

**Barn at
West Hall Farm,
Rickingham, Suffolk
RKN 039**

Historic Building Record

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(TM 0292 7352)

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This report provides a written and photographic record at English Heritage (2006) Level 2 of a barn in the curtilage of a grade II listed farmhouse. It has been prepared to a brief written by Suffolk County Council's Archaeological Service (Edward Martin, 4th February 2010, ref. SpecHBR(EM)_Pre_WestHallFm_Rickingham_2010), and is intended to inform and accompany a planning application to Mid Suffolk District Council.

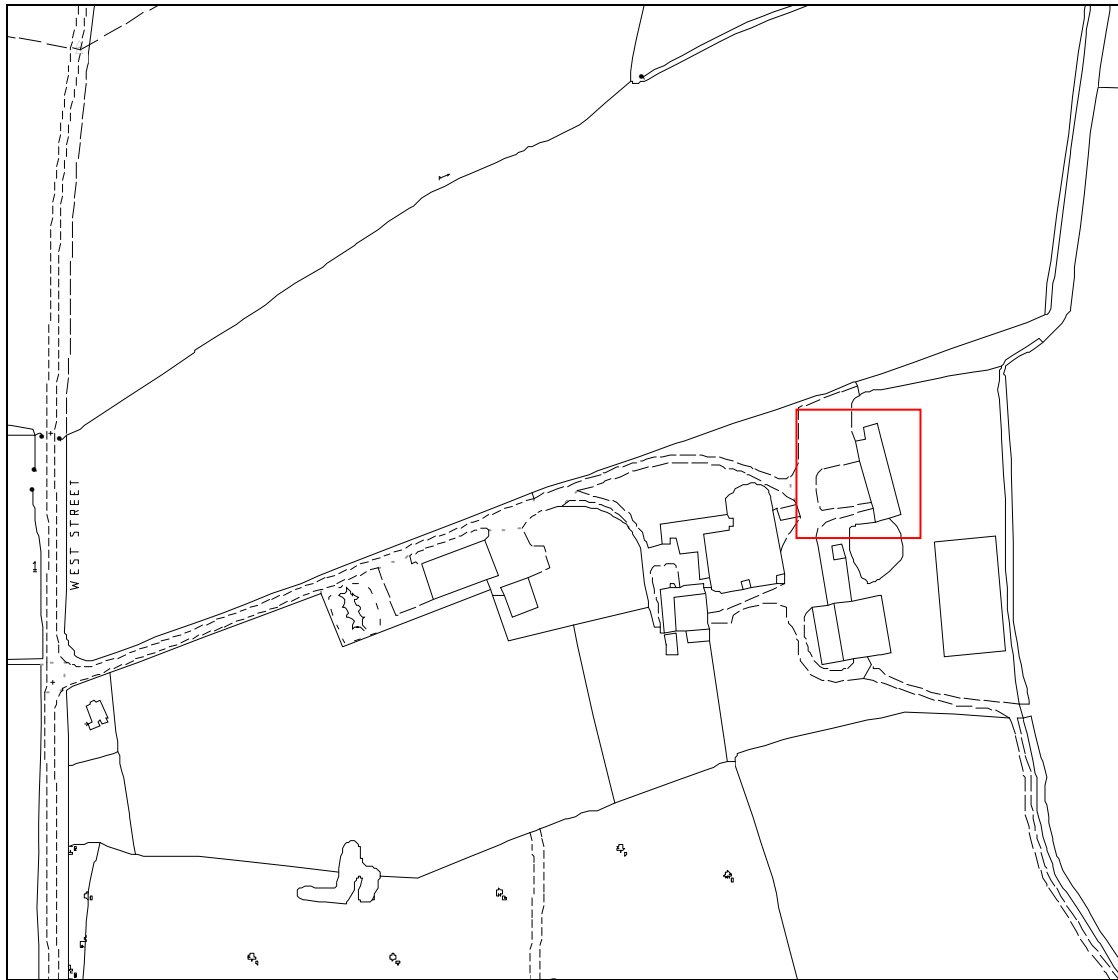
Introduction

The report is accompanied by a CD containing a photographic record in the form of 105 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. The site was inspected on 30th June 2010.

Summary

West Hall Farm lies in open countryside in the parish of Rickingham Inferior approximately 2 km south-west of Rickingham village. It probably occupies the site of the medieval manor of 'Rickingham Inferior alias Westhall Manor' given in *circa* 1,000 AD by Ulfketel, Earl of East Anglia, to Bury Abbey, and may contain important archaeological evidence of early settlement. The farmhouse is a grade II-listed timber-framed structure of the 17th century which appears to occupy the north-western corner of a large rectangular medieval enclosure including the barn to the east. At the time of the tithe survey in 1839 the property was a substantial tenanted farm of 306.5 acres owned by the Redgrave Hall estate of the Wilson family (successors of Sir Nicholas Bacon to whom the manor was granted at the Dissolution).

The present barn is a substantial timber-framed and weatherboarded structure of the mid-19th century which is not shown on the tithe map. It consists largely of re-used timber that may have derived from a 17th century or earlier barn on the same site (as depicted in 1839). The building formed part of a new 'model' farm complex with a series of enclosed animal yards of which no trace survives against its western elevation. The main range contained a five-bay open barn with twin threshing floors to the south and a two-bay stable and hay loft to the north. An integral lean-to against the eastern elevation was divided into five sheds operating as a tack room, chaff box, and three grain stores flanking the rear doors. The stable possessed a central cross-entry with the animals stalled against the internal gables and still retains its two boarded mangers despite the loss of its hay racks and much of the hay loft. Several harness hooks also survive in the tack room. The building is of local historic interest as it illustrates the sophisticated nature of the many new farm complexes associated with High Victorian Farming in the 1860s and 1870s but has been too extensively altered to merit listing in its own right: its entire roof has been rebuilt in modern softwood and the structure represents only a fragment of the original complex given the loss of its contemporary animal yards.



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Figure 1 Current Ordnance Survey Site Plan.
Enclosing the barn in red to the east of the grade II-listed farmhouse and showing the approach from West Street to the left.

Historic Context: Documentary & Cartographic Record

West Hall Farm lies in open countryside approximately 2 km south-west of Rickinghall village, and is reached by a dedicated track from West Street as shown in figure 1. It lies in the parish of Rickinghall Inferior (as opposed to Rickinghall Superior) and probably occupies the site of the medieval manor of Rickinghall Inferior alias Westhall Manor given in *circa* 1,000 AD by Ulfketel, Earl of East Anglia, to Bury Abbey (W.A. Copinger, *Manors of Suffolk*, 1909). It was acquired by Sir Nicholas Bacon of nearby Redgrave Hall at the Dissolution, and by 1909 had passed to George Holt Wilson of the same address. Copinger records a survey of the manor dated 1604 in the Davy Collection at the British Library. The present farmhouse is a grade II-listed timber-framed building of the early- to mid-17th century with a 19th century northern facade of red-brick (Schedule of Listed Buildings).

At the time of the Rickinghall tithe survey in 1839 the farm was a very substantial holding of 306.5 acres owned by George St Vincent Wilson and tenanted by John Blomfield Senior. White's 1844 Directory of Suffolk names the tenant of 'West Hall' farm as Richard Flowerdew. The 1839 map shows a large L-shaped outbuilding on the site of the current barn, which probably represents a predecessor of the existing mid-19th century structure, with a second barn of similar outline to the south (figure 2).

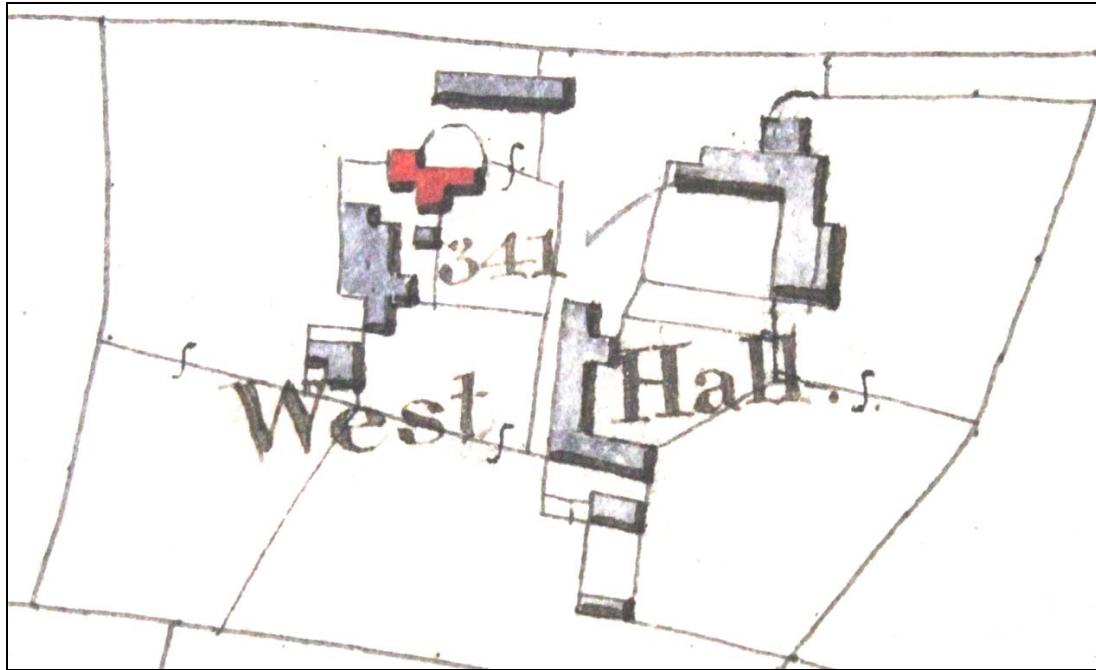


Figure 2

West Hall Farm on the Rickinghall Inferior tithe map of 1839. The 17th century farmhouse in red lies in the north-eastern corner of a large rectangular enclosure with an unusually extensive array of outbuildings to the south, north and east. An earlier L-shaped barn occupies the site of the present barn and the granary is not shown. The site (341) was described only as 'premises' on the tithe apportionment and the surrounding fields were not individually named.

The layout of the farm buildings had altered by the time of the first edition Ordnance Survey of *circa* 1885, with the structures of 1839 either rebuilt entirely or extended and refurbished. Similar dramatic changes occurred on most East Anglian farms in the 1850s and 1860s as the falling price of cereals prompted the introduction of a system of intensive mixed animal husbandry now known as Victorian High Farming. Cattle were increasingly kept in enclosed yards to maximise manure production, and a series of open-sided shelter sheds were erected here alongside new yards to both the east and south-east of the farmhouse. The regularity of the eastern barn in comparison to its outline of 1839 suggests it had been rebuilt completely, and this is supported by the architectural evidence. No trace of the contemporary horse and cattle yards adjoining its western elevation survived at the time of inspection.

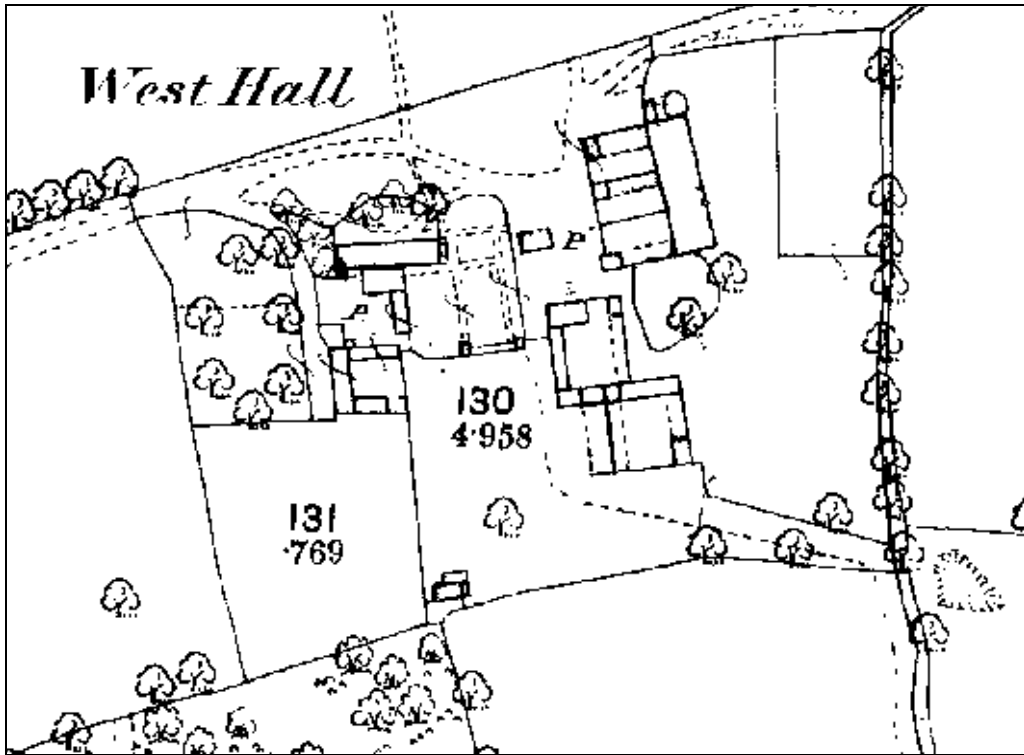


Figure 3

First edition 25 inch Ordnance Survey of circa 1885 showing the newly rebuilt barn to the east of the farmhouse with a uniform rectangular outline and a series of yards and open-sided shelter sheds to the west (since demolished). The circular feature adjoining its north-eastern corner was a horse mill of which no trace survives.

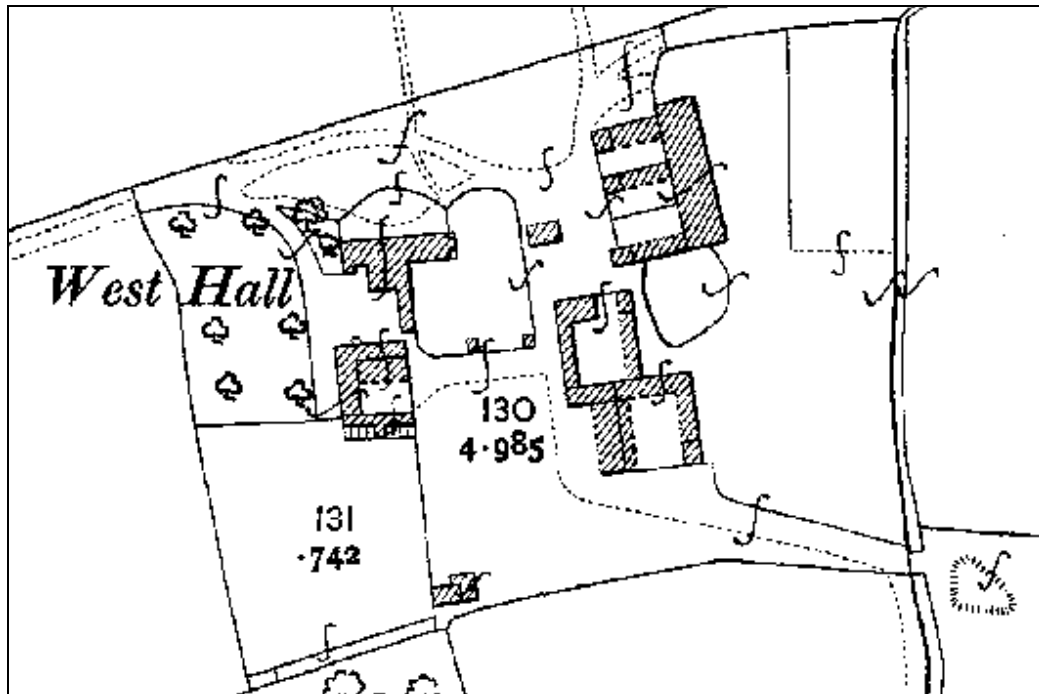


Figure 4

Second Edition 25 inch Ordnance Survey of circa 1904 showing little change since 1885, although the horse mill had been demolished.

Building Analysis



Figure 5

**Block Plan of Barn (showing the cartlodge/granary to the west).
Each historic area is identified by a number for ease of reference in the text and photographic record.**

Key

The barn is a mid-19th century timber-framed and weatherboarded structure of seven bays with an integral lean-to against its rear (eastern) elevation. The slated softwood roof structure is a late-20th century replacement, but the interior is still divided into seven original compartments as follows:

1. Five-bay open barn with two threshing floors entered by full-height doors to the west with low eastern doors in lean-to rear porches.
2. Two-bay stable and hay loft with central cross-entry. Original boarded mangers to northern and southern gables with evidence of hay racks above. The ceiling of the southern bay remains intact but that of the northern bay has been removed.
3. Lean-to tack room retaining original bentwood harness hooks.
4. Lean-to chaff box (feed store) with hatches to tack room, hay loft and corner of open barn.
- 5-7. Lean-to grain stores flanking the lean-to porches which project from the two threshing bays.

8-9. Mid-19th century three-bay timber-framed, weatherboarded and pantiled cartlodge with first floor granary. The western bay (9) later enclosed to form a vehicle shed but the two eastern bays still open to the north. Remains of boarded grain bins in granary and retaining original roof structure of staggered butt-purlins. This building is probably contemporary with the barn as neither is shown on the tithe map of 1839 and it is included only for historic context; it does not form part of the proposed planning application and is not discussed further below.

Structure and Date

The building is 37 m long including a brick lean-to at the northern end and is aligned on an approximately north-south axis to the east of the farmhouse. The barn (including the stable bays) is 31.2 m long in five principal bays and spans 6.1 m. The timber-framed and weatherboarded walls rise to 4.7 m at their eaves and rest on a tall red-brick plinth of 1.35 m, and the integral lean-to range on the eastern side is 3.7 m in width. The wall framing consists largely of re-used timber from one or more earlier barns of the 17th century or before, and may well represent the remains of the barn shown on the same site on the tithe map of 1839 (figure 2). Much of the weatherboarding is modern but certain boards have also been re-used from an older building which bore red-ochre pigment in the traditional manner of the 18th and early-19th centuries. The present structure is typical of the mid-19th century, with diagonal primary braces nailed to the frame and tie-beams secured to the roof-plates by iron straps without either knee-braces or arch-braces. The roof is a late-20th century softwood replacement of shallow pitch which is currently roofed in slate; this probably reflects the original roof-covering although it may have been pitched more steeply for pantiles in the manner of the nearby cartlodge/granary. These features suggest a date in the 1860s or 1870s and are consistent with the cartographic evidence which shows a series of animal yards and shelters adjoining the western elevation (figures 3 and 4).

Original Layout and Function

The building contained an integral stable of two bays and 7 m in length at its northern end (area 2 in figure 5). This retains the southern bay of a ceiling of tall-sectioned joists, but the rest of its original loft has been removed. Original boarded mangers survive to the north and south of a central cross-entry but the hay racks have also been lost. The stable was adjoined on the east by a tack room with bentwood harness hooks housed in the contemporary lean-to (3). A chaff house (feed store) lay to the south of the tack room and was provided with loading hatches to loft as well as both the barn and tack room. A boarded grain bin also survived in the tack room at the time of inspection. The lean-to porches of the main threshing barn were flanked by grain stores in the usual manner of the period. The layout of the building is sophisticated and would have been complemented by additional feed stores in the yard ranges to form a 'model' complex of typical mid-19th century form.

Historic Significance

The barn is of historic interest as it illustrates the sophisticated nature of mid-19th century barn complexes on large gentry holdings, incorporating twin threshing floors and a stable with a tack room, chaff box and grain stores under a single roof. It has, however, been extensively altered with the loss of its entire original roof together with part of its hay loft and its contemporary cattle yards. In consequence it is of limited local significance only, and fails to meet the English Heritage criteria for listing in its own right. The site, in contrast, is of considerable historic interest as that of a major Anglo-Saxon manor given by Ulfketel to Bury Abbey and may contain archaeological evidence of early settlement.

Appendix 1 (on accompanying CD): Full Photographic Record

Descriptions of Photographs in Appendix 1

Photograph no.

Barn

1. General view of the barn exterior west elevation.
2. General view barn exterior west elevation stable entrance at the left with loft door above full height double doors to threshing floor to the right with a second set infilled in the centre.
3. View of the farmhouse from the NW showing barn in background. The granary is concealed behind the tall trees.
4. View of the farmhouse from NW with barn in the background.
5. General view of the farmyard from the north showing the barn (left) and granary garden wall of the farmhouse to the right.
6. View of the barn from the north the front cell of the brick lean-to has been removed.
7. Farmyard from the NE showing the Granary/Cart-lodge and farmhouse.
8. NW corner of the barn-stable where plinth wall and frame have been damaged by impact.
9. North gable with brick-built lean-to shows stub of wall where the west cell has been removed.
10. NW corner principal post a reused timber with redundant mortise.
11. NW corner sole plate made up of reused wall plate chamfered for rafters plinth damaged by impact.
12. Part demolished lean-to north gable
13. General view of the barn exterior from the east.
14. General view of the barn exterior from the NE.
15. NE corner of the barn at junction with lean-to showing variation in north and east plinth wall heights.
16. Interior of the north wall of the tackroom (3) showing framing and harness hooks.
17. Harness hooks Interior north wall of the tackroom (3).
18. Barn-stable north wall exterior from tack room.
19. Wooden box within the tackroom (3).
20. Initials TW carved onto tackroom box.
21. Interior north wall of the tackroom (3).
22. Door between stable (2) and tackroom (3) showing stable block and paved flooring.
23. Partition wall between tackroom(3) and feedstore(4).
24. Interior of the stable (2) north wall partial remains of loft floor to the right further extent of the floor evidenced by empty joist mortises and extent of limewash on the lower wall re-use planking.
25. As photo 24, note reused and reversed planking at the top of the wall with reddle beneath black tar coating.
26. Reused planking in the stable showing reddle.
27. Quarter batts used brick bond close to the doorway.
28. Stable (2) north wall interior.
29. Stable north wall interior trough masked by stacked wood.

30. Drain in stable floor note the contrast between floor covering in the stable (2) and tackroom (3).
31. Harnesses stored on hooks interior of the west wall of the stable (2).
32. Feeding trough against the interior of the north wall of the stable(2)
33. Feeding trough against the stable south wall with loft floor above.
34. Ring with rope and strap tether on the stable feeding trough, note stop block on rope.
35. Lime washed walls in stable Loft floor joist supported on a clamped rail nailed to studs.
36. Stable east wall interior showing re-used timber sole plate and bolt on support and iron strap binding for ceiling binding joist.
37. As photo 36.
38. Stable west wall interior.
39. Loft floor over stable showing empty mortises where the floor has been truncated.
40. Impact damage to the stable west wall.
41. Interior of the NW corner of the stable showing interrupted studs and framing made up of second-hand timbers and planking at the top of the wall.
42. Interior of the stable NW corner framing made up of mix re-used timbers principle post joints supported by contemporary iron straps and repaired with modern steel plates
43. Loft showing loft exterior door.
44. Loft over the stable with door to the feed store (3) to the left and part blocked door to the threshing barn(1)
45. Interior of the west wall of the stable.
46. Partition wall between the tackroom(3) and the feed store(4) from the north showing entrance hatch
47. Framing of the partition wall between the tackroom(3) and the feed store (4) from the feed-store
48. Partition wall between tackroom and feed-store note the height of the entrance hatch threshold.
49. Hatch (15) between loft over stable (2) and feed store(4) with makeshift ladder.
50. Low level hatch (14) between feed-store and north end of the barn (9) barn.
51. Hatch (15) between loft and feed store.
52. Interior of the east wall of the lean-to feed-store (4)
53. Hatches connecting the barn (lower hatch) and loft (upper one) to the feed store(4) from the feed-store.
54. Double doors on the east (rear)side of the central threshing floor1 note they do not extend to ground level
55. East window to store room (7) at the south end of the barn note slatted diagonal louvers.
56. Store room (7) window detail.
57. General view of the barn exterior from the SE.
58. Partition wall between the barn (1) and the stable (2) from the barn with door to loft.
59. Interior view of the north half of the barn (1) showing partition wall to stable and threshing bay rear door. Note hatch to feed store (4) in the far corner.
60. Interior of the barn showing the rear (east) doors of the two threshing bays.
61. Interior of the west wall of the barn showing the blocked in double doors of the northern threshing bay. Note the concrete block plinth and the sawn softwood framing.

62. Joint detail showing redundant lap dovetail on the tie beam replaced with a simple lap joint and face halved scarf on the C19th wall plate
63. Joint detail showing redundant earlier joint. The tie beam length has not been altered suggesting the 19th barn width is the same as the earlier building.
64. Re-used tie beam with mortises for studding Also shows modern replacement roof rafters.
65. Intact framing east wall between the two sets of doors.
66. Redundant joint for trenched wind-brace.
67. Red pigment on principle post.
68. Re-used principle posts redundant rebate cut into the corner of the post
69. Redundant joint elongated mortise and 5 peg holes for arch bracing.
70. Opposing joint to one shown in photo 67.
71. Interior of the barn south wall.
72. Joint from photo 68 again.
73. Joint detail SW corner of the barn.
74. Rear (east) door central threshing bay.
75. Fixed grain hopper in NW corner of store room (5).
76. Interior of store room (5) taken from the south
77. Store room (5) interior looking south.
78. Entrance to store room (6) from central threshing bay.
79. Cobbled floor in central threshing bay.
80. Rear door southern threshing bay.
81. Interior store room (6) looking N.
82. Interior of the rear east wall of storeroom (6).
83. Exterior of the rear wall of the barn looking from store room (7).
84. Lean-to framing storeroom (7) looking north.
85. Exterior of the rear (east) wall of the barn from storeroom (7).
86. Stepped west plinth wall and reused sole plate timber.
87. Storeroom (7) interior looking south rear wall of the barn.

Cartlodge /Granary

88. Cart-lodge and granary from the north.
89. Cart-lodge ground floor interior partition wall from within the enclosed shed (9).
90. Cart-lodge west wall studs infilled with lathe and daub and plaster.(9)
91. Cart-lodge west wall exterior daub and render.
92. Cart-lodge west wall hand-split lathes-wattles with daub and platter infill in fill.
93. A bolted knee brace entrance to the open-sided cart-lodge (8).
94. Cart-lodge ground floor interior of the east wall lathe and daub.
95. Entrance to the cart-lodge
96. Cart-lodge and granary viewed from the north.
97. Granary and cart-lodge viewed from the south east.
98. Granary and cart-lodge viewed from the south east.
99. First floor granary south side showing boarded interior and grain bins in the far corner.
100. First floor granary, north side showing boarded interior and grain bins in the far corner.
101. Granary first floor interior, south east corner.

102. Granary first floor interior north wall and boarded ceiling.
103. Granary first floor viewed from the door.
104. Granary roof staggered purlins white washed boarded ceiling lathe and plaster.
105. Granary roof collar trussed into truss staggered purlins.

Photographic Appendix follows on pp. 11-15

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



Illus. 1. General view of the barn's external western elevation showing the stable to the left and the twin entrances of the barn to the right



Illus. 2. General view of the farmhouse from the NW showing its proximity to the barn in the background. The granary is concealed behind the trees left of the house.



Illus. 3. General view of the barn exterior from the east showing the integral lean-to tack room (right) and store rooms to the rear elevation.



Illus. 4. NW corner sole plate made up of reused wall plate chamfered for rafters. Plinth damaged by impact.



Illus. 5. Loft floor over stable (2) viewed from north, showing empty mortices where the floor has been truncated to the south.



Illus. 6. South-eastern internal corner of stable (2) showing trough against southern interior and end-rail of missing hay rack. The joists of the loft are supported on a clamp nailed to the studs.



Illus. 7. Interior of the main barn showing the rear (eastern) doors of the two threshing bays linked by integral lean-to sheds. Note the recently renewed softwood roof structure.



Illus. 8. Hatches connecting the barn and loft to the eastern feed store (4) seen from the feedstore.



Illus. 9. The cartlodge and granary seen from the north, showing the enclosed shed (9) to the right and the open lodge (8) to the left.



Illus. 10. First floor granary (8 & 9) viewed from the door in the eastern gable showing the staggered butt-purlin roof structure.