

**Mousehall Barn,  
Flowton Road,  
Flowton, Suffolk  
FLW 014**

**Historic Building Record**

OASIS ID: Suffolkc1-78079



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*on behalf of*  
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# **Mousehall Barn, Flowton Road, Flowton, Suffolk**

**(TM 077 468)**

## **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 (ref. SpecHBR(EM)\_MousehallBarn\_Flowton\_0938\_09, Edward Martin, 17<sup>th</sup> February 2010), and is intended to fulfil a condition of planning permission for conversion (Mid Suffolk District Council consent 0938/09 condition 4).*

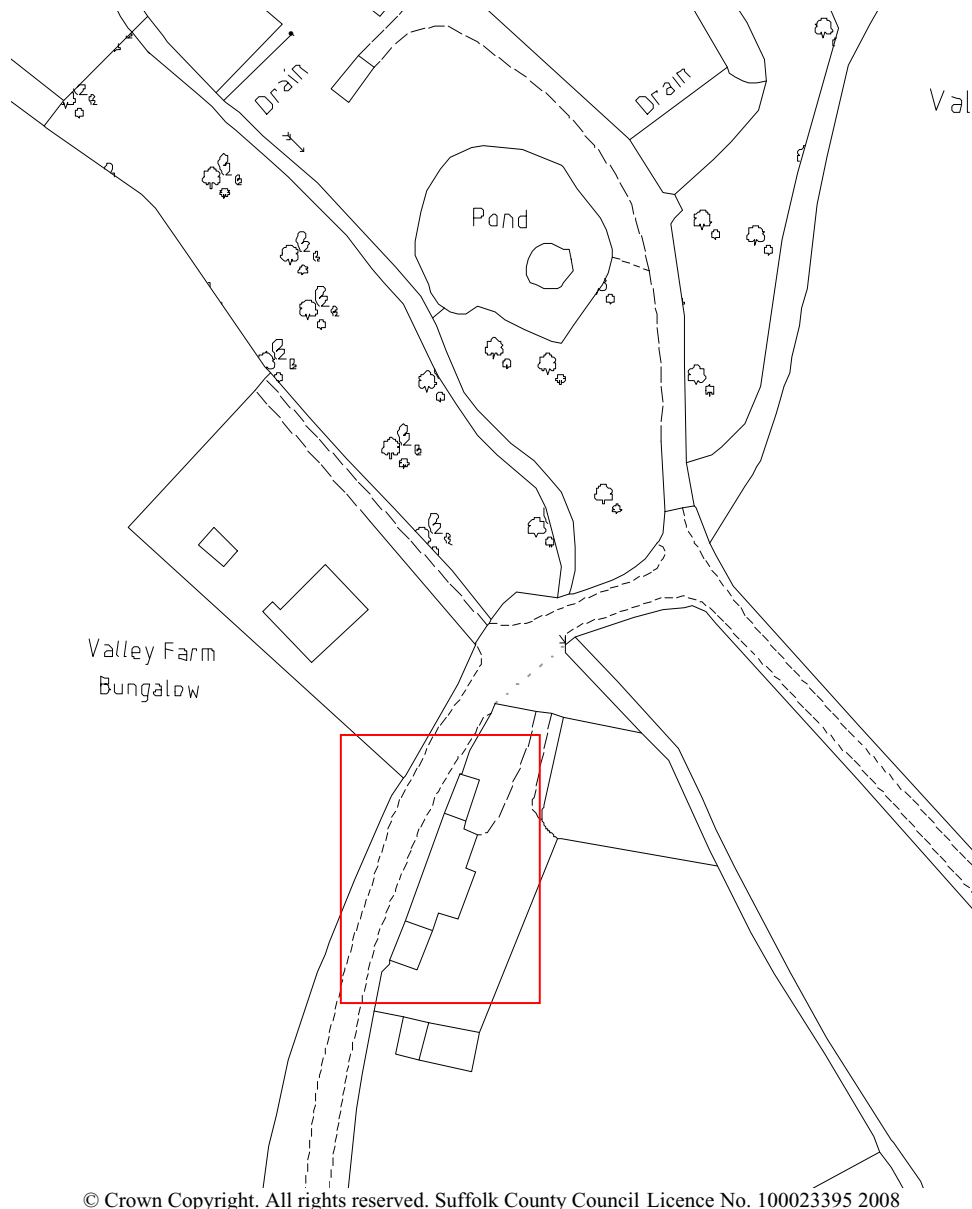
### **Introduction**

The report is accompanied by a CD containing a photographic record in the form of 62 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 10<sup>th</sup> March 2010.

### **Summary**

Mousehall Barn adjoins a paddock and stream in open countryside on the eastern side of Flowton Road, approximately 500 m west of the parish church. Its present name derives from a modern house to the south and the adjacent farmhouse shown on early maps was demolished in the 1920s. At the time of the tithe survey in 1839 it formed part of a scattered tenanted holding of 91 acres based at Bush Farm 750 m to the north-east and was named as 'Off. Farm yards' on the contemporary apportionment. A small moat in close proximity to the north surrounded a 'duffhouse' belonging to neighbouring Valley Farm.

The barn is a four-bay timber-framed and weatherboarded structure of *circa* 1800 that re-uses many timbers from an early-17<sup>th</sup> century predecessor of which the northern gable survives *in situ* with externally trenched wall-braces (where the southern gable and both elevations contain diagonal primary bracing of later form). The steeply-pitched clasped-purlin roof was previously thatched but is now covered with red-painted corrugated iron while a pair of cow-sheds adjoining its gables retain their original late-19<sup>th</sup> century pantiles. The barn is of considerable historic interest as a typical and relatively well-preserved threshing barn of the Napoleonic era which probably contained a stable in its northern bay with a three-bay threshing barn to the south. It retains its original roof structure along with most of its wall fabric, three of the four arch-braces to the entrance bay and its original porch and door framing. The structure is of additional interest given its re-use of material from a 17<sup>th</sup> century predecessor, which lends it an older and most impressive appearance than would otherwise have been the case. The adjoining pantiled sheds are later additions but are also of historic value as they occupy the site of buildings shown on the tithe map of 1839 and illustrate the typical linear development of roadside barns in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The three structures form a particularly attractive group in an area of unspoiled countryside. Despite the barn's age and character it probably fails to meet the strict English Heritage criteria for listing, but the case is marginal and less interesting contemporary examples elsewhere in the county are listed at grade II.



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**Figure 1**  
**Current Ordnance Survey Site Plan**  
**Outlining the area of the barn and adjoining sheds in red and showing Valley Farm to the north with Valley Farm Bungalow to the west of Flowton Road. The ‘pond’ was a moated dovecote in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.**

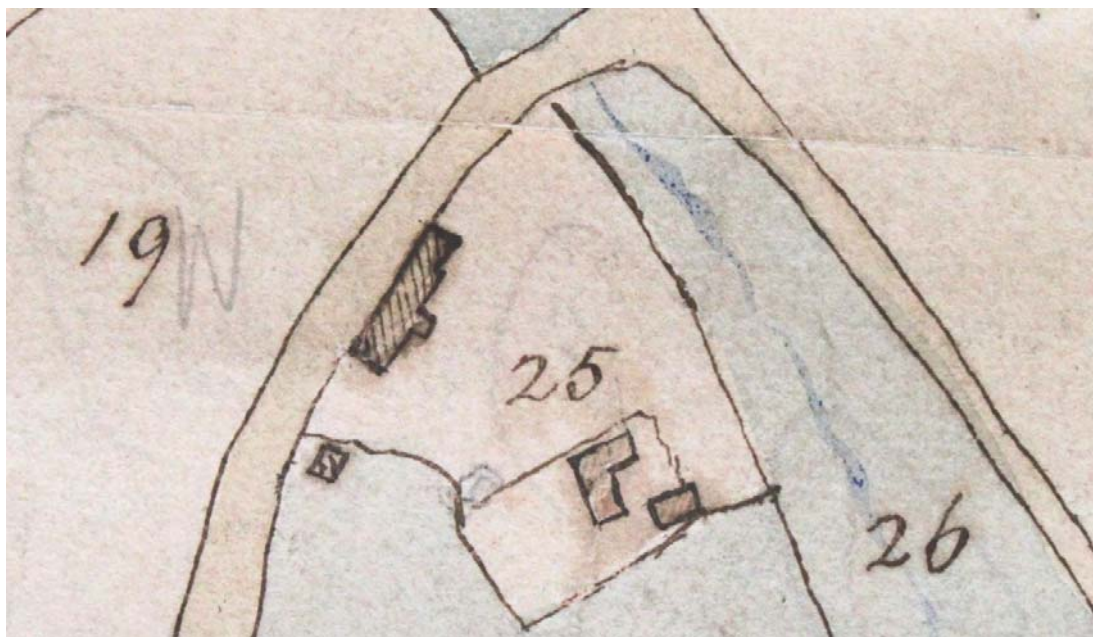
## **Historic Context: Documentary & Cartographic Record**

Mousehall Barn lies in open countryside on the eastern side of Flowton Road, approximately 500 m west of the parish church. It adjoins a paddock and a small stream on the east but the only house in the immediate vicinity is a modern bungalow on the opposite side of the road (Valley Farm Bungalow) and the nearest farm is Valley Farm approximately 120 m to the north. The unusually small moat at the entrance to Valley Farm appears to have protected a dovecote from predators. At the time of the Flowton tithe survey in 1839 an L-shaped house lay in the present paddock to the south-east of the barn and probably represented the farmhouse to which the barn had originally belonged. Both the house and barn were described together in the accompanying tithe apportionment as ‘Off. Farm yards’ (sic) and belonged to a



**Figure 2**

The site on the Flowton tithe map of 1839 (Suffolk Record Office) showing the barn to the south-west of a sharp bend in the road with Valley Farm, to the north. The square moat lay in an area (18) described as 'Four pightles (paddocks) and a dufhouse'.

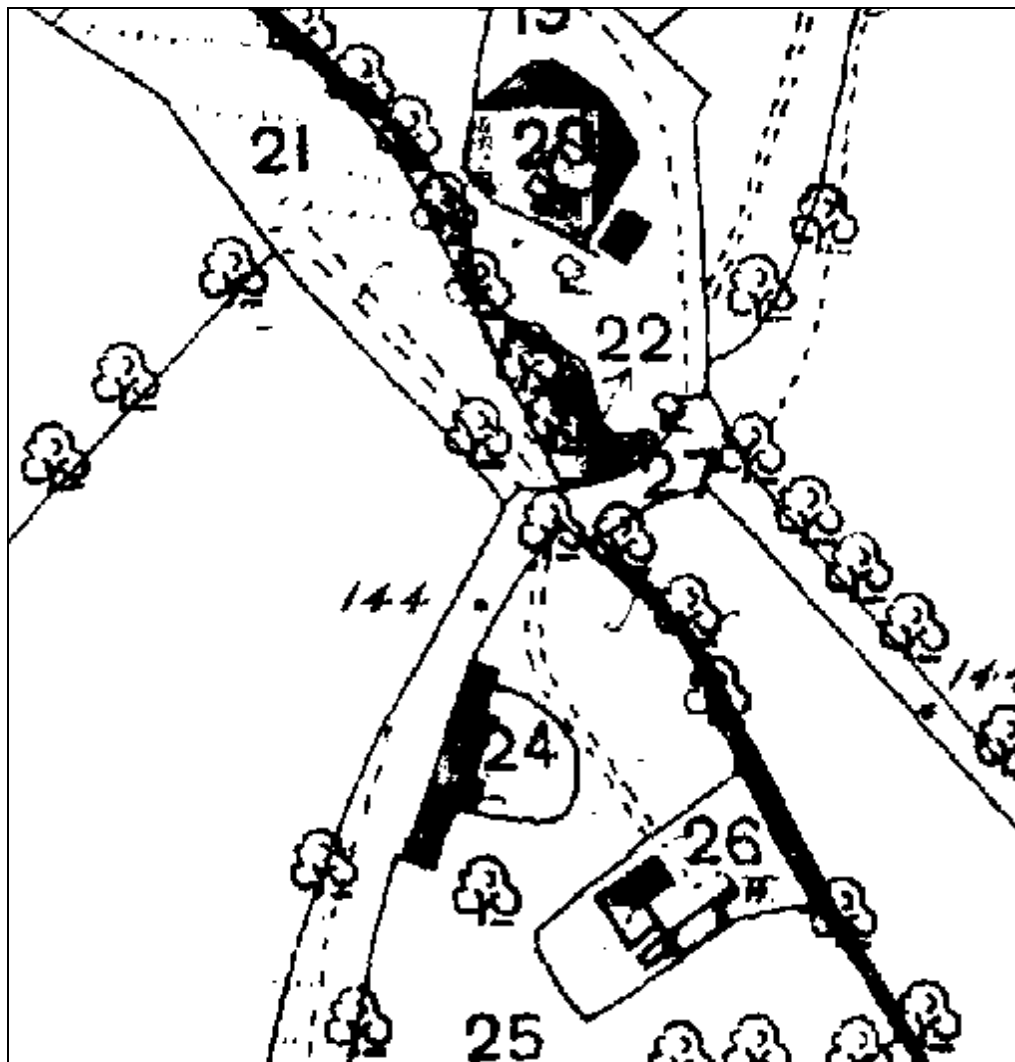


**Figure 2a**

Detail of tithe map above showing Mousehall Barn with its existing outline and a now demolished L-shaped cottage to the south-east (outbuildings are distinguished from domestic houses by diagonal shading). The area (25) was named only as 'Off. Farm yards' on the tithe apportionment and belonged to Bush Farm 750 m to the north-east. The field to the south was named 'Cart Shed Piece', probably after the small building in its north-western corner.



tenanted holding of 91 acres known in the 20<sup>th</sup> century as Bush Farm on the Somersham border north of the church (750 metres to the north-east). This was owned by John Lott and occupied by Vesey Davey, and consisted of scattered groups of fields having probably been formed by amalgamating several smaller holdings such as 'Off. Farm'. There is nothing to suggest the term 'Mousehall' is of any antiquity and it appears to derive from the name of a neighbouring modern property to the south. It is not entirely clear whether 'Off' was the name of the farm or simply an abbreviation as it terminates in a full stop; the scribe abbreviated other names in an unusual manner and it may perhaps represent 'office' - a contemporary term for a malting. The Ordnance Surveys below show little change since 1839 and the L-shaped house was shown on the third edition Ordnance Survey of 1926 but not that of 1927 (not included here but available online).



**Figure 3**

**The first edition 25 inch Ordnance Survey of 1884, showing Valley Farm to the north and Mousehall Barn to the south. The adjacent L-shaped cottage still survived at this date but had been demolished by 1927.**

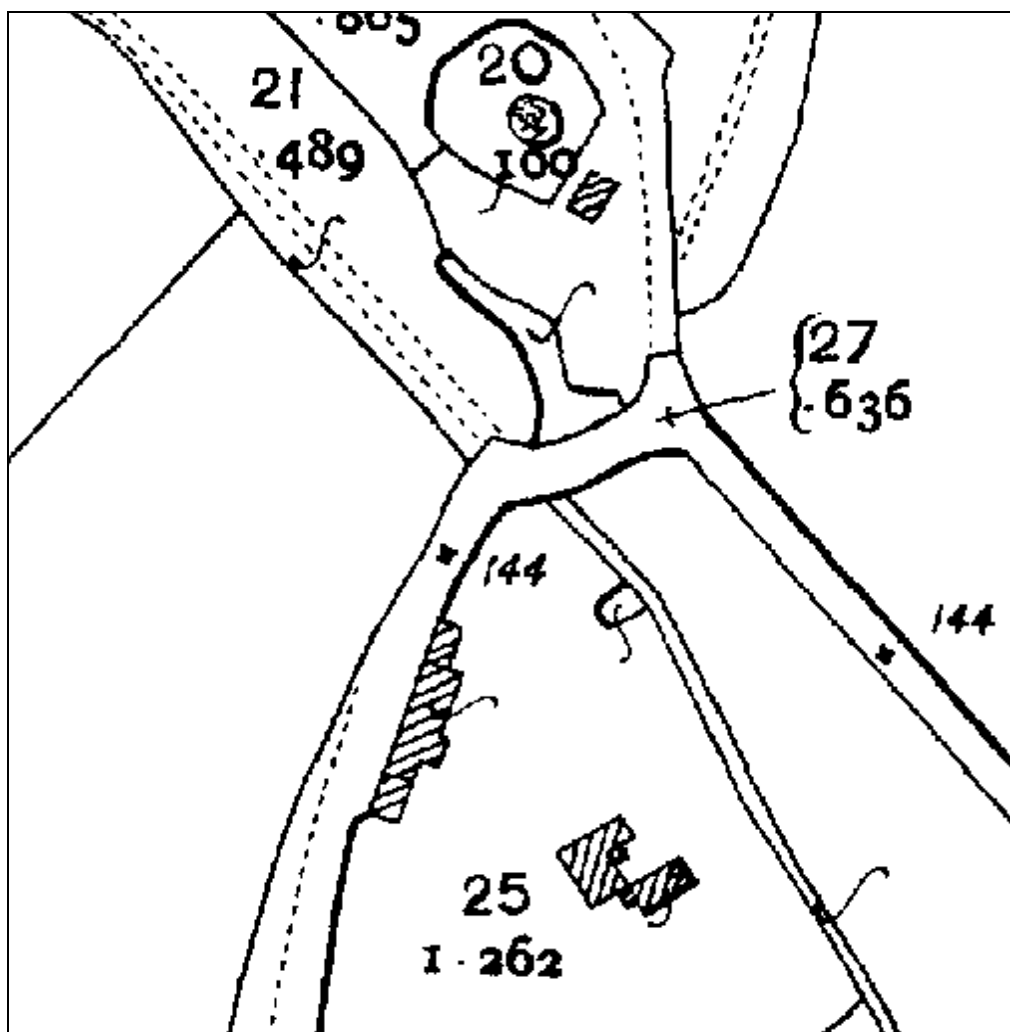
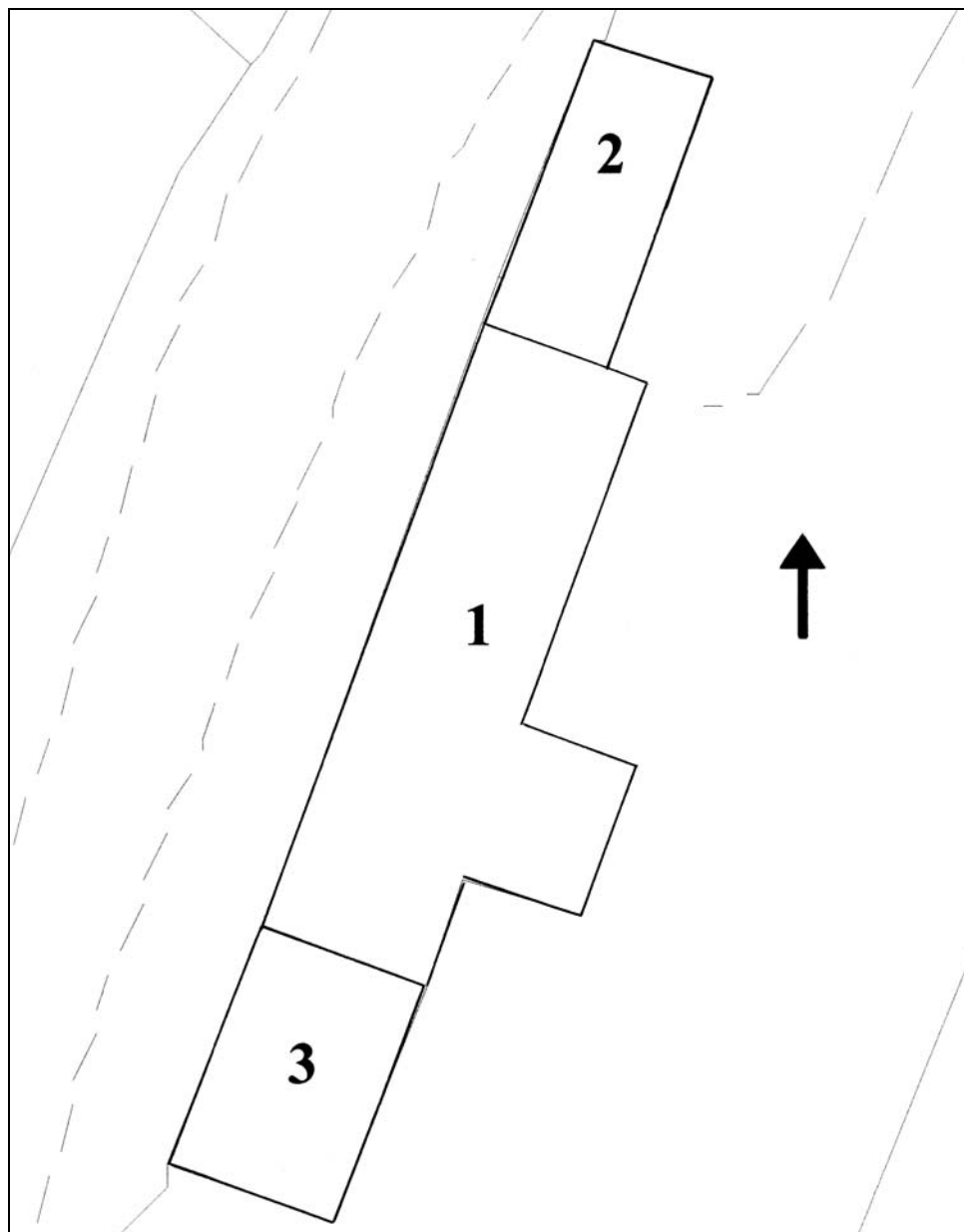


Figure 4

Second Edition 25 inch Ordnance Survey of 1904, showing little change since 1884. The greater width of the barn to the north of its eastern porch than to the south suggests the presence of a lean-to against the same elevation (as still shown in figure 1 and indicated by structural evidence, but recently demolished).

## Building Analysis



**Figure 5**

**Block Plan of site, identifying each historic building with a number for ease of reference in the text and photographic record. Adapted from Ordnance Survey.**

### **Key**

**1.** Timber-framed and weatherboarded roadside barn of four bays with entrance in penultimate southern bay. *Circa* 1800 but re-using much timber from an early-17<sup>th</sup> century barn of which the northern gable appears to remain *in situ* (with trenched wall braces in contrast to primary bracing elsewhere). Clasp-purlin roof structure steeply pitched for thatch but now covered with red-painted corrugated iron. A lean-to adjoining the eastern elevation north of the porch has been demolished in recent years.

**2.** Timber-framed and weatherboarded single-storied cow shed adjoining northern gable of barn. Pantiled roof. *Circa* 1870 but on site of earlier structure shown in 1839. Possibly built as a small stable but now with 20<sup>th</sup> century cattle troughs.



**3. Timber-framed and weatherboarded single-storied shed adjoining southern gable of barn. Pantiled roof. Circa 1870 but on site of earlier structure shown in 1839. Now an enclosed cow shed with 20<sup>th</sup> century cattle troughs but apparently designed as a shelter shed or cart shed with open elevation to east (the present eastern elevation consisting of 20<sup>th</sup> century cement blocks).**

### **Structure and Date**

Mousehall Barn is a timber-framed and weatherboarded structure of four bays on an approximately north-south axis which extends to 15.25 m in length by 5.8 m in overall width (50 ft by 19 ft). Its internal walls now rise to just 2.4 m above the modern concrete floor at their roof-plates (13.5 ft) but the ground sills are buried and the barn was once taller: it still rises an additional 45 cms (18 ins) from the lower ground to the east. The walls consist largely of re-used oak timber from an early-17<sup>th</sup> predecessor of which the northern gable alone survives intact with externally trenched wall-braces rising from the corner posts to the tie-beam. The side elevations and northern gable incorporate diagonal primary braces which interrupt the vertical studs in the manner of the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. The earlier date of the northern gable is also suggested by the presence of curved wind-braces in the style of the 17<sup>th</sup> century which are now nailed to the rafters of the rebuilt clasped-purlin roof which contains nailed collars and in all other respects is typical of a much later period. The equivalent braces at the southern gable are straight and narrow in keeping with the primary wall braces. Only the roof-plate of the penultimate southern bay of the eastern elevation appears to be original to the reconstruction; its studs are of narrow section and less well finished than the re-used 17<sup>th</sup> century examples elsewhere and are tenoned but not pegged to the frame (as expected in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries). Several rafters contain trenches for the collars of a crown-post or trussed-rafter roof of the 16<sup>th</sup> century or before, and may have been re-used even in the 17<sup>th</sup> century wind-braced roof. The steep pitch of approximately 55 degrees was designed for thatch, and numerous thatch battens survive, but the roof is now covered with red-painted corrugated iron of the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century.

A date of *circa* 1800 is indicated by the absence of jowls from the storey posts and the presence of tenoned arch-braces rather than bolted knee-braces to the tie-beams of the entrance bay but not that which divides the two northern bays. The latter tie-beam is a re-used 17<sup>th</sup> century timber with both jowl and arch-brace mortises but now lacks bracing of any kind; there are no equivalent features in the storey posts. The presence of arch-bracing to the entrance bay alone is a feature of the many similar barns built or rebuilt in the region to serve land newly brought under the plough to exploit the high cereal prices of the Napoleonic wars (when grain imports from the continent were severely restricted). Despite the earlier appearance which results from its copious re-used material the barn's key elements are entirely typical of this period.

### **Layout and Function**

Mousehall Barn was built as a traditional threshing barn with a threshing floor and opposing entrances in its penultimate southern bay. It is possible that a brick or stone floor survives beneath the modern concrete. The principal doors lie in the western roadside elevation with jambs that interrupt the roof-plates and rise to an additional 1.1 m (3.5 ft). This high door is now covered by a pentice roof (lean-to) of 20<sup>th</sup> century softwood joists but was probably designed with a vertical gable. The half-hung doors are 20<sup>th</sup> century replacements, and much of the external weatherboarding has also been renewed (although some retains heavy deposits of tar and survives from the 19<sup>th</sup> century). The joint between the roof-plate and the northern door jamb is marked by circular carpenter's marks incised with a rase-knife. The two tie-beams flanking the threshing bay continue eastwards to form the roof-plates of a contemporary porch which retains its original clasped-purlin structure. In consequence, these

tie-beams extend to an impressive 26 feet in length but were taken from trees that were barely large enough for the purpose: the southern tie is little more than roundwood at its western end (the top of the tree) and contrasts with the well-hewn re-used tie at the northern end of the barn. The porch gable and doors had been removed by the time of inspection and there was no evidence of the small yard door that probably existed here: most early-19<sup>th</sup> century barns contained rear gabled or lean-to porches to increase the width of their threshing floors but in contrast to later examples they usually possessed small doors sufficient only to create a through-draught for threshing and winnowing rather than to admit vehicles.

The northern bay of the barn may have been divided from the rest to form a stable, as often occurred in similar examples elsewhere. The evidence of such a stable is limited given the re-use of timber and the degree to which the internal walls are hidden by modern boarding. The bay certainly contained a floored stable or cow shed in the 20<sup>th</sup> century as its walls retain softwood rails to support a loft with an external door at the southern end of its eastern elevation. The Ordnance Surveys show that until recently the barn was wider to the north of its porch than to the south and indicate the presence of a lean-to shed which probably served as a tack room in the usual manner (entered by the aforementioned door). The northern elevation of the porch is now open where it adjoined the missing structure.

### **Pantiled Sheds**

The single-storied pantiled sheds of weatherboarded studwork adjoining the barn's southern and northern gables are additions of the late-19<sup>th</sup> century but appear to occupy the sites of earlier structures as the barn's outline has changed little since the tithe map of 1839. In their present form they date from *circa* 1870 as their narrow-sectioned softwood is typical of the many cattle sheds and yards added to earlier barns in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century to accommodate cattle as the price of grain declined. The northern shed is divided into two compartments with half-hung doors to each in its eastern elevation and contains a 20<sup>th</sup> century hay loft of wire mesh. It is further subdivided by a 20<sup>th</sup> century block-work partition and evidently operated most recently as a bullock shed as it also possesses a low concrete manger. Similar mangers have been inserted into the southern shed which appears to have been designed as an open-sided cattle shelter or cart shed since its eastern elevation consists entirely of 20<sup>th</sup> century block-work. This building obstructs an earlier loading door in the barn's gable. These sheds were clearly used to accommodate cattle grazing by the nearby brook, but only a solitary ram remained in residence at the time of inspection.

### **Historic Significance**

Mousehall Barn is of considerable historic interest as a typical and relatively well-preserved threshing barn of the Napoleonic era. It retains its original roof structure, albeit stripped of thatch, along with most of its wall fabric, three of the four arch-braces to the entrance bay and its original porch and door framing. The structure is of additional interest given its re-use of material from a 17<sup>th</sup> century predecessor, which lends it an older and most impressive appearance than would otherwise have been the case, and the section of the 17<sup>th</sup> century northern gable which remains *in situ*. The barn's unusually low proportions may partly reflect the re-use of material but relate chiefly to a rise in the internal ground level. The adjoining pantiled sheds are later additions but are also of historic value as they occupy the site of buildings shown on the tithe map of 1839 and illustrate the typical linear development of roadside barns in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The three structures form a particularly attractive group in an area of unspoiled countryside. Despite the age and character of the main barn it has probably been too heavily altered, given the loss of its thatch and part of the porch, to meet the strict English Heritage criteria for listing, although the case is marginal and less impressive examples elsewhere in the county are listed at grade II.

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

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

#### **Photograph no.**

1. General view of site from bend in road to north-east showing barn in rear and track to Valley Farm to right.
2. General view of site from Flowton Road to north showing barn to left and entrance to Valley Farm Bungalow to right.
3. General view of site from Flowton Road to south showing barn to right and Valley Farm Bungalow to left.
4. General view of site from east showing barn between shelter shed (3) left and cow house (2) right.
5. Exterior of barn from Flowton Road to north showing cow-shed (2) to left and main barn in rear.
6. Exterior of barn from Flowton Road to south showing shelter shed (3) in foreground and main barn in rear.
7. Western exterior of barn from Flowton Road to south-west showing pentice roof above entrance doors.
8. Exterior of barn doors in western roadside elevation showing pentice roof.
9. Eastern exterior of main barn showing gable porch to left and site of demolished lean-to right.
10. Eastern exterior of main barn from south-east showing gabled porch with former shelter shed (3) to left.
11. Exterior of barn from site entrance to north-east.
12. Western exterior of shelter shed (3) from Flowton Road showing pantiled roof.
13. Western exterior of cow shed (2) from Flowton Road showing pantiled roof.
14. Eastern exterior of cow shed (2) showing double-hung doors.
15. Eastern exterior of shelter shed (3) showing 20th century infill of cement blocks.
16. Northern gable of shelter shed (3) showing barn and porch in rear.
17. Internal northern gable of former shelter shed (3) showing uniform studwork.
18. Internal western elevation of former shelter shed (3) showing 20th century block-work partition.
19. Eastern interior of former shelter shed (3) showing block-work fabric and low cattle troughs.

20. Northern external gable of barn from shelter shed (3) showing 19th century weatherboarding.
21. Roof structure of shelter shed (3) showing blocked external loading door in northern gable of barn.
22. Southern external gable of barn from cow shed (2) showing connecting door to left.
23. Internal boarded partition of cow shed (2) from barn to north.
24. Internal eastern elevation of cow shed (2) showing northern entrance and low cattle trough.
25. Interior of cow shed (2) from north showing gable of barn in rear.
26. Internal western elevation of cow shed (2) showing narrow studwork.
27. Roof structure of cow shed (2) from north showing wire-mesh hay loft.
28. Interior of barn from south showing low arch-braces flanking entrance bay.
29. Interior of barn from north showing lack of arch-braces to northern open truss and entrance bay in rear.
30. Internal northern gable of barn showing original external trenched braces & door to cow shed (2).
31. Detail of northern internal gable of barn showing nailed wind-braces.
32. Detail of externally trenched brace in north-eastern corner of barn.
33. Detail of north-western corner of barn showing externally trenched brace.
34. Eastern roof structure of northern bay showing nailed wind brace.
35. Western roof structure of northern bay showing nailed wind brace.
36. Clapped-purlin roof structure of barn from south showing northern gable to right.
37. Southern internal gable of barn showing primary braces in contrast to northern gable.
38. Loading door in southern internal roof gable of barn.
39. Detail of south-western internal corner showing re-used timber and primary wall braces.
40. Western roof structure of southern bay showing nailed straight brace.
41. Eastern roof structure of southern bay showing nailed straight brace.
42. Internal western elevation of southern bay showing heavy section of studs with entrance to right.

43. Detail of primary brace and unpegged stud in western interior of southern bay.
44. Western interior of penultimate southern bay showing entrance doors interrupting roof-plates.
45. Detail of un-jowled storey post to south of western entrance and roof-plate tenoned to door jamb.
46. Interior of barn from south showing profiles of low arch-braces to western elevation.
47. Western interior of northern bays of barn showing lack of bracing to intermediate tie-beam.
48. Detail of circular carpenter's marks at junction of western roof plate and entrance door jamb.
49. Detail from east of re-used tie-beam between northern bays showing jowl mortise above un-jowled storey post.
50. Internal western elevation of northern bay, obscured by modern boarding.
51. Eastern interior of northern bay showing primary brace behind boarding.
52. Internal eastern elevation from north-west showing gabled porch in penultimate southern bay.
53. Eastern interior of penultimate northern bay showing narrow studs without pegged joints in roof-plate.
54. Detail of eastern roof-plate of penultimate northern bay showing contemporary framing with no re-used timber.
55. Southern bays of barn showing arch-braces to entrance and porch to left.
56. Southern internal elevation of eastern porch showing tie-beam continuing to form porch roof-plate.
57. Northern interior of eastern porch showing aperture to demolished lean-to shed.
58. Clasped-purlin roof structure of eastern porch with nailed collars.
59. Internal eastern elevation of southern bay showing primary wall brace.
60. Roof structure of barn from north showing clasped-purlins with nailed collars.
61. Detail of roof structure from north showing nailed collars.
62. Detail of roof structure showing re-used rafter with trenches for collars & thatch battens.

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

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



**Illus. 1. General view of site from paddock to east showing main barn (1) with gabled porch to entrance bay between former shelter shed (3) to left and cow house (2) to right.**



**Illus. 2. Western exterior of barn (1) from Flowton Road to south-west showing pentice roof above entrance doors with pantiled sheds to left and right. The steep pitch of the barn's roof was designed for thatch but is now covered with corrugated iron.**





**Illus. 3. Exterior of main barn (1) showing original gabled porch of penultimate southern bay to left and site of demolished lean-to shed against eastern elevation to right.**



**Illus. 4. Interior of main barn (1) from south showing the low arch-braces to the tie-beams flanking the entrance bay with roadside western doors to left. The north-eastern brace has been removed.**





**Illus. 5. Internal northern gable of barn showing original externally trenched braces behind modern boarding to right and left with door to cow shed (2). This gable is all that survives *in situ* of the early- to mid-17<sup>th</sup> century barn on the site**



**Illus. 6. Detail of externally trenched 17<sup>th</sup> century brace in north-eastern corner of barn, showing door to cow-shed (2) adjoining northern gable to left.**





**Illus. 7. Western interior of penultimate southern bay showing half-hung roadside entrance doors interrupting roof-plates with un-jowled but arch-braced storey posts to left and right. This entrance may have formerly possessed a vertical gable. The floor is of modern concrete with no trace of a threshing floor**



**Illus. 8. Detail of un-jowled storey post to south of western entrance and roof-plate tenoned to door jamb.**





**Illus. 9. Entrance bay of bay from north showing tie-beam of open truss continuing to form roof-plate of eastern porch to left. The straight primary bracing of the southern gable in rear contrasts with the earlier trenced bracing of the northern gable.**



**Illus. 10. Detail of roof structure from north showing nailed collars and clasped-purlins with the eastern porch to left and the softwood rafters of the 20<sup>th</sup> century pentice roof above the roadside entrance to right.**