

**Oxdown Barn,  
Glemsford,  
Suffolk  
GFD 035**

**Historic Building Record**

OASIS Ref: Suffolkc1-71364



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**December 2009**

# **Outbuilding at Oxdown Barn, Duffs Hill, Glensford, Suffolk**

(TL 828 490)

## **Historic Building Record**

*This report provides a written and photographic record at English Heritage (2006) Level 3 of an outbuilding currently used as a garage at Oxdown Barn. Both buildings form part of a grade II-listed farm complex that was converted into four dwellings in 2000. It has been prepared to a brief written by Suffolk County Council's Archaeological Service (Edward Martin, 6<sup>th</sup> November 2009, Ref. SpecHBR(EM)\_OxdownBn\_Glensford\_01127\_09) and is intended to fulfil a condition of planning consent for the building's extension and conversion (Babergh District Council application B/09/01061).*

### **Introduction**

The report is accompanied by a CD containing a photographic record in the form of 36 digital images (Appendix 1), but also includes 10 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 3<sup>rd</sup> December 2009.

### **Summary**

Oxdown Barn lies on a ridge of high ground at the northern edge of Glensford village, approximately 0.5 km north-west of the parish church. The property occupies part of the farm yard that belonged to neighbouring Hill Farmhouse until its conversion into four separate dwellings in 2000. The outbuilding which adjoins the entrance to the site from Duff's Hill at the southern end of the property's garden is currently used as a garage and household store. It consists of an enclosed single-storied shed of flint rubble with red-brick dressings and a roof of glazed pantiles. Much of the southern gable was rebuilt in 2000 but the structure otherwise remained unaltered.

The shed originally formed the southern end of a much longer range which divided the road from a pair of cattle yards shown on 19<sup>th</sup> century Ordnance Surveys. It contained only a pair of double doors to the south and was designed as a vehicle shed or feed store. The latter purpose is suggested by a low secondary doorway in its eastern elevation that gave direct access to the cattle yard, but this was blocked soon after its insertion. The northern end of the original shed probably accommodated cattle but was altered during conversion, while the central section was linked to a pair of open-sided shelter sheds but has been demolished. The building contains some re-used timber, but is of interest chiefly insofar as it forms a conspicuous element of an historically important and architecturally imposing grade II-listed agricultural complex of gentry status. In its most recent form this complex dated from *circa* 1860 and was typical of its period, with twin cattle yards to the west, a two-storied stable to the east and a substantial barn with twin porches and an arched yard entrance to the north. Its various pantiled buildings consisted of flint with red-brick dressings and uniform decorative features such as corbelled eaves and gable finials in the manner of a model farm. The complex may have retained some fabric from earlier buildings shown on the tithe map of 1841, at which time the farm belonged to the eponymous Alexander Duff - a wealthy silk manufacturer who also owned a mill in the village.



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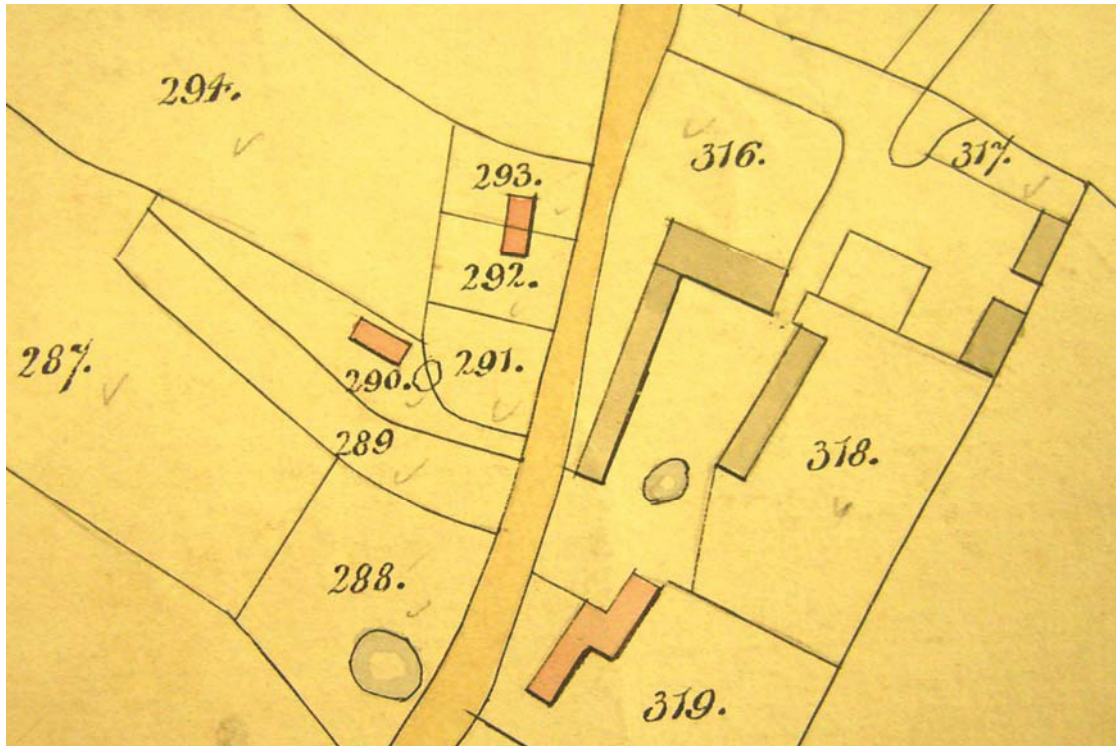
**Figure 1**

**Current Ordnance Survey Site Plan**

**Showing the outbuilding within a red square and the former farmhouse to the south. The property known as Oxdown Barn consists of the western end of the barn immediately to the north, together with its attached sheds, and is one of four dwellings created in 2000 by converting the buildings of a grade II-listed farm yard.**

**Historic Context: Documentary & Cartographic Record**

Oxdown Barn lies on a ridge of high ground at the northern edge of Glemsford village, approximately 0.5 km north-west of the parish church. The property occupies part of the farm yard that belonged to neighbouring Hill Farmhouse until its conversion into four separate dwellings in 2000. The yard buildings are constructed primarily of flint rubble with dressings of red brick and included a substantial barn with two north-facing porches to the north, a two-storied range to the east and a single-storied range to the west. Oxdown Barn contains the western end of the barn and the northern end of the western range adjoining Duff's Hill. The central section of this western range was demolished to leave the enclosed shed at its southern end as a detached garage (which forms the subject of this survey). In *circa* 2005 the northern end of the same range was extended southwards once again, but still falls short of the garage.



**Figure 2**

**Tithe map of Glemsford parish, 1841 (SRO). North to top-right Hill farmhouse is shown to the south (no. 319, named on the accompanying apportionment as ‘house and garden’) with the ‘yards and buildings’ (no. 316) to the north. The ground to the east (318) was an orchard, and one of the outlying fields was listed as ‘Oxdown field’ – from which the conversion was presumably named. The long, narrow building against the road to the west is considerably longer than the present range of single-storied sheds and probably represents an earlier structure on the same site. The outlines of the barn’s northern porches may have been disguised by lean-to sheds, but the gateway at its eastern end is not shown and the complex undoubtedly underwent major refurbishment if not complete rebuilding in subsequent decades.**

The farmhouse is listed at grade II and described in the Schedule as a timber-framed and plastered house with an 18<sup>th</sup> century façade but ‘probably of 17<sup>th</sup> century origin’. The farm buildings are separately listed at grade II as ‘barn and outbuildings at Hill Farmhouse’ and briefly described as follows: ‘An early-19<sup>th</sup> century flint pebble and red brick barn and outbuildings to the north of Hill Farmhouse. There are 2 gabled entrance bays on the north side. Roofs pantiled.’

The Glemsford tithe map of 1841 shows the house with its distinctive outline and a complex of ‘yards and buildings’ to the north consisting of two structures adjoining at right-angles to the north and west with a detached linear range to the east. The northern range may represent the present barn if its twin porches were linked by lean-to sheds, but the gateway at its eastern end is not shown and the western range is considerably longer than the existing building on the site: it extends further to the south, beyond the cottage and small pond on the opposite (western) side of the adjoining road (which are also shown on the later Ordnance Surveys). The farm was a substantial ‘gentry’ holding of 210 acres owned and occupied by the eponymous Alexander Duff who was listed as one of Glemsford’s seven principal landowners in White’s Suffolk Trade Directory of 1844. Duff seems to have resided at the Hill Farm (as named in the tithe apportionment) but owned several other tenanted farms in the immediate vicinity (including Bell’s Lane Farm of 29 acres, Lower Street Farm of 55 and Mill Farm of 160 acres). He appears in White’s Directory as a farmer and a ‘silk throwster’, and also

owned and occupied a substantial 'silk manufactory, house and garden' to the north of Chequers Lane, approximately 250 m to the south-east. This factory, which adjoined a large pond, was established by Duff in 1824 to process raw silk into yard by steeping, winding, doubling and twisting (A Short History of Glemsford by Rev. Kenneth Glass, 1962). Most of the original mill was demolished in 1960. Numerous silk manufacturers, many of Huguenot descent, moved out of London's east end during the late-18<sup>th</sup> and early-19<sup>th</sup> centuries in response to the 'Spitalfield Acts' - new legislation which forced them to raise wages in the wake of civil unrest (legislation which did not apply outside London). White's Directory explains the fall in Glemsford's population from 1,470 in 1831 to 1,366 in 1841 with reference to the 'declining state of the silk and wool weaving'.

The website of the Chermside and District Historical Society notes, remarkably, that Alexander Duff emigrated to Australia aboard the 'Young Australia' in 1866 and settled in Chermside – then known as 'Dead Man's Gully' and now a suburb of Brisbane – before dying of typhoid the following year. His descendants still live in the city. He is there said to have been born in 1806 at Bethnal Green, the son of Alexander Duff senior whose occupation was given as a silk manufacturer/merchant. In August 1831 the younger Alexander married Caroline Deakin – a well-known Glemsford surname – presumably soon after establishing a branch of the family business in the village. In the same year (1831) No. 20 Spital Square in Bethnal Green was occupied by Alexander Duff and company, silk manufacturers, who were described as Duff and Peacock at the same address in 1844 (English Heritage Survey of London, vol. 27, available online), while Pigot's Suffolk Directory of 1823 lists them by precisely the same name in Sudbury (i.e. Alexander Duff and company, silk manufacturers (Glemsford being subsumed by Sudbury for the Directory's purposes – it makes no mention of the village by name). Contemporary accounts of Spital Square suggest it was dominated by silk manufacturers during the 1830s but had entered a sharp decline, eventually becoming a notorious area of deprivation. The Duff family business may have suffered a similar fate, explaining the eventual emigration of 1866. More information about the family could be obtained from the Glemsford census returns, which have not been consulted for the purpose of this survey. White's Directory of 1855 makes no mention of them, and names William Henry Eaton in their stead as a major landowner and silk throwster in the parish. The Post Office Directory of 1869 includes Andrew Peacock as the local agent of Henry W Eaton & sons, silk throwsters, and thereby indicates a business connection between Eaton and Duff.

The Ordnance Survey of 1885 reveals significant alterations to the buildings at Hill Farm since 1841. The yard to the south of the barn had been sub-divided into three, with a pair of open-sided shelter sheds projecting from the centre of its western range. Similar changes occurred on most local farms during the 1850s and 1860s as farmers diversified into mixed animal husbandry following the arrival of the railways (which opened up new urban beef and dairy markets) and the falling price of grain after the repeal of the Corn Laws in 1846. The two western yards were probably for beef and dairy cattle, while the eastern yard adjoined a two-storied range that was almost certainly a stable. These yards were entered from the north by an imposing new gateway to the east of the barn, which is shown on the map with its twin porches. The barn's length and outline differs dramatically from that shown in 1841, yet there is no obvious evidence of extension in the surviving building. The western range is far shorter than that of 1841, and no longer continues to the south of the cottage and small pond on the western side of the road. The presence of original vehicle doors in its extant southern gable demonstrates that it cannot have been truncated, but was entirely rebuilt in *circa* 1860 – probably by William Eaton rather than Alexander Duff. The barn may possibly have been skilfully extended in similar materials to disguise the change, but it seems more likely that it too was rebuilt in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century and is not as early as suggested in the Schedule of Listed Buildings.

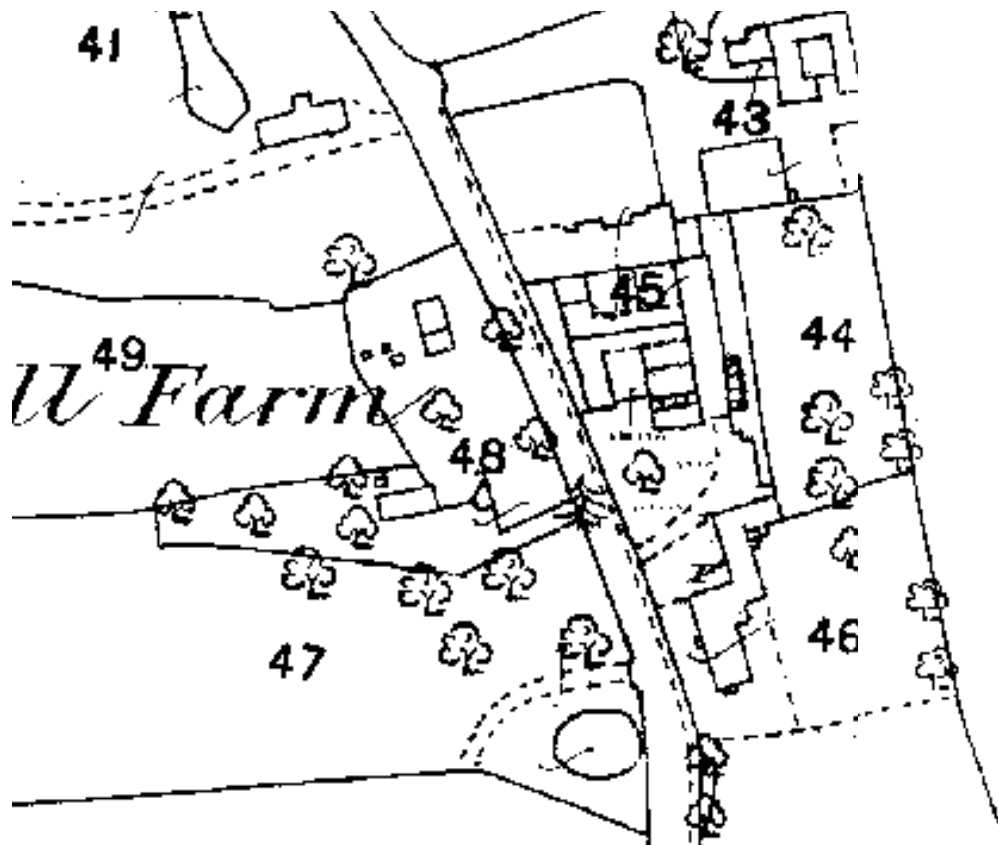


Figure 3.  
First edition 25 inch Ordnance Survey of 1885, showing the farm complex much as it remained prior to its conversion in 2000.

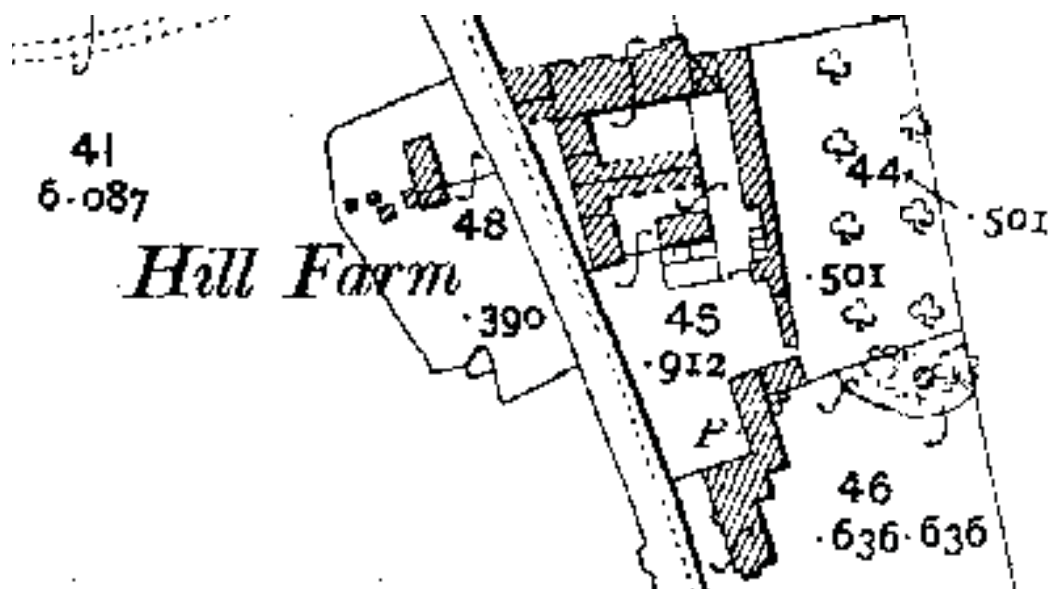


Figure 4  
Second Edition 25 inch Ordnance Survey of 1904  
Showing the present buildings in more detail. The barn is shown with its northern porches and eastern gateway (in contrast to the tithe map of 1841). The western range of single-storied sheds is divided into four compartments and adjoins a pair of back-to-back shelter yards separating a pair of cattle yards. The range is significantly shorter than its predecessor of 1841 (its southern gable lying to the north of the now demolished cottage and small pond to the west of the road, rather than south of them).

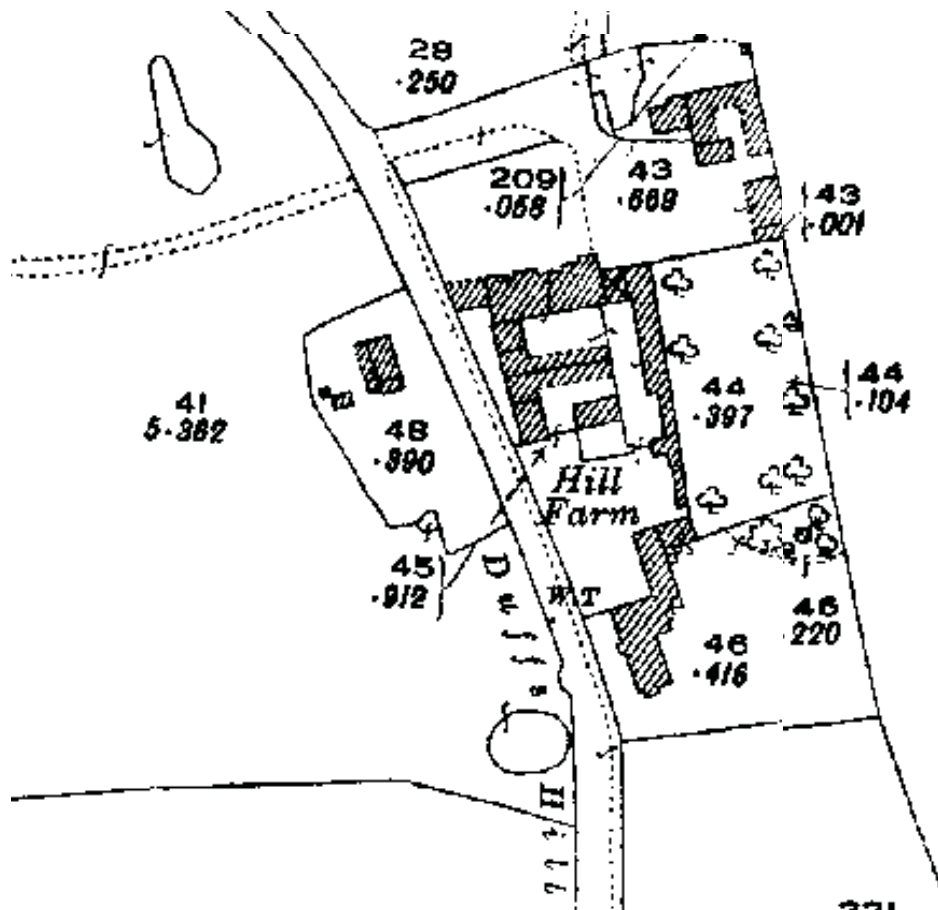


Figure 5  
Third Edition 25 inch Ordnance Survey of 1926

## Building Analysis

### Context of outbuilding within former yard complex

The outbuilding which forms the subject of this report is now a detached shed used as a garage and general household store at the southern end of the property known as Oxdown Barn. Until 2000, when the farm buildings were converted into four dwellings, it lay at the southern end of a uniform range of single-storied flint sheds which divided a pair of cattle yards from the road to the west (as shown in illustration A2.1 and on the Ordnance Surveys above). This range appears to have contained four units, viz. an enclosed shed adjoining the barn to the north, two small central sheds adjoining a pair of back-to-back shelter sheds on an east-west axis which separated the northern and southern yards, and the enclosed shed to the south. The northern shed contained a door with at least two windows in its eastern elevation and probably served as a cow-shed but was much altered during its conversion into a dwelling. The two central sheds and the attached open-sided shelters were demolished entirely, although the site is now partly occupied by a modern extension of *circa* 2005 to the northern shed.

The eastern range of the complex is a two-storied structure that appears to have formed a stable with a hayloft above, while the barn contains two northern porches and a tall gateway at its eastern end (by which the yards were entered). The entire complex is of uniform construction, with flint-rubble walls and red-brick dressings, glazed pantiled roofs and corbelled eaves with ridge finials. The layout is similar to that shown on the tithe map of 1841 (figure 2), but the latter reveals significant differences such as the absence of the gateway and

the greater length of the western range. In its final form, as shown on the Ordnance Survey of 1885 (figure 3) the complex dated from *circa* 1860, but it is not entirely clear whether it represents the single-phase rebuilding of its predecessor of 1841 (perhaps retaining only the stable) or a skilful extension and remodelling with identical materials and design. The former is more likely, but the question awaits a more detailed inspection of the additional dwellings on the site than was possible for the purpose of this survey.

### **Proportions and Structure of Outbuilding**

The outbuilding is an enclosed shed of flint rubble with red-brick dressings and a glazed pantiled roof. It extends to 7 m in length by 5.6 m in overall width (23 ft by 18.5 ft) and its walls of 35 cm (14 ins) in thickness rise to 2.5 m (7.5 ft) at their eaves. The roof gables are entirely of red-brick, and the southern gable terminates in a parapet with stepped corbels at its eaves, a rectangular finial to its ridge, and six ventilation apertures arranged in a pyramid. Much of this gable was rebuilt to reflect the original in 2000. The roof structure consists of clasped-purlins with a ridge-board and nailed collars, and incorporates several common rafters that contain empty mortises and were re-used from one or more structures of the 17<sup>th</sup> century or before. The roof-plates also contain evidence of re-use, and the door lintel in the southern gable is a 15<sup>th</sup> or 16<sup>th</sup> century cambered tie-beam with pegged stud-mortises to both its upper and lower surfaces. Miscellaneous old timbers of this kind are often found in utilitarian farm buildings and did not necessarily originate on the same site. The wall plates are spanned by a central tie-beam with horizontal axial and diagonal braces to the south.

### **Original Purpose and Alterations**

The shed lay at the southern end of a much longer range of identical fabric, as described above, and contained double doors in its southern gable. The present doors are replacements of 2000, but the aperture is respected by the masonry and shown in A2.1. The gable adjoined the road, facing a broad yard between the yard complex and farmhouse, and was designed either as a vehicle shed or feed store without additional doors or windows. A low, narrow doorway was subsequently inserted into the centre of its eastern elevation, adjoining the cattle yards. This feature interrupts the original brick dressing and lies beneath a limestone or shuttered-concrete lintel with jambs of red-brick. It appears to have been converted into a window before being blocked entirely. The door was 75 cm wide by just 1.4 m in height (2.5 ft ins by 4.5 ft) and probably operated as a feed hatch.

### **Date**

The shed's roof structure is characteristic of the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century and is highly unlikely to date from the early-19<sup>th</sup> century when ridge-boards were rarely used (although the farm complex is assigned to this period in the Schedule of Listed buildings). Its present layout probably dates from the remodelling of the farm yards in *circa* 1860, but it is possible that some flint fabric survives from the longer range shown on the tithe map of 1841.

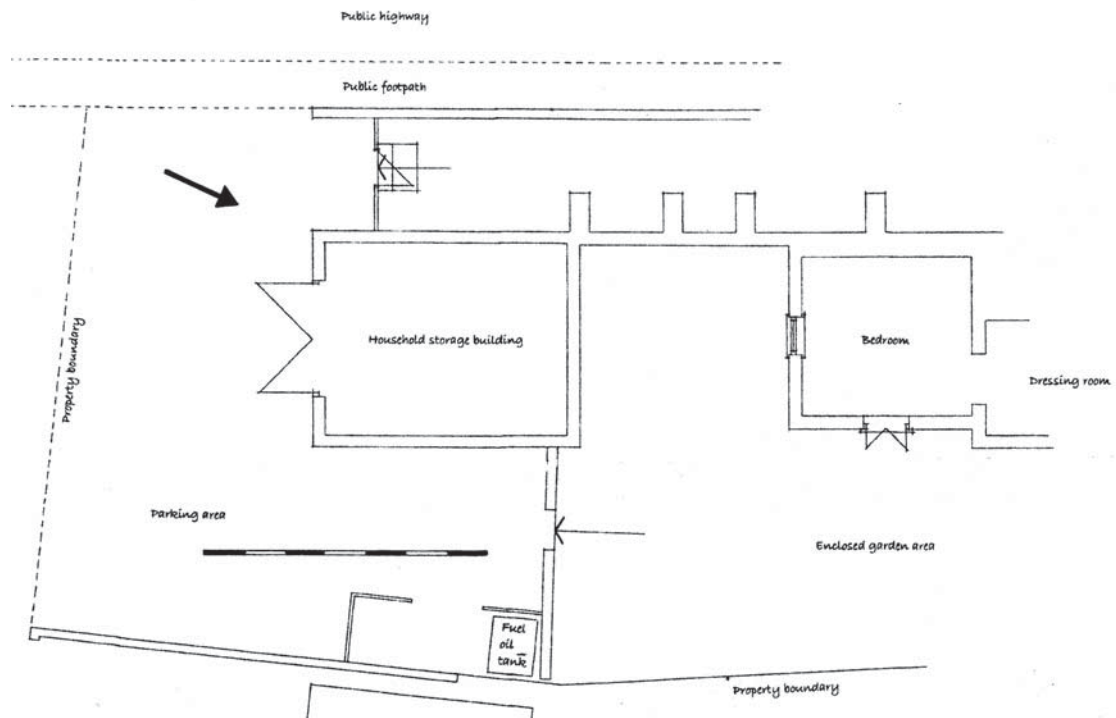
### **Historic Significance**

The shed is a visually significant component of an historically interesting and architecturally imposing mid-19<sup>th</sup> century agricultural complex of gentry status. It may represent the alteration of an earlier range of sheds built in the 1820s by Alexander Duff who also built Glemsford's silk throwing mill and is among the most important figures in Glemsford's history. The distinctive southern gable was largely rebuilt in 2000 however, and the building is not of particular historic interest in itself.



## Plans and Elevations

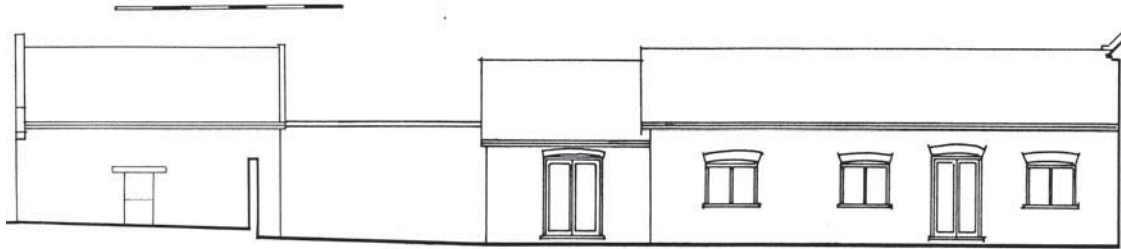
(Adapted from drawings kindly supplied by Mike Sale, MRICS. Scales in metres)



**Figure 6**  
**Ground plan, showing the outbuilding to the left ('household storage building').**

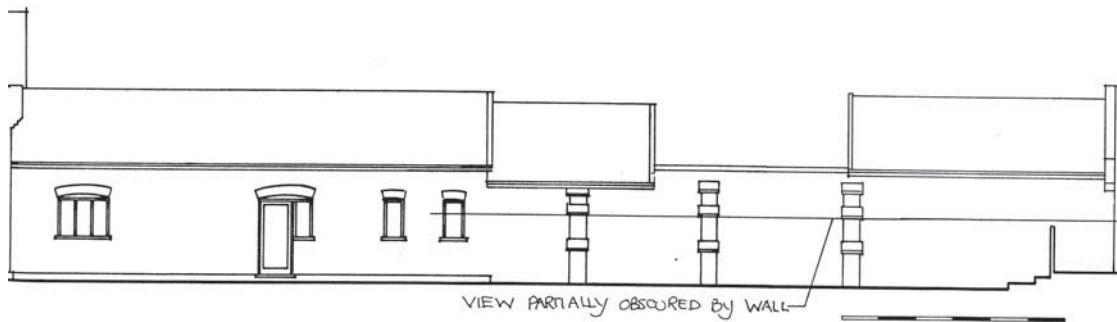


**Figure 7**  
**Southern gable showing double doors with converted barn in rear**



**Figure 7**

**Eastern elevation showing the detached shed to left with secondary aperture and the converted probable cow-shed adjoining the barn to right (with recent southern extension on site of demolished central shelter sheds)**



**Figure 8**

**Western (roadside) elevation showing featureless detached shed to right and probable cow-shed to left. The buttresses to its left are additions of 2000**

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

### Descriptions of Photographs in Appendix 1

#### Photograph no.

1. Aerial view of site from south-west (dated 1972) showing farmhouse to right and shed to left.
2. Exterior of northern end of shed range from south-east (*circa* 2005, before its extension).
3. General view of site from road to north-west, showing main barn to left.
4. Northern exterior of main barn showing secondary arched gateway to left.
5. General view of site from road to south-east showing shed to right.
6. Exterior of former farmhouse from road to north-west (included for site context).
7. Exterior of barn complex from north-west.
8. Northern end of barn complex from west showing shed to right.
9. Exterior of shed from road to north-west showing site entrance to right.
10. General view from road to south showing shed to right.
11. Entrance to site from west showing shed to left and car port in rear.
12. Northern end of shed range from south-east showing recent extension to left.
13. Main barn from south showing northern end of shed range to left.
14. Main barn from south-west showing eastern yard range to right.
15. Two-storied eastern range of yard complex from west showing main barn to left (viewed from shed).
16. External elevation from road to west.
17. Exterior from road to south showing main barn in rear to left.
18. External elevation of southern gable showing blocked ventilation apertures above double doors (much brickwork ostensibly rebuilt in 2000 conversion).
19. Exterior from south-east showing southern gable to left.
20. Exterior from north-east showing recent extension to right.
21. External elevation of northern gable.
22. Detail of eastern exterior showing blocked apparent doorway.

23. Detail of blocked original doorway with concrete lintel in eastern external elevation.
24. Interior of southern gable showing modern double doors.
25. Interior of northern gable from south showing modern shelving.
26. Internal eastern elevation showing northern gable to left.
27. Internal eastern elevation showing southern gable to right and blocked door to left.
28. Internal western elevation showing northern gable to right.
29. Internal western elevation showing southern gable to left.
30. Detail of re-used medieval tie-beam above southern doors showing empty mortises.
31. Roof structure from south showing clasped purlins and ridge pieces.
32. Detail of re-used rafters at southern end of roof structure.
33. Detail from south-east of axial & diagonal braces to tie-beam.
34. Detail from south-west of re-used eastern roof-plate showing tie-beam to right.
35. Internal south-eastern corner showing diagonal and axial braces to tie-beam.
36. Internal south-western corner showing junction of axial tie-beam brace with southern gable.

*Photographic Appendix 2 follows on pp. 13-17*

**Appendix 2 (pp. 13-17): Selected Printed Photographs**



A2.1 Aerial view of site before conversion from south-west (dated 1972) showing farmhouse to right and single-storied linear shed to left (note black-painted vehicle doors in gable). Original in possession of owner.



A2.2 General view of site from road to north-west, showing main barn with twin northern porches to left and shed in rear to right. The uniform porches and arched gateway to the left are not shown on the tithe map and it is not clear how much of the barn pre-dates 1841



A2.3 Exterior from Duff's Hill to south showing double doors and blocked ventilation holes of southern gable with main barn in rear to left. The doors and much of the brickwork was renewed in 2000



A2.4 Exterior of shed from south-east showing southern gable to left and blocked central aperture of eastern elevation to right. The shed formerly continued further to the north (right) but was partly demolished during the conversion of 2000 and the gable shown here to the extreme right is a more recent 'extension' to its extant northern end.



A2.5 Exterior of shed from north-east showing its truncated northern gable with the modern extension to its surviving northern section visible to right



A2.6 Detail of blocked secondary door with stone or concrete lintel in centre of eastern external elevation. This probably formed a feed hatch onto the cattle yard, but was subsequently converted into a window. It interrupts the original red-brick dressing above



A2.7 Interior from south showing the northern gable and the shed's current purpose as a general storage 'garage' with metal shelving against its walls. Note the original whitewashed tie-beam spanning the shed's width, with horizontal axial and diagonal braces to the south.



A2.8 Internal eastern elevation showing southern gable to right with original horizontal braces to tie-beam. The inserted eastern aperture to the left is obscured by shelving.





A2.9 Detail of re-used cambered medieval tie-beam above southern entrance doors showing empty pegged mortises in its underside



A2.10 Original roof structure from south showing clasped purlins with nailed collar and ridge-board. The rafters vary in size and several show evidence of re-use from earlier structures.