

**Agricultural Buildings at
Abbey Farm,
South Elmham All Saints, Suffolk
SEN 063**

Heritage Asset Assessment

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Agricultural Buildings at Abbey Farm, St Margaret's Road, South Elmham All Saints, Suffolk

(TM 328 833)

Heritage Asset Assessment

This report provides a written and photographic analysis and record at English Heritage (2006) Level 2 of a group of farm buildings. It has been prepared to a specification written by Edward Martin of Suffolk County Council's Archaeological Service (ref. SpecHAA(EM)_AbbeyFm_SElmhamAllSS_0245_11, dated 21st March 2011) and is intended to inform and accompany a planning application (no. DC/11/0245/FUL).

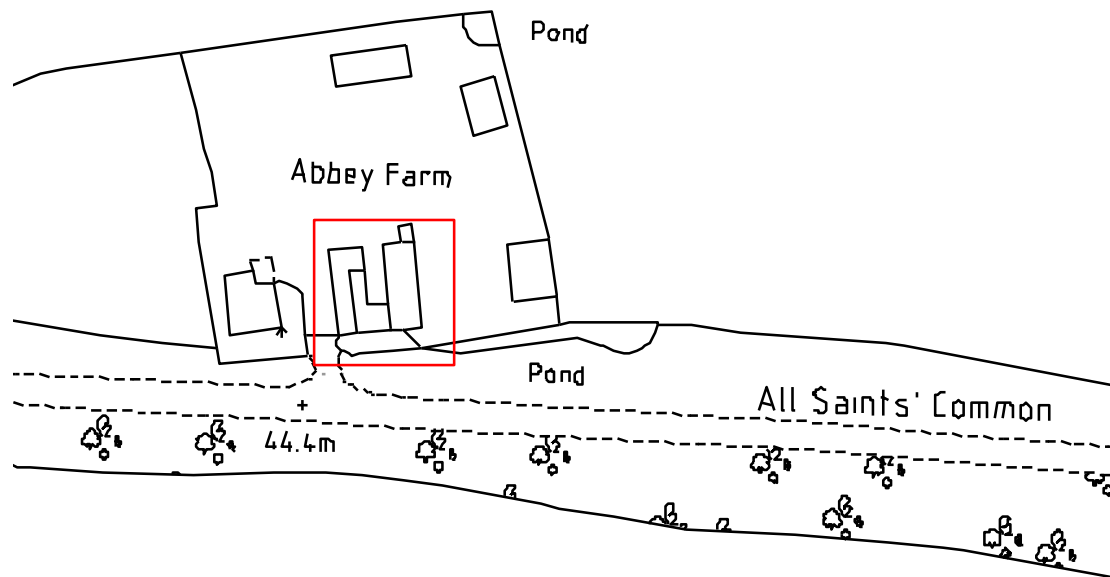
Introduction

The report is accompanied by a CD containing a photographic record in the form of 43 digital images of 21 megapixels (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 4th April 2011.

Summary

Abbey Farm lies in open countryside on the northern side of St. Margaret's Road, approximately 1.25 km north-west of All Saints Common. It appears to have faced a broad medieval green which extended towards the Rectory and church of All Saints 500 m to the south and it may well occupy an ancient site. The farmhouse is a timber-framed and rendered structure of the 18th century or earlier, and was shown on Hodkinson's county map of 1783, but is not listed and was derelict and inaccessible at the time of inspection. At the time of the tithe survey in 1839 the farm was a very modest tenanted arable holding of only 10.5 acres.

The timber-framed threshing barn to the east of the house is an unusually small example of just two bays and 7.5 m in length, reflecting the scale of the farm. It can be dated on stylistic grounds to the second quarter of the 19th century and appears to be shown on the tithe map of 1839, but replaced an earlier barn on the same site as indicated by Hodkinson. The building is well-framed in oak and is of considerable historic interest as it illustrates the nature of early-19th century barns on very small tenanted farms (of which relatively few survive in anything like their original form). The small rear door facing the farmhouse is a particularly rare feature as most were later enlarged to accommodate vehicles. Despite its historic significance, however, the loss of its roof and part of the front roof-plate means the barn fails to meet the strict English Heritage criteria for listing. A single-storied mid-19th century shed to the west is also of some interest as an example of an inexpensive clay-lump structure in an increasingly rare vernacular material, but has also suffered extensive alteration. It was probably designed as a loose box for cattle and was shown for the first time on the Ordnance Survey of 1886. The remaining agricultural structures on the site are reconstructions of the 20th century and are not of historic value



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Figure 1
Modern Ordnance Survey
 Enclosing the farm buildings in red and showing the abandoned farmhouse immediately to the west. The outlying sheds are additions of the late-20th century.

Documentary and Cartographic Evidence

Abbey Farm lies in open countryside on the northern side of St. Margaret's Road, approximately 500 m north of All Saints church and 1.25 km north-west of All Saints Common. The current Ordnance Survey identifies the broad lane as part of All Saints Common, but Hodskinson's map of 1783 shows it in far closer proximity to 'Margarets Green' just 200 m to the west (figure 2). The tithe map of 1839 shows a spur extending from this green to a distinctive, triangular field bounded by lanes on all sides and extending southwards in the direction of the church and its moated Rectory (figure 3). Already enclosed by 1839 and known as 'Great Trowers' this land almost certainly represents another medieval common upon which Abbey Farm is now the only surviving tenement. Most commons of this kind formed the focus of several small farmsteads until the contraction of the rural population during the late-14th century, and the site is probably of medieval origin. The source of its name is unclear, but a number of nearby priories (such as Rumburgh and Flixton) would have held land in the area until the Reformation. ('Priory Farms' were frequently translated into 'Abbey Farms' during the 16th and 17th centuries.)

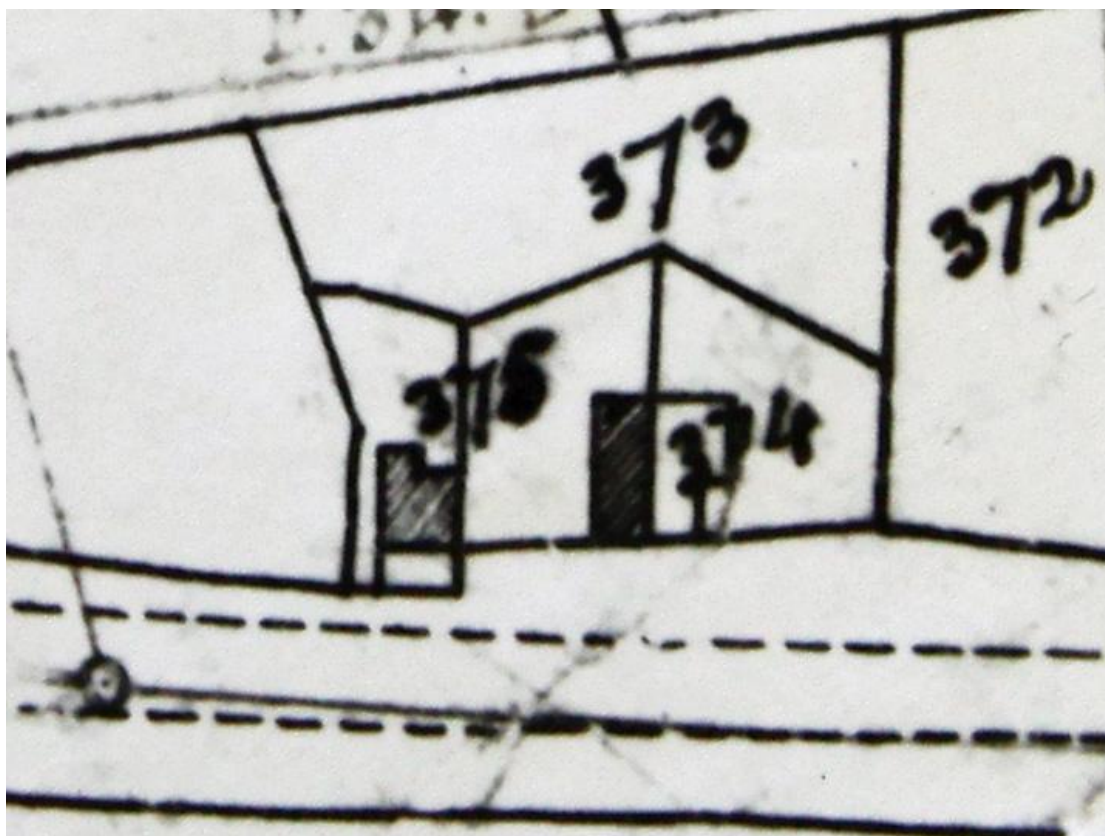


Figure 3a

Detail of the 1839 tithe map showing the 'house, etc.' (plot 375) to the left, with precisely the same outline as today, and the rectangular 'barn' (plot 374) to the right. An identically layout is shown in figure 2.

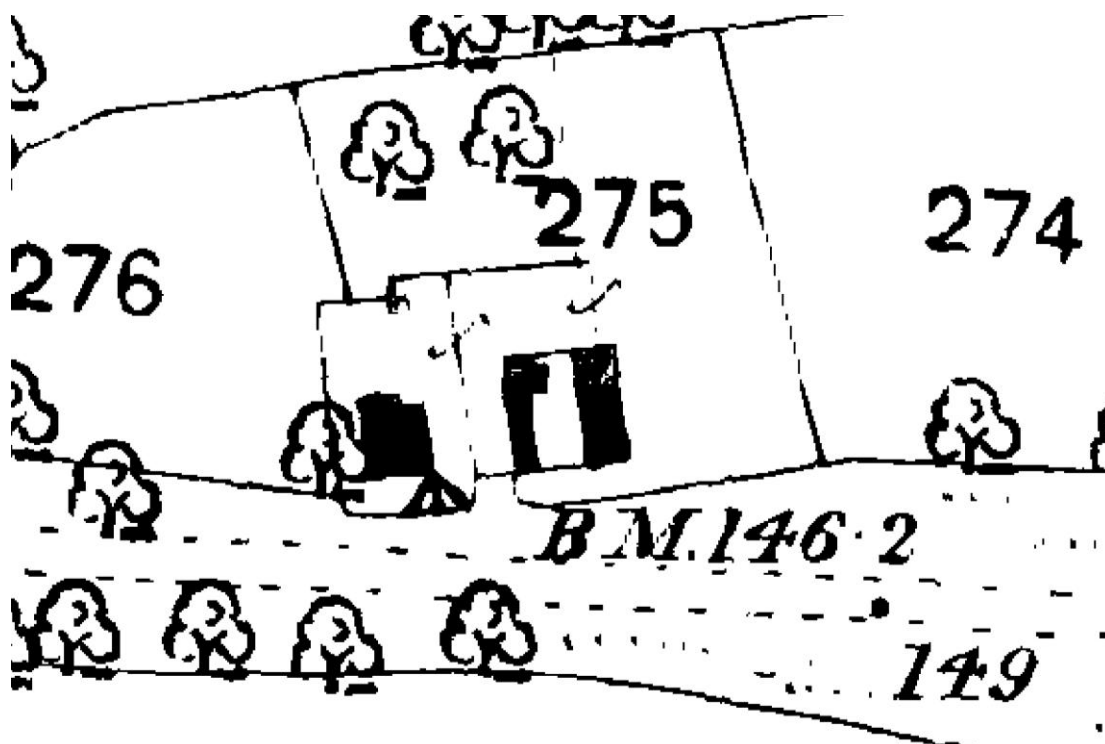


Figure 4

The First Edition 25 inch Ordnance Survey of 1886 showing the newly-built clay-lump shed (4) between the house and barn, with a narrow adjoining structure to the south.

Hodskinson shows two buildings at right-angles to each other, precisely as they remained when surveyed more accurately in 1839. The farmhouse is not listed and was abandoned at the time of inspection (the last occupant having apparently lived in a caravan nearby), but is a timber-framed structure of the 18th century or earlier with an early-19th century red-brick lean-to adjoining the rear wall (containing a privy and bakehouse, and creating an L-shaped outline which has remained unaltered at least since 1839). The facade also dates from the early-19th century, although its cement render is an addition of the 20th century. The farm was a very modest tenanted arable holding of just 10.5 acres (with under half an acre of pasture) owned by John Hurst Esquire and occupied by James Button, who was listed as a farmer in St Nicholas parish by White's Directory of 1844. (The church of St Nicholas having been ruined for two centuries even then, and the two parishes long since combined.) The rectangular outbuilding to the east of the house was described in the apportionment as a 'barn' with 'neat-house field' (plot 273) to the north – despite the absence of any obvious neat-house (i.e. cow-house).

By 1886 the barn had been joined by an L-shaped range to the west of a narrow yard, and a second building of similar outline was added before 1904 to enclose the yard on the south and unify its western elevation. The northern end of this western range survives as the clay-lump shed described below (building 4 in figure 6) but the adjoining structures were rebuilt in the 20th century and there is no trace of the two narrow ranges shown to the south on the Ordnance Surveys.

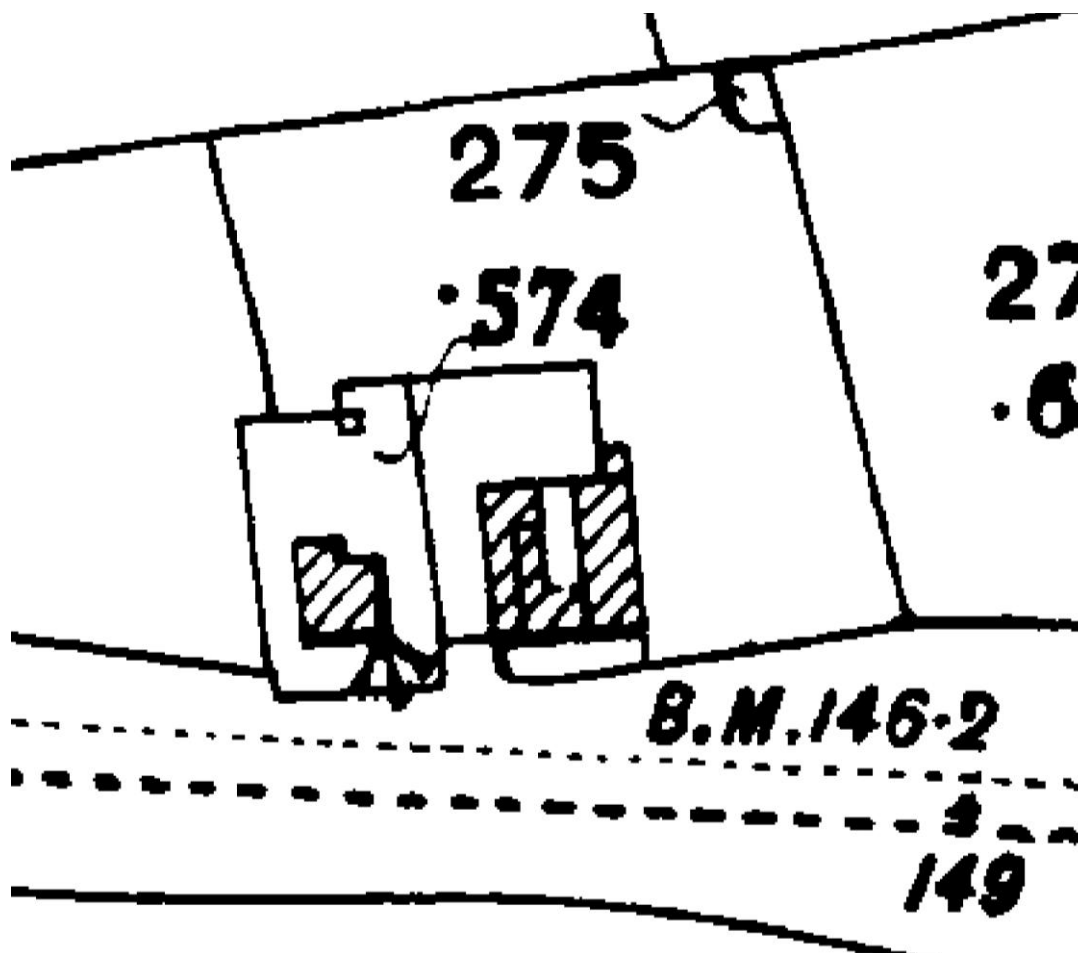


Figure 5
The Second Edition 25 inch Ordnance Survey of 1904, showing a new building to the south of the narrow yard between the barn and clay-lump shed.

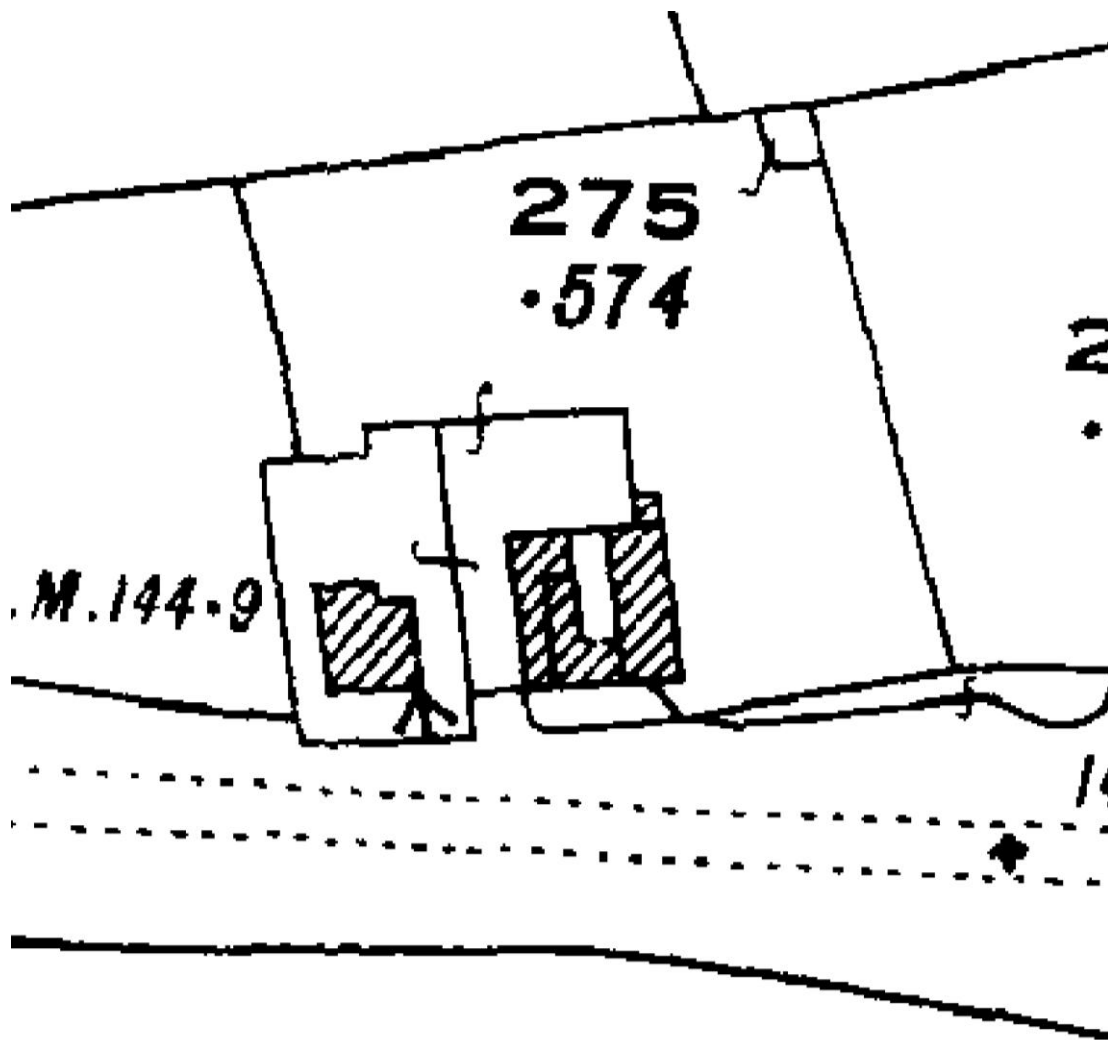


Figure 6

The Third Edition 25 inch Ordnance Survey of 1927, showing no change since 1904. The current Ordnance Survey (figure 1) shows an identical layout, but in fact the structures in the south-western corner of the complex were rebuilt in the late-20th century.

Building Analysis

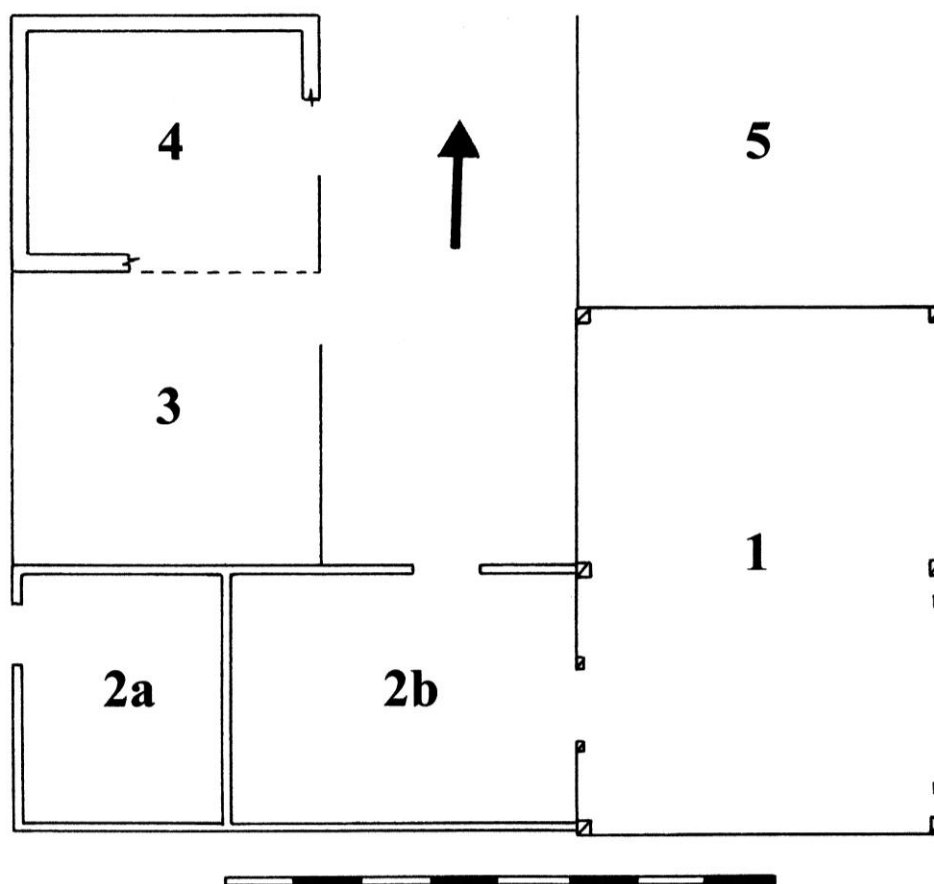


Figure 6

Schematic block plan of the farm buildings, numbering the key elements for ease of reference in the text and photographs. Scale in meters.

Key

1. An oak-framed and weatherboarded barn of two-bays with an original low, narrow door to the rear (west) and evidence of full-height entrance doors to the east (replaced and reduced in height in the 20th century). With original bolted knee-braces to the central tie-beam, jowl-less storey posts and diagonal primary wall braces that are pegged and tenoned to the frame. The carpentry is characteristic of the second quarter of the 19th century and the barn was probably newly built when depicted on the tithe map of 1839. It may date from as late as *circa* 1850, however, replacing an earlier barn on the same site (as shown on Hodskinson's map of 1783). The pantiled roof was rebuilt and the cladding largely renewed in the 20th century.
2. A late-20th century single-storied animal shed of cement blocks with a single-pitch corrugated iron roof. Divided into two compartments as shown in figure 6.
3. A late-20th century single-storied animal shed lately used as a workshop with a corrugated iron roof and walls of vertical (to the west) and horizontal boarding.
4. A mid-19th century single-storied clay-lump shed with weatherboarded roof gables and a late-20th century corrugated iron roof structure. Internally and externally rendered in cement (externally tarred) with little original fabric exposed. Much of the southern gable removed. Stripped of relevant fixtures and fittings but probably designed as a loose box for cattle.
5. A late-20th century open-ended vehicle shelter adjoining the northern gable of the barn and incorporating some brickwork from an earlier building (possibly a stable) on the same site.

1. Two Bay 19th Century Barn

The barn at Abbey Farm is an unusually small timber-framed structure of two equal bays on a north-south axis at right-angles to the nearby farmhouse. It extends to 7.5 m in length by 5.3 m in width overall (24.75 ft by 17.5 ft), and its walls rise to 3.2 m (10.5 ft) at their roof-plates above an internal floor of 20th century concrete. The ground sills rest on red-brick plinths of 0.6 m (2 ft) in height, but are largely rendered in cement. The oak framing is typical of the early- to mid-19th century, with original bolted-knee braces to the single tie-beam, storey posts without jowls and diagonal primary braces which interrupt the studs and are pegged and tenoned to the posts and sills. The present pantiled softwood roof structure is a shallow-pitched replacement of the late-20th century with clasped-purlins and crudely nailed collars which probably replaced a steeply pitched thatched predecessor. The eastern roof-plate of the southern bay is also a softwood replacement (linked to the original with a simple edge-halved scarf joint), and the external weatherboarding and eastern window are modern, but in other respects the frame is largely intact.

The southern bay contained the threshing floor (of which no trace remains) and was entered by full-height doors from the east. The original door jambs survive *in situ*, as indicated in figure 6 (both tenoned and pegged to the ground-sill which they interrupt), but the opening has been reduced in height and the present double doors date only from the 20th century. The small rear door of 1 m (3.5 ft) in width immediately opposite is an original feature with a (probably late-19th century) half-hung door. Barns typically possessed small rear doors in this manner, sufficient to create a through-draught for threshing and winnowing, until vehicle thoroughfares became fashionable with the advent of mechanical threshing during the mid-19th century. It is uncommon for the principal entrance of a barn to face away from its farmhouse.

The barn can probably be equated with the building of identical proportions shown on the tithe map of 1839, at which time it would have stood for no more than a decade or two, but must have succeeded the earlier barn on the site shown on Hodskinson's map of 1783. On structural grounds alone, however, it may possibly be as late as *circa* 1850. The outline in 1839, and all subsequent Ordnance Surveys, includes an additional bay to the north which probably formed a separate brick stable but was rebuilt as an open vehicle shed in the 20th century (building 5 below).

2. Cement-Block Animal Shed

The single-storied shed which projects at right-angles from the western elevation of the barn's southern bay is a cement-block structure of the late-20th century with a single-pitch corrugated iron roof. It is divided by a boarded internal partition into two compartments, entered by half-hung doors from the western gable (2a) and the narrow yard to the north (2b), and it probably formed a pair of loose boxes for bullocks. A metal hay rack is attached to the internal partition of the eastern shed (2b). This building replaced an earlier structure on the same site erected between 1886 and 1904, as indicated by the Ordnance Surveys above (figures 3 and 4).

3. Studwork Animal Shed

The single-storied shed which forms the southern end of the western range flanking the yard is a late-20th century reconstruction of earlier structures shown on the Ordnance Surveys of 1886 and 1904. The western elevation consists of tarred vertical boarding while the eastern elevation contains some studwork of poor quality that probably survives from a narrow late-19th century addition erected shortly before 1904. The roof is of modern corrugated iron, and there is no indication of the axial partition shown on the Ordnance Surveys. The shed was

entered by a half-hung door from the yard and probably formed a loose box for cattle, but has been used as a workshop and general store for some time.

4. Clay-Lump Shed

The single-storied clay-lump shed at the northern end of the yard's western range is a mid-19th century addition shown on the Ordnance Survey of 1886 but not the tithe map of 1839 (figures 4 and 3 respectively). It extends to 4.4 m in width by 3.6 m in length overall (14.5 ft by 12 ft) and its walls, which are 23 cms thick (9 ins), rise to 1.75 m at their eaves (5.75 ft). The clay-lump is almost entirely hidden by cement render, both internally and externally, and the small section of exposed fabric to the western exterior is too badly weathered to determine the size of the individual blocks. The interior is entered by a double-hung door from the yard and probably formed a loose box for cattle, but has been stripped of any historic fixtures and fittings. The modern roof structure is covered with corrugated iron but the weatherboarded roof-gables are probably original. Much of the southern gable has been removed to create a wide internal access to the adjoining southern shed (3) and the southern end of the eastern elevation has been rebuilt in studwork of late-19th or early-20th century appearance. The floor, like those of the adjoining sheds, is of modern concrete and tile.

5. Vehicle Shelter

The northern gable of the barn (1) is adjoined by a mid-20th century lean-to vehicle shelter with a roof and walls of corrugated iron and an open gable to the north. It extends to 4.25 m in length (14ft). The eastern elevation incorporates 19th century brickwork to a height of 1.25 m, and the building occupies the site of an earlier structure of similar proportions shown on the historic Ordnance Surveys and (probably) the tithe map of 1839. The timber-framed barn of two bays is complete in itself, and it is likely that this structure formed a separate stable of a kind that often adjoined the gables of local barns in the same manner.

Historic Significance

The timber-framed barn at Abbey Farm is an unusually small example of just two bays and 7.5 m in length, reflecting the scale of the 10.5 acre holding. It can be dated on stylistic grounds to the second quarter of the 19th century and appears to be shown on the tithe map of 1839. The building is well-framed in oak and is of considerable historic interest as it illustrates the nature of barns on very small tenanted farms (of which relatively few survive in anything like their original form). The intact rear door is a particularly unusual feature as most were later enlarged to accommodate vehicles. Despite its historic significance, however, the loss of its roof and part of the front roof plate means that it fails to meet the strict English Heritage criteria for listing. The mid-19th century shed to the west is also of some interest as an example of an inexpensive clay-lump structure in an increasingly rare vernacular material, but has also suffered extensive alteration. The remaining agricultural structures on the site are reconstructions of the 20th century and are not of historic value.

Appendix 1 (on accompanying CD): Full Photographic Record

Descriptions of Photographs in Appendix 1

Photograph no.

1. General view of site from St Margaret's Road to west showing site entrance on left.
2. General view of site from north-east showing barn complex to left and abandoned house in rear to right.
3. General view from north showing site entrance with abandoned house to right & barn complex to left.
4. Front (southern) exterior of abandoned house showing central entrance to right. Included for site context.
5. Exterior of barn complex from site entrance to south-west showing cement-block shed (2a) in foreground.
6. Exterior of barn complex from north-east showing barn (1) and open shelter (5) to left with clay-lump shed (4) to right.
7. Exterior of barn complex from north showing central yard with barn (1) to left and clay-lump shed (4) to right.
8. Eastern exterior of barn (1) showing principal entrance doors (reduced in height) to left and open shed (5) to right.
9. Western exterior of barn (1) from central yard showing corrugated iron open shed (5) to left.
10. Interior of open shelter (5) from north showing modern weatherboarding to northern external gable of barn (1).
11. Detail of eastern exterior of barn (1) showing 20th century weatherboarding with reduced principal entrance to left.
12. Interior of barn (1) from south showing oak frame of two bays with diagonal primary wall braces.
13. Interior of barn (1) from north showing original bolted knee-braces to tie-beam and 20th century rebuilt roof structure.
14. Detail from south of crude 20th century roof of barn (1) with tall-sectioned softwood rafters & nailed collars.
15. Western interior of barn (1) showing original small rear doorway to left with section of red-brick plinth.
16. Western interior of barn (1) showing original red-brick plinth and ground sill tenoned to original rear door jamb.

17. Eastern interior of barn (1) showing full-height entrance to right with original jambs but later studs above modern door.
18. New 20th century softwood roof-plate above position of original full-height entrance doors in eastern interior of barn.
19. Eastern interior of barn (1) showing bolted knee-brace and crude edge-halved scarf linking new softwood roof-plate on right to the original on the left.
20. Northern internal gable of barn (1) showing original oak studs with nailed primary braces below tie-beam (renewed above).
21. Southern internal gable of barn (1) showing original oak studs with nailed primary braces below tie-beam (renewed above).
22. Eastern interior of barn (1) showing 20th century inserted window to left and modern principal entrance doors to right.
23. Exterior of barn (1) from cement-block shed (2b) to west showing half-hung rear door in southern bay.
24. Northern exterior of 20th century cement-block shed (2b) to south of narrow central yard.
25. Interior of cement-block shed (2b) from east showing modern hay rack & half-hung door to yard to right.
26. Interior of 20th century cement-block shed (2b) from west showing barn (1) in rear.
27. Northern interior of cement-block shed (2b) showing door to yard with barn (1) to right.
28. Western exterior of cement-block shed (2a) seen from the site entrance.
29. Interior from west of cement-block shed (2a) showing boarded partition to eastern section (2b).
30. Exterior of clay-lump shed (4) from north-east showing 20th century extension (3) to left.
31. Eastern exterior of clay-lump shed (4) right and 20th century studwork addition (3) left, both with half-hung doors.
32. Western exterior of clay-lump shed (4) from south-west showing studwork addition (3) in centre and block-work shed (2a) to right.
33. Western exterior of clay-lump shed (4) showing tarred daub with vertical boarding of addition (3) to right.
34. Detail of western exterior of clay-lump shed (4) showing decayed clay-lump fabric with cement render and repair & showing the studwork extension (3) to right.

35. Western interior of clay-lump shed (4) showing cement-rendered walls and 20th century corrugated iron roof.
36. Northern internal gable of clay-lump shed (4) showing studwork of roof above cement-rendered wall fabric.
37. Eastern interior of clay-lump shed (4) showing original entrance with later studwork to right.
38. Eastern interior of clay-lump shed showing later studwork to right of original entrance with hook for horizontal bar.
39. Southern interior of clay-lump shed (4) showing removed section of fabric adjoining later shed (3) to left.
40. Southern exterior of clay-lump shed (4) from adjoining studwork shed (3) showing boarded gable & original fabric to left.
41. Eastern interior of 20th century studwork shed (3) showing half-hung door to yard to left.
42. Western interior of 20th century studwork shed (3) showing southern gable of clay-lump shed (4) to right.
43. Interior of 20th century studwork shed (3) from north showing rendered wall of cement-block shed (2) to south.

(Photographic Appendix 2 follows on pp.13-17)

Appendix 2 (pp. 13-17): Selected Printed Photographs



Illus. 1 General view of the site from St Margaret's Road to the west showing the site entrance in the centre with the barn complex to the right and the abandoned former farmhouse to the left.



Illus. 2 The exterior of the barn complex from the north-east showing the barn (1) with the open shelter (5) adjoining its northern gable to the left and the clay-lump shed (4) to the right. The former farmhouse is visible in the trees to the rear.



Illus. 3 The eastern exterior of the barn (1) showing its principal entrance doors (reduced in height) to the left and the open shed (5) to the right.



Illus. 4 The western interior of the two-bay barn (1) showing its original small rear doorway to the left with a section of exposed red-brick plinth. The oak studs respect the door, and the ground sill is tenoned and pegged to its jamb.



Illus. 5 The eastern interior of the barn (1) showing the position of the original full-height entrance doors to the right. The present doors and the narrow softwood studs above were inserted in the 20th century (along with the roof structure and section of roof-plate immediately above) but the jambs to left and right are original features.



Illus. 6 The narrow central yard from the north showing the barn (1) to the left and the clay-lump shed (4) with its later southern extension (3) to the right. The 20th century cement-block shed (2b) is visible in the rear.



Illus. 7 The western exterior of the clay-lump shed (4) seen from the site entrance to the south-west showing the 20th century block-work shed (2a) to the right and the studwork addition (3) in the centre.



Illus. 8 The western exterior of the clay-lump shed (4) showing its tarred daub with the vertical boarding of the studwork addition (3) to the right. A section of decayed clay-lump fabric is exposed to the left of the scale.



Illus. 9 The western interior of the clay-lump shed (4) showing its cement-rendered walls and 20th century corrugated iron roof.



Illus. 10 The southern exterior of the clay-lump shed (4) as seen from the adjoining studwork shed (3) showing its boarded roof-gable and original clay-lump fabric to the left. The right-hand section of the gable has been removed to link the two sheds.