FARM BUILDINGS AT STROOD HALL TAKELEY ROAD LITTLE CANFIELD ESSEX

HISTORIC BUILDING RECORD





Field Archaeology Unit

April 2013

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Document Ref.	2654rep
Report Issue Date	April 2013
Circulation	Mr P. Curran
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	ECC Historic Environment team (Place Services)
	Essex Historic Environment Record

As part of our desire to provide a quality service, we would welcome any comments you may have on the content or the presentation of this report.

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FARM BUILDINGS AT STROOD HALL TAKELEY ROAD LITTLE CANFIELD ESSEX

HISTORIC BUILDING RECORD

Client: Mr P. Curran FAU Project No.: 2654 NGR: TL 5970 2147 Planning Application No.: UTT/0264/12/FUL & 0265/12/LB OASIS No.: 143702 Dates of Fieldwork: January 2013

1.0 INTRODUCTION

A programme of historic building recording was undertaken by Essex County Council Field Archaeology Unit (ECC FAU) on an early 19th century barn at Strood Hall prior to conversion to residential use. An external photographic survey was also carried out on associated outbuildings that are also included in the proposals. The work was commissioned by Cowper Griffith Architects and undertaken in accordance with a brief prepared by Essex County Council Place Services (Historic Environment) team.

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

Strood Hall Farm appears to have been established in the early 19th century by the Maynard family of Easton Lodge as a planned farm. The brick-built barn occupies the northern end of an unusual oval-planned farmstead, with timber-framed and cob-built outbuilding ranges either side and the farmhouse and ancillary buildings to the south. The farmhouse is Grade II-listed and the farm buildings are therefore curtilage-listed. Most of the original layout remains intact but has been affected by modern developments.

The importance of recording historic farm structures prior to conversion is outlined in *Living Buildings in a Living Landscape: Finding a Future for Historic Farm Buildings* (English Heritage 2006) and *Research and Archaeology Revisited: A Revised Framework for the East of England* (Medlycott 2011).

2.0 BACKGROUND

2.1 Site location and description

Strood Hall lies to the east of Little Canfield village at NGR TL 5970 2147, along the north side of the B1256 between Great Dunmow and Takeley, in a prominent position just past the junction with the A120 dual carriageway (fig. 1). The farm buildings form an oval plan with the brick barn at the north end and the farmhouse to the south. Inbetween, on either side of the yard, are timber-framed ranges originally containing cow sheds, feed-stores, piggeries etc. Large pre-fabricated modern cow sheds occupy much of the former yard (see cover plate) and modern stables have been constructed on the north-west side of the farm.

The farmhouse (EHER 37773), which is currently empty, faces the road with a curved driveway leading behind it to the farm buildings, which are also accessed from a track to the west (fig. 1). The barn, the main subject of this report, is in fair condition with some signs of deterioration to the roof and north-east corner, which is cracked and twisted, while the timber ranges have suffered more, particularly those on the east side of the yard. None of the structures have recently been used for agricultural purposes.

2.2 Planning background

A planning application to convert the barn and outbuildings into residential use was submitted to Uttlesford District Council (UDC) in February 2012 (UTT/0264/12/FUL & 0265/12/LB). Mindful of the historic significance of the farm buildings ECC Place Services recommended that a full archaeological condition for building recording be placed on any grant of planning permission to ensure 'preservation by record' of the buildings prior to conversion. These recommendations were for an English Heritage level 3 (2006) record of the barn and an external photographic survey of the outbuilding ranges.

2.3 Historic background

Cartographic and documentary research was undertaken by the author at the Essex Record Office (ERO), Chelmsford, to understand the origins and development of the farm. List descriptions and secondary sources were also studied. The results below represent the information gathered at the time, with accompanying ERO references in brackets. Historic

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

A map of 1767 indicates that prior to Strood Hall being established, the land was in the ownership of the Stone Hall estate. Stone Hall, to the north, is reached by the track defining the western edge of Strood Hall farm (fig. 1). According to the map the vacant plot for Strood Hall lies in 'Dunmow Field'. The term 'Strewds', from which the farm took its name, is indicated in field names on the map relating to pasture land (D/DMg/P14) and this term generally relates to marshy ground (Reaney 1969).

The farm does not feature on the first map of Essex, produced by Chapman and Andre in 1777.

According to the list description, Strood Hall dates to the early 19th century and carved initials dating to 1819 observed during the survey in the barn appear to support this.

The first map to show the farm is the Great Dunmow tithe map of 1840 (D/CT 199), which refers to it as 'Randall's Farm'. Barring the modern buildings that now dominate the layout, the map depicts the farm very much as it appears today, laid around a single enclosed yard with the curved driveway leading from the main road (fig. 2). At this stage, the farm lies on the very western edge of the town and is owned by Viscount Maynard of Easton Lodge and rented to John Randall. The fact that it is known by his name suggests the family already had a long tenure here, probably being there from when it was first tenanted. The accompanying tithe award (D/CT 199A) mentions a largely arable farm with a holding of C.70 acres, shown in figure 2.

In the mid to late 19th century, between 1840 and 1880, the large central yard was subdivided into several yards and additional structures, probably accommodation for cattle, added down the middle (fig. 3). By the end of the century (1897) these had been substituted with a long central shelter shed open to subdivided yards on both sides (fig. 4).

By 1912 the farm had fallen into dilapidation (D/F 35/2/256). Some of the Easton Lodge estate was sold off in this year, but Strood Hall is not included in the sale particulars (SALE/A280). Subsequent mapping from the 1920s and 40s indicate no changes to the layout.

According to Ted, the foreman from the site groundworkers, who grew up in the area, the farm was used in the early 1960s for rearing cattle and pigs; cattle in the barn, which benefitted from the ventilation provided by the high roof, and pigs in the surrounding ranges. The modern cattle sheds (see cover plate) that stood in the central yard were constructed around this time.

It is unclear when farming ceased but the site appears to have been redundant for some time.

2.4 Farming in the 19th century

The agrarian revolution began in the late 17th century with improvements in farming techniques and application, which continued into the 18th and 19th centuries to culminate in the Victorian ethos of 'High Farming'. Improvements in crop rotation heralded the end of the medieval three year crop cycle, and developments in animal husbandry led to the rearing of larger animals, while increased production of winter feed meant more animals could be kept for fattening over the winter months.

Improvement led to a reappraisal of farming resources. In the 1740s, the medieval scattered farmsteads began to be replaced by a more uniform, inter-dependant layout with the introduction of 'planned' or 'model' farms by rich improving landlords, based around the courtyard plan form. The buildings were arranged efficiently around the yard to follow the natural flow of materials: food and straw were provided for the animals in exchange for muck, meat and milk. Ideally the barn occupied the north side, providing the yard with shelter, and attached shelter sheds were arranged either side of the yard. One side often contained cattle sheds and loose boxes, the other stables. Cattle were fed in one or more smaller yards within the main yard, which was south-facing to maximise sunlight and warmth. An entrance on the southern side was common, and it was often here where feed and bedding stores and cart lodges were located, preferably along the roadside. In the yards manure was trod into straw, which was collected and added to the fields to increase crop yields.

Improvement accelerated between 1840 and 1870 as the farming economy was stimulated by population growth and increased demand for milk, meat and grain from urban areas. The new markets were opened up by the growing railway network. The importance of cattle in the farming economy was realised, leading to the expansion of farms and farm buildings. This period is known as the 'Golden age of Agriculture'. However, to most improving landowners, the expense of building a whole new planned farm like the 'model' farms was impractical. Instead, rather than demolish and build afresh, many added to and adapted their existing farms to the courtyard form. Generally the larger buildings, inevitably barns, were retained and new housing for livestock attached to replicate the courtyard layout. This was the prevailing trend in Essex.

By 1860 most farms included shelter sheds for cattle. Pigs were kept for fattening and to clear household waste, horses were used to pull ploughs, and carts and sheep were kept outside or in temporary shelters outside the main yard.

The Golden Age came to an end in the 1870s when bad harvests, coupled with the introduction of cheap American grain and Argentinean refrigerated beef, started a long-term agricultural depression. Farmers survived by cutting costs and improving efficiency still further. Although the worst was over by the end of Queen Victoria's reign, the depression lasted until after the First World War.

3.0 OBJECTIVES

The purpose of the historic building record was to provide an English Heritage level 3 (2006) record of the barn and a photographic record of the timber ranges in their present state prior to conversion works; the aim to preserve the structures 'by record'. As part of the work, the record addressed the following: plan form; materials and method of construction; dating and phasing; function and internal layout; fixtures and fittings; additions and modifications and the context of the farm within its contemporary landscape.

4.0 DESCRIPTION OF FIELDWORK

Prior to the start of fieldwork, site drawings (floor plans and elevations) were supplied by the client's architects, Cowper Griffith LLP, for use in the survey.

The fieldwork was conducted in two stages. The first stage recorded all aspects of the barn apart from the south elevation, which was obscured by the modern cow sheds at the time. Building descriptions were made and a section was drawn across the barn. The second stage occurred after the cowsheds and wooden stables were demolished, which provided the opportunity to record the south side of the barn and to access the timber outbuildings for the photographic record. A brief descriptive record was made of the timber outbuildings either side of the barn to compliment the photographic survey A series of photographs (digital and 35mm black & white print) were taken to record the interiors and exteriors of the barn and specific shots were taken of any areas of important architectural detail, fixtures or fittings. General photographs in both formats were taken externally of the outbuildings. A representative selection of photographs is reproduced at the back of the report as plates 1-18. The remainder can be found in the archive.

5.0 THE BUILDINGS

5.1 Barn

The barn is a long rectangular structure standing on the northern side of the farmyard, facing out to the fields. It is built of brick with a 45°- pitched slate roof and measures 34m in length, 8m in width and 8.50m in height.

The building is constructed in 'pier and panel' form, with brick piers and recessed arches. Large cart doorways are located along the north and south elevations and single, projecting, plain brick imposts connect the springing points of the arches to the piers either side and provide architectural detail. Walls are built in 14-inch brickwork set on a stepped plinth with no foundations. The bricks are Flemish bonded $8\frac{3}{4}$ - 9-inch soft reds with dimensions of c.225mm x 110mm x 65mm, indicative of an 18th or early 19th century date (Ryan 1996) and laid in a lime mortar.

Most of the built fabric is original and largely unaltered. Modern features include the replaced north cart doors, concrete ramps on the north side and plastic rainwater goods.

Inside, the barn is nine bays long with bare brick walls, concrete floors and a high machinesawn timber roof frame. The interior is open-plan, suggesting that fixtures and fittings associated with its use as a barn were removed when the building was converted to hold cattle.

5.1.1 External description

North elevation

The north wall (plate 1) contains three evenly-spaced large cart doors set at regular intervals on the second, fifth and eighth bays. All the doors on this side are of modern ledged braced and boarded type (a traditional form) held on steel T-hinges. The brick panels between the piers contain tall recessed semi-circular arches picked out in brick headers. Original air vents within the head of each have been blocked with brick, but their outlines suggest a diamondshaped design (plate 2).

Tie rod plates are evident at the east end of the elevation in an attempt to control the twisting of the north-east corner (fig. 5, plate 2). Some iron door hooks survive to the former doors.

End elevations

The east and west gables continue the pier and panel pattern of the main elevation. In the east gable ivy covers the second of the two arches and the brickwork has suffered to the north-east corner and the gable itself (plate 3). Ivy obscures a good deal of the west elevation and the presence of small timber stables here also affected the view prior to their removal (plate 4).

South elevation

The original yard elevation (plates 5 & 6) has until recently been hidden by the modern cow sheds, which were demolished during the course of the survey. This side continues the pier and panel theme of the other walls, but retains part of the central and east doors (fig. 5). The principal one of these, occupying the central bay, comprises the main cart doors and a set of upper doors that could presumably be opened for carts with larger loads (e.g. at harvest time). Those below are missing (plate 7). Part of the lower door on the eastern end remains and has a typical ledged, braced and battened form (plate 8). The cart doors at the opposite end were replaced with a sliding door providing access to a small modern electrical switch-room located between the barn and later cowshed (fig. 5 & plate 6).

5.1.2 Internal description

The interior (plates 9 & 10) is laid out over nine regular 3.5m-wide bays. The floor is laid to concrete for the most part but in the three bays to the west is laid over a clinker bed (fig. 5 & plate 10). The walls are bare-brick and largely featureless and the only light to enter the interior would have been from the vents (prior to blocking) and the old cart doors. Wooden 'leaps' would have kept cattle from straying into the barn from the yard and the leap-board slots remain either side of the door thresholds (plate 8). There are few features within the barn apart from a raised diesel tank in the north-west corner, which is post-war in date (fig. 5 & plate 10, right).

The main point of interest is some 'graffiti' carved into the side wall of the central doorway on the north side, which reads W.GILBY S.WIL(KS?) 1819 (fig. 5 & plate 12). The script is neat and well-carved and is interpreted as providing the build date for the barn. The name

J.LEECH is carved below in similar script and there are other names below that are too faint to read. An example of later graffiti is located on the opposite wall beside the west door, which reads ?PSP 1853 (fig. 5, plate 12).

The raking strut roof frame is constructed from machine-sawn timbers, suggesting it is a later replacement since machine-sawn trusses were not common until the latter part of the 19th century. On each of the bays, the principal rafters are tenoned into the cross beams and kept under compression by a vertical iron tie rod at the apex (fig. 6). The struts are located either side of the rod, in-line with purlins supported by wooden cleats at the ends (fig. 6).

5.2 Timber outbuildings

The timber outbuildings represent former loose boxes, feed stores, open-sided cow sheds, etc associated with the early 19th century farm that were viewed after the modern cowsheds and stables were removed (fig. 1). Almost the full length of the outbuilding range on the west side of the yard (plates 13-16) survives but only one part of the east side remains, the latter in a dilapidated state (plates 17 & 18). All buildings are timber-framed and weather-boarded on the yard-facing sides and cob-built on a brick plinth at the back. Roof trusses are in the same form as those in the barn and the majority of roofs are slated, but some parts have been replaced with modern corrugated iron sheeting.

6.0 DISCUSSION

From the available evidence, Strood Hall farm was established in 1819 as a planned farm for the Easton Lodge estate on farmland formerly owned and farmed by Stone Hall. Mid 19th-century mapping depicts it as Randalls Farm, after the tenants who farmed it, and it was only later on (by 1880) that it was known as Strood Hall.

The surviving farm buildings originally belonged to a mainly arable farm, with the barn used for storing cereals and the outbuildings used for keeping cattle and other animals. However, during the agricultural depression towards the end of the 19th century, the farm shifted towards cattle rearing. The buildings were refurbished with new roofs and new shelter sheds were built within the large open yard, which was sub-divided either side. Cattle production increased during the 20th century and by the post-war period the barn was used solely to house cattle and modern cattle sheds were inserted into the former yard.

The original farmstead was built on an unusual oval or 'horse shoe' plan with the barn at the north end, enclosed south-facing yards with feed stores and shelter sheds on either side and the farmhouse and garden to the south, along with attached cart sheds and other utility structures. The reasoning for the oval form appears to be aesthetic and would almost certainly have taken longer to build. No comparable examples in Essex or further afield are known.

With the exception of the two side ranges the farmstead is built entirely of brick, including the barn itself, which would have been a considerable financial outlay at the time. The pier and panel form of the barn, with its arched eight bays and high roof, creates an imposing impression on the landscape and adopts a form more typical of industrial structures from the period. Unfortunately, aside from the shell of the barn, few historic features survive apart from the remains of cart doors on the south side that undoubtedly suffered in later years from their location beside the modern cattle sheds. The diamond-shaped vents within the arched panels are historically-interesting features that have subsequently been blocked. The use of brick in the barn contrasts with the more vernacular materials of the timber side ranges, particularly the use of cob in the outer walls, which was a common material used on East Anglian farms before many were rebuilt during the Victorian Golden Age of Agriculture.

7.0 CONCLUSION

Recent work published in the *Revised Framework for the East of England* (Medlycott 2011) states that the East Anglian Farmstead between 1750 and 1914 is a crucial, but understudied component of the East Anglian landscape. Planned farms such as Strood Hall were often created by wealthy estates to capitalise on a boom in agriculture after the Napoleonic Wars and to take advantage of prevailing improvements in agriculture. Despite later changes, a large part of the original complex survives. Redevelopment and refurbishment of this interesting site for new purposes will revive this prominent group of buildings, ensure the survival of the brick barn and enable the outbuildings to be retained and repaired.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thanks are due to Karen Lim of Cowper Griffith Architects for commissioning the survey and for supplying drawings used in the survey and report. Thanks also to Ian Silvester of G.E. & A.E. Silvester Building Contractors for facilitating the survey and Ted from the groundworkers, R.A. Swan, for his help. 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 of ECC FAU and monitored by ECC Place Services on behalf of the LPA.

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Appendix 1: Contents of Archive

Site name: Farm buildings at Strood Hall, Little Canfield, Essex Project no. 2654

Index to the Archive

Document wallet containing:

1. Research Archive

- 1.1 Two copies of the client report (one unbound)
- 1.2 ECC Place Services brief
- 1.3 ECC FAU wsi (method statement)
- 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: Farm buildings at Strood Hall, Takeley Road, Little Canfield, Essex		
Parish: Little Canfield	District: Uttlesford	
NGR: TL 9699 1448	HER ref.: 37773 (Grade II-listed farmhouse)	
Type of Work: Building recording	Site Director/Group: Andy Letch, ECC FAU	
Dates of Work: November 2012	Size of Area Investigated: N/A	
Curating Museum: Saffron Walden	Funding Source: Client	
Further Work Anticipated? No	OASIS No.: 143702	
Final Report: Summary in EAH	· · · ·	
Periods Represented: Early 19th century		

SUMMARY OF FIELDWORK RESULTS:

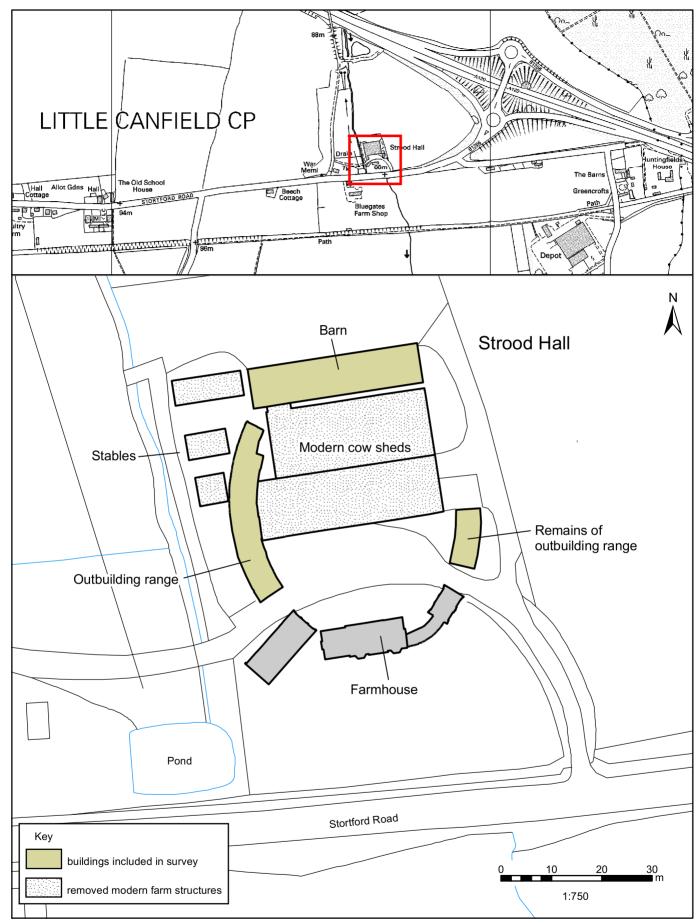
A programme of historic building recording was undertaken on an early 19th century barn at Strood Hall prior to conversion to residential use. An external photographic survey was also carried out on the remains of two outbuilding ranges that are also included in the proposals. The buildings form a large part of a planned farm believed to have been established by the Easton Lodge estate in 1819. The farmhouse at the opposite end of the site is Grade II-listed are currently unoccupied.

The barn is a large brick-built structure occupying the northern end of an unusual ovalshaped farmstead. It has a pier and panel form with a high roof (probably replaced in the late 19th century) and arched bays incorporating now-blocked diamond-shaped brick vents. The interior was latterly used to house cattle alongside modern cattle sheds that were removed during the course of the survey. There are few historic features apart from the remnants of cart doors on the south side and some graffiti that suggests a build date of 1819.

Timber-framed and cob-built outbuilding ranges are sited either side of the yard, forming an oval plan form with their curved walls. The west side survives almost intact but much of the east side was removed when the modern cattle sheds were constructed and the remainder is in a derelict state.

Planned farms such as Strood Hall were often created by wealthy estates during the early 19th century. A large part of the original complex survives and it is interesting to note the survival of vernacular cob-built structures within the predominantly brick complex. The farm layout fits the contemporary courtyard form but its oval shape is unusual and there are no known parallels in Essex.

Previous Summaries/Reports None	
Author of Summary: Andy Letch	Date of Summary: 4th March 2013



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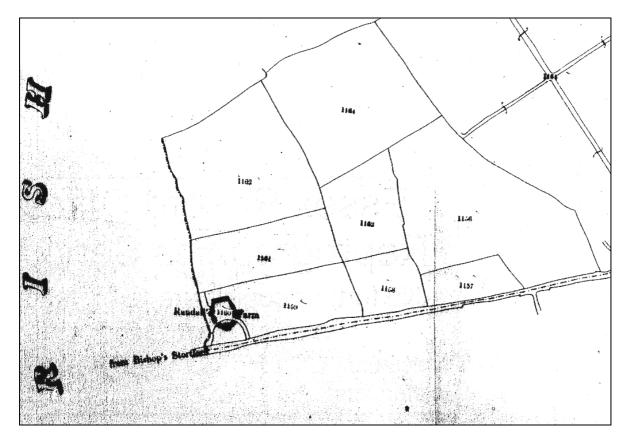


Fig. 2 Great Dunmow tithe map, 1840 (D/CT 199)

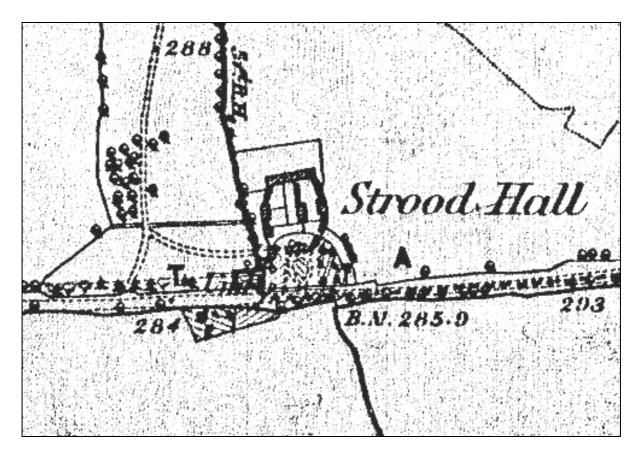


Fig. 3 First edition OS map, 1880 (sheet 23)

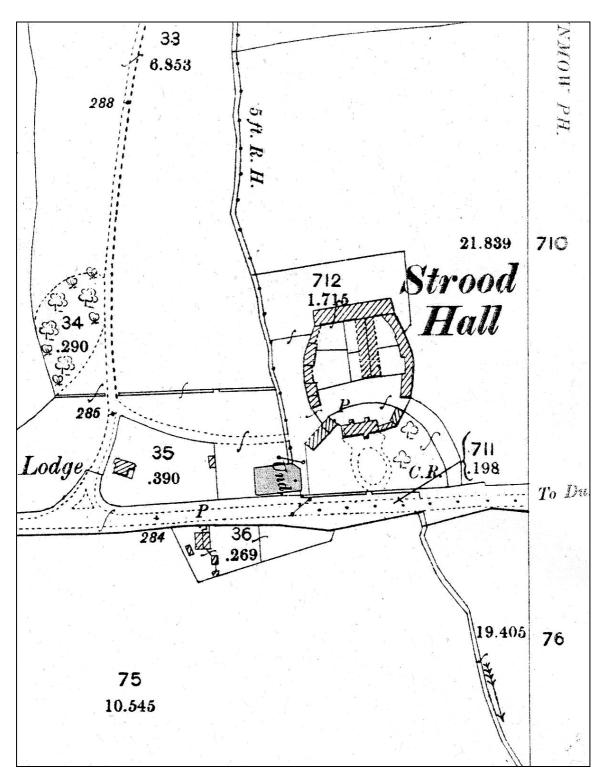
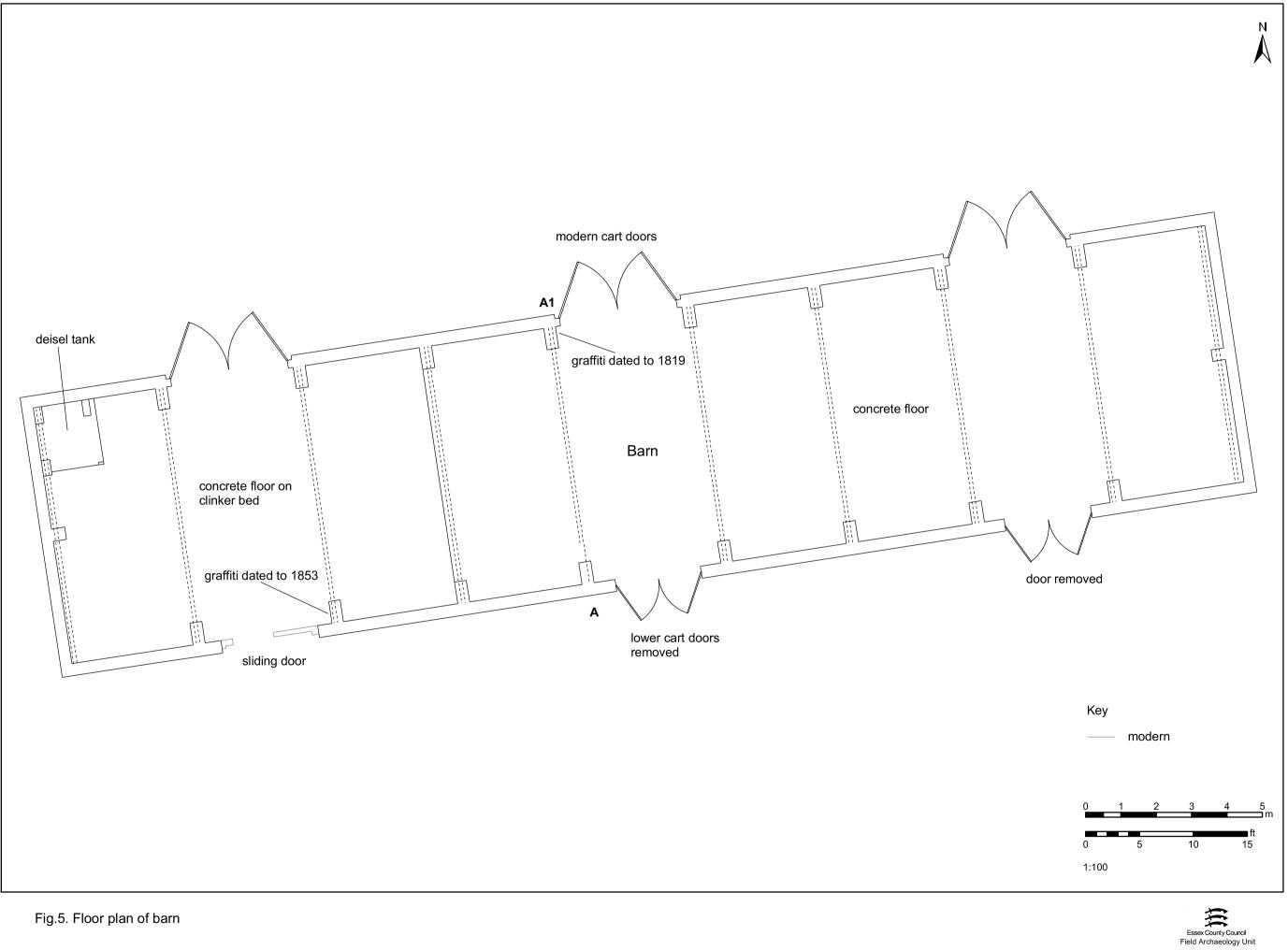
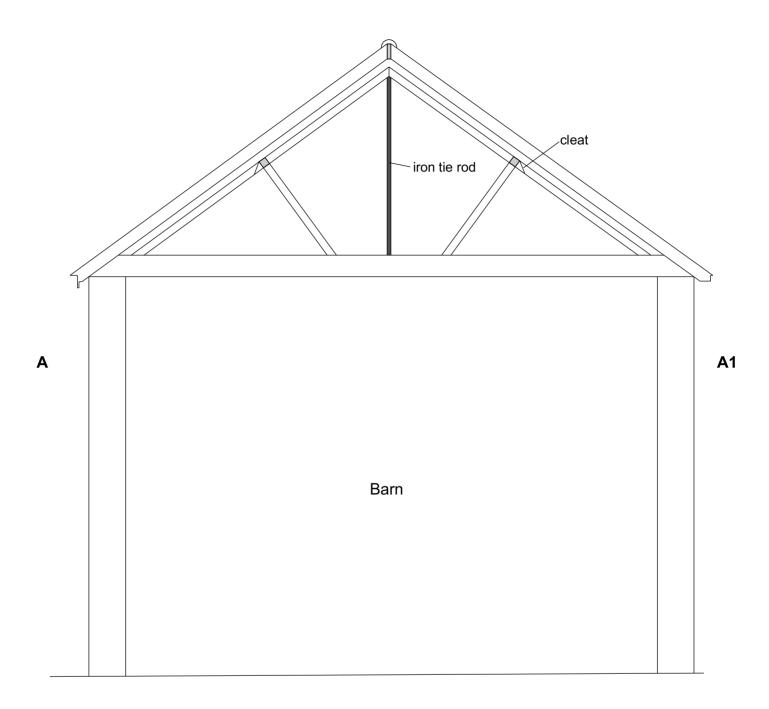


Fig. 4 Second edition OS map, 1897 (sheet 23/15)





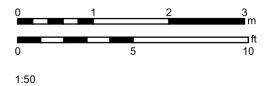




Fig.6. Cross section A - A1



Plate 1 North elevation of barn



Plate 2 Pier and panel detail at east end of elevation



Plate 3 East elevation of barn (with modern cow shed)



Plate 4 West elevation of barn (with modern stables)



Plate 5 Barn viewed to north-east



Plate 6 South elevation of barn

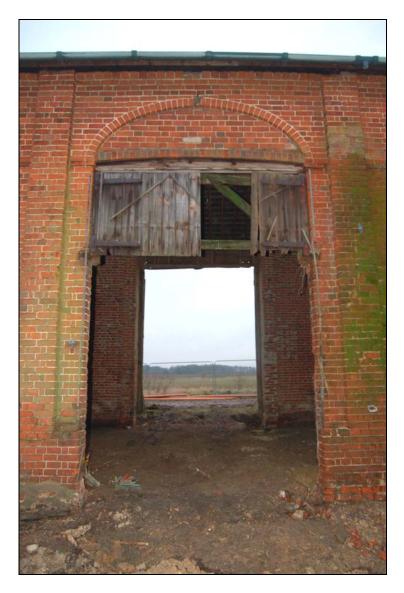


Plate 7 Main doorway on south side of barn

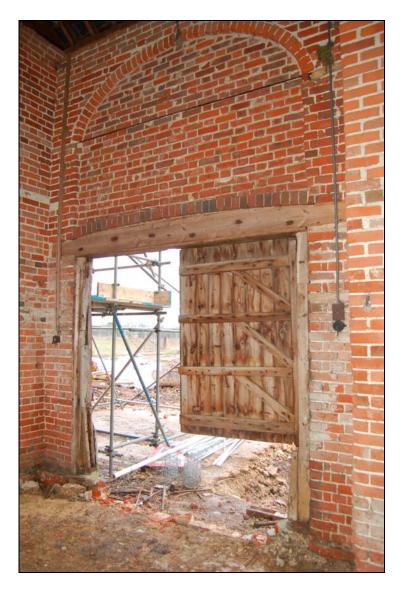


Plate 8 East doorway (viewed internally)



Plate 9 Barn interior viewed to west

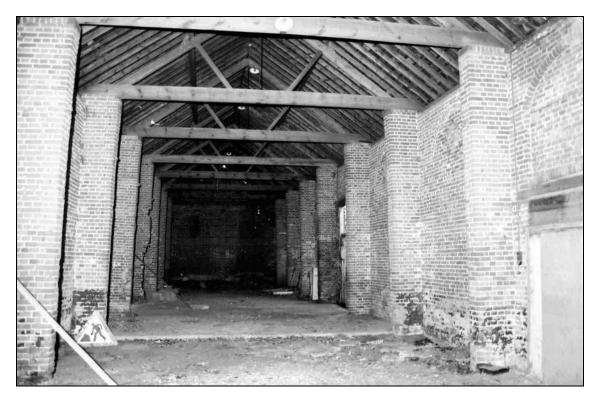


Plate 10 Barn interior viewed to east

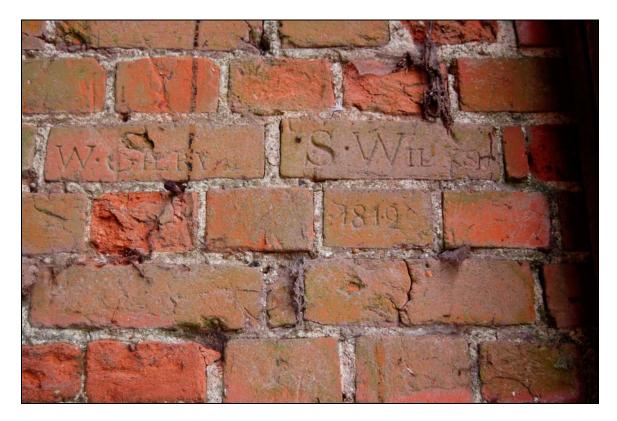


Plate 11 1819 graffiti



Plate 12 1858 graffiti



Plate 13 West range viewed to south-west from yard



Plate 14 West range viewed to north-west from yard



Plate 15 Rear of west range viewed to east



Plate 16 Rear of west range viewed to north-east



Plate 17 Remains of east range viewed to east



Plate 18 Rear of east range viewed to south-west