

**The Cartshed,  
Stone Farm,  
Blaxhall, Suffolk  
BLX 018**

**Historic Building Record**

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*on behalf of*  
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# **The Cartshed, Stone Farm, Station Road, Blaxhall, Suffolk**

**(TM 351 564)**

## **Historic Building Record**

*This report provides a written and photographic record at English Heritage (2006) Level 2 of a redundant agricultural cartshed. It has been prepared to a brief written by Suffolk County Council's Archaeological Service (ref. SpecHBR(SP)\_StoneFmCartlshedBlaxhall\_1619\_10), Edward Martin, 19<sup>th</sup> April 2010), and is intended to fulfil a condition of planning permission for conversion (Suffolk Coastal District Council consent C/09/1619, condition 8).*

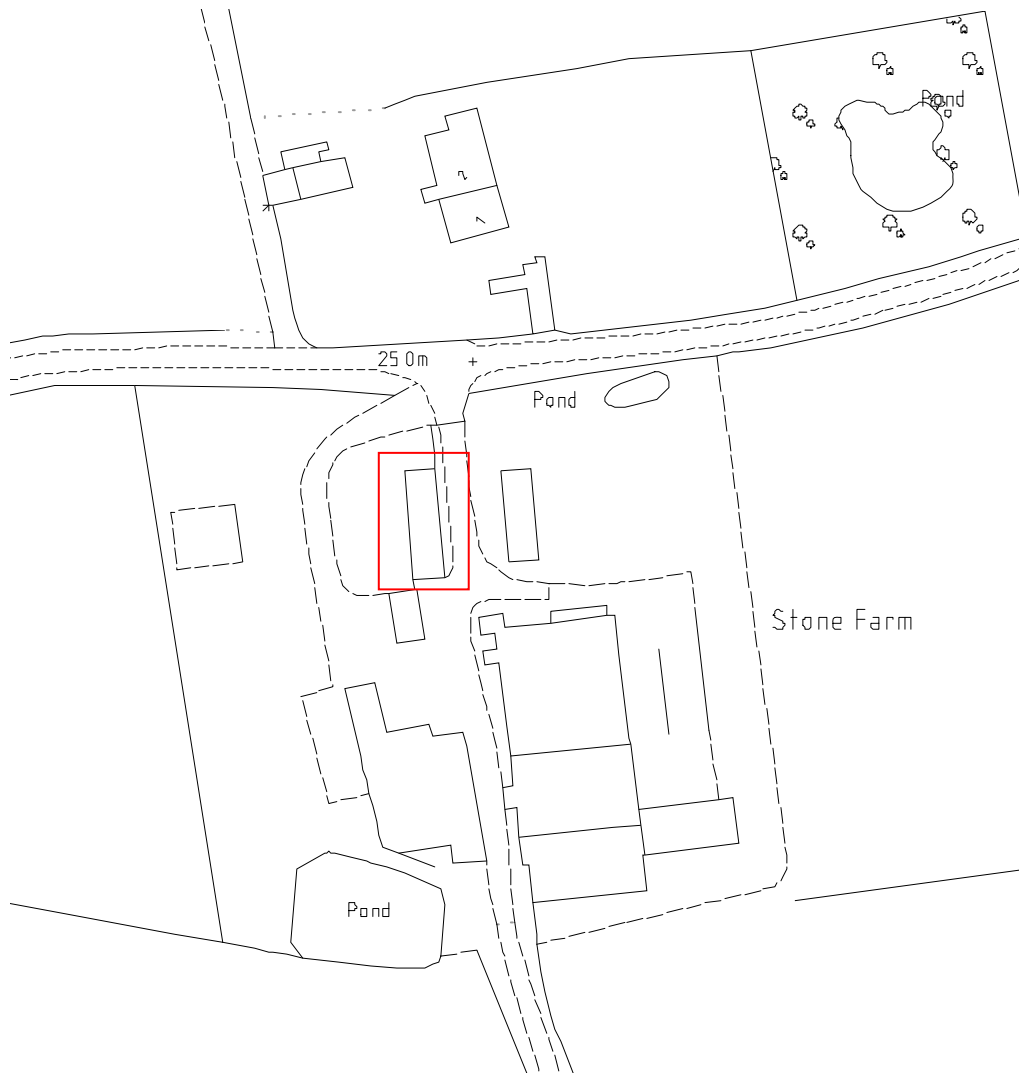
### **Introduction**

The report is accompanied by a CD containing a photographic record in the form of 39 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 9<sup>th</sup> June 2010.

### **Summary**

Stone Farm lies in open, arable countryside approximately 750 m south-west of Blaxhall parish church. Its name supposedly derives from a five-ton glacial erratic that local legend suggests was only the size of 'two fists' when ploughed up in the 19<sup>th</sup> century but has since grown to its present size. The story was published by George Ewart Evans and is commemorated by a painted sign beside the gate. At the time of the tithe survey in 1841 the farm was a substantial tenanted holding of 204 acres and the brick farmhouse appears to have been rebuilt shortly afterwards.

The single-storied cartshed is an impressively large and unusually late example of a traditional type. It extends to over 21 metres (or 70 feet) in length and contains eight bays with an open arcade of ostensibly earth-fast posts to the east. It occupies the usual position for cart and implement shelters at the entrance to the farmyard immediately opposite the farmhouse. The roof and walls are well-framed in softwood with post-and-rail construction to the enclosed western elevation and both hipped gables. Until recently it was pantiled and clad in vertical tarred boarding but both the roof and walls had been stripped by the time of inspection although the arcade posts remained intact with original grey pigment. An extensive complex of mid-19<sup>th</sup> century cattle yards and sheds to the east was undergoing conversion while work on a weatherboarded barn to the south had been completed. The cartshed was not shown on the tithe map or the Ordnance Survey of 1883 but had appeared by 1904 and evidently dates from *circa* 1890. The apparent use of earth-fast technology illustrates the longevity of this ancient technique even in substantial agricultural structures. The building is accordingly of some historic interest despite its relatively recent origin and its traditional appearance makes a significant contribution to the local landscape. Its location on a public road immediately opposite a farm associated with a 'growing stone' of some renown increases this significance.



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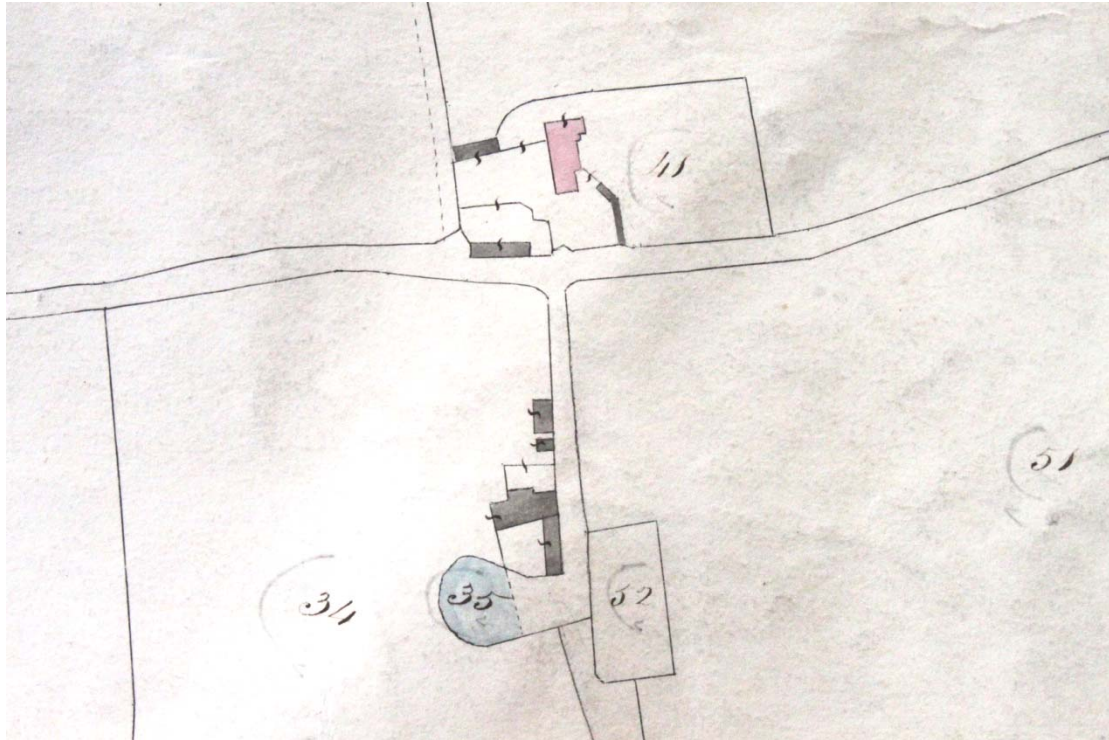
**Figure 1**

**Current Ordnance Survey Site Plan**

**Enclosing the rectangular cartshed to the west of the farmyard entrance in a red rectangle and showing the farmhouse on the opposite side of Station Road to the north. The farm complex to the south-east of the site was undergoing conversion at the time of inspection and the conversion of the barn to the south-west (north of the pond) had been completed**

**Historic Context: Documentary & Cartographic Record**

Stone Farm lies in open, arable countryside approximately 750 m south-west of Blaxhall parish church. The farmhouse is ostensibly a double-pile red-brick and slated structure of the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century but may conceal earlier fabric in its western range. A painted sign on the gate refers to the legend of the ‘Blaxhall Stone’ from which the farm is reputed to derive its name: a large glacial erratic in the grounds which has supposedly grown in size since it was ploughed up in the 19<sup>th</sup> century (illus. 3). The legend was discussed by George Ewart Evans in ‘Ask the Fellows Who Cut the Hay’ (p.211, 1956), and the stone is described as a five-ton piece of sandstone from a parent mass in Spilsby, Lincolnshire (megalithia.com). Such stories were commonly invented to explain the appearance of megaliths with no obvious local origin, but there is no mention of the story in White’s Suffolk Directory of 1844 which names the property as Stones Farm. No buildings on the site are listed.



**Figure 2**

**Stone Farm on the Blaxhall tithe map of 1841 showing the farmhouse in red to the north of the road and a barn to the north of the pond. Neither the cartshed nor farm complex to the east of the farm track had been built at this time.**

The farmhouse is divided from its farmyard to the south by Station Road (a single-track lane) and the site appears to occupy a medieval crossroads with unmade tracks extending to both north and south. At the time of the Blaxhall tithe survey in 1841 the farm was a substantial tenanted holding of 204 acres owned by the Honourable Mrs Sophia North (who owned much of the land in the parish) and occupied by Henry Toller. The main barn to the south of the yard and farmhouse occupied the same positions as today, although the house appeared significantly narrower, but there was no trace of the cartshed to the west of the yard entrance or of the large complex of cattle sheds and yards to the east. The latter was shown for the first time on the Ordnance Survey of 1883 (figures 2 and 3). Many local farms were extensively refurbished in this way during the 1850s and 1860s as cattle were introduced to compensate for falling cereal prices. The 1841 map names the adjoining field on the west (no. 34) as 'the barn field including yard' and that on the east (51) as 'stackyard field'. The small enclosure opposite the 'pond' (35) was the eponymous 'stackyard'. The farmhouse (41) was described only as 'house, barns, stables, etc.'. The cartshed was shown for the first time on the Ordnance Survey 1904 (figure 4) having evidently been built since 1883. A date of *circa* 1890 is entirely consistent with its surviving softwood structure. At the time of inspection the site had been subdivided and the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century cattle complex to the east was in separate ownership to the cartshed and barn. The latter had been converted for domestic use some months or years previously while the buildings of the cattle complex were undergoing conversion. The farmhouse was also undergoing extensive renovation.

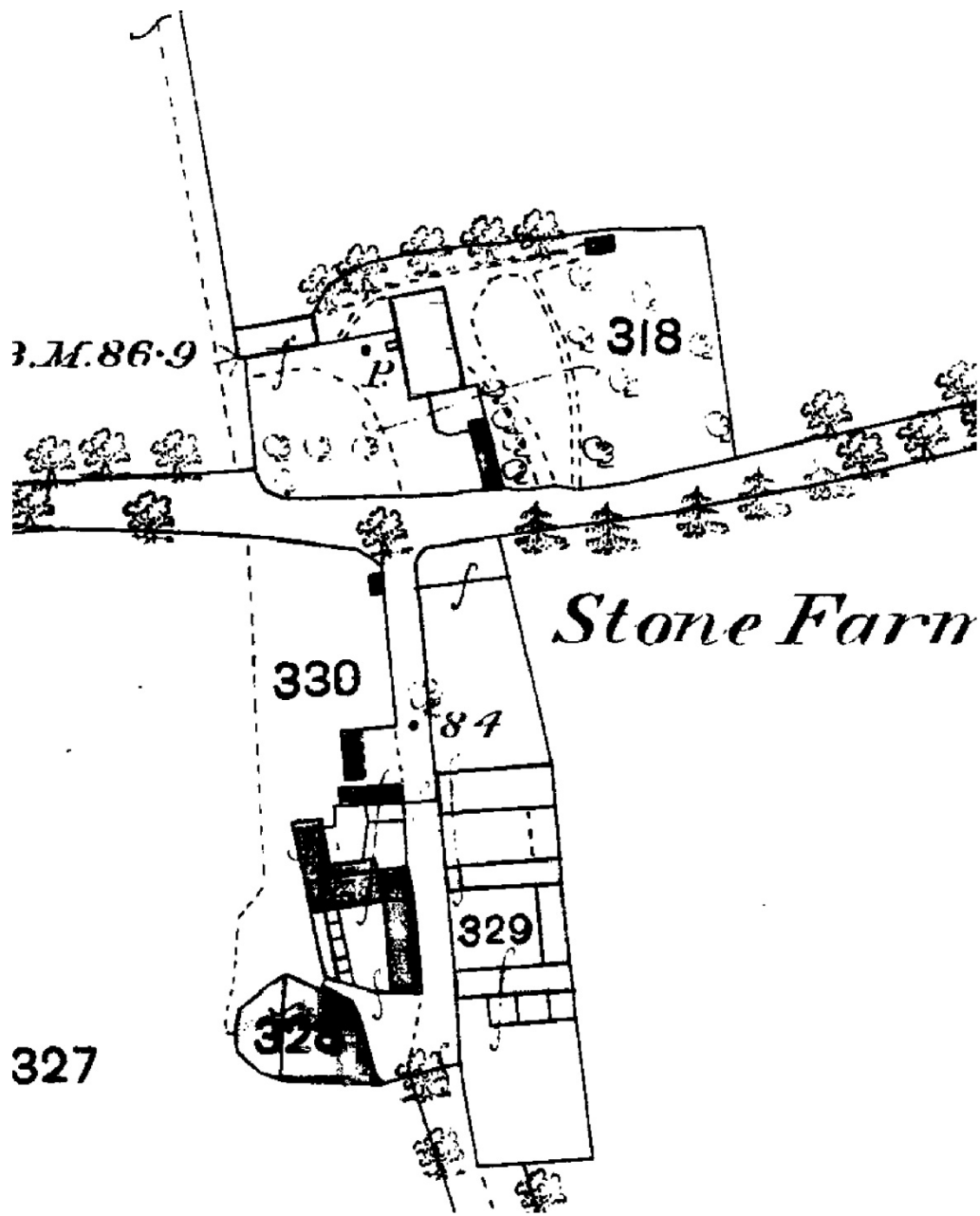


Figure 3

First edition 25 inch Ordnance Survey of 1883 showing the new complex of cattle yards and sheds to the east of the farm track (built since 1841) and the enlarged or rebuilt farmhouse. The cartshed had still not appeared, although a small new structure occupied its site at the western entrance to the yard.

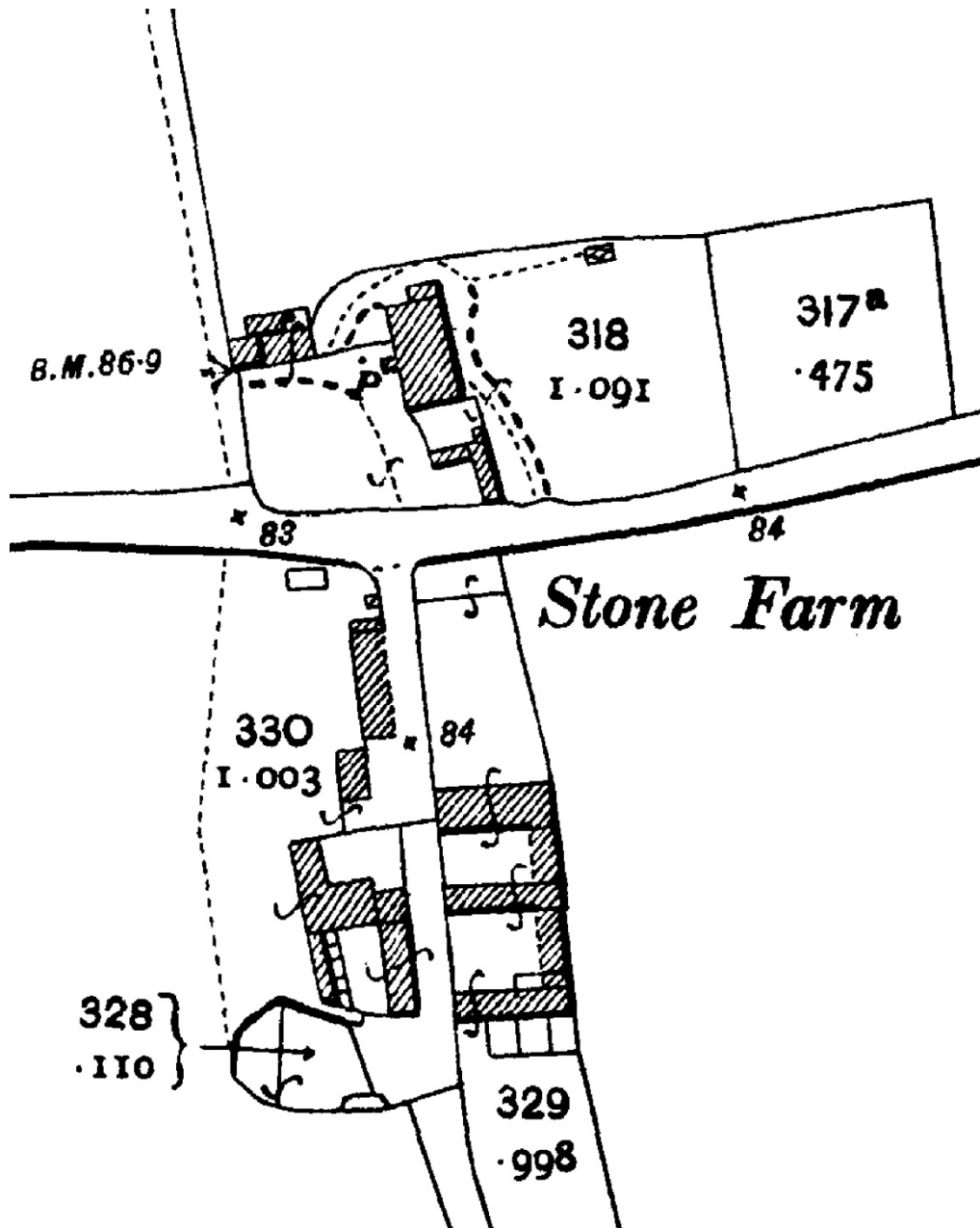


Figure 4

The second edition 25 inch Ordnance Survey of 1904, showing the cartshed for the first time (evidently built since 1883). The broken line depicting its eastern elevation indicates the open facade. A narrow lean-to of which no trace now survives appears to adjoin the northern gable.

## Building Analysis

*N.B. The cartshed had been stripped of its roof tiles and external cladding, and the cattle complex to the east was undergoing conversion at the time of inspection.*

### Structure and Date

The cartshed at Stone Farm occupies the usual location for a building of this type at the entrance to the farm complex, immediately opposite the farmhouse. It is a timber-framed structure in eight bays on a north-south axis which extends to 21.6 m in length by 6.1 m in overall width (71 ft by 20 ft). Its roof-plates lie 2.3 m above the ground (7.5 ft) and its open eastern elevation is supported by seven arcade posts of square section which appear to have been earth-fast originally (i.e. buried in the ground rather than resting on pads) although some have been truncated and supplied with secondary concrete plinths. Each post carries a horizontal lintel with shaped terminals nailed to the roof-plates (as shown in illus. 8 below) and bears grey pigment which is probably original: many timber-framed and boarded agricultural buildings in 19<sup>th</sup> century East Anglia were coloured either grey or red/brown as an alternative to tar. The solid walls of the rear (western) elevation and both gables are of post-and-rail construction, with two horizontal rails nailed to the external corners of the storey posts (illus. 7) which are themselves tenoned and pegged to the roof-plates and ground sills: the sills rest on red-brick plinths laid in Flemish bond which rise to 60 cms (2 ft) in height. The gables contain central posts and the rails of all six corner bays are interrupted by diagonal primary braces descending from the corner posts to the sills. The fully hipped roof structure consists of clasped-purlins with tall-sectioned rafters, nailed collars and a ridge board (illus. 10). Until recently the roof was covered with unglazed pantiles and the walls clad externally in tarred vertical boarding nailed to the rails (as indicated by tile rubble and boards that were stored within the building at the time of inspection). The northern end of the western elevation retains a door that is blocked by intact rails and appears to have been re-used as cladding (illus. 5). The timber is of machine-sawn deal (softwood) and the tie-beams and collars are little more than rough-wood with waney edges. The quality of the timber and the method of construction is entirely consistent with the date of *circa* 1890 suggested by the cartographic evidence (the building appears on the Ordnance Survey of 1904 but not that of 1883). A small boarded shed in the north-western corner is a mid-20<sup>th</sup> century addition that was probably designed as a secure store for tools and lubricants.

### Historic Significance

The building is a traditional East Anglian cartshed (or cart lodge) that represents an impressively large and unusually late example of its type. The apparent use of earth-fast technology illustrates the longevity of this ancient technique even in substantial and well-framed agricultural structures. The building is accordingly of some historic interest despite its relatively recent origin and its traditional appearance makes a significant contribution to the local landscape. Its location on a public road immediately opposite a farm associated with a 'growing stone' of some renown increases this significance. The framing of the roof and walls is almost completely intact with early grey pigment despite some slight lateral racking which has occasioned the need for a secondary bracing truss. The rails have been removed from only the penultimate southern bay of the western elevation, and the pantiles and cladding could be readily replaced. The roof and wall fabric survives in good condition and the undulating nature of the rafters and roof-plate may be considered part of the shed's historic and visual character: it relates largely to slight settlement in the earth-fast posts of the eastern elevation. Despite its historic significance the building is not of sufficient age or rarity to meet the strict English Heritage criteria for listing.



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

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

#### **Photograph no.**

1. General view of site from Station Road to west showing farmhouse to left and site entrance to right.
2. Site entrance from gates of farmhouse to north showing cartshed in rear to right.
3. General view of site entrance from north showing cartshed to right and converted farm complex in rear.
4. General view of site entrance from south showing cartshed to left and farmhouse in rear to right.
5. General view from north showing modern drive to converted barn with cartshed to left.
6. Converted barn from north-east showing cartshed to right.
7. Farm complex undergoing conversion seen from north-west (included for site context).
8. Farm complex from north showing converted barn to right (included for site context).
9. General view of farmhouse seen from site entrance to south, showing sign to right of gate (included for site context).
10. Detail of sign to east of farmhouse gate regarding the Blaxhall Stone (included for site context).
11. Farmhouse from south-east showing ostensibly mid-19th century brick facade (included for site context).
12. Exterior of cartshed seen from site entrance to north.
13. External western elevation from west showing frame stripped of cladding and tiles.
14. External eastern elevation showing arcade posts of eight open bays.
15. Exterior from south-east showing open eastern elevation with southern gable to left.
16. External northern gable seen from north-west showing door at northern end of western elevation.
17. Detail of red-brick plinth of northern external gable.
18. Detail of north-western corner showing machine-sawn softwood roof-plates and post.

19. Detail of northern external gable showing horizontal rails nailed to central post.
20. Open arcade of eastern elevation seen from south-east showing undulating roof and shaped lintels of arcade posts.
21. Detail of shaped lintel to arcade post of eastern exterior showing original grey pigment.
22. Detail of shaped lintel to arcade post of eastern internal elevation showing scarf joint in roof-plate.
23. Interior of eastern elevation from north showing iron straps to tie-beams and roof-plates.
24. Western exterior from north-west showing door to left.
25. Detail of western exterior showing twin rails with nails for stripped vertical cladding.
26. Detail of door at northern end of western external elevation.
27. Detail of end-sections of vertical planks stripped from exterior (now stored within cartshed).
28. Detail of tarred vertical boards stripped from external elevations (now stored within cartshed).
29. General view of interior from south showing secondary cross-bracing to counter racking.
30. General view of interior from north.
31. Detail of plank shed in north-western internal corner with rail blocking door to western exterior.
32. Northern internal gable showing plank shed in north-western corner to left.
33. Southern internal gable showing post and rail construction.
34. Internal roof structure seen from north showing nailed rafters of southern hip.
35. Internal roof structure seen from north showing clasped-purlins with nailed rough-wood collars.
36. Internal western elevation seen from south-east.
37. South-western internal corner showing removed rails of penultimate bay to right.
38. Internal eastern elevation seen from south-west.
39. Detail of broken pantiles stripped from roof (now stored within cartshed).

*Photographic Appendix 2 follows on pp. 9-13*

**Appendix 2 (pp. 9-13): Selected Printed Photographs**



**Illus. 1. General view of site entrance from south showing cartshed to left and farmhouse on opposite side of Station Road in rear to right.**



**Illus. 2. General view of site entrance from north showing cartshed to right and farm complex currently undergoing conversion in rear.**



**Illus. 3. Detail of sign to east of farmhouse gate regarding Blaxhall Stone (included for site context).**



**Illus. 4. Exterior of cartshed from south-east showing open eastern elevation and site entrance to right with southern gable to left. The building had been entirely stripped of its external cladding and tiles prior to inspection.**



**Illus. 5. Western exterior from north-west showing northern gable and door to left (re-used as cladding) with post-and-rail construction fully exposed. The converted barn is visible to the right.**



**Illus. 6. Open arcade of the eastern elevation seen from south-east showing the undulating roof and the shaped lintels of the arcade posts.**



**Illus. 7. Construction detail of northern external gable showing softwood horizontal rails nailed to central post.**



**Illus. 8. Detail of shaped lintel to arcade post of eastern exterior showing scarf joint in roof-plate and original grey pigment.**



**Illus. 9. General view of interior from south showing open arcade to right and enclosed western elevation to left. The diagonal braces are modern insertions.**



**Illus. 10. Internal roof structure seen from north showing clasped-purlins with nailed deal roughwood collars and tie-beams. The tie-beams are secured to the roof-plates with original iron straps.**