

**Barn at Moat House,
Park Green,
Wetheringsett,
Suffolk
WCB 064**

Historic Building Record

OASIS REF: c1-79363



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Barn at Moat House, Park Green, Wetheringsett, Suffolk

(TM 1280 6451)

Historic Building Record

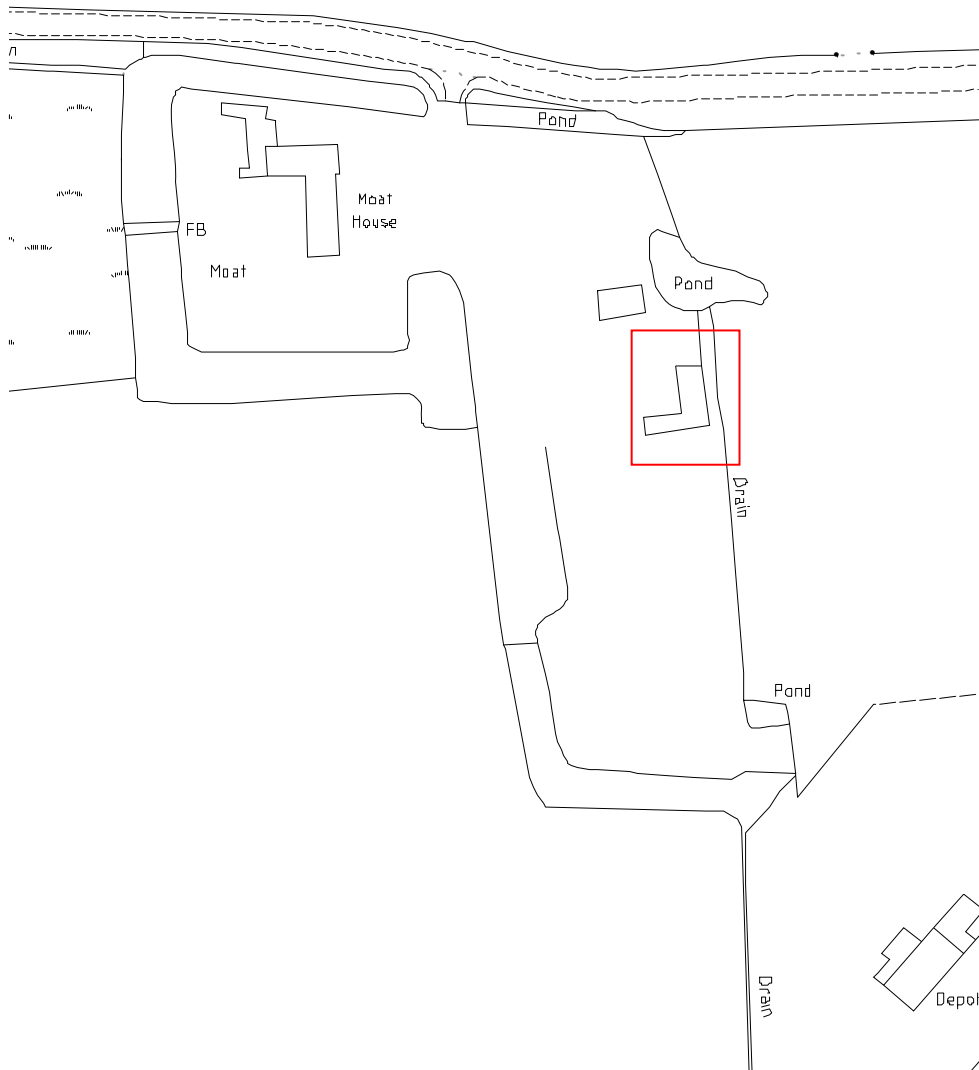
This report provides a written and photographic record at English Heritage (2006) Level 2 of a redundant farm building (known for planning purposes as a barn) in the curtilage of a moated grade II-listed former farmhouse. It has been prepared to a brief written by Suffolk County Council's Archaeological Service (Edward Martin, 11th February 2010, ref. SpecHBR(EM)_PreMoatHo_Wetheringsett_2010), and is intended to inform and accompany a planning application to Mid Suffolk District Council.

Introduction

The report is accompanied by a CD containing a photographic record in the form of 40 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 29th March 2010.

Summary

Moat House lies in open arable countryside 500 m north-east of the Mendlesham transmitting station and on the northern edge of the WWII airfield approximately 2.5 km south of Wetheringsett village. The grade II-listed farmhouse of the 16th century occupies an exceptionally well preserved moat which until its enclosure in the mid-19th century adjoined the south-eastern corner of a large 59-acre common known as Brockford Green. At the time of the tithe survey in 1841 the farm was a substantial tenanted holding of 164 acres of chiefly arable land with 45 acres of pasture and three common rights on Brockford Green. It then possessed a complete moat with a narrow bridge to the east facing a 'base' courtyard in the typical medieval pattern flanked on the south by what appears to be a barn with an attached stable and a group of scattered outbuildings beyond. The L-shaped shelter-sheds which form the subject of this report had not yet been built, but formed the south-eastern corner of an extensive new mid-19th century cattle yard complex and were depicted for the first time on the Ordnance Survey of 1904. A similar shed was shown on part of the same site in 1885, but this must have been rebuilt in *circa* 1890 as the present range was built in a single phase of construction. The pantiled and weatherboarded single-storied sheds are open to the yard but include an enclosed feed store or loose box at their junction. Their softwood framing is typical of the late-19th and early-20th centuries with nailed bracing and iron pins in the roof trusses. With the exception of a ruinous brick stable and fragmentary yard walls the rest of the farm complex has been demolished, including the main barn, and the shelter-sheds have been truncated and partly rebuilt. While the site of Moat House is of considerable historic importance, given its well-preserved moat and the likelihood that the demolished barn formed part of a medieval 'base court', the shelter sheds are of relatively recent origin and are not of significant historic interest in themselves.



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Figure 1 Current Ordnance Survey Site Plan.

Enclosing the L-shaped shelter shed known as a ‘barn’ in red, and showing the well-preserved moat of the farmhouse to the west and the fragmentary stable immediately to the north-west. The rest of the extensive farm complex shown on 19th century maps has been demolished.

Historic Context: Documentary & Cartographic Record

Moat House lies in open arable countryside 500 m north-east of the Mendlesham transmitting station and on the northern edge of the WWII airfield approximately 2.5 km south of Wetheringsett village. The site is now reached by Town Lane, which joins the A140 500 m to the west. Town Lane was constructed during the mid-19th century and is not shown on the tithe map of 1841 (fig. 2), when the moated farmhouse adjoined the south-eastern corner of a large linear common of 59 acres known as Brockford Green which extended 800 m north to the modern hamlet of the same name. The farm was also approached by a track from the direction of Park Green approximately 500 m to the east, and a green lane, which still survives, linked the site to a field to the south but may have continued further in the Middle Ages. The well-preserved moat surrounds a grade II-listed farmhouse which the Schedule of Listed Buildings dates to the 16th century.

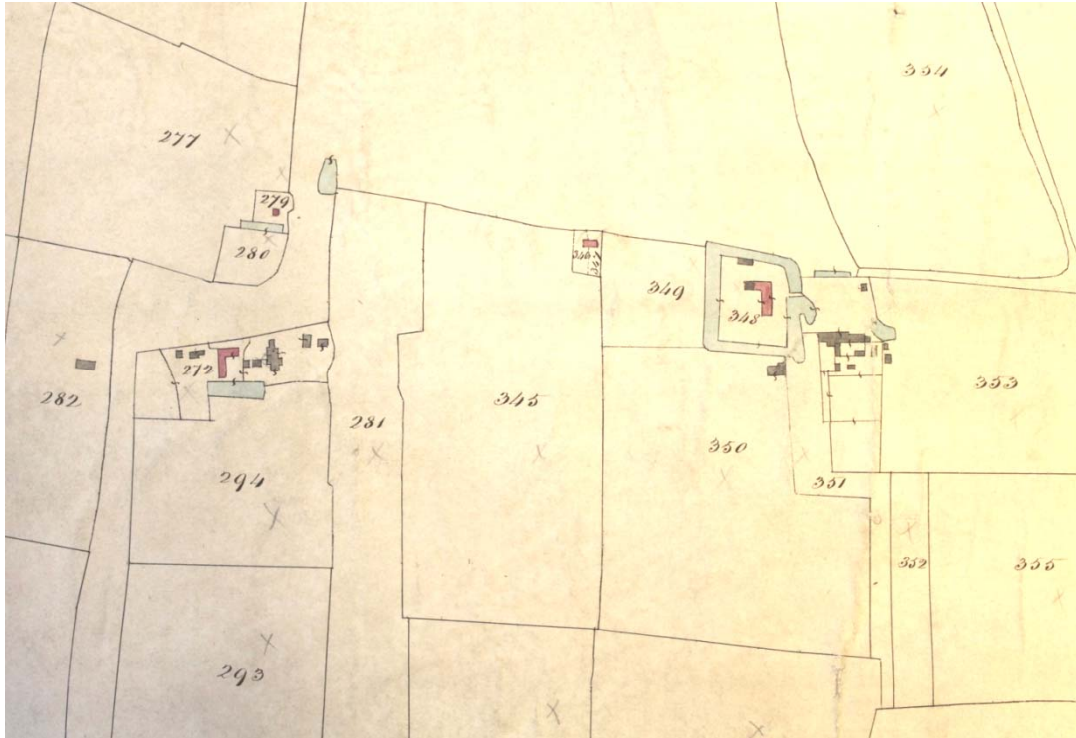


Figure 2

Tithe map of Wetheringsett-cum-Brockford, 1841 (Suffolk Record Office)

Showing Moat House adjoining the south-eastern corner of the 59-acre Brockford Green, which extended to the present hamlet of Brockford Green 800 m to the north. Town Lane did not exist, and the site was approached from the green and by a narrow lane from Park Green (which no longer existed as a green) to the east. Wetheringsett Green nearby extended to an impressive 101 acres according to the apportionment.

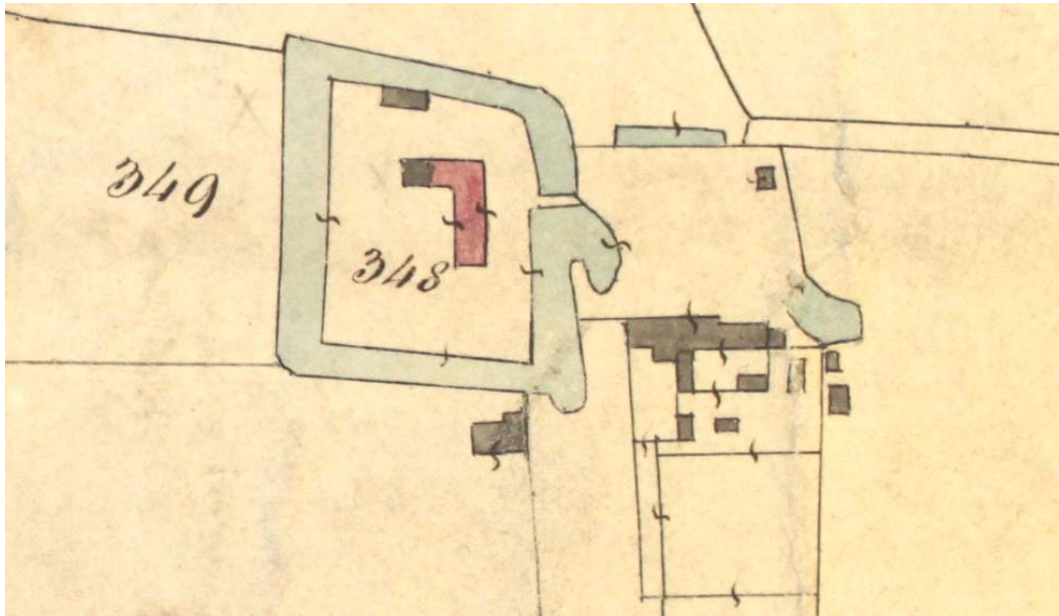


Figure 2a

Detail of 1841 tithe map above, showing the complete moat and a barn to the south of an eastern 'base court' through which the moat bridge was approached. The narrow building adjoining the barn's eastern gable is probably a predecessor of the present brick stable, but the shelter sheds in the south-eastern corner of the yard are not shown.

The farm was the largest of three in the parish owned by a Mrs Huntingdon in 1841, containing 164 acres of chiefly arable land with 45 acres of pasture and three common rights on Brockford Green. It was tenanted by John Howlett and then possessed a complete moat with a narrow bridge to the east facing a 'base' courtyard flanked on the south by what appears to be a barn with an attached stable and a group of scattered outbuildings beyond. The site was described in the apportionment only as 'house, barn, yards, etc.' (no. 348) and adjoining fields named as 'Orchard' to the west (349), 'Neathouse Meadow' to the south-west (350) and 'Shop Meadow and ponds' to the east. A detached outbuilding in the corner of 'Neathouse Meadow' was presumably the eponymous neat-house (cow shed) and the green lane was a 'drift' leading to an additional isolated field barn in 'Barn Field' to the south (341). The L-shaped shelter sheds which form the subject of this report had not yet been built.

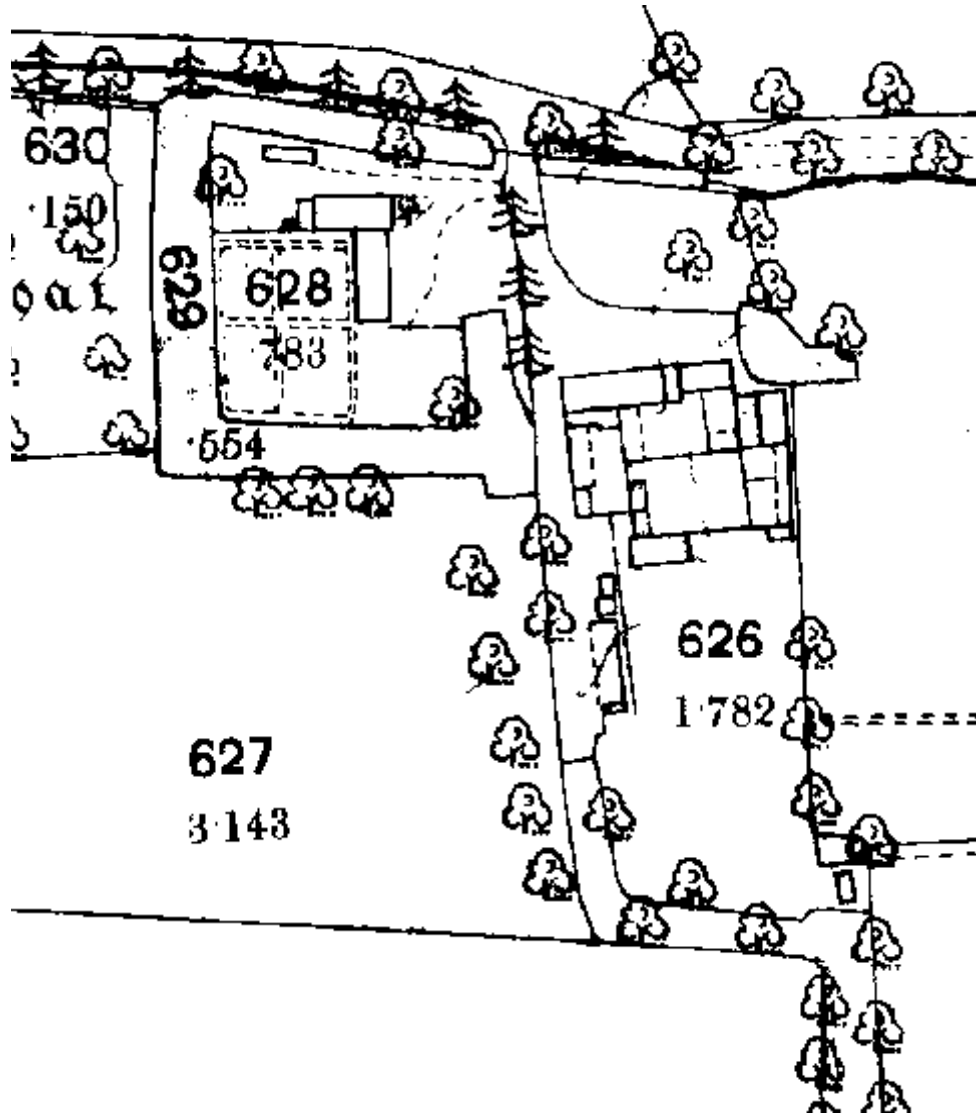


Figure 3

First Edition 25 inch Ordnance Survey of 1885

Brockford Green had been enclosed to form arable fields since 1841 and Town Lane inserted to link Moat House to the A14. The moat had been partly filled to enlarge the entrance to the house. A series of new cattle yards had been built to the south of the barn, with a narrow open-sided shelter-shed on the site of the existing structure (no. 1 in figure 5 below) but the southern shed had not yet appeared – although a smaller shed is depicted on the same site.

By the Ordnance Survey of 1885 (figure 3) the moat had been partly infilled to the east, much as it remains, and a new cattle yard complex built to the south – possibly retaining the barn of 1841. Many local farms were extensively refurbished in this way during the 1850s and 1860s as more cattle were introduced to compensate for the falling price of grain and enclosed yards instead of field neat-houses were employed to maximise the production of valuable manure. A narrow shelter-shed with an open-sided western elevation occupied the approximate site of the present western range (1 in figure 5) but the eastern range was not present. Both appear to be shown on the Ordnance Survey of 1904 and as two ranges are fully integral the earlier shed must have been rebuilt in *circa* 1890.

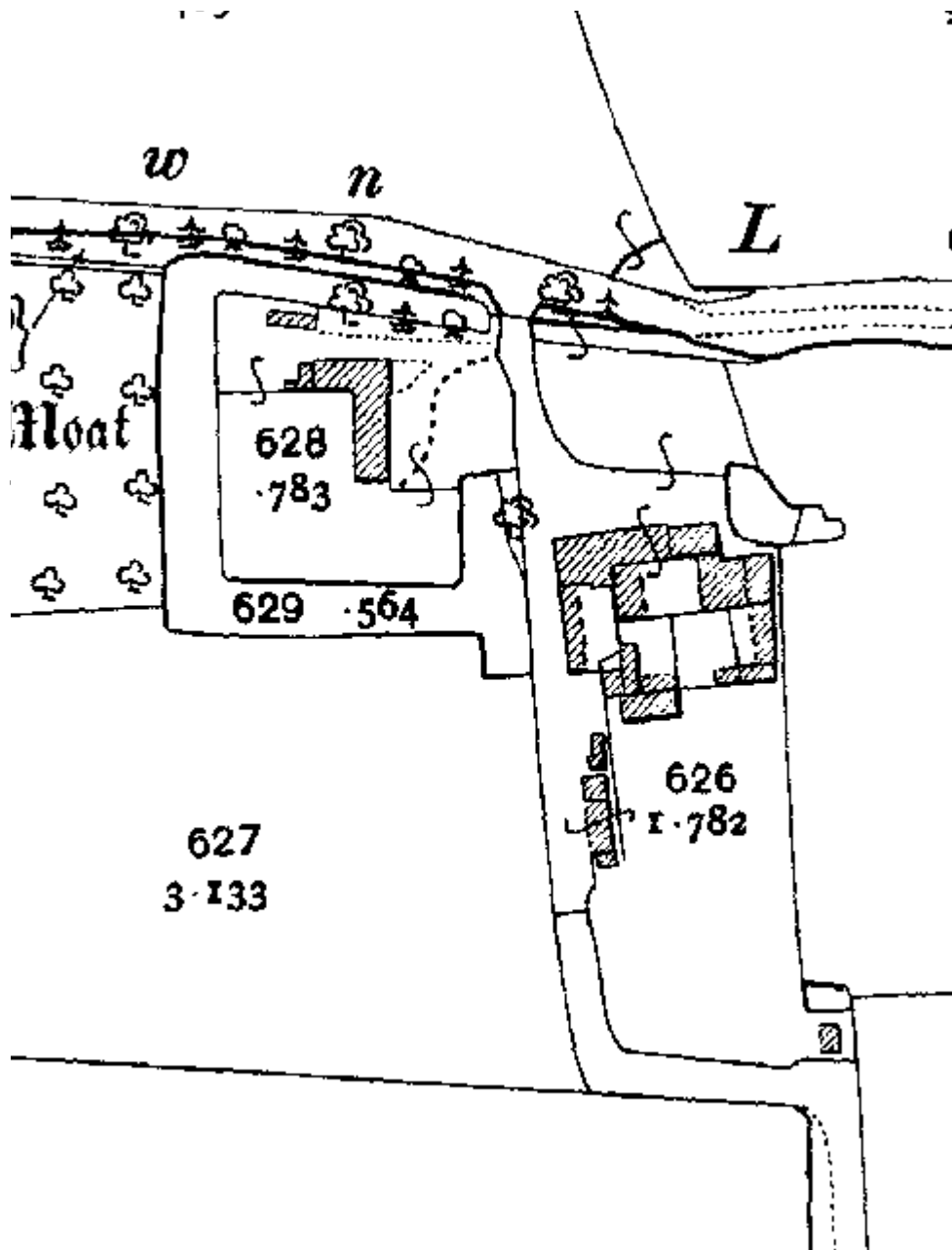


Figure 4

Second Edition Ordnance Survey of 1904

The southern shed (2) is shown for the first time in the south-eastern corner of the yard complex, including its internal partition which relates to a boundary in the yard. The earlier shelter-shed had been truncated but its open western elevation is clearly indicated by a broken line.

Building Analysis

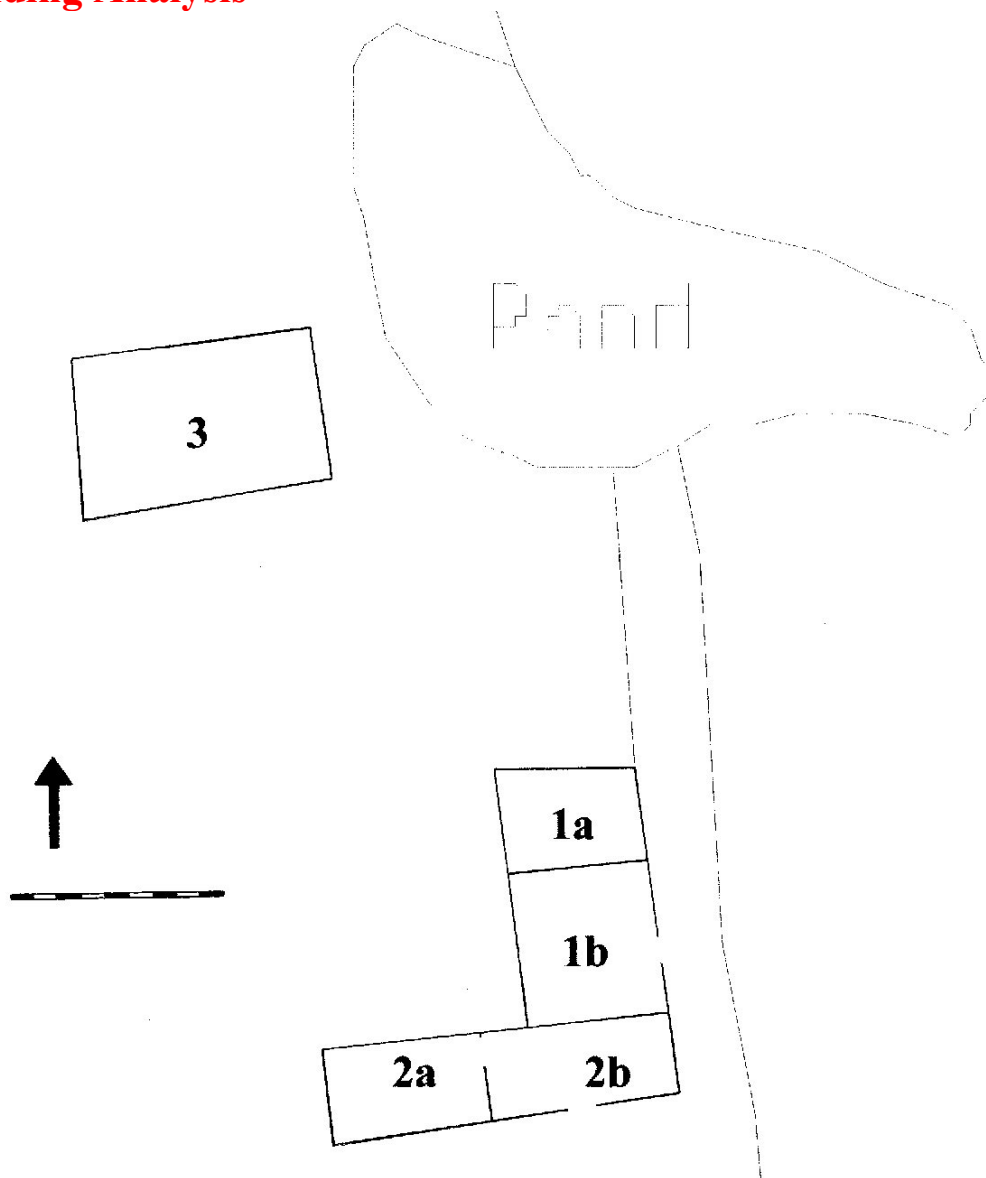


Figure 6

Block Plan of Site (adapted from Ordnance Survey). Scale in metres.

Identifying each area of the building with a number for ease of reference in the text and photographic record.

Key

1. Timber-framed, pantiled and weatherboarded shelter-shed with softwood roof structure of through-purlins supported on inner trusses. Open sided to the western cattle yard and now open to its truncated northern gable. Divided by an original lateral partition into two sections: 1a to the north and 1b to the south. Brick plinth rebuilt in 20th century. *Circa* 1890.

2. Timber-framed, pantiled and weatherboarded shed with softwood roof structure of clasped purlins divided into a shelter-shed to the west (2a) serving the adjoining cattle yard and an enclosed loose box or feed store to the east (2b). Integral with the structure of 1 above and dating from *circa* 1890.

3. A mid-19th century red-brick stable formerly adjoining the eastern gable of a barn as shown on 19th century maps. Now ruinous, lacking its roof and upper walls, but retaining evidence of opposing doors to north and south and windows to the southern yard. Included for site context and not discussed further below.

Structure and Date

The building known for planning purposes at a barn at Moat House is a single-storied L-shaped structure of weatherboarded studwork which formed north-eastern corner of an extensive cattle yard complex as shown on historic maps. This complex now survives only as fragmentary ruins, with no trace above ground of the main barn to the north-west which was shown on the 1841 tithe map and may have been a medieval building. Its western range extends to 13.9 m in length on an east-west axis by 3.4 m in overall width (45.5 ft by 11 ft) while the eastern range projects by an additional 10 m to the north (33 ft) and is significantly wider at 5.8 m (19 ft). The walls of weatherboarded studwork rise to 2.4 m at their roof-plates (8 ft) including a red-brick plinth of 0.75 m (2.5 ft). The framing consists of uniform, machine-sawn softwood with nailed, diagonal primary bracing and iron straps linking the tie-beam and roof-plates in the typical manner of the late-19th and early-20th centuries. The roof trusses differ slightly, with clasped-purlins to the narrower western range and through-purlins supported on triangular inner trusses with vertical iron rods to the east, but both wings are fully integral and clearly contemporary. An open-sided shelter-shed was shown without a western wing on the Ordnance Survey of 1885 but must have been rebuilt when the eastern wing was added before 1904 (figures 3 and 4 above).

Layout

The eastern range was designed as an open-sided cattle shelter and retains its original arcade posts with chamfered lintels together with an original internal partition which respects a yard wall. Its northern gable has been truncated and formerly abutted another building of which no trace remains. An original door opens from the southern section (1b) onto the boundary ditch to the east, but the plinth of this elevation has been rebuilt in 20th century brickwork and cement blocks. The narrow eastern wing is now partly open to the north (2a) but this area may have been designed as a second enclosed loose box or feed store like its neighbour to the east, which is entered by original doors to the south and west: it lacks an arcade post and is shown as enclosed on the Ordnance Survey of 1904. No relevant fixtures or fittings such as mangers and hay racks survive.

Historic Significance

The site of Moat House is of considerable historic importance given its well-preserved moat and the likelihood that the demolished barn shown on 19th century maps formed part of a medieval 'base court' (service courtyard) through which the bridge was approached. However the 'barn' to the south-east is a cattle shelter and loose box of *circa* 1890 that was a late addition to a mid-19th century yard complex and has been truncated and partly rebuilt in the 20th century. The pantiles and the much-repaired tarred cladding retain a degree of traditional visual character but similar sheds survive in considerable numbers elsewhere in the region and of itself the structure is not of significant historic interest.

Appendix 1 (on accompanying CD): Full Photographic Record

Descriptions of Photographs in Appendix 1

Photograph no.

1. General view of site entrance from Town Lane to east showing Moat House to left and edge of former green to right.
2. Exterior of Moat House from site entrance to north-east showing well-preserved moat in foreground (included for site context).
3. Exterior of Moat House from south-east showing well-preserved moat in foreground (included for site context).
4. Eastern facade of Moat House (included for site context).
5. Site entrance from north showing Moat House to right and site of farm buildings behind trees to left.
6. General view of farm buildings behind trees from site entrance to north-west.
7. General view of farm yard from north-west showing stable (3) left & site of demolished barn right with sheds (1 & 2) in rear.
8. Green lane to south-west of farm yard seen from north (included for site context).
9. General view of site from paddock to south of farm yard showing shed (2) to right and Moat House to left.
10. General view of farm yard from west showing sheds (1 & 2) in rear to right and brick yard wall to left.
11. Exterior of brick stable (3) from sheds (1 & 2) to south-east showing Moat House in rear to left.
12. Exterior of brick stable (3) from north-west showing opposing doors with sheds (1 & 2) in rear to right.
13. Exterior of sheds (1 & 2) from north-west showing wall of stable (3) to left.
14. Exterior from north-west showing brick yard wall in foreground.
15. Exterior from north-west showing junction of two wings (1 & 2) with corner of the enclosed shed (2b) in centre.
16. External northern elevation of western shelter shed (2a) showing enclosed shed (2b) to left.
17. External western elevation of northern shelter shed (1b) showing yard wall & truncated bay (1a) to left.
18. Internal western gable of open shed (2a) showing yard to right.

19. Softwood roof structure of open shed (2a) from west showing clasped-purlins with nailed collars & door to closed shed (2b).
20. Southern interior of open shelter-shed (2a) showing diagonal primary stud bracing with western gable to right.
21. Interior of open shed (2a) from west showing original door to enclosed shed (2b) to left.
22. Interior of eastern shelter shed (1b) showing western shed (2a) to right with boarded partition to enclosed shed (2b) left.
23. Internal southern gable of open shelter-shed (1b).
24. Roof structure of eastern shelter shed (1b) from north, showing through-purlins and queen struts.
25. Internal eastern elevation of eastern shelter shed (1b) showing original external door.
26. Interior of eastern shelter shed (1b) from south showing partition to northern shed (1a).
27. Interior of northern shed (1a) from north-west showing truncated roof-plate to right.
28. Exterior of truncated northern shed (1a) showing western shed (2a) in rear to right.
29. Exterior of truncated northern shed (1a) from west showing concrete pad beneath arcade post.
30. External western gable of western shelter shed (2a).
31. Southern exterior of shed showing entrance to enclosed loose box (2b) to right.
32. Eastern exterior of shed showing brick plinth and external door to open shed (2b).
33. Eastern exterior from south showing proximity of shed to boundary ditch (right).
34. Detail of cement-block plinth at northern end of eastern exterior.
35. Detail of brick plinth to exterior of eastern shelter shed (1b).
36. Detail of junction between eastern (right) and earlier southern brick plinths.
37. Interior of enclosed shed or loose box (2b) from east showing external door to left and door to open shed (2a) right.
38. Interior of enclosed shed or loose box (2b) from showing external door to right.
39. Detail of original door from enclosed shed (2b) to open shed (2a) showing quarter bricks in plinth.
40. Detail of original door in southern interior of enclosed shed (2b).

Appendix 2 (pp. 11-15): Selected Printed Photographs



Illus. 1. General view of site entrance from Town Lane to east showing Moat House to left and the former Brockford Green to right. The road did not exist until the green was enclosed in the mid-19th century.



Illus. 2. Exterior of Moat House from south-east showing the well-preserved moat in the foreground (included for site context).



Illus. 3. General view of farm yard from north-west showing the ruined mid-19th century brick stable (3) to left & the site of the demolished barn to the right. The shelter sheds (1 & 2) are visible in the rear.



Illus. 4. Exterior from north-west showing the brick yard wall in the foreground with the truncated northern shed (1a) to the left



Illus. 5. Exterior from north-west showing the junction of the two integral wings with the open shelter-sheds (1b & 2a) to left and right respectively and the enclosed loose box or feed store (2b) in the centre.



Illus. 6. Softwood roof structure of open shed (2a) from west showing its clasped-purlins with nailed collars & the door and boarded partition to the enclosed shed (2b).



Illus. 7. Southern interior of the western open shelter-shed (2a) showing the diagonal primary stud bracing and brick plinth with the western gable to the right.



Illus. 8. Southern exterior showing the entrance to the enclosed loose box or feed store (2b) to the right.



Illus. 9. Eastern exterior showing the rebuilt brick plinth and the external door to the open shed (2b).



Illus. 10. Interior of enclosed feed store or loose box (2b) from the east showing the external door to the left and the door to the open shed (2a) to right.