

**FARM OUTBUILDING RANGE AT SWAYNES HALL  
MOLE HALL LANE  
WIDDINGTON  
ESSEX**

**HISTORIC BUILDING RECORD**



Essex County Council

**Field Archaeology Unit**

April 2013

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# **CONTENTS**

## **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

## **2.0 BACKGROUND**

### **2.1 Site location and description**

### **2.2 Planning background**

### **2.3 Historic background**

### **2.4 Farming in the medieval and post-medieval periods**

## **3.0 OBJECTIVES**

## **4.0 DESCRIPTION OF FIELDWORK**

## **5.0 BUILDING DESCRIPTIONS**

### **5.1 General description**

### **5.2 External description**

### **5.3 Internal description**

#### **5.2.1 Garage/store (building 1)**

#### **5.2.2 Log store/old tack room (building 2)**

#### **5.2.3 Pump room and west end of cart shed (building 3)**

#### **5.2.4 East end of cart shed (building 4)**

## **6.0 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION**

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

## **BIBLIOGRAPHY**

## **APPENDICES**

### **Appendix 1: Contents of Archive**

### **Appendix 2: EHER Summary**

## FIGURES

- Fig. 1 Site location and block plan
- Fig. 2 Chapman and Andre's map of Essex, 1777 (plate 7)
- Fig. 3 Debden tithe map, 1843 (D/CT 112)
- Fig. 4 First edition OS map, 1880 (sheet 14/6)
- Fig. 5 Second edition OS map, 1897 (sheet 14/6)
- Fig. 6 Floor plan of outbuilding range
- Fig. 7 Cross section A-AI through building 3

## PHOTOGRAPHIC PLATES

Cover shows interior of building 2, the former stable, now log store

- Plate 1 Outbuilding range and modern stable block viewed to north-east
- Plate 2 Rear of outbuilding range viewed to south-east
- Plate 3 South elevation showing log store and tack room
- Plate 4 South elevation showing pool pump room and cart shed
- Plate 5 Outbuilding range viewed to south-west
- Plate 6 Outbuilding range viewed to south-east
- Plate 7 West door of porch
- Plate 8 Interior of garage viewed to north-west
- Plate 9 Craved graffiti on collar inside garage
- Plate 10 East wall of garage viewed from building 3 (stable)
- Plate 11 Stall inside tack room, viewed to north-east
- Plate 12 Building 2 viewed to east (outer wall of building 3)
- Plate 13 Harness racks in former stable (top)
- Plate 14 Central bay of building 3 viewed to north
- Plate 15 Building 3 viewed to west (former stable)
- Plate 16 Interior of buildings 3 and 4 viewed to east
- Plate 17 Bladed scarf joint in southern wall plate of building 3
- Plate 18 Wind-brace in roof of building 3
- Plate 19 Cart shed entrance
- Plate 20 Detail of cart door construction
- Plate 21 East bay of cart shed
- Plate 22 Cart shed porch viewed to north-west

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ESSEX**

**HISTORIC BUILDING RECORD**

**Client:** Mr & Mrs Middleton

**FAU Project No.:** 2663

**NGR:** TL 54870 31585

**Planning Application No.:** UTT/0758/12/FUL & 0759/12/LB

**OASIS No.:** 147813

**Date of Fieldwork:** 15th January 2013

## **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

A programme of historic building recording was undertaken by Essex County Council Field Archaeology Unit (ECC FAU) on a post-medieval outbuilding range that forms a significant part of a small historic farm complex at Swaynes Hall, Widdington. The work was carried out during the conversion of the structure into ancillary accommodation and was based on a brief prepared by Essex County Council Place Services team.

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

Swaynes Hall occupies a medieval moated site containing a 17th century farmhouse and a thatched aisled barn, both of which are Grade II listed. The outbuilding range is also listed and its earliest elements are likely to be contemporary with the house and barn, with other parts dating to the 19th century.

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 Building* (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**

Swaynes Hall lies on the north-east side of Widdington, on the border with the neighbouring parish of Debden, at NGR TL 54870 31585, the hall being within Widdington and outbuildings in Debden. The farmhouse has private access from Mole Hall Lane, with a second, separate access to the farm also off Mole Hall Lane, which runs between the south side of the farm and Mole Hall Farm (fig. 1).

The outbuilding range and accompanying barn to the west (not subject to the planning application) form an attractive and well-built group of historic timber-framed and thatched structures alongside the Hall, which is plastered and tiled. Remains of a medieval moated enclosure pre-dating the existing farmstead survive to the north and south-west of the Hall and there is a pond in the centre of the yard (fig. 1), perhaps a former watering hole. Mole Hall Farm, another moated site, lies to the south-east on the opposite side of Mole Hall Lane (fig. 1).

The range comprises four adjoining structures that traditionally had mixed uses concerned with livestock and feed storage. Their traditional functions (c.1900) are shown in figure 1 as loose box, stable, cow-house and a hay and chaff house, which are discussed more fully in section 2.3. A modern cement block-built stable stands along the east side of the yard. Since farming ceased the individual built elements have been used for differing purposes, which has resulted in a certain amount of modernisation, particularly to the garage/store area and pool pump room (fig. 6). At the time of the survey conversion works had begun and most of the weather-boarding and roof thatch had been removed.

### **2.2 Planning background**

A planning application to convert the outbuildings to ancillary accommodation associated with the nearby swimming pool was submitted to Uttlesford District Council (UDC) in April 2012 (UTT/0758/12/FUL & 0759/12/LB). Mindful of the historic integrity and working

character of the building, the ECC Place Services team recommended that a full archaeological condition for building recording be placed on the planning permission, requiring recording to English Heritage level 3 standard (2006) prior to conversion works starting.

### **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, and in particular the outbuilding range. List descriptions and secondary sources were also studied. The results, from information available at the time, are presented below with accompanying ERO references in brackets. Historic map extracts included in the report as figures 2-5 have been enlarged to provide greater clarity.

The east elevation of Swaynes Hall farmhouse bears the inscription 'ST 1689', which presumably refers to its construction date, although the List description (EH Building ID no. 415860) provides a broader 16th-17th century date range. A fuller and more detailed description, particularly of the interiors, may be found in the RCHM Inventory of Historic Building in Essex (1916). The outbuilding and aisled barn are likely to be contemporary with the Hall, but the former is described as 18th-century in date according to the List description (EH Building ID no. 121639).

Swaynes Hall is depicted on the Chapman and Andre map of 1777 as four structures standing in a group to the north of Mole Hall: the Hall, the barn, outbuildings (in grey) and an unidentified farm structure standing to the south of the range, where the modern stable block stands (fig. 2). Judging from their appearance on the map, only outbuildings 2 and 3 existed at the time. The private track to the west side of the house is shown but not the farm drive off Mole Hall Lane.

Debden tithe map (1843) again depicts a rectangular structure the same as the 1777 map (fig. 3, orientated to the west rather than the north). Because the parish boundary cuts through the middle of the yard, the Hall is only shown in broad outline and the barn is depicted on the Widdington tithe map (of 1838, D/CT 398). The accompanying tithe award mentions the farm is owned by John Judd and occupied by Henry Prior (D/CT 398A). The holding within Widdington parish is 13 acres of arable land but the acreage in Debden parish is unknown because the tithe award no longer survives.

By 1880 the linear range has been formed, with the addition of buildings 1 and 4 at either end. Also, an open-sided structure has been built at the east end of the range where the current stable block now stands (fig. 4). The OS map from this year also depicts two enclosed yards, one around the barn to the west, and another around the outbuildings to the east. The west yard includes a building on the west end of the range and a separate quite small building to the south. By 1897 these structures have disappeared and the pond has been dug (fig. 5).

By 1903 Swaynes is in the ownership of the Debden Hall estate and farmed by Mr William Taylor at £40 p.a. A sale catalogue from this year (SALE/B2787) describes the buildings as comprising a

“large barn, piggery, loose box, 3-stall stable, cow-house to tie 8, hay and chaff house, 3 bay cattle shed and yard”

These functions correspond with the surviving elements of the farm and are included in figures 1 and 6. The land holding is 101 acres, two-thirds of which are arable. The house is let separately to an artist from London at £25 p.a. (SALE/B2787).

Following the sale, the farm became part of Mole Hall Farm and the house continued to be rented separately. The early 20th century was clearly a period of turmoil for the estate for in c.1913 it was again put up for auction (SALE/A1012), the outcome of which is unknown.

There appears to have been very little change to the farm during the remaining part of the 20th century apart from the withdrawal from farming and re-joining of the house and farmstead into common ownership. It is not known when farming ceased on the site.

## **2.4 Farming in the medieval and post-medieval periods**

Early farm buildings were often scattered rather than grouped around a yard, though those on the larger estates tended to be better planned. There are few complete farmsteads in East Anglia which date to before 1750 and none to before 1600 (English Heritage 1997). Most buildings that survive are barns, because of their adaptable size and good construction. Stables also survive, but lesser so livestock accommodation which, before the 18th century, consisted of temporary shelters at best. Demands for timber increased during the 17th and 18th centuries, causing prices to rise and old timbers were increasingly reused together with new, less substantial, pieces in more vernacular buildings (Harris 1993).



The agricultural revolution of the 18th and 19th centuries was founded on improvements dating back to the 17th century: new root crops and grasses, drainage and colonisation of new land, plus ongoing improvements in manuring, animal husbandry, 'permanent tillage' (elimination of the fallow year) and enclosure. From the 1740s, new planned or 'model' farms were constructed to replace or improve earlier farmsteads, forming more symmetrical, planned, layouts around a central courtyard with the barn one side and stables and stock sheds and stores for feed and bedding forming perpendicular wings, thus creating a more efficient working unit. The planned form continued into the 19th century reaching its peak during the agricultural boom between the 1840s and 1870s, the 'Golden Age of Agriculture'. 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.

The Golden Age finished 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 a detailed English Heritage level 3 (2006) record of the outbuilding range in its present state prior to conversion works. 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**

The buildings were recorded using drawings (floor plans, elevations and frame survey) supplied by architect, Edward Parsley Associates. Building works had already started at the time of the survey and most of the weather-boarding, doors and flooring had been removed as well as the thatched roof (plates 1 & 2). Scaffold supported the walls on all parts except for the garage, which was not affected since it has already been converted and is to retain its present use. As a consequence, fixtures and fittings such as stall and room partitions,

internal boarding and modern elements in the pump room had been removed. The builders were occupying building 2, the former log store and tack room, where they were removing the floor and preparing new timber sill plates (see cover plate). To protect them, the roof here was covered in blue plastic sheeting. The weather was damp, cold and misty and there was snow on the ground.

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 or features. A representative selection of photographs is reproduced at the back of the report as plates 1-22, which include some taken from the Structural Survey (Edward Parsley Associates 2012) and Design and Access Statement (Sue Bell 2012) to provide a more accurate representation. These were downloaded from the UDC planning website and are credited in the report plates as EPA and SB, where relevant. The remainder can be found in the archive.

## **5.0 BUILDING DESCRIPTIONS**

The outbuilding range recorded in the survey is timber-framed and weatherboarded with a thatched roof, in similar form as the aisled barn to the west. There are four built elements to the range that share similar post-medieval construction methods, and evidence suggests the range was built in two phases, beginning in the 16th or 17th century and finishing in the mid-19th century, perhaps reusing elements from earlier buildings, which was common practice in this period.

The buildings were listed in 1980 and the list description is provided below:

Range of C18 timber-framed and weather-boarded outbuildings with a thatched roof. Swaynes Hall (qv) is situated in the Parish of Widdington. (English Heritage Building ID: 121639)

In the following text, the exterior of the whole range is described first, followed by individual descriptions of the separate building interiors under their last known use, as buildings 1-4 (west to east). Their presumed historic farming functions are taken from the 1903 sale particulars and are referred to in the text. Descriptions are based on the current survey and information from earlier surveys mentioned in section 4.0.

## **5.1 General description**

The outbuildings form a linear structure measuring 30.5m by 5m with a small 2.7m long porch facing the swimming pool on the north side (fig. 5). The main part, which is thatched, is 5m high with a steep roof pitch of 50°, while the garage/store (1) on the west side, with its rebuilt pantile-clad roof, stands to only 4m and has a shallow 35° pitch. The ends of the roofs are gabled apart from the east end and north end of the porch, which are hipped.

The walls are generally clad in black-painted weather-board and stand on a brick plinth constructed from c.8½ inch (220 x 105 x 60-65mm) soft red bricks laid in English bond and likely to be of 18th or early 19th century date (Ryan 1996), when the plinth was inserted. The main elevation is on the east side, facing the yard and pond and contains several historic half-heck animal doors, with the larger cart doors located at the northern end. The walls are timber-framed utilising a mixture of studded, external bracing and primary bracing, mostly built in oak.

Prior to stripping-out, the interiors were boarded-over in buildings 2 (stable) and part of building 3. All internal framing was therefore exposed during the survey. Concrete flooring predominates.

## **5.2 External description**

### ***South elevation***

The main elevation comprises garage/store 1 at the west end, whose front has been replaced with sliding doors (plates 1 & 3). Beyond this is the log store/old tack room (building 2), which has a single off-centre half-heck door leading from the former stalls inside and a window/vent on the first bay (plate 3). Further to the east is the former cow-house (pool pump room and part of the cart shed 3) with its half-heck doors, now removed, on the first and second bays (plate 4). These doors were 1.10m-wide and of traditional ledged, braced and boarded form, fitted with cast iron strap hinges and were intended for animal access onto the yard. The cart doors at the east end leading into cart shed 4 had the same fixtures and were set below a quite shallow flat-topped hood (plate 4).

### ***East elevation***

The east elevation (plate 5) faces onto rough ground at the back. It is fully-boarded underneath a hipped roof. The only feature is on the east side of the porch in the form of an inserted window below the eaves, which simply comprises panes of glass inserted between the exposed studs (fig. 5 & plate 22, internal).

### **North elevation**

The north elevation stands behind the swimming pool in an exposed position and much of its historic fabric remained apart from the roof (plates 2 & 6). The short porch at the back of the cart shed, at the east end, was propped up with scaffold poles prior to conversion work beginning (plate 6). This part is fully-boarded apart from an inserted window. A small ledged, braced and battened door with long strap hinges and original closing fixtures is located on the west side of the porch and was the only door to remain *in-situ* at the time of the survey (plate 7). An inserted window as per that on the east side of the porch is located above it.

The boarding on this side continues up to the rear door at the west end of the cartshed (central bay of building 3) but there after, up to the western end bay of the log store, the upper panels are exposed and reinforced plastic sheeting placed behind (plate 6), either replacing plastered panels or wooden vents to the rear of the stable and cow house. From this point onwards the full weather-boarding resumes up to the end of the garage (plate 2).

### **West elevation**

The west elevation was unaffected by the building work and comprises the end wall of the garage, whose boarding and plastered gable above are painted white to match the plastered gable end of building 3 onto which it joins (plate 2). A clock is positioned just beneath the apex of the roof, which is a feature added or re-located when this wall was replaced during the garage conversion

## **5.3 Internal descriptions**

Internal descriptions were made during the survey. Wherever possible, photographs are included of the interiors prior to conversion work commencing.

### **5.3.1 Garage/store (building 1)**

This is interpreted as the former loose box, though much of its historic character was lost when it was converted into a garage in recent years and now there are no original fixtures or fittings remaining. Only the back (north) wall of this building is original, the rest, and the roof, having been replaced (plate 8). The floor is laid to concrete. The original building had two 3m-wide bays and was constructed in primary-braced timbers, probably in the mid-19th century.

One of the original bay posts remains on the north-west corner, while a second divides the bays from the centre. Both have dimensions of c.18 x 16cm and have jowled heads, sawn

down when the roof was rebuilt approximately 1m lower than the rest of the range and fitted to a new wall plate. Jowled timbers are common in Essex buildings from the 14th through to the mid to late 16th century, continuing as late as the 18th century in some barns (Walker 1994), and this could be a late version or a case of reuse. No braces across the bays remain though there is a slot for one on the central post, accompanied by two peg holes.

Original studwork comprises c.12cm by 10cm-wide studs (c.5 by 4-inch), five per bay, spaced at c.40cm intervals (plate 8). Again, the timbers are cut down suggesting the height of the building was reduced during the garage conversion from that of the rest of the range. It is uncertain whether the sill plate is original or not, since it is rendered over in cement. The studs have slightly uneven scantling and are divided by diagonal primary braces of equal size. Primary-bracing is where the brace is inserted first and the studwork nailed onto it and was used from the 16th-century throughout the post-medieval period.

The west wall is built in modern machine-sawn primary-braced timbers and the casing for the outside clock is located at eaves level, reached by an internal ladder. The south wall, which is also modern, contains sliding wooden garage doors. The west wall is also primary-braced but hidden internally by modern pine boarding. Two curved braces have been re-located here as features, nailed to the modern boards, and it is logical to assume they formerly braced the central bay. The southern brace is the most interesting, since it bears carved graffiti from 1893. The graffiti alludes to Messrs W. and G. Bunting and D. Snow (plate 9). The Buntings were perhaps workers on the farm at the time, perhaps brothers, while D. Snow seems to have added his name afterwards to 'get in on the act'. Other more plainer graffiti dates to the ?1940s and 2001. The east wall is the only unaltered section of wall to remain. This wall replaced the external west wall of building 2 next-door after the loose box was built (fig. 5 & plate 10).

The plain nailed collar purlin garage roof is modern and is therefore of no historic significance.

### **5.3.2 Log store/old tack room (building 2)**

This was probably the stable mentioned in the sale catalogue from 1903, which appears to belong to the earlier phase, though its precise date is unknown. Prior to stripping-out the building was boarded internally on three sides and contained an old timber horse stall (plate 11). The only entry point was located on the south side between the tack room and stall (fig. 5). The later layout included a modern tack room at the east end (fig. 5), the partition for

which was removed prior to the survey. The existing concrete floor was being broken out at the time of the survey and no earlier floor surfaces were apparent. Plate 11 depicts modern boarding on the upper half of the walls that appears to confirm this side was either vented or plastered in the historic period.

The building has two distinct but different bays divided broadly along the line of the former stall partition, which suggests it contains reused timbers. The first, at the west end (plate 10) is constructed of primary-braced timbers and is the wider of the two, measuring 4.8m. The studs are pegged to the top plate and sill and comprise a mixture of straight and slightly waney (and rotted) c.15cm by 9cm-wide studs, seven in all, spaced at c.42cm wide intervals per bay. The studs have slightly uneven scantling and are divided by diagonal primary braces corresponding to the pattern seen in the garage.

The second bay is narrower at 3.6m and built in un-braced studwork of similar-sized scantling to the first but with smaller gaps, commonly 32-35cm (plate 12).

Main framing comprises jowled bay posts similar to those in the garage with slightly curved bracing, again similar, along the bay division. Only one of these survives on the north side, attached by three pegs to the tie beam and wall post. A second tie beam was inserted to carry the netting for what appears to be insulation material in the ceiling shown in an earlier photograph (plate 11), which is also a reused timber.

There are no scarf joints to the wall plates and the sills had rotted. The wall plate of building 2 is attached to building 3 (the pool pump room) by an un-pegged crude diagonal joint (fig. 5). Therefore the east wall represents the external west wall of building 3, which is the earliest of the structures. It is interesting to note the lath and plastered external gable, with the regularity and number of nail holes on the wall below it suggesting this end was plastered too in its original form (plate 12). Wooden harness racks are located in the north-east corner, where the posts of the two buildings join (plate 13).

The roof frame (plate 10) is a fairly basic double-pegged collar clasped purlin roof found in all parts of the building apart from the garage, a common form of roof frame found from the 16th century onwards. The rafters are fairly narrow and lapped and pegged at the apex.

### **5.3.3 Pool pump room and west end of cart shed (building 3)**

Prior to the removal of its eastern end wall, the pool pump room and the west end of the cart shed was a single three-bayed building that on constructional grounds pre-dates the rest of the range. The 1903 sale catalogue suggests this was the cow house, which was divided in the modern period when the pool was installed (fig. 5). Plate 14 depicts the modern partition on the left side of the central bay before the building was stripped-out. All that remains now is a single pine wall plate.

The original layout had three narrow 2.5m-wide bays, with animal doorways located on the south and west sides and a smaller entrance along the north wall (fig. 5 & plate 15). The east end wall was removed after building 4 was added and the brick floor in the east bay (plate 16) is more likely to be Victorian in date, possibly a milking area.

All existing walls have nailed external trenched bracing apart from those of the central bay. External bracing has a wide dating range, from the 14th through to the 17th century in domestic buildings (Walker 1994), and probably lasted longer in the more vernacular structures. The nailed, narrower, bracing observed here indicates the later form. The studs vary in scantling at approximately 13 by 8cm with wide c.45cm gaps inbetween. Those in the gables tend to be slightly thinner and are in-line on the bottom register (plate 15). The original east wall was probably removed after building 4 was added.

Main framing tends to comprise jowled bay posts. The only braced tie beam is the one dividing the central and east bays and drawn as section A-A1 (fig. 7 & plate 15). The surviving brace on the north side is curved and pegged twice to the post and three times to the beam. Scored carpenter's marks were observed on the two bay posts indicating the numbers 3 and 7 (fig. 7).

Edge-halved and bridled scarf joints connect the wall plates on the north and south sides of the building (fig. 5), which is a medieval and early post-medieval joinery form (fig. 5 & plate 17). The last recorded in Essex dates to 1650 (Hewett 1969). In the Swaynes Hall case the bridles are short, inferring a later date.

The roof frame is the same collar clasped purlin roof as building 2, but with later raking struts added below the purlins to counteract the sagging of the roof (fig. 5 & plate 15). Diagonal wind braces are nailed to the rafters at either end on both sides, a feature only found in building 3 (plate 18).

#### **5.3.4 East part of cart shed (building 4)**

This three-bay primary-braced extension was added to the east end of building 3 probably in the mid-19th century to create the hay and chaff house mentioned in the 1903 sale catalogue. Hay and chaff were used as animal feed and could be easily dispensed from here to the adjoining cow house and stables. Carts would enter through the cart doors at the front and probably deposited hay and chaff in bins in the side bays and in the small porch on the north side. Carts were probably parked up in the central bay when not in use, hence the familiar title of the cart shed. It is unclear what purpose, if any, this building has had since farming ceased.

General build quality in this part is to a lower standard than the rest of the range in terms of pegging, scantling and the use of reused timbers, and even changes between the bays. Such inconsistencies support the interpretation of this being the latest addition.

Like the rest of the building, jowled posts with gently-swelling heads define the bays, though they vary in size from around 23cm x 16cm. The posts originally held slightly-curved bracing similar to those found in buildings 1 and 2. Only one survives now, situated on the south side of the central and east bay division (fig. 5), attached by single pegs. There are no scarf joints to the wall plates and the sills are either too rotten to see or are hidden under cement render. Generally the wall-framing is quite substantial, though scantling of the studs varies.

The central bay (plate 19) is the widest of the three, at 4.2m, to admit carts for unloading. No studwork remains of the former east wall of building 3 to which this is joined and it is unclear when this was removed. The former east end of building 3 has a secondary serpentine brace nailed onto the south side. The post and brace on the north end of the wall were replaced in the modern period to counteract the lean of the porch (plate 20). The cart doors were set slightly higher than the rest of the building and the base of the door jambs are protected from wear and tear on three sides by wooden wheel buffers (fig. 5). The cart entrance is clearly built over the end of building 3 and bolted onto it.

Dwarf brick walls and asphalt-flooring define the cart bay on the ground, separating the bay from the storage and ?milking areas (fig. 5) The low west wall helped to prevent cattle from straying into the store (plate 20).

The floor of the east bay is a mixture of asphalt and bare earth, surrounded by old concrete floors to north and east. Along the base of the east wall of is a four-course brick trough base



and iron tethering points, indicating that latterly this end was used for keeping cattle (fig. 5 & plate 21). The bricks used in the plinth comprise 9-inch frogged red bricks stamped with the initials S H E, likely to originate from a local brickworks. They are also used in the brick splash-back behind, that kept water off the timbers. The east bay contains good pegging and straight, sizable studs c.15cm by 9cm-wide spaced at c.52cm wide intervals. Bracing falls in pairs, one either side of the central stud and is slightly staggered apart from the north wall, which is the shortest and only contains one brace. The east wall displays slightly curved bracing, which is an attractive feature (plate 21) that also reflects the diversity of the fabric.

By contrast, the north bay (porch), which is leaning away from the main structure, is a completely different build, though there is no evidence to show that it is later in date. Firstly it is constructed over two registers, the bottom one being close-studded and the upper one being primary-braced, although in here the timbers fall from the corners to the centres (plate 22) rather than that seen in the east bay. Pegging here is sparse and commonly confined to the primary bracing and central posts, which is the usual pattern in this form of construction. Some of the studs are pegged but most appear to be only tenoned into the plates. Scantling varies considerably and many studs are quite waney in shape.

The roof frame is the same double-pegged collar clasped purlin roof seen in buildings 2 and 3 with additional raking posts supporting the purlins, again a later feature. The roof at this end of the building has failed and several repairs to the frame have been made in modern times, primarily a section of cross-framing over the central bay to support a sagging purlin (plate 21) and bolted V-shaped bracing against the adjoining wall with building 3 to strengthen this end (plate 19).

## **6.0 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION**

Outwardly, the outbuilding range at Swaynes Hall would appear to have been constructed in one phase as part of the post-medieval development of the farm, since it bears a clear resemblance to the barn, which, apart from the house, is the only other farm building standing on the site. However, cartographic evidence suggests the farm developed quite slowly over a long period of time and was constructed in two broad phases, the first around the time of the house and the second in the mid-19th century. Detailed inspection of the interiors show general post-medieval construction characteristics throughout, and earlier

elements in later parts, which makes individual dating difficult and suggests the range contains rebuilt elements.

**Building 3**, the former cow house, is the earliest of the four structures on stylistic grounds, probably 17th century in date. The original structure provided the template for the other buildings in the range, with its weather-boarded sides and lime-rendered gables. However, it is unlikely to have stood in isolation and was more likely to have been part of a small scattered group of agricultural buildings, displaying similar characteristics that developed into the range standing today.

Dating of this structure is primarily based on the late use of the edge-halved and bridled scarf joint linking the wall plates and its (nailed) externally-braced frame. Pegging is good and the roof frame, although common to all parts of the range, is wind-braced, which is only found in this area. Jowl-headed bay posts are another common feature and in this case they have a n elegant gently-swelling form. The braces here are more curved than the other parts of the range. Many of these aspects can be found in medieval and early-post medieval structures but given the fact that the quality of these characteristics is quite low and the scantling of the timbers themselves are fairly rough, the dating is likely to be late, perhaps the second half of the 17th century, which would tie-in with the house.

The building is largely intact except for the east wall which was lost when it was opened up to building 4 in the 19th century. The west wall retains its lath and plastered gable preserved in the roof space and it is suggested that formerly the lower part of the wall was also plastered, since there are white marks around nail holes in the framing of the former end wall. The side walls were probably weather-boarded as they are now and there appears to be no cut or chisel marks on the studs for wattle staves. The upper panels may have been plastered on the north side or else vented, though it is perhaps unlikely that the colder north side would be exposed in this manner. The brick floor of the east bay is probably Victorian in date.

According to map evidence, **building 2**, the stable, had been added to building 3 by the later part of the 18th century, built up against the plastered west wall of 3 and connected roughly by a low-quality unpegged splayed joint to the wall plate. The side walls contain a mixture of studded and primary-braced frames which is another indicator of a late date and perhaps the reuse of existing frames from other buildings. The west wall was removed after building 1 was constructed but adjoins the east wall of building 2 and bears evidence of former braces and studs. The presence of two harness racks confirms this was the stable indicated in the

1903 sale catalogue; a rare survival of historic fixtures that remained after the recent stripping-out, thanks to their elevated position in the roof.

Only the east and north walls survive of **building 1**, the converted loose box, now garage, which was probably added in the middle part of the 19th century. Stud-walling on the east side is now exposed but was formerly boarded on this side (the outer wall of building 1) and some earlier weather-boarding remains in the gable. Since the garage was converted modern boarding has been fixed to the internal wall and plastered over where the gable rises above the shortened rebuilt roof of the garage. Otherwise the build shares the same common characteristics in the form of jowled posts and primary-bracing.

It is suggested that **building 4**, the cart shed, is perhaps the latest of the four structures that make up the range, though it belongs to the same 19th century phase as building 1. The reasoning for its late date is the low build quality and the variations in construction form from reused timbers. Although in-keeping with the rest of the range on the south elevation, the north end has fallen away from the main structure and has had a considerable amount of support added internally to stabilise the lean. Some of the internal layout remains for cart parking and probable bin areas for chaff and hay. The east bay was used for cattle at some stage.

Swaynes Hall is a rare and unspoilt survival of a traditional farmstead that has developed in its own way as an estate farm within its largely-unspoilt historic landscape setting. The outbuilding range in particular demonstrates the difficulties experienced sometimes in understanding the historic development of post-medieval farm groups through construction form and the available evidence and shows how vernacular building techniques and traditions lasted longer on farms in more remote areas. Further research may illuminate more about this interesting and unusual group and its association with the Debden Hall estate.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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## **Appendix 1: Contents of Archive**

**Site name: Farm Outbuilding Range at Swaynes Hall, Widdington, Essex**

**Project no. 2663**

### **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 written scheme of investigation (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

<b>Site Name/Address:</b> Farm Outbuilding Range at Swaynes Hall, Mole Hall Lane, Widdington	
<b>Parish:</b> Widdington	<b>District:</b> Uttlesford
<b>NGR:</b> TL 54870 31585	<b>HER ref.:</b> 203-4
<b>Type of Work:</b> Building recording	<b>Site Director/Group:</b> Andy Letch, ECC FAU
<b>Dates of Work:</b> January 2013	<b>Size of Area Investigated:</b> N/A
<b>Curating Museum:</b> Saffron Walden	<b>Funding Source:</b> Client
<b>Further Work Anticipated?</b> No	<b>Related LBS Nos.:</b> 121639.
<b>Final Report:</b> Summary in EAH	<b>Oasis No.:</b> 147813
<b>Periods Represented:</b> Post-medieval	
<b>SUMMARY OF FIELDWORK RESULTS:</b>  <p>A programme of building recording was undertaken on a grade II-listed three listed post-medieval outbuilding range at Swaynes Hall prior to conversion by the owners into ancillary accommodation. The range forms a significant part of a small well-preserved late 17th century farm complex based around the Hall (1689) and a large thatched barn, which were outside the survey.</p> <p>The range is timber-framed and weatherboarded, with a thatched roof. Externally it would appear to have been built in one phase, but internal evidence and historic mapping shows it was built in at least two stages, initially probably around the time of the Hall and later on in the 19th century. However, due to its largely generic post-medieval form of construction, it is difficult to assess more precise phasing. The earliest part contains bridle scarf joints and external bracing, but most of the other parts are primary-braced. Few historic fixtures and fittings remain due to its more recent domestic uses as garaging, pump room for the swimming pool, and others, but the framing survives well.</p> <p>Early 20th century sources show the various parts of the range functioned as loose box, stable, cow-house and hay and chaff house alongside a former cattle shed (since replaced with modern stables) and the barn. The range illustrates the use of established post-medieval building forms in utilitarian agricultural structures up to the late 19th century.</p>	
<b>Previous Summaries/Reports</b> None	
<b>Author of Summary:</b> Andy Letch	<b>Date of Summary:</b> 11th January 2013



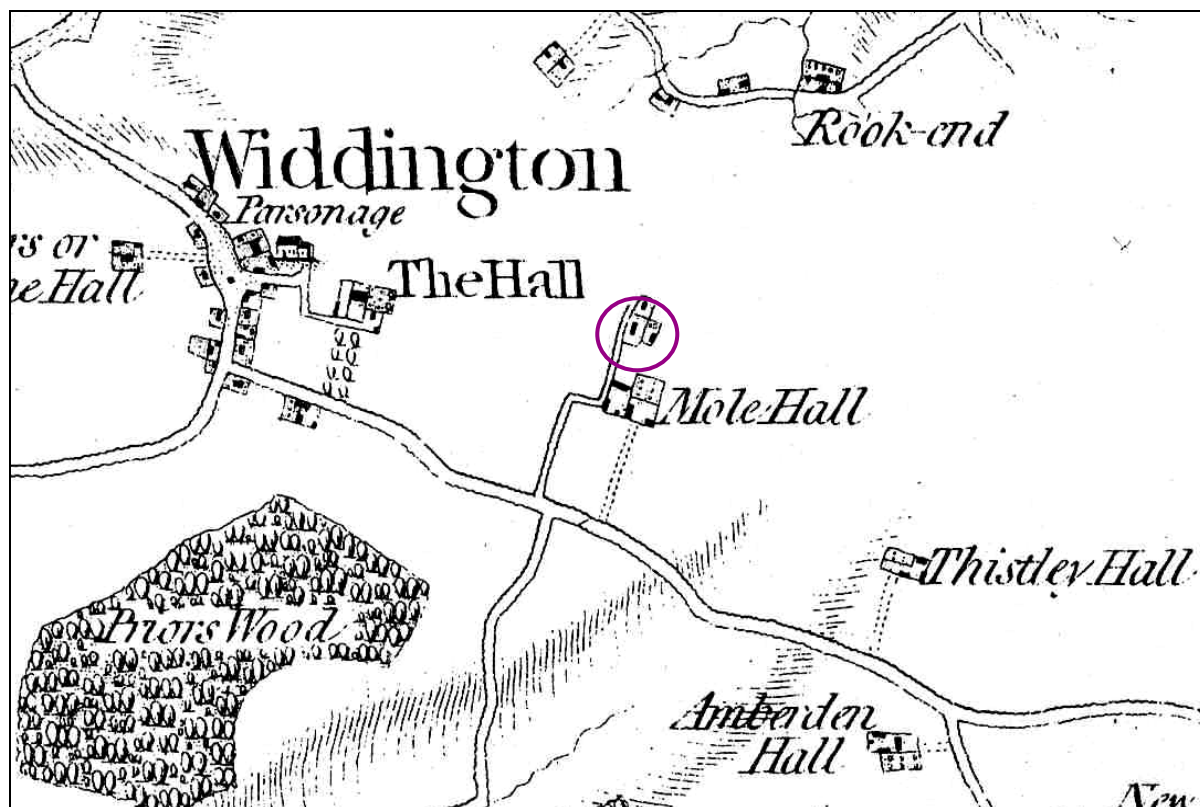


Fig. 2 Chapman and Andre map of Essex, 1777 (plate 7)

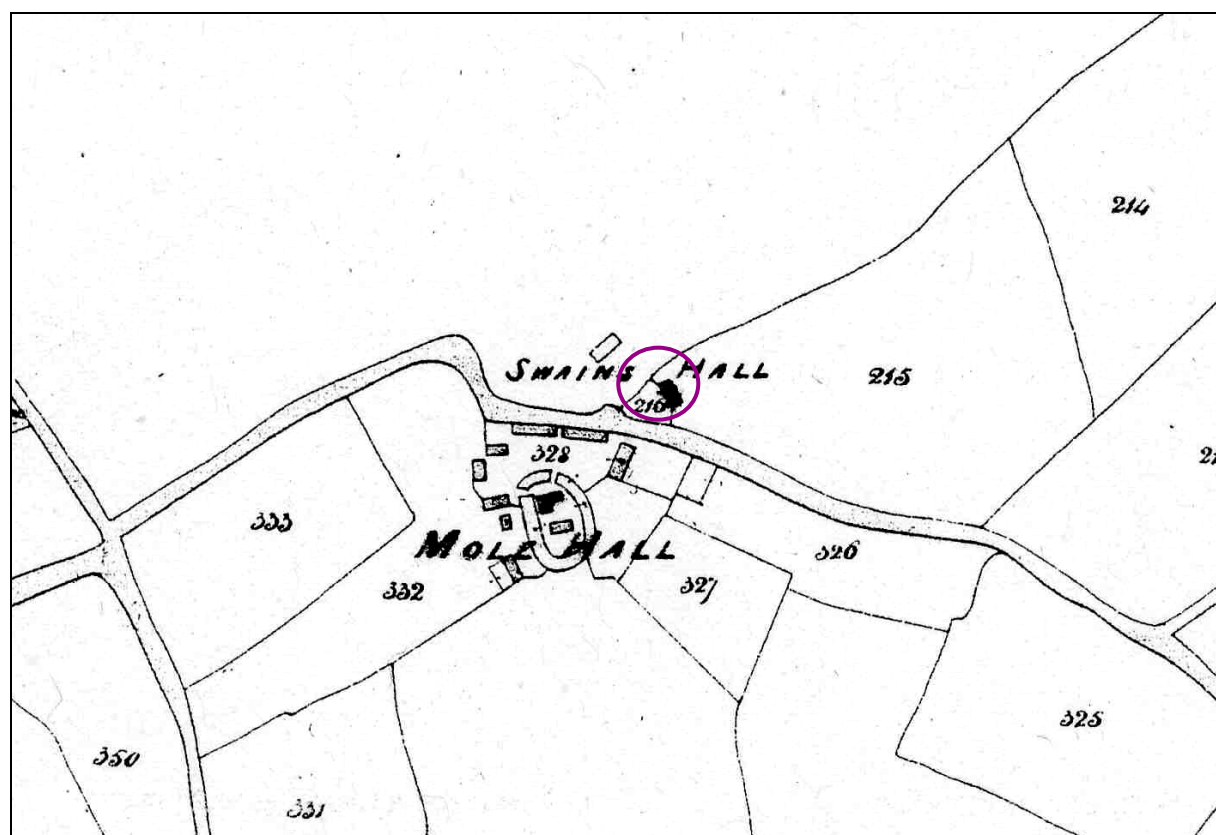


Fig. 3 Debden tithe map, 1843 (D/CT 112)



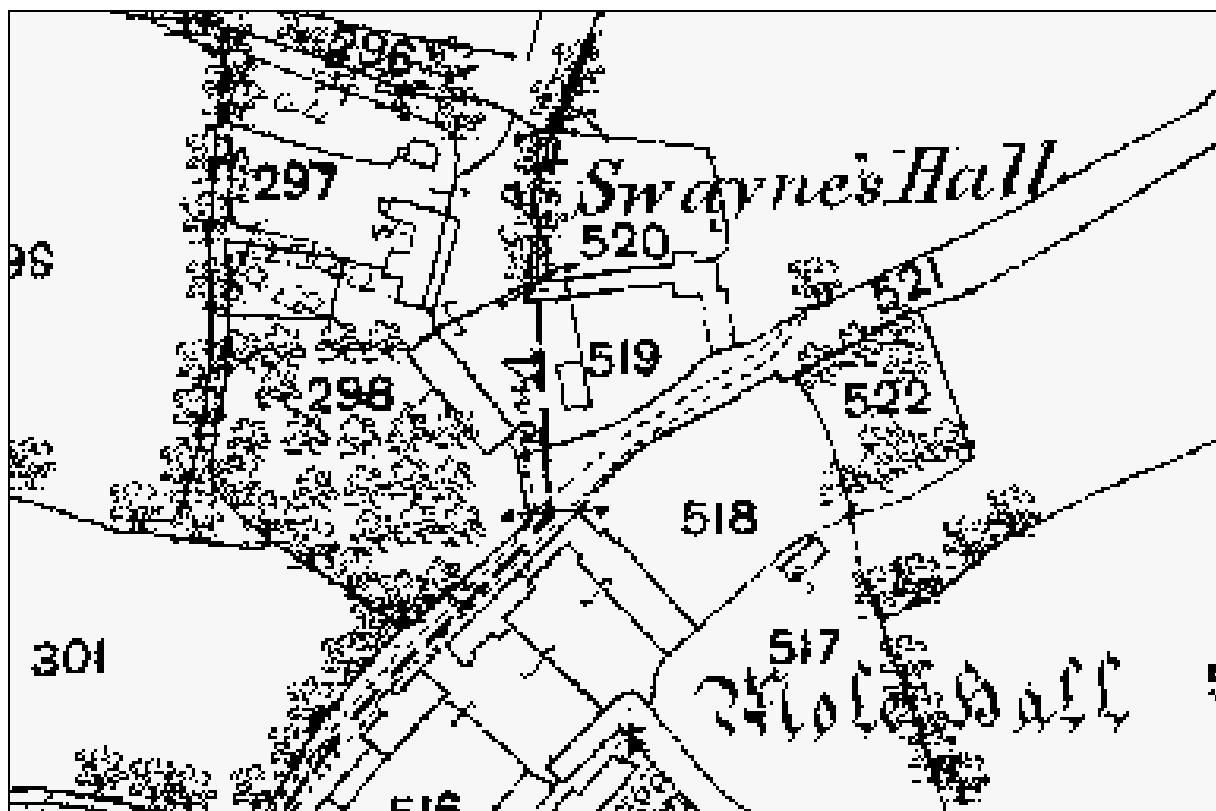


Fig. 4 First edition OS map, 1880 (sheet 14/6)

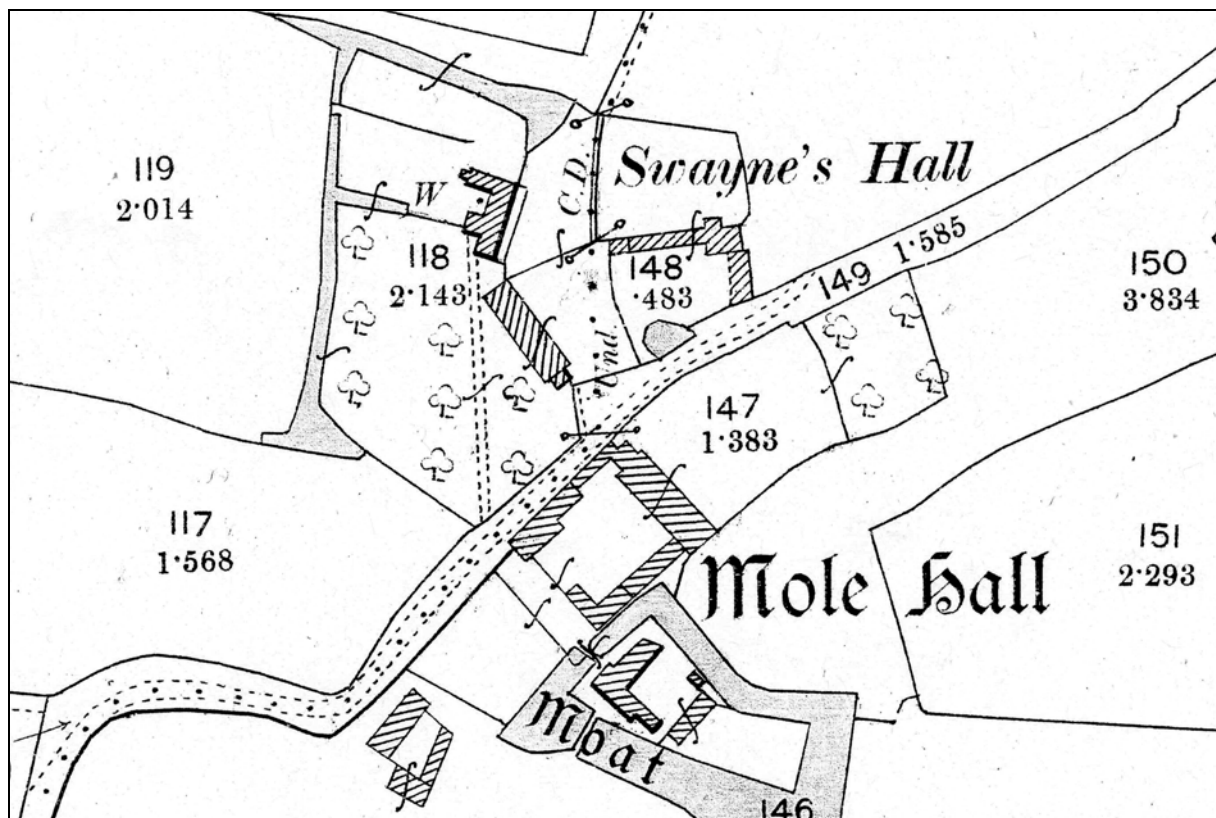


Fig. 5 Second edition OS map, 1897 (sheet 14/6)

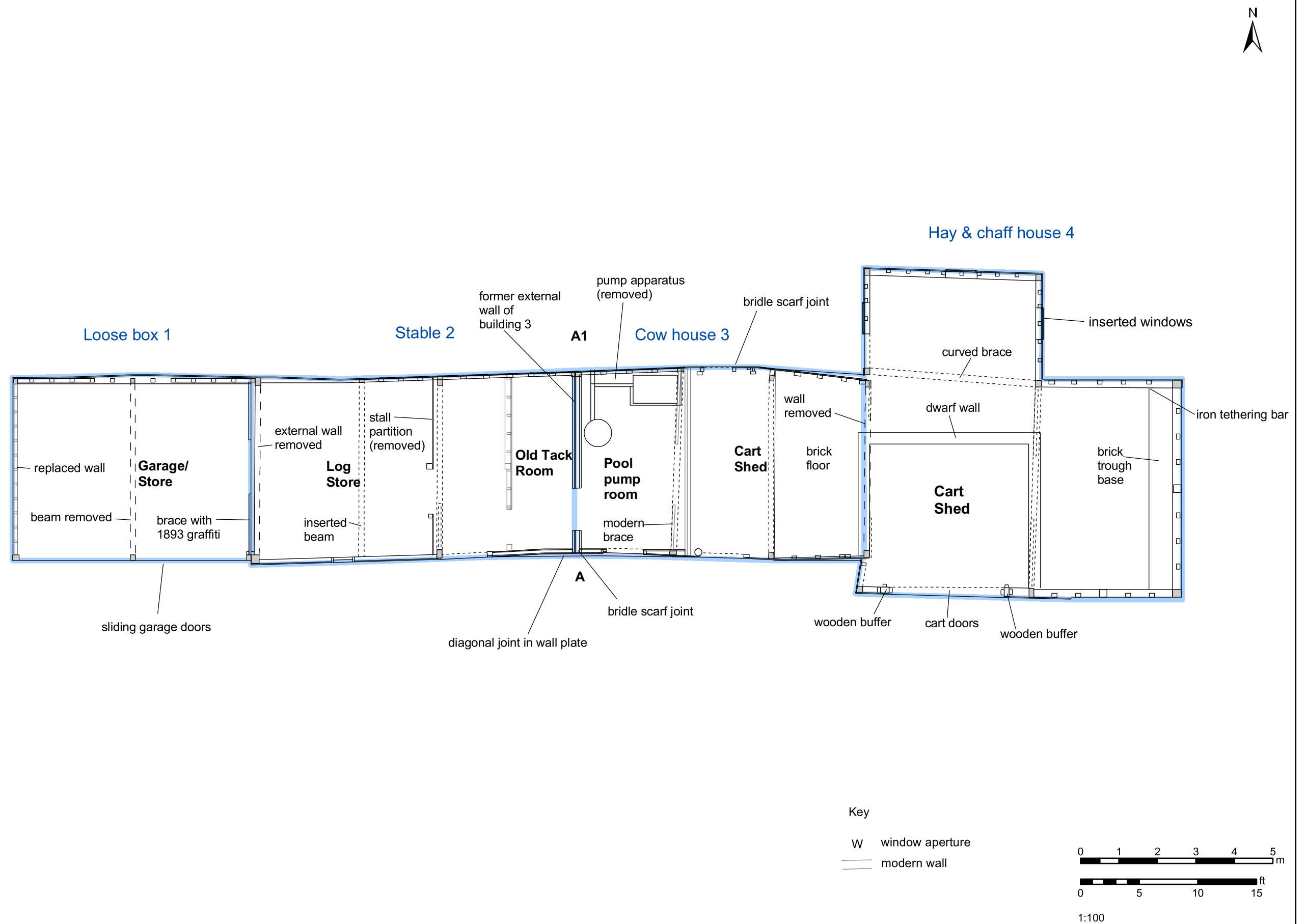


Fig.6. Floor plan of outbuilding range

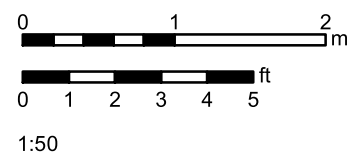
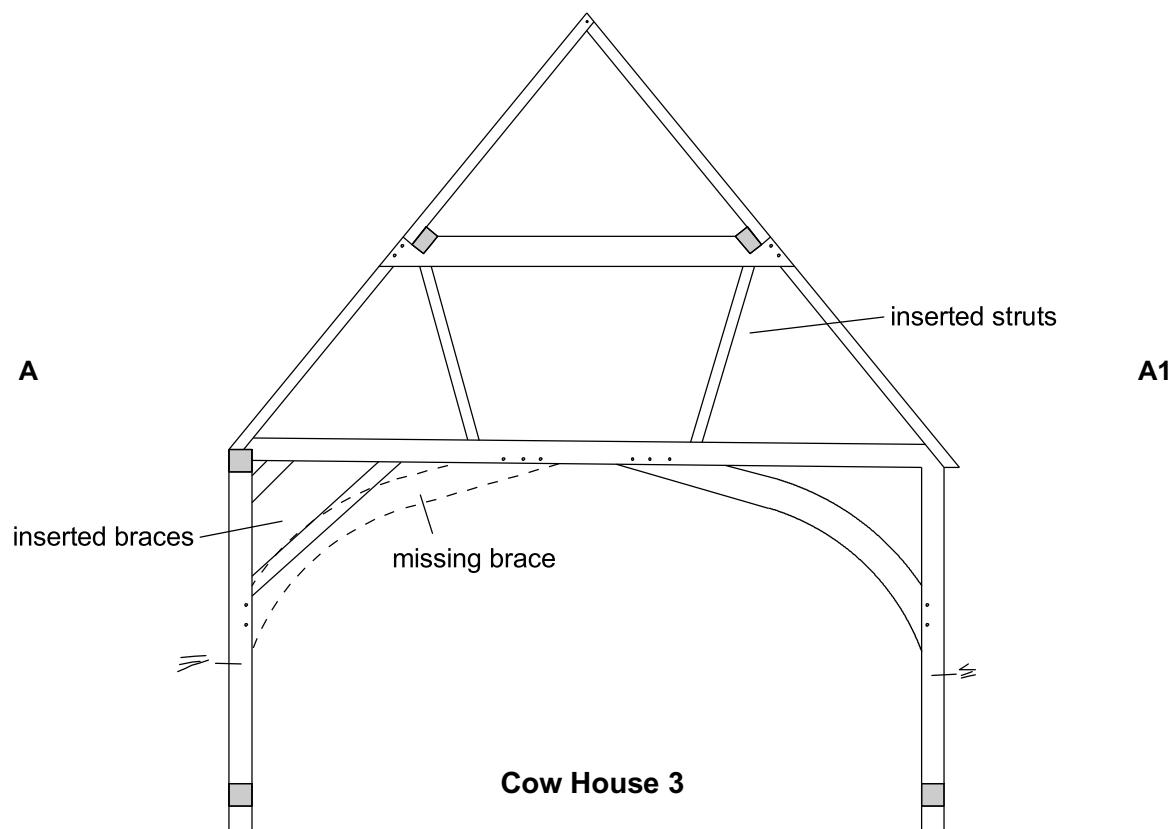


Fig.7. Cross section A - A1 through building 3



Plate 1 Outbuilding range and modern stable block viewed to north-east



Plate 2 Rear of outbuilding range viewed to south-east





Plate 3 South elevation showing log store and tack room (SJ 2012)



Plate 4 South elevation showing pool pump room and cart shed (EP 2012)





Plate 5 Outbuilding range viewed to south-west



Plate 6 Outbuilding range viewed to south-east (EP 2012)



Plate 7 West door of porch



Plate 8 Interior of garage viewed to north-west



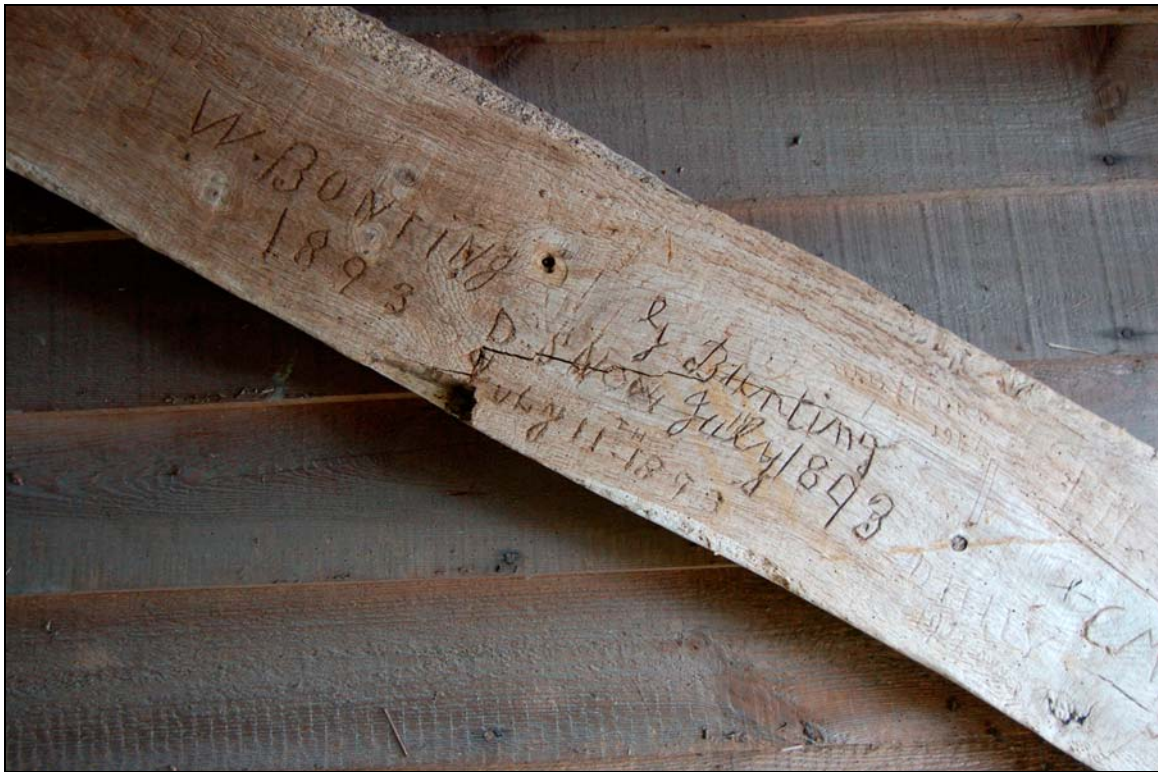


Plate 9 Craved graffiti on collar inside garage



Plate 10 East wall of garage viewed from building 3 (stable)





Plate 11 Stall inside tack room, viewed to north-east



Plate 12 Building 2 viewed to east (outer wall of building 3)



Plate 13 Harness racks in former stable (top)



Plate 14 Central bay of building 3 viewed to north (EP 2012)





Plate 15 Building 3 viewed to west (former stable)



Plate 16 Interior of buildings 3 and 4 viewed to east





Plate 17 Bladed scarf joint in southern wall plate of building 3



Plate 18 Wind-brace in roof of building 3





Plate 19 Cart shed entrance



Plate 20 Detail of cart door construction





Plate 21 East bay of cart shed



Plate 22 Cart shed porch viewed to north-west