

HISTORIC BUILDING SURVEY OF
A BARN AT PRAYORS MANOR
PRAYORS HILL
SIBLE HEDINGHAM
ESSEX



Essex County Council

Field Archaeology Unit

MAY 2011

**HISTORIC BUILDING SURVEY OF
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SIBLE HEDINGHAM
ESSEX**

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Essex CM1 1QH

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**HISTORIC BUILDING SURVEY OF
A BARN AT PRAYORS MANOR
PRAYORS HILL
SIBLE HEDINGHAM
ESSEX**

Client: Edward Parsley Associates Ltd on behalf of Mrs Capel Cure

FAU Project No.: 2399

NGR: TL 7750 3438

Planning Application: BDC 10/01498/FUL

OASIS No.: 101466

Date of Fieldwork: 20th April 2011

1.0 INTRODUCTION

A programme of historic building recording was undertaken by Essex County Council Field Archaeology Unit (ECC FAU) on a Grade II-Listed barn at Prayors Manor prior to residential conversion. The work was commissioned by the architects, Edward Parsley Associates on behalf of the owner and carried out in accordance with a brief issued by the Historic Environment Management team of Essex County Council (ECC HEM), who also monitored the work.

Copies of the report will be supplied to ECC HEM and the Essex Historic Environment Record (EHER) at County Hall, Chelmsford. The archive will be stored with Braintree Museum. An OASIS online record has been created at <http://ads.ahds.ac.uk/oasis/index.cfm>.

The barn was probably built in the mid-19th century as a granary and is currently used as a garage and garden store. It is located next to a small 18th century brick-built structure, possibly a former kiln, not mentioned in the Listing, but also subject to the conversion works. They stand apart from the grade II-Listed 17th century farmhouse and late Victorian planned farm, which were not subject to record.

2.0 BACKGROUND

2.1 Site location and description

Prayors Manor (TL 7750 3438) lies on the eastern side of Sible Hedingham, close to the neighbouring parish of Castle Hedingham. The house and grounds occupy two acres of land comprising well-managed gardens and lawns, with the 17th-century (or earlier) Grade II Listed timber-framed farmhouse (LBS 408778) at the north end, close to the former farm, and the barn located separately; close to the boundary with the 14th century St Peter's Church and the road (fig. 1 & cover plate). Access is by a driveway roughly opposite the Wethersfield Road junction that forks off to the house and former granary. A second trackway, located slightly further along the road, leads to the late 19th century farm, which is in separate ownership and appears to be currently redundant (fig.1).

The barn was Listed in 1984, and is described as follows:

Barn. C17/C18. Timber framed and weatherboarded. Red tiled gambrel roof half hipped to left. Brick plinth. Left vertically boarded door, central panelled door and red brick buttress. Also included for Group Value with house and church (LBS 408779).

Before its current use as a garden store and garages, the barn functioned as a granary, and grain bins survive on the first floor. Some of the side walls were lost in the garage conversion, but other parts of the structure survive well.

2.2 Planning background

A planning application for residential conversion was submitted to Braintree District Council (BDC) in November 2010 (10/01498/FUL). Mindful of its Listed status and the impact of conversion on the historic integrity of the building, ECC HEM advised BDC that a full archaeological condition should be attached to the planning consent, based on advice given in Planning Policy Guide Statement 5: Planning for the Historic Environment (Communities and Local Government Dept CLG 2010).

2.3 Historical background and development

Cartographic and documentary research was undertaken at the Essex Record Office (ERO), Chelmsford, to understand the origins and development of the structure in the context of the farm and manor house. List descriptions and secondary sources were also studied. No mention is made of either structure in the historic sources, but its development can be found through cartographic evidence. The results are presented below with accompanying ERO

references in brackets. Historic map extracts included in the report as figures 2-4 have been enlarged to provide greater clarity.

The Manor of Prayors derives its name from the family of Robert De Praeres who held the manor in the 13th century (Reaney 1969) under the ownership of the Earls of Oxford at Hedingham Castle. It was the chief manor of the parish and also known as the Manor of Hengham Sible and 'Boure Hall' (Morant 1763).

The house at Prayors is Listed as 17th century or earlier (LBS 408778). A beam inside is carved with the date 1678, but there are suggestions it was built as a hall house c.1550 (SALE/B8207).

Building 1 (granary) is Listed as 17th or 18th century in date, although its form is more likely to be 18th or early 19th century. A structure within its broad location appears to be shown on Chapman and Andre's Essex map of 1777 (fig.2), though this pre-dates it and is more likely to represent a postulated 18th century small-scale malthouse, of which only the kiln (building 2) remains standing. Other structures on the map are likely to represent an early scattered farmstead around the farmhouse.

The 1840 tithe map of Sible Hedingham (D/CT 174) depicts building 2 standing on its own, prior to the granary being built (fig. 3). By this time the malthouse, likely to have been timber-framed, had been demolished, leaving only the kiln. The accompanying tithe award lists the house and gardens as Plot 19 which is described as 'yards and homestead' (D/CT 174A). At the time, Prayors Farm was owned by Joseph Cooke and Aneurin Owers and tenanted by William Fisher. The holding was largely arable, with c.60 acres of land concentrated on the western side of the road.

Sometime between 1840 and 1876, the date of the first edition Ordnance Survey map, granary 1 was constructed, built onto the redundant kiln, whose roof was replaced and interior gutted. A smaller building was constructed on the south-western end of brick structure 2, which is no-longer standing, and there is a protrusion on the north-east end (fig. 4) that may represent a loading bay associated with a first floor doorway on this side (fig. 6).

Between the dates of the first and second edition Ordnance Survey maps (1876 and 1896), the farm was relocated to its present position north of the house (fig. 1).

By 1991 the farm was no longer in the same ownership as the house and was probably redundant. The house had been refurbished (SALE/B8207) and it is possible the granary was converted to its present use at the same time

3.0 OBJECTIVES

The purpose of the historic building record was, as outlined in the brief, to provide a detailed record of the Listed building in its present state prior to conversion. For the benefit of the report, it is described under its two components, the granary (1) and former kiln (2).

As part of the work, the record was required to address the following: plan form, materials and method of construction, dating and phasing, function and internal layout, fixtures and fittings, additions and modifications and its role within the post-medieval farm.

4.0 DESCRIPTION OF WORKS

The building was recorded using drawings (ground floor plan and elevations) supplied by the architects. A numbered block plan has been produced to show its location in relation to the house and farm (fig.1).

A series of photographs (digital and 35mm black & white print) were taken to record the structure internally and externally. Specific shots were taken of any areas of important architectural detail, fixtures or fittings. A representative selection of photographs is reproduced at the back of the report as plates 1-16. The remainder can be found in the archive.

Documentary and cartographic research, outlined in section 2.3, was undertaken to investigate the origins and development of the building.

5.0 BUILDING DESCRIPTIONS

5.1 General description

The building comprises a timber-framed and weatherboarded granary and a tall square brick structure, not mentioned in the List description, but possibly a former kiln to an earlier malthouse, not previously identified (plates 1 & 2).

Much of the ground floor layout of the granary was lost when the garage conversion occurred, but the upper floor survives well. The brick garage has lost its original roof and parts have been rebuilt. Internal descriptions are provided under current function, as shown on the architect's plans.

5.2 Granary 1 (garden store and garage)

The main structure is a two-storeyed timber-framed and weatherboarded building laid out over four bays, with dimensions of c.10m by 5.7m and a height of 6.7m. Historically the first floor was used for storing grain and appears to have not been used for any other purpose since. There is evidence on the floor below for a cart bay and stabling for horses, and probably a workshop associated with the house rather than the farm.

Where original walls remain, they are set on a brick plinth constructed from English-bonded 9" soft red bricks, indicative of a 19th-century date (Ryan 1996). The plinth is highest at the north-east end, where the ground slopes down towards the pond. It has a pegtiled gambrel roof, half-hipped to the north-east (plate 1).

5.2.1 External description

The main **north-west elevation** (plates 1 & 2) faces onto the driveway and grounds of the house. On the left side are modern brick steps leading to an original strap-hinged, ledged and braced boarded door, opening onto the stairs to the first floor. Separated by a wooden air vent is a modern doorway, which, unlike the other, is cut through the plinth. The door here is braced and boarded and set on steel T-hinges. A wide wooden lintel over the door corresponds to a break in the boarding that suggests there was a wider doorway here before, probably for carts (plate 1). Beyond the doorway to the south-west, brick piers have replaced the studwork walls to create two garage bays with electric doors.

The half-hipped **north-east elevation** (plate 3) has been altered very little, leaving the brick plinth and weatherboarding largely intact. However, a modern four-light casement window

has been inserted just below the hip, occupying the position of a former loading-door, whose outline may still be seen below the window (plate 1).

Much of the **south-east elevation** (plate 4) is obscured by a modern single-storey extension, built from Fletton bricks, which is to be retained in the conversion plans. It has modern casement windows and a lean-to slate roof. Next to it is a redundant Fletton-brick base to a former greenhouse. Ivy covers the external cladding.

The **south-west elevation** is built onto the north-east brick wall of garage (2) and is essentially part of the interior of building 2, though is worth mentioning here. The shared brick wall below eaves level shows redundant features associated with former use (plate 5), namely a blocked ground floor former doorway and wall hatch/window (fig. 5), and a first floor loading door (fig. 6). The wall plate that supports the granary gable rests on the top of the brick wall, with studs rising up to the ridge, the upper part of which is still clad in weatherboarding. Above the hatch, midway up the gable, are the remains of a wall vent that would have provided through-ventilation to the granary (plate 5).

5.2.2 Internal description

Ground floor

The current layout is divided between the garage and garden store in broadly equal measures by a modern brick partition wall (fig. 5). Historically the interior was divided into five c.4m bays. Timber-framing survives only in the garden store, parts of which are hidden behind modern boarding, added for tool fixtures (plate 6). The walls in the garage area were removed in recent years when the garage doors were fitted at the front and the extension at the back. The floors are concrete.

Construction in the **garden store** is consistent with 18th and early 19th century buildings, with quite large 15 x 20cm bay posts, to support the floor above, and narrow primary-braced studwork; usually four c. 10 x 8cm studs per bay with 31-35cm gaps between. Elm is used throughout. The studs are nailed rather than pegged together and all timbers are hand-sawn or cut.

Large bridging joists (c.24 x 22cm) span the width of the building and the floor construction above, though weak in places, is virtually intact. It is best seen in the garden store, where the two beams are neatly tapered into the posts either side (fig. 7). The beams are roughly-chamfered, although one has run-out stops, suggesting it is reused. The floor joists are coggled to the beam, a method used from the late 17th century onwards.

The stair is enclosed by 9 inch elm boards, neatly fitted around the treads, leaving the underside exposed (plates 6 & 7).

None of the original walls survive in the **garage** bays and the roof is kept in place by longitudinal steel joists (fig. 5). Bridging joists are cruder here and of softwood, probably Baltic pine (plate 8), with hooks attached for hanging tools or equipment (plate 9). A modern boarded ceiling obscures further detail.

First floor

Entry onto the first floor was by the stairs in the north-east bay (plate 10) but there was also a loading door on the north-east gable, perhaps associated with a hoist or lucam that is no longer present.

The first floor (plates 11 & 12) survives with no obvious modern disturbance. At this level there are four slightly wider c.5m bays, represented by narrow roof trusses. The first two bays are open-plan with 9 inch floor boards, a few of which are in poor condition and boarded-over. A small, 35cm-wide trap door with crude wrought iron T-hinges, perhaps to supply the horses below with feed, is located in the second bay (fig. 5, plate 13). There is no sign of any other trap doors.

Within the north-east gable is a former loading door, shown by a break in the wall, which was blocked when the modern window was fitted (plate 11).

Pine boarding lines the lower parts of the long walls up to the level of the four grain bins, but originally continued to purlin level. The grain bins, located in the second and third bays, measure approximately 2 x 2.5m each. Their construction employs timbers of similar scantling to the studwork with pine boarding attached. At floor level two lateral tie bars run through the bins to prevent the roof from spreading, which appear integral to its construction rather a secondary addition.

At the south-west end (plate 12) there are several features of note. Here, the gable next to the former kiln is lime-plastered on crude laths to the top of the bins. At floor level is a long partly-blocked hatch into the brick structure, interpreted as a former loading hatch onto the kiln floor, which was subsequently blocked when the granary was established. There are still fixtures for small doors on the outside of the wall and evidence for a low, partly blocked access door in the open part (plate 5). The surviving wall vent above it has a hexagonal

central shaft that originally held doweled wooden grills, short pieces of which remain (plate 15).

Located at the south-west end is a small loft (fig. 6, plate 16), perhaps used for hay or straw. It is a later feature, supported on timber poles between the purlins and clad in roughly-cut 6" floorboards and weatherboard. In the centre is a doorway whose door is missing but the catch remains on the left-hand side (plate 16).

The roof structure (fig. 7) is based on the 'gambrel' or mansard form, where the roof is broken into two pitches along the purlin line, allowing for greater headroom. Roof trusses contain narrow 2" x 9" tie beams pegged to the rafters, supported by nailed straight braces. Additional beams have been added in the second and fourth bays, both of which are nailed and fitted around the wall plates (plate 12). The collars at the top of the roof are also nailed, and trenched around the purlin. Wall plates are in two lengths, joined by simple double-pegged bridle scarf joints (plate 14). The rafters have the same scantling as the wall studs below and follow the same lines. Very few have been replaced and these are mainly above the grain bins on the south-east side in bays three and four.

5.3 Former kiln 2 (garage/store)

According to the maps, the brick-built structure (2) pre-dates the granary, and this is borne out by differences in brickwork between the two. Square structures in a rural setting tend to be either kilns, allied to maltings or drying hops for brewing, or dovecotes. Either could be the case here, since there is very little internal evidence remaining for function, but given the perceived presence of a longer structure on the 18th century map and a likely loading hatch, a kiln seems the most likely.

The structure measures 4.1 x 5.8m with an overall height of 5m and is built from 8½ - 9" bricks arranged in Flemish bond, with some irregularly-spaced burnt headers. Brick dimensions suggest an 18th or early 19th century date (Ryan 1996). The roof is single pitched and slopes away from the main building, with weatherboarded sides on studs contemporary with the granary, presumably replacing a conical kiln roof. The corrugated steel sheeting now covering the roof is clearly modern.

The only external feature is a large opening on the main (north-west) elevation that is a later feature, though there is no evidence for doors.

The interior is described in the 1991 sale catalogue as 'suitable for a horse box or caravan' (SALE/B8207). Certainly its height makes this possible, but its current use is as storage facilities since it has not been fitted-out as a garage. The floor is unmade and the walls bare brick that has been rebuilt in places and former openings filled-in. The wall shared with the granary shows signs of a former doorway and hatch/window on ground floor level (fig. 5) and loading door (fig. 6) already mentioned, with a short (partly blocked) doorway on the right-hand side (plate 5). Any evidence for the kiln hearth and roasting floor no longer remain.

6.0 DISCUSSION

There are two forms of granary, one is generally a small square structure raised off the ground on staddle stones and the second is one that occupies the upper floor of another building, usually over a cartshed, stable or, on occasion, a cowhouse (Peters 2003). All granaries are above the ground to reduce the risk of damp and attack by rodents. On smaller farms they are invariably brick or timber in the vernacular tradition and contain separate, sometimes external, staircases and plenty of ventilation. Grain could be stored in bins or in sacks on open floors. The walls were often boarded or plastered for cleanliness and to limit the amount of dust-collecting surfaces (Peters 2003).

The granary at Prayors Manor conforms to these principles and characteristics and retains many such features, or their evidence. Such features were not identified when the structure was Listed probably because the building was not entered, a common factor of the 'drive-by Listings of the mid-1980s.

Particular features of interest inside the granary are the internal stair, grain bins and wall vents and it is interesting to note the presence of a former loading bay, which implies this was a large-scale operation, perhaps also serving other farms on the Prayors estate. It is difficult to understand the original spatial layout of the ground floor. However, the ventilation grill and wide former cart opening in the two northern bays (garden store) suggests a horse and cart were kept here, presumably a trap or carriage for the farmer rather than a farm vehicle which would be more likely sited at the farm itself. The first floor trap door would have been used to pass oats or chaff down to the horse troughs. Less is known of the other two bays (garage) because both outer walls were lost during the earlier conversion. One interesting point is the survival of several wrought iron hooks, suggesting this part was therefore perhaps more of a utility area, possibly part of a workshop or a sacking area.

The square brick structure onto which the granary is built can be easily overlooked but is in fact older than the granary. Although stripped of all but its bare brick walls, there is enough structural evidence to presume it was part of a small-scale malthouse seen on the 1777 map, though there is no documentary evidence for this. This interpretation is based on its height, plan-form and a significant feature: a redundant high-level loading hatch/door, generally used for transferring germinating grain onto the kiln floor. The fact that it is wider than the grain bins in the granary shows that it predates them, though would equally been useful in loading carts with grain, and it is possible the former kiln had a secondary use as a loading bay after the granary was built in the 19th century. Some of the other blocked apertures may be contemporary with its primary function or may have been introduced later on, but are not considered unusual.

The architectural style of the granary gives it an older appearance than its actual date. The gambrel/mansard roof form was popular in the 17th and 18th centuries and was used for granaries and also, coincidentally, maltings, where the high roof trusses made access along the floor easier. The siting of the building away from the farm indicates a separate function/relationship, though traditionally granaries were located close to the farmhouse, since grain was an expensive commodity. The location of a malting away from the house would however be sensible because of the risk of fire and it is interesting to speculate if it was fire that caused the demise of the earlier, 18th century malting.

7.0 CONCLUSION

Prayors was the most important manor in Sible Hedingham and part of the Castle Hedingham estate in the medieval and post-medieval periods. The present house is believed to have been built as an open hall, and is likely to have earlier origins than the List entry suggests. The granary is later in date than previously understood, utilising an earlier form of construction. A similar late 18th or early 19th century example was recorded behind Bradford Street in Bocking, which is likely to have a similar layout, with a cart bay and stalls for horses on the ground floor and grain bins on the floor above (Letch 2010).

Despite modern alterations, the granary has significant historic character as part of the East Anglian vernacular tradition. Although not of any great architectural significance, the level of preservation on the first floor is remarkable and with its surviving fixtures provides an interesting contribution towards the study of vernacular buildings. The role of the brick

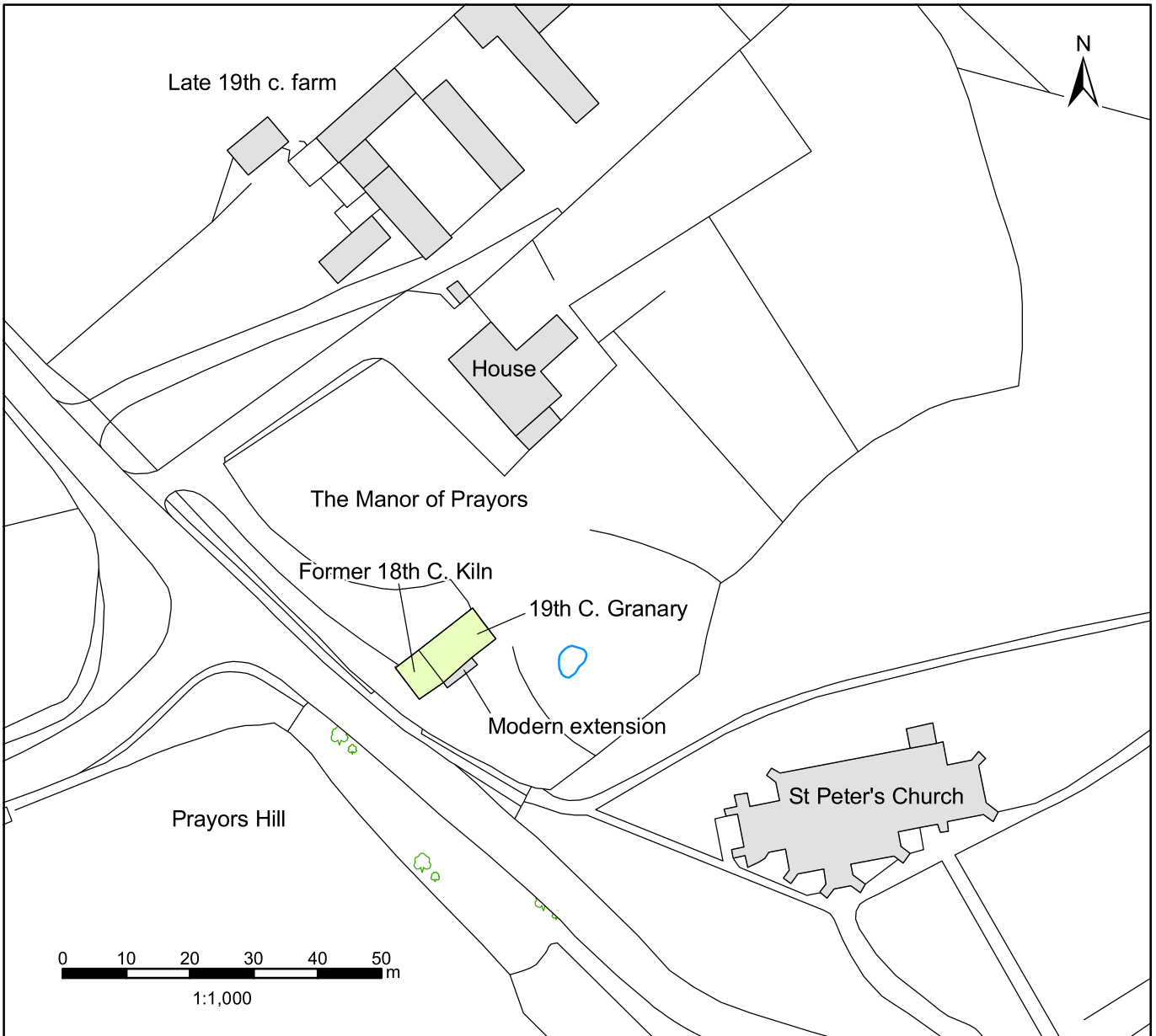
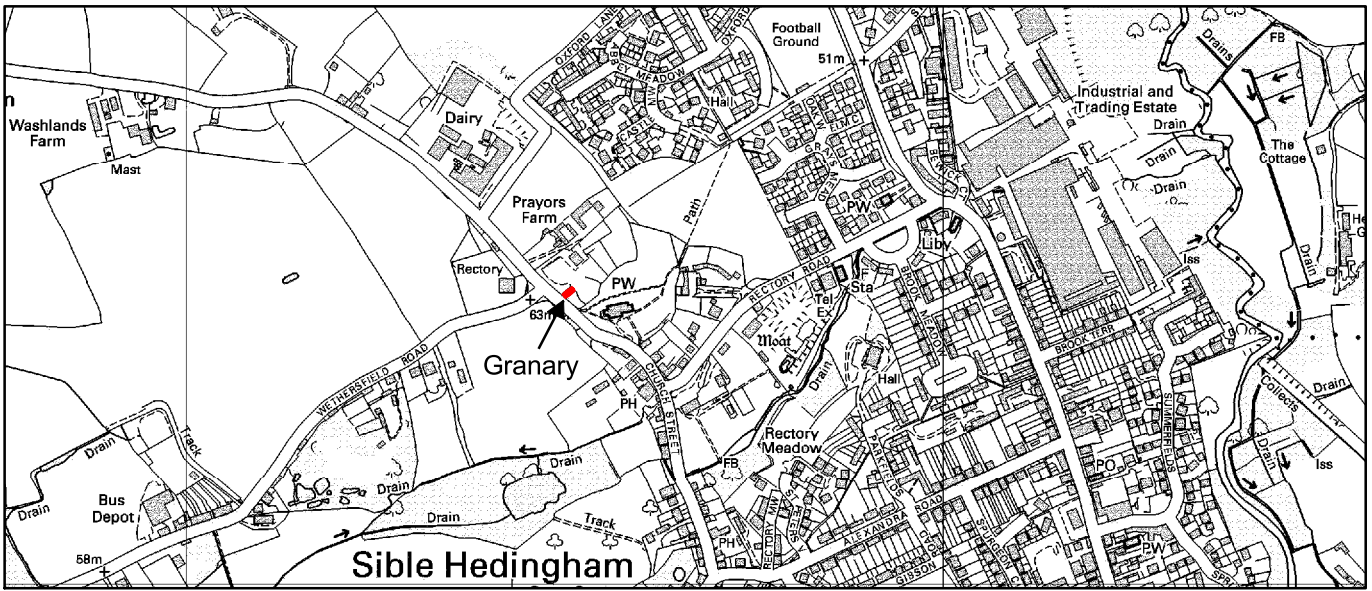
building, hitherto largely ignored, opens up a new understanding of the post-medieval development of Prayors Manor.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thanks are due to Dave Farrow of Edward Parsley Associates, for commissioning the works on behalf of Mrs Capel Cure, and for supplying drawings used in the survey and this report. Thanks also to the staff at the Essex Records Office for their assistance. Fieldwork, recording and photography were undertaken by the author. Illustrations were prepared by the author and produced by Andrew Lewsey. The project was managed by Adrian Scruby and monitored by Teresa O'Connor of ECC HEM, on behalf of the Local Planning Authority.

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Fig.1. Location and block plan

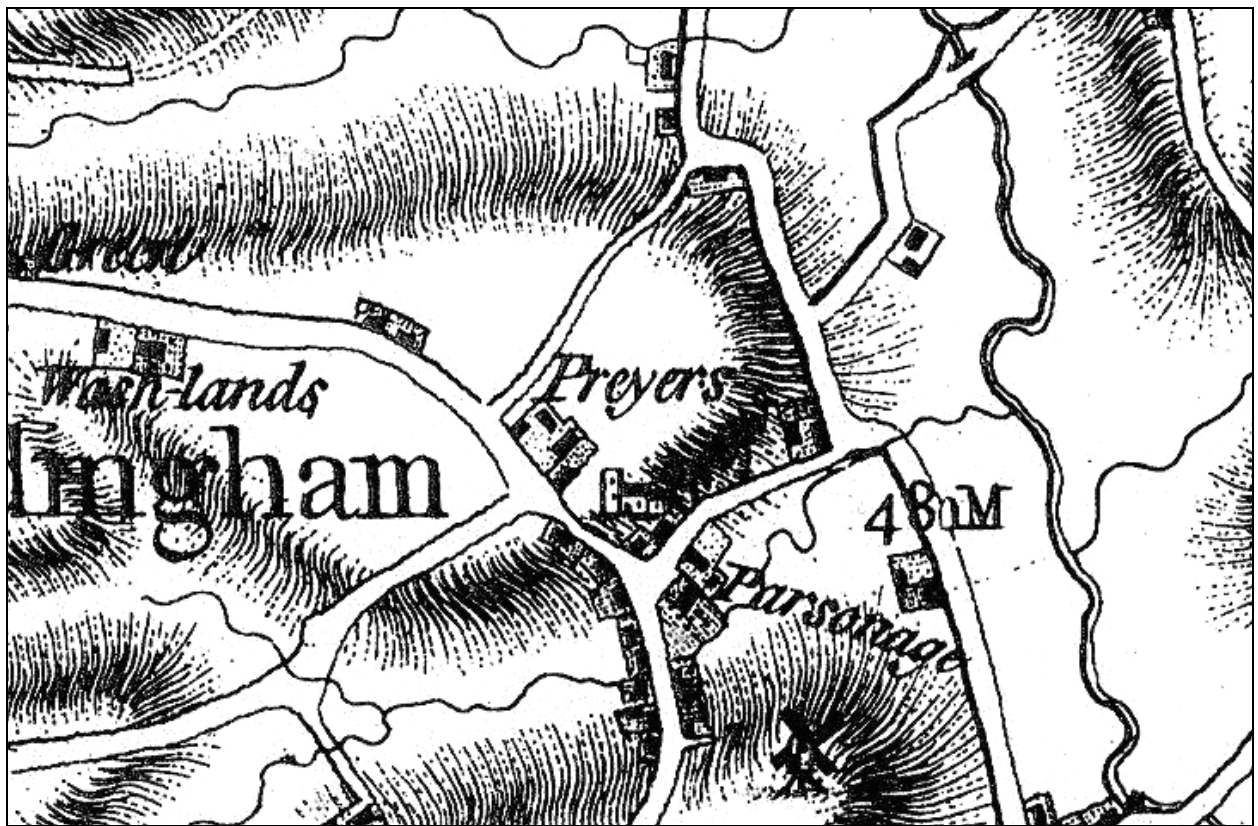


Fig. 2 Chapman and Andre map of Essex, 1777 (plate 3)

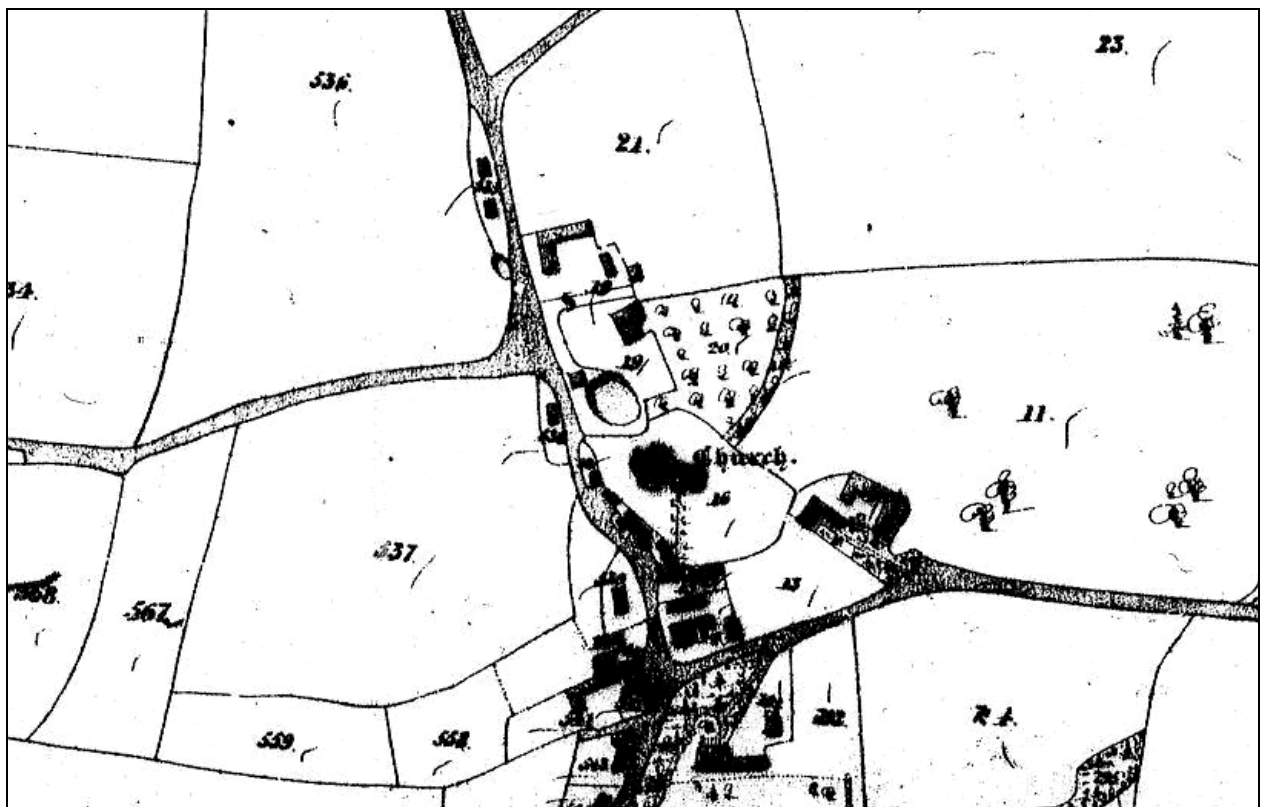


Fig. 3 Sible Hedingham tithe map, 1840 (D/CT 174)

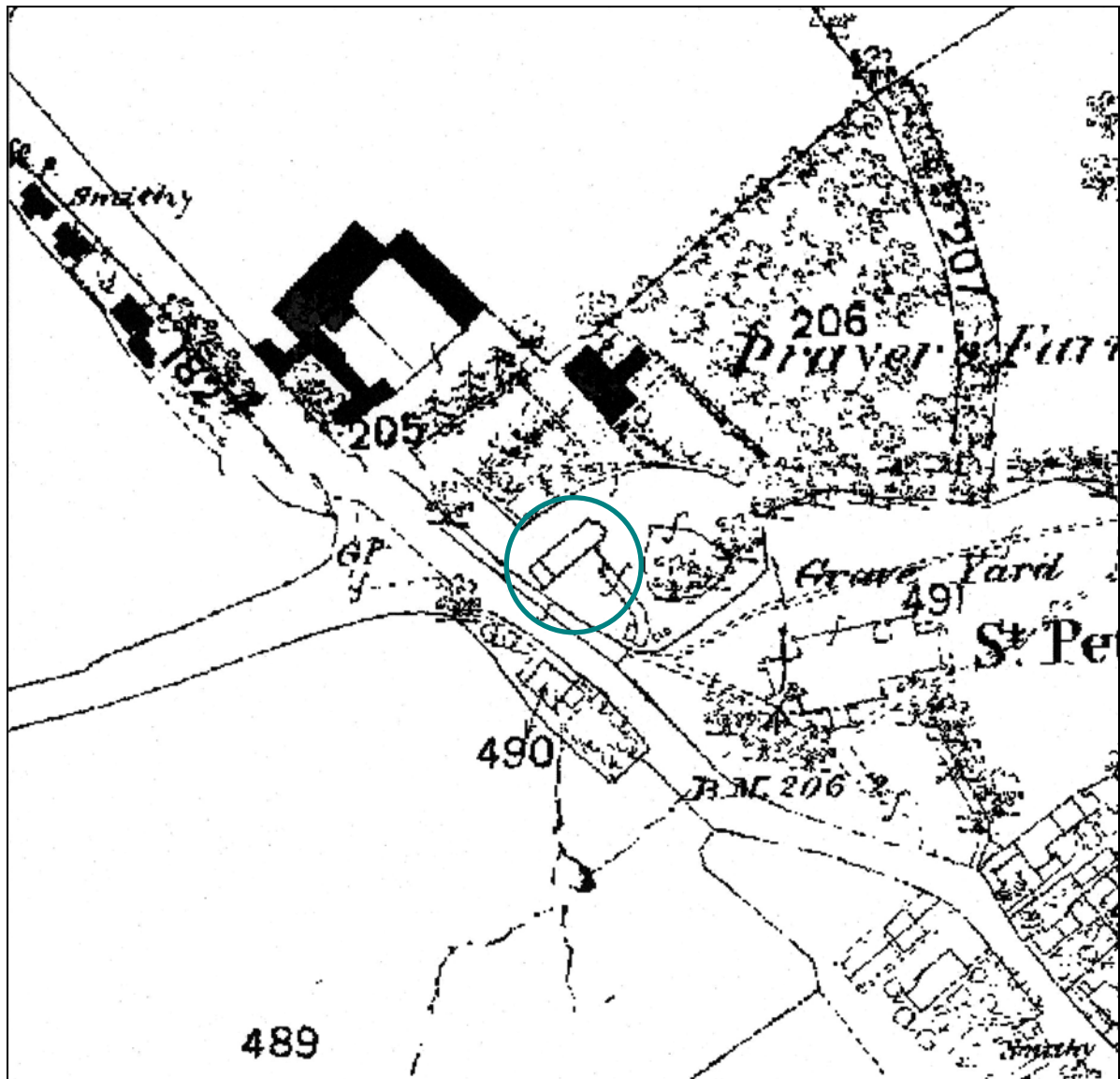


Fig. 4 First edition 25" OS map, 1876 (sheet 16.3)

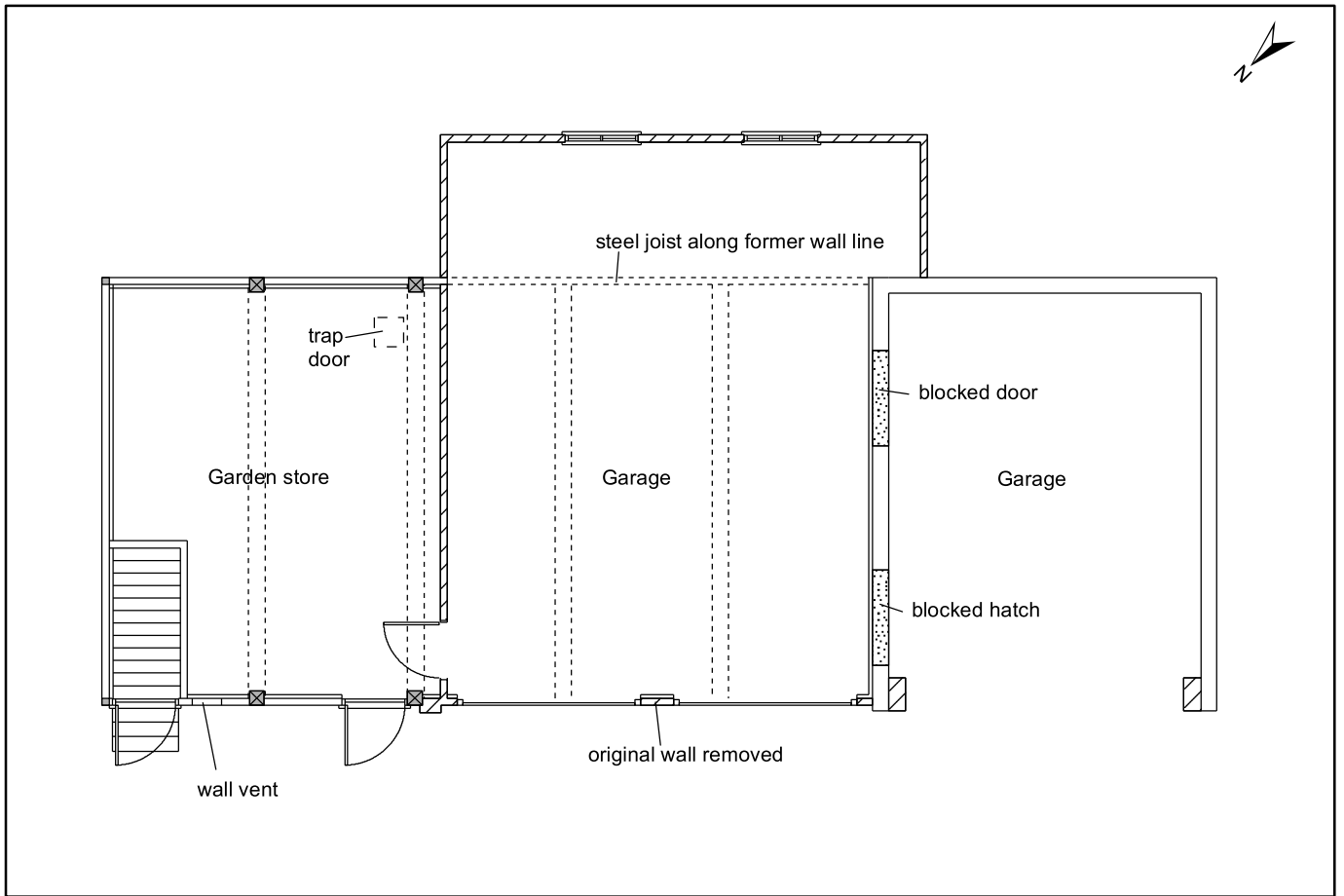


Fig.5. Ground floor plan

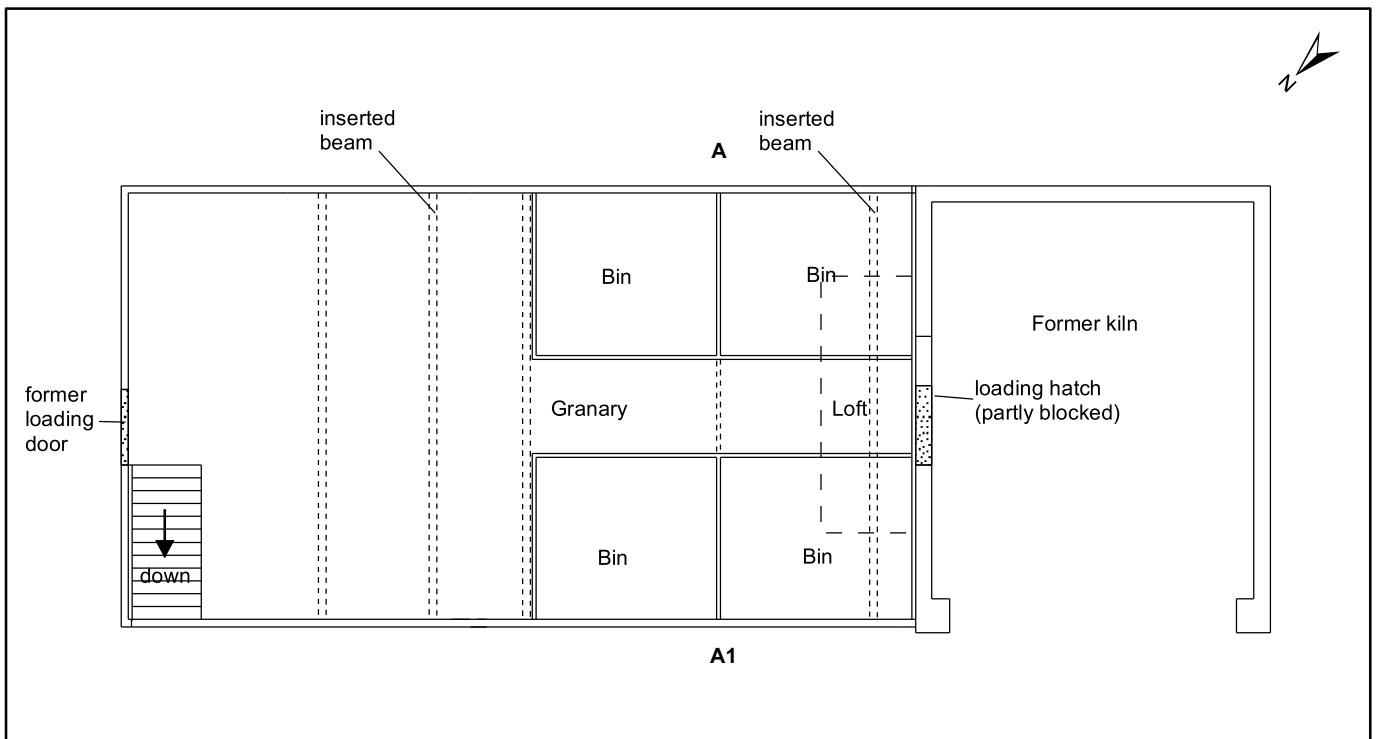

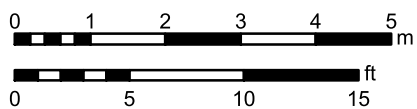


Fig.6. First floor plan

Key
 modern



1:100

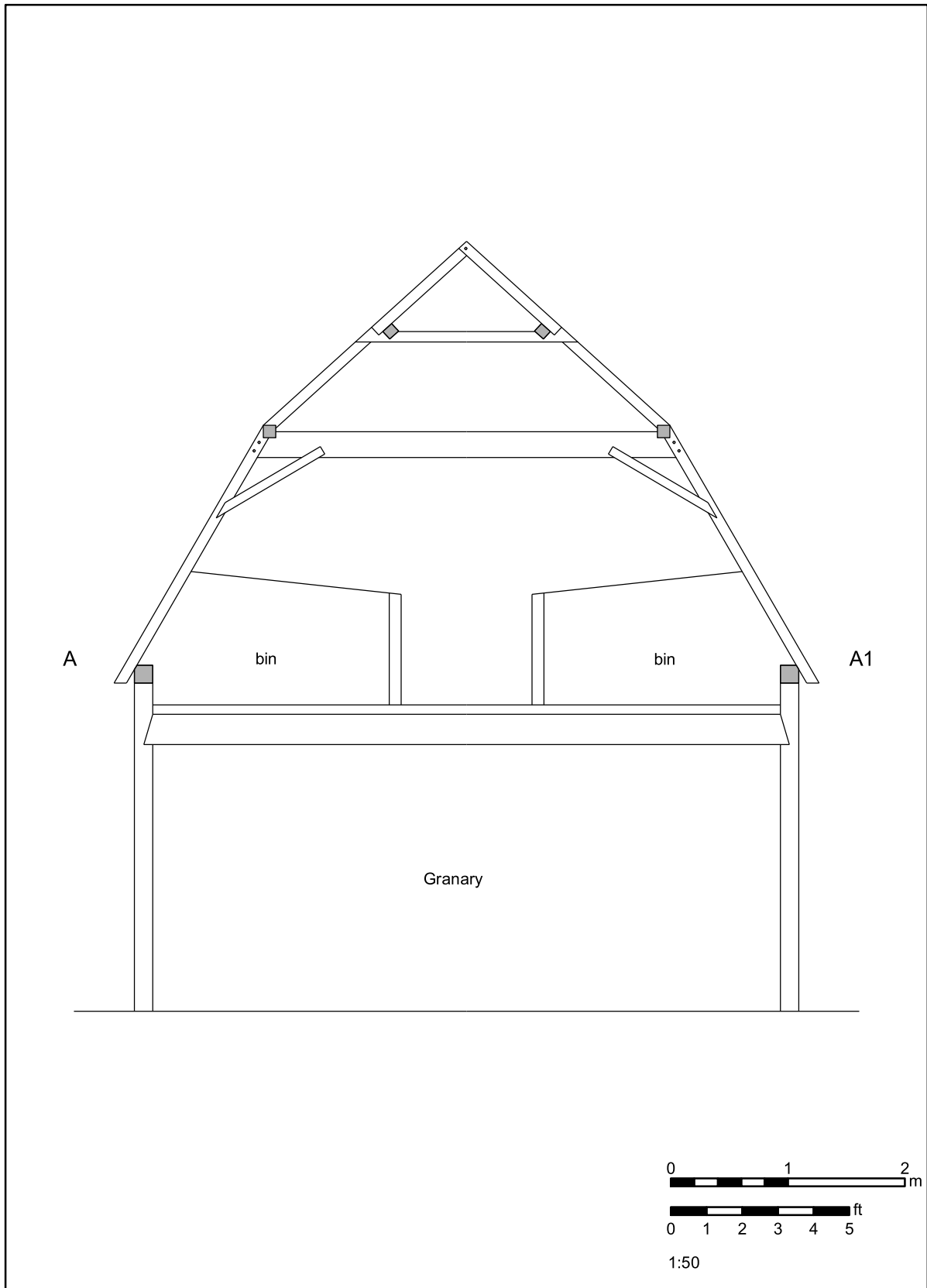


Fig.7. Section A - A1



Plate 1 Granary viewed to south



Plate 2 Granary viewed to east



Plate 3 Granary viewed to west



Plate 4 South-east elevation



Plate 5 South-west wall of granary and former kiln interior

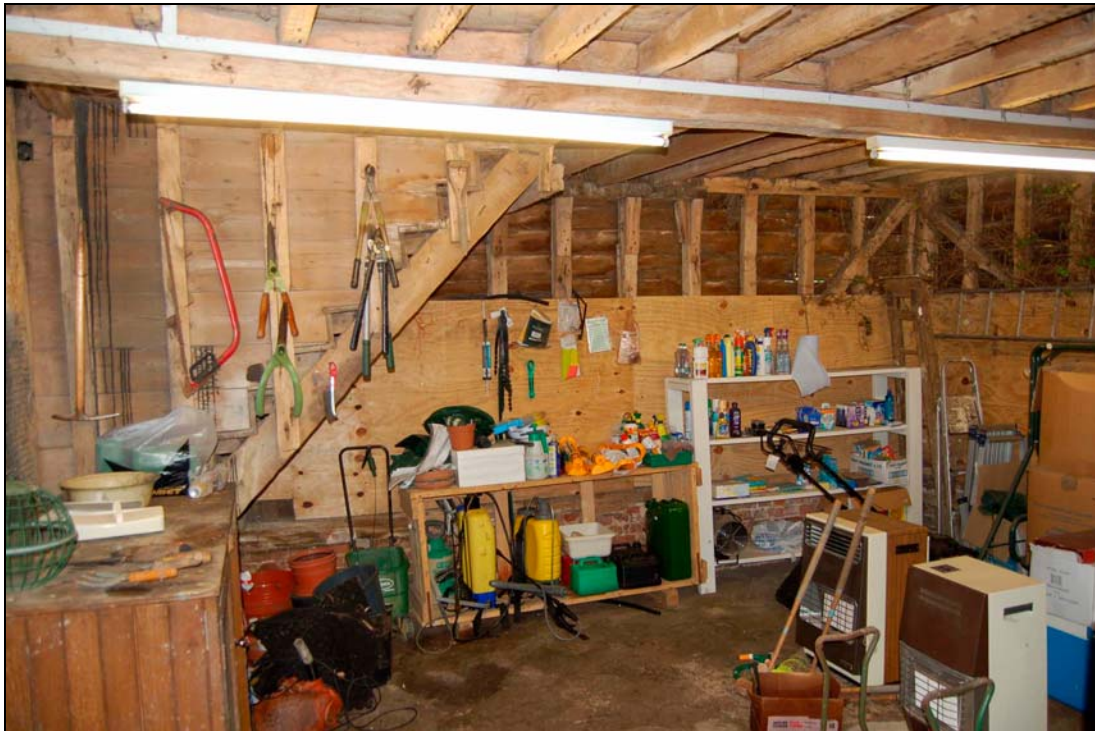


Plate 6 Interior of garden store viewed to north-east



Plate 7 Interior of garden store viewed to north-west



Plate 8 Interior of garage viewed to north-east



Plate 9 Iron hook on bridging joist in garage



Plate 10 Granary stairs



Plate 11 Granary interior viewed to north-east



Plate 12 Granary interior viewed to south-west



Plate 13 Trap door



Plate 14 Plain scarf joint in wall plate



Plate 15 Former vent at south-west end of granary



Plate 16 Hay loft

Appendix 1: Contents of Archive

Site name: Granary at Prayors Manor, Prayors Hill, Sible Hedingham, Essex

Project no. 2399

Index to the Archive

Document wallet containing:

1. Research Archive

- 1.1 ECC HEM design brief
- 1.2 ECC FAU written scheme of investigation (WSI)
- 1.3 Two copies of the client report (one unbound)
- 1.4 CD containing digital images, pdf-formatted report, architects drawings, etc

2. Site Archive

- 2.1 Photographic registers
- 2.2 Photographic record (colour digital & 35mm monochrome prints)
- 2.3 Site notes & annotated survey plans

Appendix 2: EHER Summary Sheet

Site Name/Address: Barn at Prayors Manor, Prayors Hill, Sible Hedingham, Essex	
Parish: Sible Hedingham	District: Braintree
NGR: TL 7750 3438	Oasis ref.: 101466
Type of Work: Building recording	Site Director/Group: Andy Letch, ECC FAU
Dates of Work: April 2011	Size of Area Investigated: N/A
Curating Museum: Braintree	Funding Source: Edward Parsley Associates
Further Work Anticipated? No	Related LBS Nos.: LBS 408778 & 408779
Final Report: Summary in EAH	
Periods Represented: Post-medieval	
<p>SUMMARY OF FIELDWORK RESULTS:</p> <p>A Level 3 building record was undertaken on a Grade II-Listed building in the grounds of Prayors Manor (previously Prayors Farm), Sible Hedingham, prior to residential conversion.</p> <p>Although Listed as a barn, it appears to be a 19th century granary attached to a probable 18th century kiln. The granary is timber-framed and weatherboarded with a tiled gambrel roof. It is 2-storeyed, with a ground floor cart bay/stable and probable workshop, but was heavily-altered c.1991 to become a garage. The upstairs, however retains its interior and features such as grain bins, internal stairs and a wall vent.</p> <p>The granary is built onto a tall, square brick structure that is part of a longer building range on 18th century mapping, but is standing alone on the tithe map (1840). Not only are its proportions consistent with a kiln, there is also a blocked first floor loading door that predates the granary. However, the roof has been lost along with any remains of the original kiln and kiln floor.</p> <p>Despite modern alterations, the granary has significant historic character as part of the East Anglian vernacular tradition. Although not of any great architectural significance, the level of preservation on the first floor is remarkable and with its surviving fixtures provides an interesting contribution towards the study of vernacular buildings. The role of the brick building, hitherto largely ignored, opens up a new understanding of the post-medieval development of Prayors Manor.</p>	
Previous Summaries/Reports None	
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