup>th</sup> century annotation records its subsequent sale to 'Pritchard Esq.', and the name 'Douglas Doyle Jones' was added in pencil. The plan shows an L-shaped building on the same site as the remaining barn, with two further structures adjoining the ditch to the south and an outbuilding behind the farmhouse. The site (no.1) is labelled 'buildings, yards and gardens', and the fields as 'The Fen' (2), 'Upper Seven Acres' (3), 'Lower Seven Acres' (4), 'Five Acres' (5), 'Bakers Meadow' (6), 'Spong Meadow' (7) and 'Mill Meadow' (8). The Tendring estate seems to have made rapid alterations to its new acquisition, as by the time of the tithe survey in 1839 three of the buildings shown in 1832 had been demolished (including the domestic outhouse). The farm was tenanted by Stephen Harris and contained the same acreage, but the fields are named differently with 'Upper Hill' and 'Lower Hill' replacing Upper and Lower Seven Acres, and 'Hole Meadow' instead of 'Bakers Meadow'. The land immediately to the north is indicated as church glebe, and it may be possible to trace the names of earlier owners in the abutments of any extant glebe terriers. Stephen Harris seems not to have relied on agriculture for his income as he and William Harris (perhaps his brother) were named as seed crushers and oil millers in White's Suffolk Directory of 1844 (producing oil-cake animal feed from linseed). The census returns would shed further light on the ancillary occupations of Valley Farm's 19<sup>th</sup> century residents.



**Figure 3**

**The Higham parish tithe map of 1839, showing the loss of several buildings since 1832, and marking the land to the north as church glebe land. The L-shaped building to the east may have been a small barn and stable, and occupies the same site as the surviving 'barn' (which was built as a stable).**

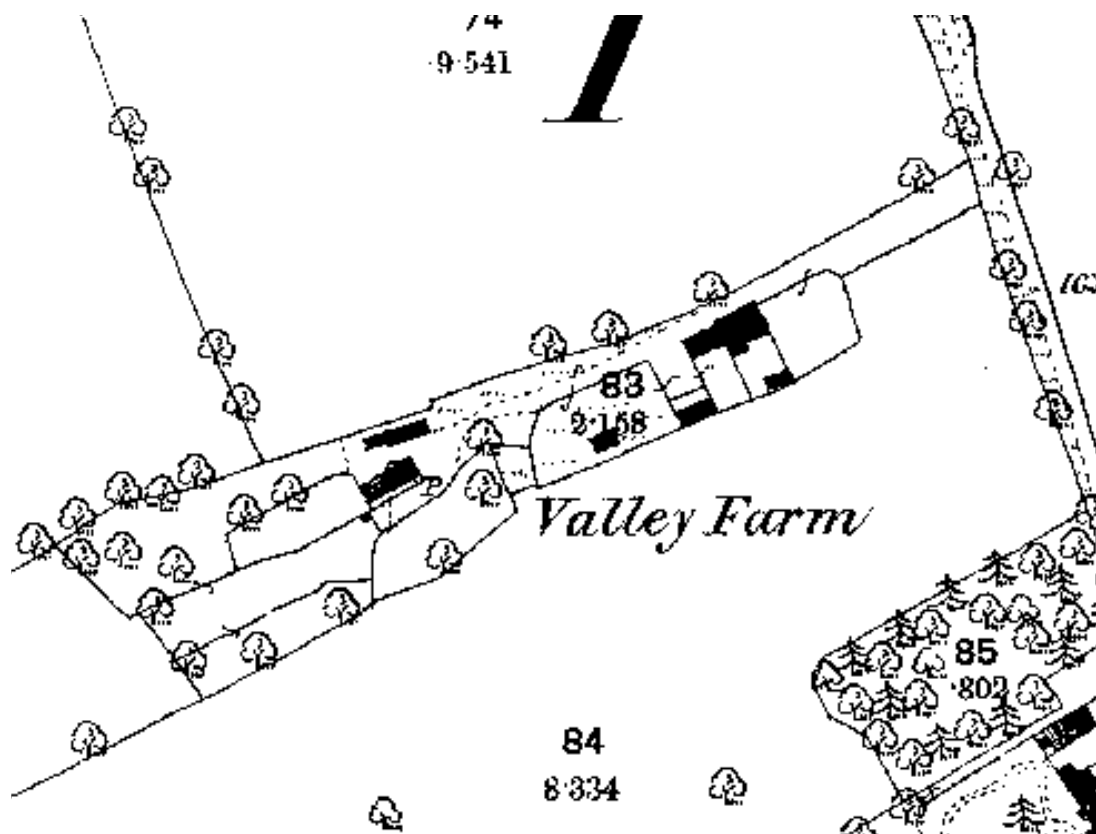


Figure 4

First Edition 25 inch Ordnance Survey of 1886, showing the present 'barn' as part of a new yard complex. The surviving building lies to the north of the westernmost of two rectangular yards, and adjoins a larger structure on the east that probably represents a grain barn. A new outbuilding behind the house had replaced that of 1832.

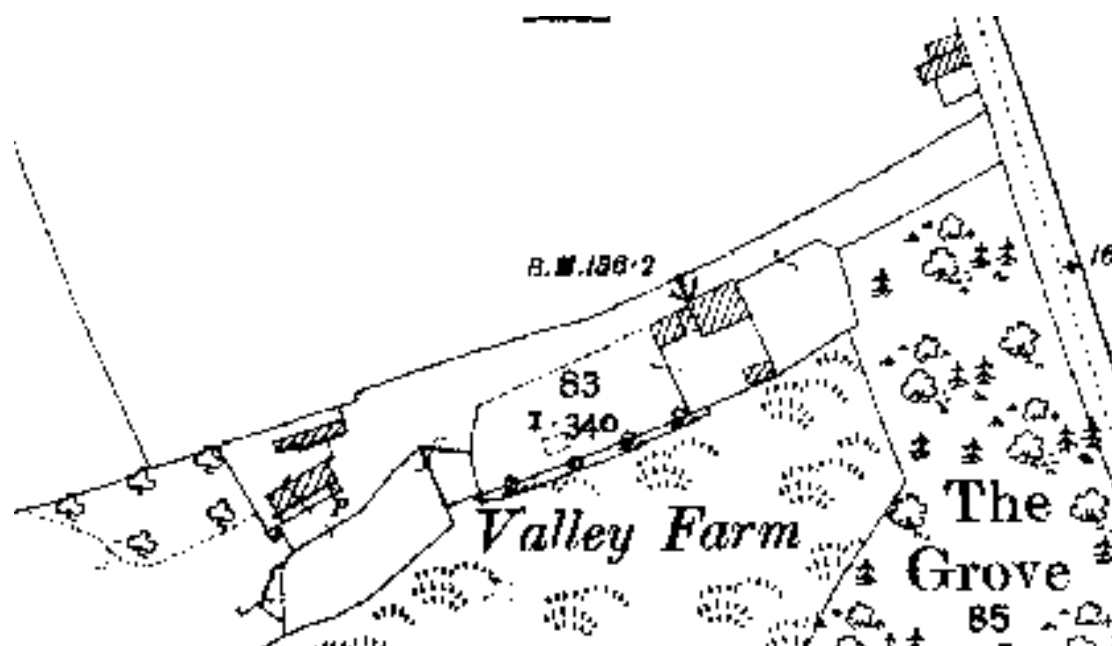
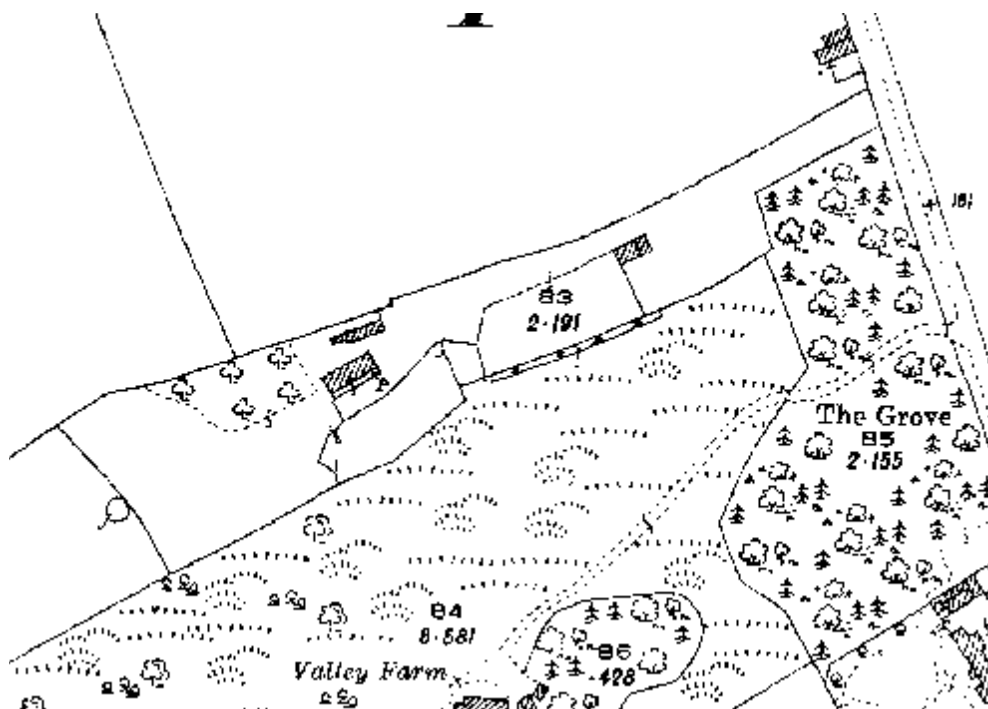


Figure 5

Second Edition 25 inch Ordnance Survey of 1904, showing a slightly different arrangement of yards to that of 1886. Note the new building on the Hadleigh Road.

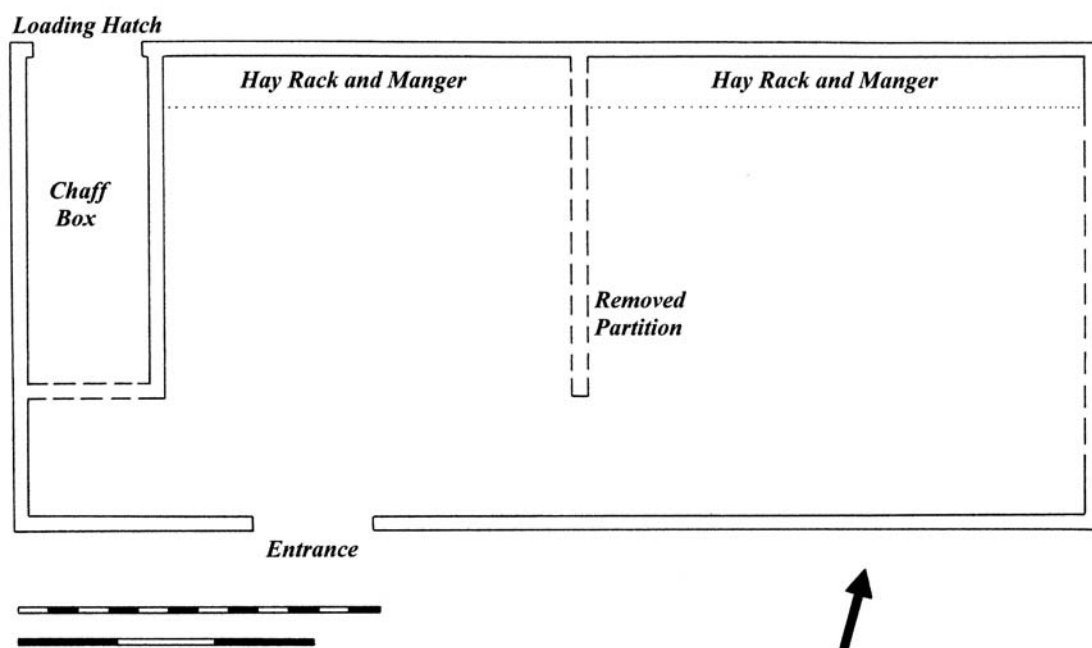


**Figure 6**

**Third Edition Ordnance Survey of 1926 showing the new farmhouse to the south and the loss of all the earlier farm buildings except the 'Studio Barn'. The situation remained unaltered at the time of inspection, although the heathland to the south had developed into woodland.**

The buildings of most local farms were extensively altered or wholly rebuilt in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century as intensive cereal production gave way to mixed animal husbandry when the Repeal of the Corn Laws in 1846 caused grain prices to collapse. By the time of the first edition 25 inch Ordnance Survey in 1886 the L-shaped outbuilding of 1839 had been replaced by a new complex of enclosed yards and buildings of which only the present barn of *circa* 1860 and a fragment of brick boundary wall still survive. The remaining barn was designed as a stable, and the larger building which it adjoined on the east was almost certainly the normal grain barn which any farm would require. The two narrow yards may have housed cattle and horses respectively. The size of the stable seems excessive for the 18 acres of arable land shown in 1832 and 1839, for which one or two animals should have been sufficient, but it is possible that more land had been added or that the unusually high proportion of pasture land was used to breed horses. Any ancillary commercial activity associated with the site (such as feed milling) might require additional stock for transport. By 1904 the detached farm buildings to the west of the yards had vanished again and the two yards had been combined, while the Ordnance Survey of 1926 shows the new farmhouse to the south and only the 'Studio Barn' still standing.

## Building Analysis



**Figure 7**  
**Ground Plan of the 'barn' showing its original layout. The northern elevation adjoins the farm entrance track, and the southern elevation an overgrown yard formerly enclosed by a brick wall**

### Proportions and Structure

The 'barn' at Valley Farm Cottage adjoins the southern side of the entrance track approximately 100 m east of the former farmhouse. Its distance from the house is unusual with respect to most East Anglian farms, but was presumably dictated by the narrow confines of the site in a narrow, steep-sided valley. The timber-framed and weatherboarded building extends to 10.1 m in length by 4.95 m in overall width on an east-west axis, and rises to 2.4 m at its eaves (including a red-brick plinth of 60 cm). The ground slopes downwards from east to west and from north to south, and the external height of the plinth varies accordingly. The walls consist of narrow studs interrupted by straight primary braces which are nailed to the frame, and pegged tenons are employed only at the junctions of principal timbers. The shallow-pitched hipped roof is a clasped-purlin structure with nailed collars and a ridge-piece that retains its original covering of Welsh slate.

### Date

The brickwork and framing are typical of the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, and the cartographic evidence above suggests it was built as part of a new yard complex between 1839 and 1886. A date of *circa* 1860 is most probable. The estate plan of 1832 and the tithe map of 1839 show another building on the same site and the present structure may overlies the remains of a medieval farmyard (given the early-16<sup>th</sup> century date of the associated farmhouse and the likelihood that it replaced a medieval predecessor).

### Layout and Original Function

The interior was originally divided into two unequal compartments of 5 m to the east and 4.25 m to the west, with a narrow third compartment in the north-western corner as shown in

figure 7. The internal partition now survives only at roof height, with empty mortises in the front and rear roof-plates for its removed tie-beam, but the small compartment remains largely intact and extends to 1.2 m in width by 3.4 m in length (4 ft by 11 ft); it was accessible only by hatches at both ends and is typical of the storage compartments for chaff found in many 19<sup>th</sup> century stables which lack hay lofts and known locally as chaff houses or chaff boxes. The identity of the 'barn' as a stable is confirmed by clear evidence of a removed hay rack against the northern internal elevation in the form of a diagonal scar against the boarded chaff box and corresponding notches in the wall posts. The bottom of this rack lay 1.6 m above the floor and rose to 2.4 m, with mangers immediately beneath (as indicated by an extant section of internal boarding between the plinth and rack of the western compartment). Such a rack would have been too high for cattle, although in other respects the building could have been designed as a cow-house. The building was entered from the southern yard by a doorway of 1.2 m in width (4 ft) in the same position as the present door (to the jambs of which the ground sills are neatly tenoned and pegged). The height and thickness of the brick plinth in the eastern gable is considerably greater than elsewhere, and the roof-plates and purlins extend beyond the corner posts in a manner which suggests they linked the stable to another structure that no longer survives; the former presence of such a building is demonstrated by the cartographic evidence above, and the stable probably abutted a contemporary barn in the normal pattern of local farms. The size of the stable is large for the holding of 31¼ acres shown on the tithe map, which would have required only a pair of plough horses, but the acreage may have increased by the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, or the farm may have engaged in ancillary commercial activity as suggested by White's Directory of 1844.

### **Later Alterations**

The building underwent extensive alteration in or about 1926 when it was converted into an artist's studio and the rest of the 19<sup>th</sup> century agricultural buildings were demolished. Large glazed windows were inserted into the western compartment's southern elevation and the northern hatch to the chaff box was also replaced by an additional window (leaving the iron pintles of its hinges *in situ*: this hatch allowed the box to be loaded from the farm track). The present floor of white brick was laid at the same time, and internal steps were built to reach the chaff box from which the southern wall was removed. Much of the tarred external cladding was replaced, and external steps were built to reach the southern door (suggesting the ground level in the yard was initially raised by a thick layer of manure – as usually found in cattle yards rather than stable yards). The internal partition may have been removed after this initial process of conversion as no windows were inserted into the eastern compartment, and a wide aperture was cut through the eastern gable in the late-20<sup>th</sup> century when the building was used as a garage.

### **Historic Significance**

Despite its conversion into an artist's studio in the 1920s the 'barn' remains a good and largely intact example of a single-storied mid-19<sup>th</sup> century stable which retains its original slate roof and internal chaff box. It is not of sufficient age or rarity to merit listing in its own right, but may occupy the site of a medieval farm building. The structure is arguably of greater historic interest for its association with the local school of artists which included Sir Cedric Morris, Vivien Gribble (who illustrated Thomas Hardy) and other national figures than for its agricultural significance.

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

### **Descriptions of Photographs in Appendix 1**

#### **Photograph no.**

1. Southern external elevation of Valley Farm Cottage (included for site context).
2. General view of site from west showing Cottage to left and barn in rear distance.
3. General view of site from west showing Cottage to right and barn in centre distance.
4. General view from site to west, showing location in narrow valley above River Brett floodplain.
5. General view from site showing floodplain of River Brett to west.
6. General view of barn from west showing entrance track to left.
7. Hadleigh Road from north showing entrance to site on right.
8. Hadleigh Road from south showing entrance to site on left.
9. Entrance track to site from Hadleigh Road to east.
10. General view of site from west showing barn in rear and pond in foreground.
11. Entrance track to site from east showing barn and overgrown yard to left.
12. Exterior of barn from east showing entrance track to right & Cottage in distance.
13. Exterior from north-east showing entrance track to right.
14. Exterior from north-west showing slate roof and secondary window replacing hatch to chaff box.
15. Detail of secondary window in northern elevation showing pintles of chaff box hatch to left.
16. Western external gable showing entrance track to left.
17. Exterior from south-west showing original entrance door & yard to right.
18. Detail of brick plinth of western external gable.
19. Fragment of western brick boundary of yard to south of barn see from north.
20. Southern external elevation showing original entrance reached by later steps.
21. Eastern end of southern external elevation showing door and secondary window to left.
22. Eastern external gable showing secondary vehicle entrance.

23. General view of interior from eastern gable.
24. General view of interior from west showing secondary entrance in eastern gable.
25. Narrow boarded chaff box at western end of interior with hay rack scar to right.
26. Interior of chaff box from south, showing secondary window to entrance track.
27. Interior of chaff box from north, showing position of removed inner partition.
28. Interior of chaff box from south showing sill beam of removed internal partition.
29. Floor of south-western internal corner showing secondary steps to chaff box.
30. South-eastern corner of chaff box showing secondary steps and renewed floor bricks.
31. Northern internal elevation from south-east showing scar of hay rack on boarded partition to left.
32. Northern internal elevation from south-west showing back-boards of removed mangers.
33. Northern internal elevation from south-west showing eastern gable to right.
34. Detail of back-boards of removed mangers against northern internal elevation.
35. Western end of southern internal elevation showing original door & secondary window to left.
36. Detail of original doorway in southern internal elevation with sills tenoned to jambs & 20<sup>th</sup> century door.
37. North-eastern internal corner post with notch to secure removed hay rack.
38. Southern internal elevation from north-west showing secondary window to right.
39. Detail of original clasped-purlin roof structure from west.
40. Detail of original hipped gable at western end of roof.
41. Remains of boarded partition between two stable compartments seen from east.
42. Detail of southern roof plate showing mortise of removed tie-beam of internal partition.
43. Eastern end of roof showing continuation of plate and purlin beyond corner post.
44. Detail of tall & thick brick plinth of eastern gable cut by modern vehicle entrance.

## Appendix 2 (pp. 12-17): Selected Printed Photographs



A2.1 Southern external elevation of Valley Farm Cottage (included for site context), showing the 17<sup>th</sup> century parlour & chimney to left, the early-16<sup>th</sup> century hall and original parlour in the centre and a 19<sup>th</sup> century brick extension to the right



A2.2 General view from site showing the nature of its location in narrow valley overlooking the floodplain of the River Brett to the west



A2.3 General view of barn from west showing entrance track from Hadleigh Road to left and overgrown remains of enclosed yard to right



A2.4 Exterior of barn from east showing entrance track to right with remains of yard & site of demolished building to left & Valley Farm Cottage in distance to rear



A2.5 Exterior from north-west showing the original slate roof and a secondary window replacing the hatch to the chaff box.



A2.6 Exterior from south-west showing the secondary windows, original entrance (with later door) and site of southern yard to right



A2.7 Eastern external gable showing secondary vehicle entrance cutting tall brick plinth



A2.8 General view of interior from eastern gable showing remains of internal partition in roof, site of hay rack and manger to right and boarded chaff box in rear



A2.9 Narrow boarded chaff box in north-western corner of interior with secondary brick steps to left and diagonal scar of missing hay rack to right



A2.10 South-eastern corner of chaff box showing secondary steps and renewed floor bricks



A2.11 Interior of south-western corner showing original southern doorway & secondary window to left with chaff box to right



A2.12 Remains of boarded partition between original two compartments seen from east