

**The Barn,  
Bendalls Farm,  
Mendlesham, Suffolk**  
MDS 155

**Historic Building Record**

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# The Barn, Bendalls Farm, Hobbies Lane, Mendlesham, Suffolk

(TM 097 654)

## 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's Archaeological Service (Edward Martin, 13<sup>th</sup> November 2009 ref. SpecHBR(EM)\_BendallsFm\_Mendlesham\_2639\_09), and is intended to fulfil a condition of planning permission for conversion (Mid Suffolk District Council application 2639/09 condition 3).*

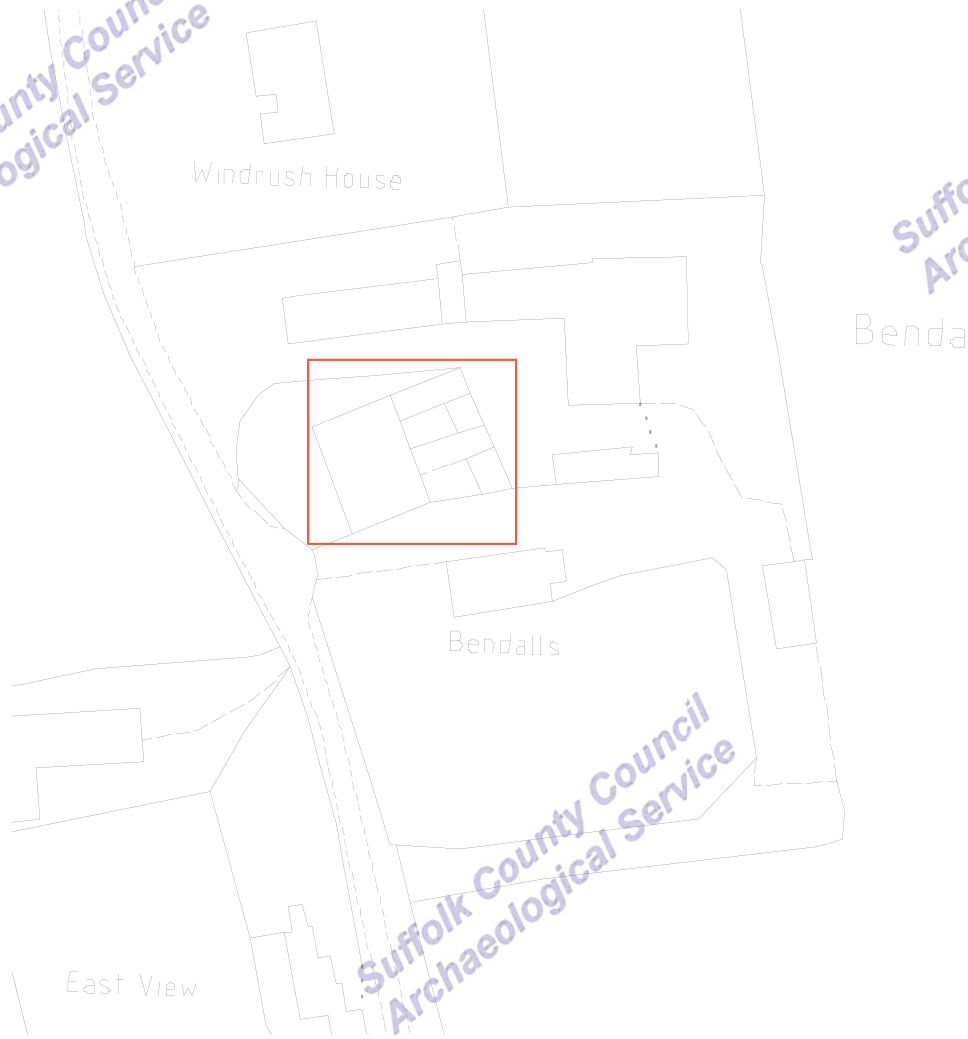
### Introduction

The report is accompanied by a CD containing a photographic record in the form of 48 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 11<sup>th</sup> February 2010.

### Summary

Bendalls Farm lies in open countryside on the eastern side of Hobbies Lane, approximately 500 metres south-west of Mendlesham village. The former farmhouse is a timber-framed and rendered structure of the late-18<sup>th</sup> century but has been much altered and is not listed. Its original roof structure includes a number of badly scorched re-used timbers and can be dated by an inscription of 1780 (or possibly 1789) in the internal clay daub of the western gable. At the time of the parish tithe survey in 1839 the farm was a small tenanted holding of just 19 acres occupied by the eponymous Thomas Bendall with an irregular pond described on the tithe apportionment as a moat to the south of the house.

The timber-framed and weatherboarded roadside barn adjacent to the farmhouse is a four bay structure of *circa* 1800 that originally contained a single-bay stable at its northern end. The roof was replaced in the 20<sup>th</sup> century and much of its wall fabric has been rebuilt but it remains of considerable historic interest. Its original framing incorporates a substantial quantity of badly scorched and burnt timber from a domestic building of the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries that may have occupied the moated medieval site. Similar burnt timber has been re-used in the house, suggesting the two structures are of the same date and that better quality material was difficult to obtain on a small farm. The tie-beams of the entrance bay are linked to the re-used storey posts by traditional arch-braces and bolted knee-braces – both of which appear to be original and represent a rare transitional combination that is unique in my experience. (Arch-braces were often replaced by bolted knees in the 19<sup>th</sup> century to increase headroom, but they were not used together.) Despite these points of interest the extent of the barn's alteration is too great to meet the strict English Heritage criteria for listing. Conversion work was well underway at the time of inspection and the buildings of a mid-19<sup>th</sup> century cattle yard against the barn's eastern elevation had been wholly or partly demolished. These were probably not of particular interest in themselves but their general appearance typified local farmyards of the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century and was accordingly of some historic and landscape value.



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**Figure 1**  
**Current Ordnance Survey Site Plan**  
**Outlining the barn and adjoining yard complex in a red square to the north of the former farmhouse and showing Hobbies Lane to the left.**

## Historic Context: Documentary & Cartographic Record

Bendalls Farm lies in open, arable countryside on the eastern side of Hobbies Lane, approximately 500 metres south-west of Mendlesham village. The former farmhouse is a timber-framed and rendered structure of the late-18<sup>th</sup> century but has been much altered and is not listed. Its original roof structure includes a small number of badly scorched re-used timbers and can be dated by an inscription of 1780 (or possibly 1789) in the internal clay daub of the western gable (in association with the initials ?GO). The re-use of timber from an earlier building that evidently burnt down is highly unusual, and since similar timbers occur in the barn it seems likely that both buildings are of the same period.

The farm was a small tenanted holding of just 19 acres at the time of the Mendlesham tithe survey in 1839. It was owned by Avis Halls and occupied by Thomas Bendall whose name it still bears. The land consisted of 9.5 acres of arable with the remainder laid to pasture in equal proportions and a large irregular pond to the south of the farmhouse was described by the tithe apportionment as a moat with the adjoining southern pasture named as Moat Meadow.



Figure 2

**Bendalls Farm on the Mendlesham tithe map of 1839 (Suffolk Record Office) showing the present barn to the north-west of the farmhouse. The site is described in the tithe apportionment as ‘farm house, yards, premises and moat’ (nos. 721, 722 & 723) with ‘Moat Meadow’ to the south (no. 719)**

The presence of a moat suggests the site is of medieval origin, but the pond’s irregular outline is not obviously recognisable as such. The tithe map shows the barn as a detached structure with two small outbuildings to the east and north-east. By the time of the first edition Ordnance Survey of 1885 it had acquired its present eastern yard, with the L-shaped brick shed (building 3 in figure 5) forming its north-eastern corner. The barn’s increased width suggests that it had also acquired the lean-to shed (2) which had been demolished prior to inspection, but the southern shelter shed (4) is a block-work addition of the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century that is not shown on the second edition Ordnance Survey of 1904. The ‘moat’ had disappeared by 1885, presumably having been drained and filled as part of the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century alterations.



Figure 3

The first edition 25 inch Ordnance Survey of 1885 showing the eastern lean-to (2) and L-shaped brick shelter shed (3) for the first time.



Figure 4

Second Edition 25 inch Ordnance Survey of 1904 showing little change since 1885. The 'moat' of 1839 appears to have been drained.

## Building Analysis

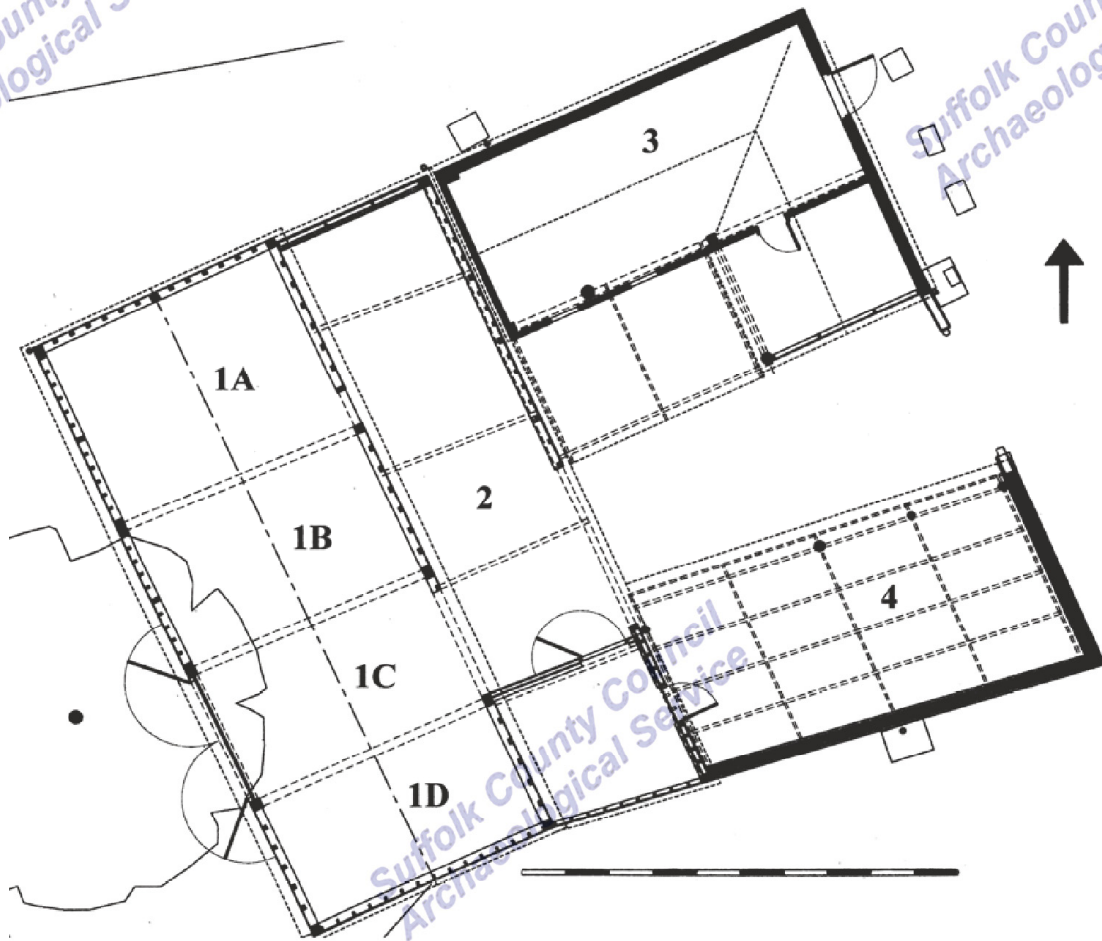


Figure 5

Block Plan of site, identifying each historic area with a number for ease of reference in the text and photographic record. From a drawing by Brown & Scarlett Architects dated August 2009. Scale in metres

### Key

1. Timber-framed and weatherboarded threshing barn of four bays with western entrance in penultimate southern bay (C). The northern bay (A) was formerly floored to form a stable and loft with an original door in the eastern elevation. Unusual combination of arch-braces and bolted knee-braces to the tie-beams flanking the threshing bay but bolted knee-braces only to the northern truss. Much re-used timber of which some had been badly burnt prior to its re-use. The roof structure replaced in the 20<sup>th</sup> century and now covered with corrugated asbestos but the original roof was probably thatched. The walls much rebuilt in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. *Circa* 1800 (possibly contemporary with farmhouse which bears an inscribed date of 1780 or 1789).
2. Lean-to shed against eastern elevation of barn. Shown on Ordnance Survey of 1885 but demolished prior to inspection. Incorporating a separate shed to the south as shown on architect's plan of August 2009.
3. Brick and pantiled open-sided shelter-shed of *circa* 1870 with clasped-purlin softwood roof structure, partly demolished and stripped of tiles before inspection.
4. Mid-20<sup>th</sup> century open-sided shelter-shed of cement blocks and corrugated iron.

*N.B. Conversion had commenced prior to inspection and the lean-to shed (2) against the barn's eastern elevation had been entirely demolished. The external cladding to the same elevation had also been removed and the internal floor excavated. The tiles had been stripped from the brick shelter shed (3) and part of its fabric demolished. Three photographs provided by the owner show the site before these alterations.*

### **Structure and Date**

The barn at Bendalls Farm is a timber-framed and weatherboarded structure of four bays on an approximately north-south axis which extends to 15 m in length by 6.1 m in overall width (49.5 ft by 20 ft). Its walls rise to 4.1 m at their roof-plates (13.5 ft), including a low brick plinth of 30 cm (12 ins) and the roof structure is a mid- to late-20<sup>th</sup> century replacement covered with corrugated asbestos. The walls consist almost entirely of re-used timber, much of which is severely scorched and evidently survived a major fire that presumably destroyed the building in which it originated. The studs are interrupted by diagonal primary braces in the typical manner of the late-18<sup>th</sup> and early-19<sup>th</sup> century, and the barn dates from *circa* 1800. It may be contemporary with the nearby farmhouse, which also re-uses burnt timber in its roof structure and bears a convincing inscribed date of 1780 or 1789 in the internal render of its western gable. The tie-beams and storey posts flanking the entrance bay (C) are linked by long plank-sectioned arch-braces which are pegged and tenoned at both ends in the medieval tradition, but the tie-beam dividing the two northern bays (A and B) is secured only by bolted knee-braces with no evidence of arch-bracing. The combination of original arch-bracing to entrance bays and bolted knee-braces elsewhere (to maximise headroom in the storage bays) is typical of so-called 'Napoleonic barns' of *circa* 1800 – rebuilt to exploit the agricultural profits of high cereal prices occasioned by restrictions on grain imports during the Napoleonic wars. Mid-19<sup>th</sup> century barns were normally provided only with knee-braces. In many cases the earlier arch-braces were removed at this later period and replaced by knee-braces as farm vehicles increased in size, but all four corner posts of bay C at Bendalls barn combine bolted knees and arch-braces with only one of the latter now missing (in the south-western corner). Both forms are probably original to the frame as the bolted knees are identical to those of the northern truss which lacked arch-bracing from the outset. There would be little point in inserting them at a later date without removing the arch-braces. Such a combination is unique in my experience and is undoubtedly highly unusual; it may have been considered necessary to strengthen the frame given the re-used nature of the timbers and their relatively poor condition.

### **Layout and Function**

The structure was designed as a standard East Anglian combination barn with a threshing barn of three bays to the south (bays B-D) and a single-bay stable (A) to the north. At 4.6 m (15 ft) the stable bay is significantly longer than the rest (bays B, C and D extending to only 3.5 m, 3, and 3 m or 11.5 ft, 10 ft and 10 ft respectively) and the central post of the northern bay contains the empty mortise of the axial joist of a missing hay loft. The loft was open to the barn but the stable beneath would have been divided by a boarded partition as there is no obvious evidence of mid-rail mortises in the relevant storey posts. The present loading door in the external gable is a replacement of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. An original doorway lay at the southern end of the stable's eastern elevation but its present nailed lintel is a 19<sup>th</sup> century alteration as the pegged empty mortises of its slightly lower predecessor are exposed beneath. The ground sill is tenoned to the northern door jamb in a manner which confirms the door as an original feature. The three-bay barn would have contained a threshing floor in its central bay but this no longer survived at the time of inspection. The present low double doors to the western roadside elevation are 20<sup>th</sup> century additions which replaced the full-height doors of the principal entrance, and the presence of empty stud mortises in the roof-plate of the opposite elevation confirms that its present full-height aperture (lacking doors) is secondary.



Most barns of this period possessed small rear doors that were designed only to create a through-draught for threshing and winnowing but not to admit vehicles.

### **Alterations**

The barn had been extensively altered and rebuilt even before the beginning of the present conversion work. In addition to the loss of its original roof structure (which was probably thatched in keeping with most smaller barns on this type) the western elevations of the two northern bays (A and B) were rebuilt in more uniform timber in the late-19<sup>th</sup> century or early-20<sup>th</sup> century. The plinth of these bays is now of Fletton brick. The southern gable was entirely rebuilt in narrow-sectioned softwood during the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century and the lower half of the northern gable has also been renewed. Original framing survives in the western elevation of bay D, although its ground sill has been raised in height, and only the eastern elevation remains largely original. The weatherboarding appears to have been renewed throughout, but had been stripped from the eastern elevations of bays A and B prior to inspection. The cladding of the southern bay (D) probably survives from the 19<sup>th</sup> century where it was protected by a demolished lean-to shed (2).

### **Re-Used Timber**

Much of the original fabric consists of re-used burnt timber which appears to derive from a multi-phase building with 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> century components. A curved timber re-used as a primary brace in the western elevation of the southern bay (D) is highly characteristic of the 17<sup>th</sup> century while the neatly chamfered storey posts with empty mortises for mid-rails and ceiling joists are more typical of the early-16<sup>th</sup> century. A single stud in the eastern elevation of the same southern bay is chamfered and grooved to operate as a muntin in a plank-and-muntin screen. Screens of this kind were normally used only in domestic buildings and formed partitions of vertical studs (muntins) linked by wide planks. Given the presence of similar burnt material in the farmhouse it might seem that it derives from a former farmhouse on the site that burnt down in the late-18<sup>th</sup> century, but if so one might expect a more uniform supply of timber rather than the rather motley assortment of varying fragments found in both buildings. While the timber may have originated on the site it might as readily have been imported from elsewhere – as was usually the case with re-used timber in structures of this date.

### **Yard Sheds (2-4)**

Unlike the main barn, the sheds flanking the enclosed cattle yard to the east were not shown on the tithe map of 1839 and are additions of the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century. The brick shed to the north-east (3) retains a clasped-purlin roof of machine-sawn softwood with nailed collars and a ridge board and is typical of the 1860s and 1870s. It was present by the Ordnance Survey of 1885 and in recent years formed an open sided shelter-shed. It is, however, shown as an enclosed structure on the Ordnance Surveys (which normally used broken lines to indicate open-sided buildings) and this may have been a later alteration. The evidence had been lost due to partial demolition by the time of inspection and the pantiles shown in earlier photographs had been removed. The present shelter shed to the south of the yard is an addition of cement blocks and corrugated iron of the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, but replaced an earlier structure shown on the Ordnance Surveys. The lean-to shed which extended along the full length of the barn's eastern elevation had been entirely demolished before inspection but was shown in 1885. It contained an enclosed shed (perhaps a feed store or loose box) at its southern end, as shown in the architect's drawing upon which figure 5 is based. It was most recently covered with corrugated asbestos and may have been partly rebuilt in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Yard buildings of this kind were added to most barns in Suffolk during the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century as cattle were introduced to compensate for the falling price of grain after the Repeal of the Corn Laws in 1846.

### **Historic Significance**

The barn at Bendalls Farm has been much altered and substantially rebuilt but is nonetheless of considerable historic interest. It represents a typical East Anglian combination barn of the Napoleonic era, originally with a stable to the north and a threshing barn to the south, but is unique in my experience in its combination of ostensibly original arch-braces and bolted knee-braces the open trusses of the entrance bay. It is also highly unusual to find large quantities of re-used burnt timber and suggests that better quality timber was difficult to obtain on a small farm of just 19 acres. The apparent presence of a moat on the title map of 1839 also lends historic significance to the site, but the extent of the barn's alterations is too great to meet the strict English Heritage criteria for listing. The buildings of the eastern cattle yard were probably not of particular historic interest in themselves even before their recent demolition, but their general appearance typified local farmyards of the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century and was accordingly of some historic and landscape value.

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

### Descriptions of Photographs in Appendix 1

#### Photograph no.

1. General view of site from Hobbies Lane to north showing barn to left with farmhouse in rear.
2. General view of site from Hobbies Lane to north-west showing roadside barn with site entrances to left and right.
3. Southern site entrance from Hobbies Lane to west showing farmhouse to right and barn to left.
4. Southern elevation of farmhouse showing gable of barn to left.
5. Exterior of barn from Hobbies Lane showing northern gable to left and western elevation to right.
6. Detail of external barn doors in bay C.
7. Western exterior of barn showing 20th century weatherboarding and Fletton brick plinth to bays A and B.
8. Southern external gable of barn showing pigeon holes with site of demolished lean-to (2) to right.
9. Exterior of 20th century shelter shed (4) from south-west showing barn and site of lean-to (2) to left.
10. Eastern yard entrance showing farmhouse & shelter shed (4) to left with eastern exterior of barn in rear.
11. Eastern exterior of barn with site of demolished lean-to (2) in foreground.
12. Eastern site entrance from south-east showing brick shed (3) to right and barn in rear to left.
13. Northern external gable of barn showing loft loading door with brick shed (3) to left.
14. Interior of partly demolished brick shed (3) from site of demolished lean-to (2) to west.
15. Roof structure of brick shed (3) from west.
16. External eastern elevations of bays D & C showing original entrance in bay C to right with scar of demolished lean-to (2).
17. External eastern elevation of bays B & A showing site of demolished lean-to (2).
18. Detail of north-eastern storey post of bay C showing empty mortises (evidence of re-use).

19. Eastern exterior of bay A showing stable door to left.
20. Detail of lintel of stable door in eastern exterior of bay A showing empty mortises of original lintel below.
21. General view of barn interior from south showing entrance bay C in foreground.
22. 20th century roof structure of barn from south showing unusual combination of knee and arch-braces to tie-beams of entrance bay C.
23. General view of barn interior from north.
24. Internal northern gable showing secondary framing beneath former stable ceiling.
25. Detail of axial joist mortise of stable ceiling in central post of internal northern gable.
26. Detail of northern internal gable showing scorched posts to left and right.
27. Internal southern gable showing narrow studs of 20th century reconstruction.
28. Bolted knee-braces and reverse-cranked arch-braces of entrance bay C seen from north.
29. Detail from north of bolted knee-brace and arch-brace to tie-beam of entrance bay C.
30. Open truss between bays A & B from south showing bolted knee-braces without arch-braces.
31. Western interior of bays D & C showing original framing with raised sill to left and lowered door in bay C to right.
32. Detail of re-used burnt timber with lath stripes to western interior of bay D.
33. Detail of south-western corner of barn showing re-used burnt timber.
34. Internal western elevation of bays B & A showing early-20th century reconstruction.
35. Eastern interior of bay C showing stud mortises in roof-plate above present full-height door.
36. Detail of bolted knee-braces to north-eastern storey post of entrance bay C.
37. Western interior of bays B & A showing absence of partition mortise in dividing storey post.
38. Eastern interior of bays A & B showing original framing with stable door to right.
39. Detail of face-halved and bladed scarf joint in eastern roof-plate.
40. Western interior of bay C showing reduced entrance doors with original framing to left and secondary framing to right.

41. Original framing with re-used burnt timber in eastern interior of bay D.
42. Detail of re-used burnt primary brace to eastern interior of bay D.
43. Detail of re-used timber showing brace trenches to eastern interior of bay D.
44. Detail of re-used timber to eastern interior of bay D showing groove of screen muntin.
45. Detail of re-used south-western storey post of bay C showing heavily weathered northern surface.
46. Circa 2008. Exterior of pantiled brick shed (3) from north-east showing barn & lean-to shed (2) in rear to right.
47. Circa 2008. Interior of brick shed (4) from south-west showing open elevation with pantiled roof.
48. Circa 2008. Eastern exterior of barn showing lean-to shed (2) with shelter shed (4) to left.

*Photographic Appendix 2 follows on pp. 12-16*

Appendix 2 (pp. 12-16): Selected Printed Photographs



Illus. 1. General view of site from Hobbies Lane to north-west showing roadside barn with site entrances to left & right and western gable of farmhouse in rear



Illus. 2. Southern elevation of farmhouse showing gable of barn to left.



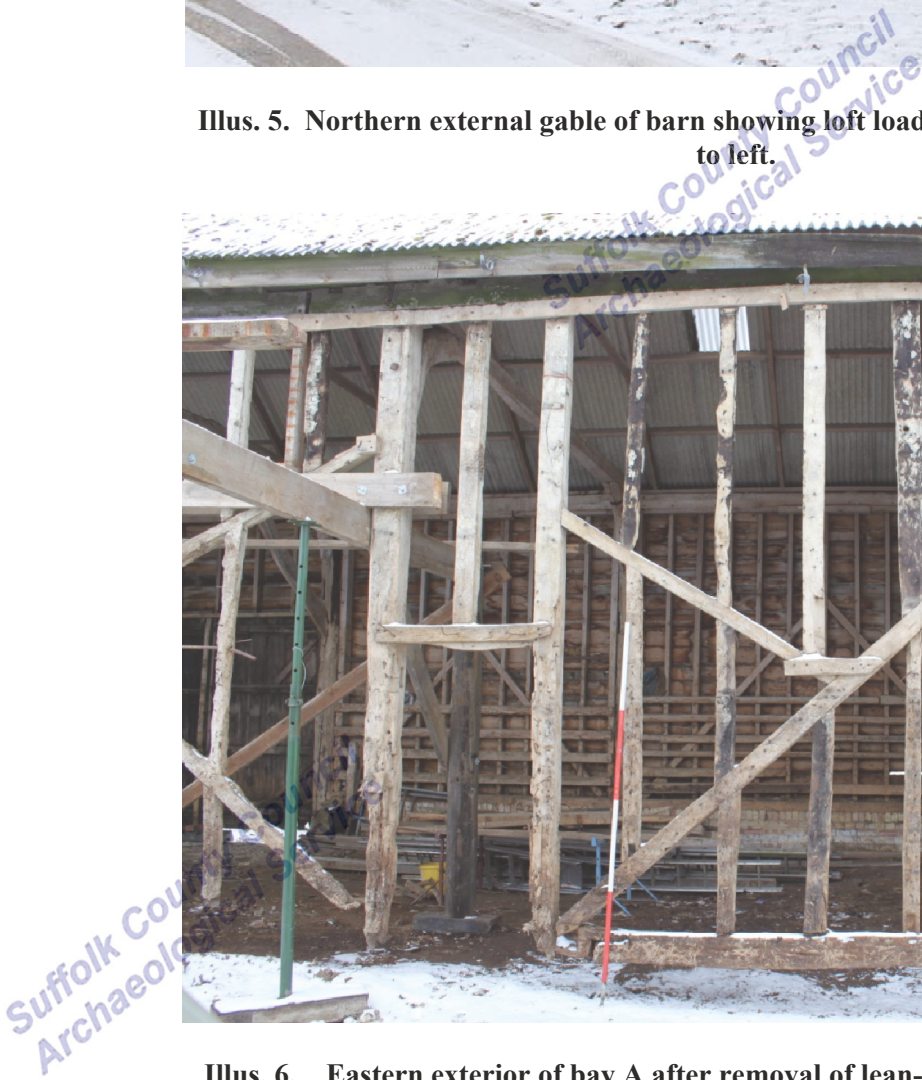
Illus. 3. Eastern yard entrance showing farmhouse & 20<sup>th</sup> century block-work shelter shed (4) to left with eastern exterior of barn in rear.



Illus. 4. Eastern exterior of barn with site of demolished lean-to (2) in foreground and sheds 3 & 4 to right and left respectively.



Illus. 5. Northern external gable of barn showing left loading door with brick shed (3) to left.



Illus. 6. Eastern exterior of bay A after removal of lean-to shed (2) showing original framing with re-used timber and stable door with raised lintel to left.



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**Illus. 7.** General view of barn interior from south showing entrance bay C in foreground and the unusual combination of tenoned arch-braces and bolted knee-braces to its open trusses.

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**Illus. 8.** Bolted knee-braces and reverse-cranked arch-braces of entrance bay C seen from north with 20<sup>th</sup> century roof and rebuilt southern gable in rear



**Illus. 9.** Western interior of entrance bay C showing the reduced height of the entrance doors with original framing in bay D to left (with unusual re-used burnt timber) and rebuilt framing of the late-19<sup>th</sup> or early-20<sup>th</sup> century in bay B to right.



**Illus. 10.** Circa 2008. Eastern exterior of barn showing lean-to shed (2) with shelter shed (4) to left before demolition work began.