

**FARM BUILDINGS AT LITTLE THORBENS, TOOT HILL ROAD
GREENSTEAD GREEN, ONGAR, ESSEX**

HISTORIC BUILDING RECORDING



Essex County Council

Field Archaeology Unit

May 2006

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FARM BUILDINGS AT LITTLE THORBENS, TOOT HILL ROAD

GREENSTEAD GREEN, ONGAR, ESSEX

HISTORIC BUILDING RECORDING

Client: Mr. Q. McCauley

FAU Project No.: 1637

NGR: TL 522 033

OASIS No. 15392

Site Code: ONLT 06

Planning Application: EPF/0130/06 & EPF/0135/06/LB

Date of Fieldwork: 9th May 2006

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Essex County Council Field Archaeology Unit (ECC FAU) undertook a programme of building recording on a group of 18th and 19th-century farm buildings at Little Thorbens, Greenstead Green, near Ongar. Works were funded by the owner, Mr. Q. McCauley, in advance of conversion work to single residential usage. The aim was to fulfil the archaeological condition and enable the sale of the buildings with planning permission along with the house Little Thorbens, a Grade II listed 16th-century property with sizable garden. The work was carried out in accordance with a brief issued by the Historic Environment Management team of Essex County Council (Clarke 2006), who also monitored the work.

Copies of the report will be supplied to the client, ECC HEM and the Essex Historic Environment Record (EHER, former SMR) at County Hall, Chelmsford. Copies of the archive will be deposited with ECC HEM and the National Monuments Record (NMR) at Swindon.

2.0 BACKGROUND

2.1 Site location and description (fig.1)

Little Thorbens is a house and outbuilding range situated in the hamlet of Greenstead Green, close to the junction between Toot Hill Road and Blake Hall Road, immediately to the west of

Chipping Ongar. The land abuts the grounds of Greenstead House and is accessed from the main road to the south, across the former 'Greenstead Green', recorded as such on historic maps.

Until recently, the farm house and buildings were in separate ownership, but now form one unit. The farm complex consists of four ranges arranged around an open yard to the west of the house and accessed from the main driveway. On first impression they might appear simply to be planned 19th-century timber-framed cattle houses and shelter sheds. However, these are grafted onto earlier elements, in the form of a possible 18th-century shelter shed and outbuilding. All structures are curtilage listed with the house.

The buildings awaiting conversion are currently used by the occupants of the house for general storage purposes. They are all of timber-framed construction, with varying degrees of rebuilding and alteration carried out over a long period of time, but, outwardly at least, nothing too damaging to their historic fabric and character. In fact, thanks to ongoing maintenance and repair, the group is in good condition and watertight.

2.2 Planning background

Epping Forest District Council received planning/listed buildings applications (EPF/0130/06 & EPF/0135/06/LB) for change of use and conversion of the farm complex to form a single four-bedroom residential dwelling with guest accommodation. Mindful of the possible effects on the historic integrity of the structures and the archaeological importance of the site, a full archaeological condition was attached to the planning permission, based on advice given in Planning Policy Guidance Note 16: Archaeology and Planning (DOE 1990).

2.3 Historic background

Little Thorbens is a statutory grade II listed cross-wing house (LBS 11779) dating from the 16th-century or earlier. The date '1564' is carved into one of the roof timbers (Listed Buildings Online). The house and farm group stand within a ditched enclosure, which may represent remains of a former moat and thereby possible earlier occupation as a medieval moated homestead.

2.4 Farming in the 19th and early 20th-centuries

From the 1740s onwards, earlier organic, more scattered, farmsteads were being replaced by 'planned' or courtyard farms to maximise cattle yields. Cattle (beef and dairy) were kept in enclosed yards joined to open-sided stock sheds, usually south-facing. The 'model' farm represented the peak of farm development established by the richest 'improving' landlords.

At the end of the Napoleonic Wars, in 1815, much of the marginal land brought under cultivation during a wartime boom was reverting to rough pasture or waste and slow corn prices and decreasing land values were leading to unemployment and bankruptcy. As the pace of enclosure continued, large holdings were rented out to tenants by single landlords.

The 1846 Repeal of the Corn Laws removed protective measures on the price of corn and was opposed by the farming community at the time. It was argued that a free market for food would mean more money in the pockets of the populace, which could then be spent on consumer goods, thus raising the standard of living and further stimulating trade and employment. However, although the price of grain on the world market dropped between 1848 and 1852, the general trend was of comparative stability. In fact the period between 1840 and 1870 was subsequently looked back upon as 'a golden age of farming', when grain prices were at their peak, leading to acceleration in farm building and improvement.

To counter the effects of the trade cycle on agriculture and the economy, the focus was on mixed farm agriculture. This accentuated the traditional partnership between man and beast whereby food and straw were produced for the animals in exchange for manure for crops in the fields. Great debate was had on the practice, philosophy and practice of farming technique. Farm buildings were arranged efficiently around the yard to follow the natural flow of materials. The yard was open to the warmer southern side, surrounded by open-fronted shelter sheds on the three sides and stores for feed and bedding.

By the 1860s, open-sided shelter sheds for cattle were provided on most mixed farms (Barnwell 1998). Smaller farmers influenced by the trends in Victorian farming were financially unable to create their own model farms and often remodelled their farms by constructing new housing for livestock, whilst retaining some of the more practical older buildings, usually the barn.

However, the golden age did not last long. Bad harvests and a downturn in the world economy after 1870 led to the abandonment of arable land in favour of livestock, butter, cheese, milk and market gardening. This led to the 'Great Depression' which lasted until the outbreak of WWII.

3.0 OBJECTIVES

The purpose of the historic building survey was, as outlined in the brief (Clarke 2006), to investigate and record the farm buildings to RCHME level 3 standard prior to conversion. The record was required to consider the plan form of the site, date, materials and method of construction, building chronology, development and phasing, process flow, function and internal layout and survival of early fixtures and fittings relating to original or change of usage. The record also aimed to understand the context of the farm within broad trends in agriculture and assess the local/regional significance/rarity of the buildings.

4.0 DESCRIPTION OF WORKS

The development area was recorded using architects drawings prepared for the conversion and supplied by the client. These provided a base plan for the fully annotated figures used in this report. A written site survey prepared by the architects (Tattershall 2006) was also supplied.

The standing buildings were each assigned a number and referenced to a block plan of the site (fig. 1). External and internal architectural descriptions were made and wherever possible the original function of each building was assessed, along with its relationships to others within the agricultural environment. Internal fixtures and fittings had probably been removed over time, affecting in some cases, accurate identification of function.

A series of photographs (digital, colour medium format and 35mm black & white prints) were taken to record the buildings internally and externally. General photographs of the farm group were difficult to take due to the proximity of the house and other features. Specific shots were taken of areas of important architectural detail, fixtures and fittings. A representative selection is reproduced at the back of the report as plates 1-24. The remainder can be found in the archive.

Cartographic and documentary sources (section 5) were consulted at the Essex Records Office (ERO), Chelmsford, to understand in greater detail the origins and development of the site.

5.0 CARTOGRAPHIC AND DOCUMENTARY ANALYSIS (figs. 2-5)

Chapman and Andre's map of 1777 (fig. 2) indicates a building in the approximate location of Little Thorbens. It is likely that two of the structures recorded in the survey (buildings 1 and 2) have 18th-century origins but it is not unusual for relatively small utilitarian buildings to not be included on this map, which is more schematic in nature. Hardins', the farm opposite, now known as Hardings Farm, is shown on the other side of the Green.

Grinstead (sic) Tithe Map (D/CT 153B, fig. 3), drawn in 1840, provides a clear picture of the house with an L-shaped range of farm buildings to the south-west, not dissimilar in part to the layout of the enclosed yard recorded in the survey, in terms of location and alignment. Bearing in mind that the map is, unusually, drawn to the south, such plan-forms are replicated in farms to the south and, to some extent, the south-east. In fact, judging from the pre-19th-century characteristics of buildings 1 and 2 recorded in the recent survey, it is possible that all or parts of these structures are represented on the map as the north-west range. The existing range on the south-west side is clearly later in date, but is built in part on an earlier ground plan. The accompanying Tithe Award (D/CT 153A) records the 'cottage building yard and garden' under the ownership Sarah Quinsey tenanted by Henry Lewis. The size of the plot is smaller than today's, at 2 rods and 6 perches, because that part of 'Grinstead Green' at the front of the property (fig. 3) was not incorporated into the grounds until the 20th-century. The land under the tenancy of Henry Lewis, close to the house, was mainly used for grazing. Only a small percentage was cultivated or woodland. The identity of Sarah Quinsey is unknown, but it is clear from Tithe Awards of the surrounding parishes, that she did not live locally.

By 1873-4, when the first edition 1878 OS map was surveyed (fig. 4), the ranges have been re-structured to create the familiar enclosed plan-form recorded in the survey. In common with other Essex farms during the 'golden age of agriculture', expansion has occurred through investment into new ranges for the primary function of cattle rearing. Presumably housing for horses and carts were provided too. There is no barn for large scale crop storage so it must be assumed the cultivated land was used to grow crops for fodder, stored in one of the structures. From the map, it can also be seen that Hardings, across the road, has also undergone some minor 'improvement' during this period. As a result of enclosure, it is assumed, the Green, to the south of the ditch, has been incorporated into the curtilages of Little Thorbens and the neighbouring Ivy Cottage. A trackway crosses the former Green leads to the house, with a second trackway beginning at the southern corner of the ranges where a dilapidated gate stands today, giving access onto the meadow.

The larger scale of the 1896 second edition OS map gives greater clarity, but shows no real change. The yard to the south-east is partitioned off by a fence or wall and the trackways seen in the preceding OS map are clearer.

The layout of the farm has not changed since before 1873 and later OS maps, although studied, provide no further information. Documentary sources provided no new information on development and ownership in the modern period.

6.0 BUILDING DESCRIPTIONS

6.1 General description (fig. 1)

The buildings (plates 1-3) are arranged in an enclosed square layout formed from animal ranges set around a modern gravel yard on a north-west to south-east orientation. No contemporary yard surfaces or partitions remain. A small square central drain appears to be related to the modern yard. The sole entry point is located opposite the house to the north-east between buildings 1 and 6. It is not clear whether the house formed part of the arrangement, but this would seem likely. All except building 1 and possibly parts of 2 are purpose-built in one phase some time between 1840 and 1873.

All structures are single storey and timber-framed, built on 19th-century brick plinths, comprising handmade dark orange bricks laid in Flemish bond and re-pointed in modern cement. Individual brick size is, on average, c.23 x 10-11 x 6-7cm (9 x 4 x 2½ inches). The fabric is rough with smooth arises. Identical bricks appear in all wall plinths, demonstrating a similar mid 19th-century construction date. Often they are mixed with a small amount of yellow stock bricks, manufactured in London and Kent, which came into widespread use with the coming of the railways post-1840s.

The exteriors are weather-boarded, except those originally built open to the yard that predominate on the south-east side. Included is shed 6 which has been in-filled between its external bay posts. Likewise, the oldest structure in the group, building 1, has infilling on its rear (north) side indicating a former function as a shelter shed from an earlier phase. Building 2 appears to have adopted the position of an earlier range and may contain fragments from it or reused sections of walling contemporary with shed 1. All the roofs are unhipped and gabled with barge boards. They are clad in a variety of materials depending on whether the roofs have been re-laid in the modern or quasi-modern period, but were probably originally slate-clad.

Overgrown vegetation obscures much of the rear elevations, providing little opportunity for detailed photography. However, the rear elevations of each element are consistent, comprising of blind machine-sawn tarred weatherboarded walling set on low brick plinths with no architectural detailing or fixtures. Fixed three-light windows have been cut into and nailed to the main elevations of the enclosed buildings facing onto the yard and may date from the late 19th- or early 20th-century. All structures except Loose Box 3 have unmade earth floors.

As outlined earlier, the condition of the group is good, thanks to care and maintenance up until the present time. Because of this, however, some historic fabric has inevitably been replaced with modern materials.

Each element of the farm complex has been given a number in the following descriptions, with reference to the block plan (fig. 1). Where possible they are identified by original function.

6.2 Shelter Shed 1 (figs. 6 & 7)

The earliest building in the group survives in its original location at the end of the north-east range and displays timber-framing characteristics indicative of a post-medieval, perhaps 18th-century date. It is currently used for storage and domestic appliances (freezer, etc) and consists of two areas: the main part, originally open-sided to the north-west (hence a shelter shed) and an enclosed narrow woodshed or former loose box. Its dimensions measure 8 x 15m. Interestingly, 15m is equivalent to three rods. Elements of the attached outbuilding 2 appear contemporary, but may be reused fragments from another structure pre-dating the Victorian improvement phase.

The shed stands on a low c.25cm-high brick plinth; a secondary addition contemporary with the 19th-century enclosed layout, as is the rear wall that in-fills the former open side. The roof is gabled both ends and is the only building clad in slate, echoing the sturdy workmanship below.

On the main, south-east, elevation (plates 1 & 4), a centrally-placed stable-type half-heck door provides entry into the main part of the structure, between two three-light windows. A second door with fixed plain fanlight over, leads into the narrow woodstore that originally was probably either a loose box or feed store. Both doorways are fastened to the frame by distinctive round-ended and spearhead strap hinges, suggesting a post-17th-century date (Alcock and Hall 1994) and are likely original fixtures. The doorway into the woodshed has a

distinctive zigzag timber construction (plate 5) that appears to be contemporary rather than a later graft.

Inside are two unequally-sized bays, plus the partitioned store on the south-west end; effectively three bays. The shed was originally built open-sided, connecting to the store by a doorway in the southern corner that was blocked with reused timber (plate 6) in the 19th-century with the construction of the enclosed layout. The weather-boarding on the inside of the store clearly shows the former in-filled outline of the doorway. The internal earthen floor has a cobbled threshold (plate 7).

Framing is mainly in oak, with the later rear wall in softwood, probably pine. Original studwork is fairly thick (c.8 x 11cm), primary braced and set c.35-40cm apart. Some of the timbers are waney, when good wood was in shorter supply, suggestive of post-medieval construction. There is evidence in the woodstore that this is Baltic oak, which came into the country from the 17th-century onwards (Letch 2001). A few are later replacements. Only the primary timbers are pegged. The studs are tenoned into the wall plates but nailed to the bracing and sill beams. Again, this is indicative of a post-medieval date. Mortice holes for studs in the exposed tie beam soffit indicates reuse rather than a second partition, as the holes are pegged and much wider than the studs at c.20cm. It is likely the tie beam was a former wall plate belonging to a medieval structure, perhaps related to the site. Its size is 15cm², larger than plates directly belonging to the structure, which are only c.12cm². Such plates are joined in three places by edge-halved and bladed scarf joints (plate 8), used to join long sections of timber from the late 16th-century onwards. There are no evident carpenter's marks.

Infilled framing on the formerly open-sided north-west side consists of primary braced 19th-century machine sawn softwood tenoned into to the earlier wall plate. Enough of the plate was viewed to verify that the original build was open this side. Later studwork measures only 5 x 10cm each.

Roof framing is basic pegged collar trenched purlin with ridge plank and piece (fig. 7, section A). Rafters, contemporary with the primary build, are waney and c.8 x 8cm-wide. Some have slots cut through indicating reuse. The roof is un-braced. Both purlins have been replaced in the modern period and additional support granted by diagonal beams connecting the wall plate on the north-east gable to the ridge piece above the tie beam.

The small area currently functioning as a woodstore (plate 4, left) displays identical construction techniques to the main part of the shelter shed. The boarded partition between the two is original and, again, the north-west side has a machine-sawn primary-braced frame. However, mortice holes on the wall plate soffit on this side show the sawn framing replaced an earlier stud wall on this side. The interior (plate 9) is limewashed and there are vague possible Baltic timber marks (*ll*) on the south-west wall plate (fig. 6, plate 10).

6.3 Cowhouse 2 (figs. 6 & 7)

Building 2 forms the remainder of the north-west range, connecting between Shed 1 and Loose Box 3 and replicating the L-shaped plan form of the pre-1840 group. Its function is obscure, but an animal-related usage is indicated by the inclusion of half-heck doors at the front; perhaps as a simple cowhouse or stable. However, no internal fixtures or fittings remain to verify its exact purpose.

Inside the building, earlier framing elements contemporary with building 2 appear to have been retained or reused within the later structure. All walls, with the exception of the south-west gable wall which has been completely rebuilt, have a mixture of original and modern timbers. It currently houses household items ready in storage ready for moving after the house and outbuildings are sold.

The structure is linear in plan, measuring 9 x 28m and divided into three equal c.9.2m bays. Like the other enclosed structures, it is clad in weatherboard on a low brick plinth but has a low 35° pitch gabled roof covered in modern pantiles.

The main elevation (plates 1 & 11) fronting the yard contains two half-heck doors either end, with inserted fixed windows set between. Both doors appear contemporary with those in building 1 and the one furthest to the north-east end retains the same round-ended strap hinges. In fact, there is evidence to suggest the north-east bay contains elements of wall-framing to the pre-1840 structure, left upstanding when the rest of the building was constructed. A scar in the weatherboarding on the first bay (plate 11) is consistent with original framing on the inside, as if this side of the bay was retained. Indeed, the ground sill here appears to be original (9 x 19cm) and has been cut off where bays 1 and 2 join. The following sill is narrower and appears to be replaced.

A new wall plate and sill have been added to the rear (north-west) wall joined by basic lapped scarf joints and carrying a mixture of new and reused timbers in a dark stain (plate 13). Most of the south-east side retains possibly original wall plates, though the sills appear

to be replaced on bays 2 and 3 (plate 14). Certainly, the door into bay 2 is in the right position (plate 00) and surrounded by genuine limewashed studwork. Proper inspection in this area was hindered slightly by the amount of stored items kept here.

The collared roof is built from 5 x 18cm sawn plank ties supported on nailed and lapped diagonal braces. All the rafters are sawn too and therefore all replaced. The walls are spreading slightly at the bases (fig. 7, section B).

6.4 Loose Box 3 (figs. 6 & 7)

This small structure (6.5 x 11m) conforms to the early L-shaped layout, but unlike buildings 1 and 2 appears to contain very few reused timbers from the earlier phase. Originally it may have functioned as a loose box for calving, young or sick cattle.

The main elevation shows two fixed inserted windows and a half-heck door, possibly reused from the original structure. The roof is low-pitched at 35°, rebuilt and recently re-roofed in pantiles on new tile battens.

Originally, the interior (plate 15) was divided into two bays but additional modern 5 x 15cm cross-planks now divide it into four. Exposed framing is mainly in sawn softwood, with some waney reused studs on the rear wall, possibly from the earlier structure. The gable end walls are encased in weatherboarding and there is a concrete floor, the only place where there is one, indicative perhaps of the long time in disuse. The roof frame is basic (fig. 7, section C).

6.5 Shelter Shed 4 (figs. 6 & 8)

The main component of the south-west range is Shelter Shed 4 (plate 17), situated between Loose Box 3 and Shelter Shed 5; essentially the same, but with slightly differing construction and alterations. Shelter sheds were open to the yard, giving cattle room to roam. Historic mapping (fig. 5, 1896) shows that this end of the yard was enclosed and it is possible that areas were zoned off to different animals. The plan form is linear and its proportions similar (9 x 29m) to the other two, although this is slightly misleading as there is no real partition between sheds 4 and 5.

Thick 18cm² posts, encased in brick with cement render over, divide the structure into three c.5.2m-wide open bays with a fourth, larger, 12m bay occupying the southern end, where a feeding trough is located (fig. 6.). The trough (plate 18) is constructed from planks laid on a thick wooden frame. At 75cm, it is set rather high for cattle, usually between a few inches (when lying down) up to 0.6m high, but too low for horses which always feed standing up,

usually between 0.91-1.07m (Peters 2003). A partition built from sawn and reused timbers defines the feeding area in the larger bay from the other three bays, which are linked by an open doorway (fig. 6, plate 19).

King post strut roof trusses (fig. 8, section D, plate 19) define the bays and also appear in-between as modern insertions, to support a heavier roof load. The latter are not shown in fig. 6. The roof has been replaced in plain clay tiles on new rafters. Some of the accompanying plank tie beams have been repaired in the modern period with new timbers splay-scarfed on and secured with stainless steel bolts. The valley and hip rafters have been replaced where buildings 4 and 5 join (Tattershall 2006). The rear wall consists exclusively of sawn primary-braced softwood.

6.6 Shelter Shed 5 (figs. 6 & 8)

This four-bayed structure forms most of the contemporary south-east range. The main differences between this and Shed 4 are that the bays are slightly wider at c.6m, and the posts narrower at only 14cm². The posts have nailed diagonal up braces on either side to the 12 x 15cm-wide wall plates (plate 2). Less of the structure is adapted and its original form has been largely maintained. The bay adjoining Shelter Shed 6 has been partitioned-off with a modern tarpaulined light stud wall to create a lawnmower shed (fig. 6). A shallow-pitched modern porch roof has been added at the front on top of a pair of double plank and batten doors set in the open position (plate 2).

The pantile roof appears to be original, topped with moulded ridge tiles also recorded with Shelter Shed 6. The trusses are collarless, with diagonal braces passing from bay post to rafter and notched into the tie beam either side (fig. 8, section E).

6.7 Shelter Shed 6 (figs. 6 & 8)

The range on the north-east side has recently been used as a workshop. Formerly, however, it was a third open-sided shelter shed whose open side was latterly in-filled with stud walling and weatherboarding, much the same as building 1. Shed 6 was in-filled at a later stage, possibly during the depression years after the 'golden age'. Concrete surrounds to the brick bases are visible at the front (plate 3). The interior (plate 22) consists of four bays of varying widths, largely consistent with the other two sheds. Bay posts on the original open side are identically braced as those in Shed 5 (plate 23). The bay adjoining shed 5 is wider to accommodate the width of the structure. The gabled partition that separates the two has a partition door and a wooden slatted gable for ventilation. The north-west gable is slatted in the same way (plate 24); a common feature of partitions and gable ends to livestock areas. A

small chained opening at the base of the doorway on the north-west elevation is a later insertion for cat entry and vermin control (plate 21). The roof structure and pitch (fig. 8, section F) appear to be original and are the same as Shelter Shed 5.

7.0 DISCUSSION AND PHASING

Later 19th century improvements at Little Thorbens resulted in the expansion of the existing small L-shaped complex into a larger enclosed courtyard plan, to maximise milk and beef production in line with contemporary trends in farming. The scale of the farm was small and focused on rearing animals, with arable land for growing fodder crops. There is no evidence for barns or granaries on the site, familiar structures on mixed and cereal-based farms. Although not listed as a farm in any of the sources examined, the house, Little Thorbens, probably performed the same function as a farmhouse.

Shed 1 probably originally opened out onto a yard defined partly by the ditched enclosure around the house. Fields for grazing were sited to the rear (north) of the small complex. It is not known if the farmstead was expanded and rebuilt in the 19th-century as a result of increased land holdings.

Three main phases of historic development have been identified, broadly based on construction techniques examined during the survey and 19th-century maps, which show the extent to which the layout of the farm buildings was influenced by important national developments in agriculture during this period. A third phase is included to illustrate some of the changes made in the last century and up to the present time, although many of these are not properly datable.

This development is summarised as follows, the dates given are approximate:

Phase 1: 18th-century

A small L-shaped group of buildings is known to have pre-dated the existing ranges, shown on the 1840 Tithe Map. Their construction date is unknown. These faced away from the existing yard, onto what was probably a small 'yard' or enclosure. A pond is situated in the western corner of the enclosure for watering. With the ground rising in the fields to the rear (north) side, the ditch provided, and still does, a way of protecting the farm from hillwash (Q. McCauley pers. comm.). Additional grazing may have occurred on the Green. Building 1 survives virtually intact from this period, and it is likely that elements of outbuilding 2 are

contemporary. Indeed, it is likely that the early farm became the source for reusable timbers when the existing complex was built in the mid to late 19th-century.

Building 1 was constructed as a small open-sided shelter shed with attached shed, possibly a food store. The function of the two contemporary structures (largely demolished and replaced) is unclear, but if the focus of the farm was for animals rather than crops, they are likely to be related to animal husbandry; i.e. animal shelters, loose boxes or stores. The smallest of the three structures, forming the L-shaped part of the plan-form opened out onto, what is today, the yard and is the logical place to have a cartshed.

In the oldest structure, the wall framing is of fairly thick, primary-braced oak, with pegged trusses and edge halved and bladed scarf joints securing the wall plates. The studwork is tenoned into the plates at the top, but nailed onto the sills (which appear to be original) at the base. The clasped purlin roof is later, but probably replaced an earlier one. All things considered, this is post-medieval construction that would not be out of place in a structure built in the 18th- or perhaps early 19th-century, hence the dating of this primary phase.

Phase 2: Mid-19th-century (1840 to 1873-4)

The 18th-century L-shaped range was 'improved' in the early 19th-century by remodelling it into the enclosed yard form. The small shelter shed from phase 1 was retained and its open side enclosed, perhaps to form an enclosed store, for fodder or hay. Structure 2 adhering to it was largely rebuilt on the same plan form, but retaining sections of wall framing from the previous phase. Loose box 3 was built on the ground plan of the earlier possible wagon lodge. Three new open-sided shelter sheds (buildings 4, 5 and 6) were constructed to form a square enclosed yard open to the east. A central yard was created, divided roughly between the shelter sheds to the south-east and probable fodder store, cowhouse and loose box to the north-west. It is likely that accommodation was provided for horses and wagons within the structures.

The Green ceased to exist and part of the land was amalgamated with that of Little Thorbens and Ivy Cottage next door. With the larger holding, it is more likely the animals were grazed on the pastures to the north-west of the house. The cattle would be led out of the entrance in the north-east of the range and down the trackway (driveway to the house) onto the former Green and then onto the trackway that led past the north corner of the ranges and into the fields.

Phase 3: 20th-century onwards

When farming ceased at Little Thorbens, sometime in the 20th-century, perhaps as a result of the Great Depression, the open-sided north-east range was in-filled to become a workshop and fixed windows inserted to all enclosed buildings. More recently, the yard has been gravelled over and outbuildings been kept and maintained as garaging/storage areas for the house.

8.0 CONCLUSION

The farm at Little Thorbens was until closure a cattle farm. This is strongly suggested by the clear absence of structures associated with arable farming such as barns and granaries. In the 19th-century, cattle were either reared for meat and leather or dairy purposes, mainly cheese and butter production. Milk production was concentrated, before refrigeration, around the urban centres (Peters 2003). The existence of a farm based solely on livestock is rare in Essex, yet it would appear from the earlier layout that cattle farming here was traditional, and, like many other farms, elements of an earlier farmstead were incorporated into the new design. Had the farm had an arable focus, like many Essex farms, then Little Thorbens would have probably followed the trend toward mixed farming like many others did as a response to fluctuations in the trade cycle and contemporary practice.

The cattle ranges and associated structure retain their vernacular form and group appeal, which is not detracted externally from modern repairs, mainly to the roofs, which have kept the buildings in their present good condition. External fixtures and fittings remain but internal elements, except for the feeding trough, have probably been removed over time.

Significantly, because of the low-level of adaption and extension to the farmstead, the original 19th-century plan-form remains fossilised. This is comparatively rare in Essex, where many farm groups expanded in the middle of the 20th-century to contain ever larger machinery and industrial-scale barns to hold increasing grain yields, as the focus again shifted towards arable production after WW II and Britain's entry into the Common Market in the early 1970s.

Over the centuries, farming has had a profound impact on the rural landscape. The research framework for the Eastern Counties (Glazebrook 1997) has identified the importance of studying surviving farm groups from the two main historic periods of agricultural improvement: the agricultural revolution (1750-1820), when new crops and rearing

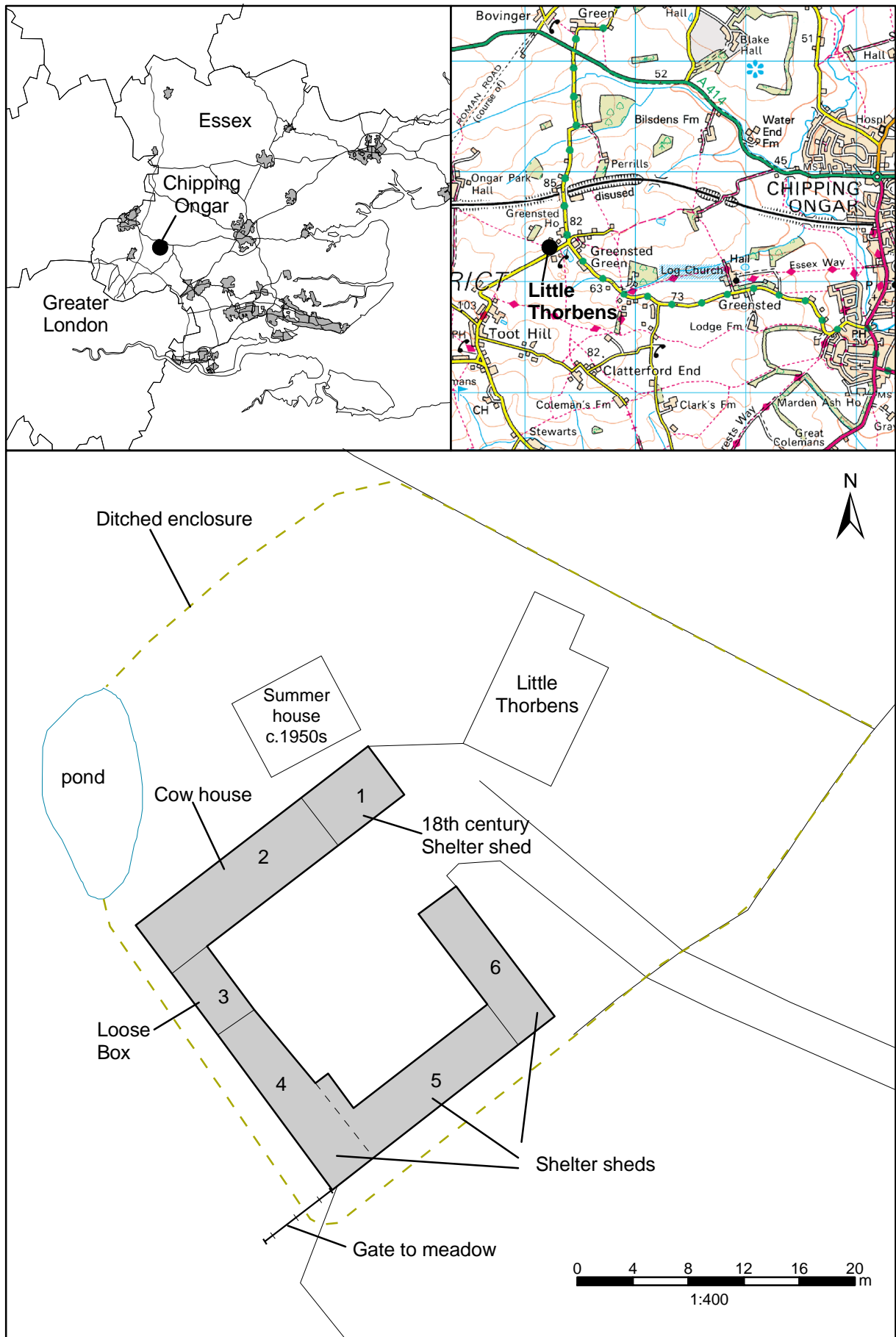
techniques were developed with the introduction of the planned and model farm, and Victorian High Farming (1840-70), when farms were remodelled to bring about increased livestock (invariably cattle) yields. Pre-dating the Victorian era of high farming, the layout at Little Thorbens is an early planned form and a good example of its type.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The survey was undertaken by ECC FAU on behalf of the owner, Mr. Q. McCauley. Thanks are due to Mr. and Mrs McCauley for their friendly cooperation and assistance and to staff at the Essex Records Office for their help during the research stage. The project was monitored on behalf of the LPA by Vanessa Clarke of ECC HEM.

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Fig.1. Location and block plan



Fig. 2 Chapman and Andre, 1777 (plates XII & XVII)

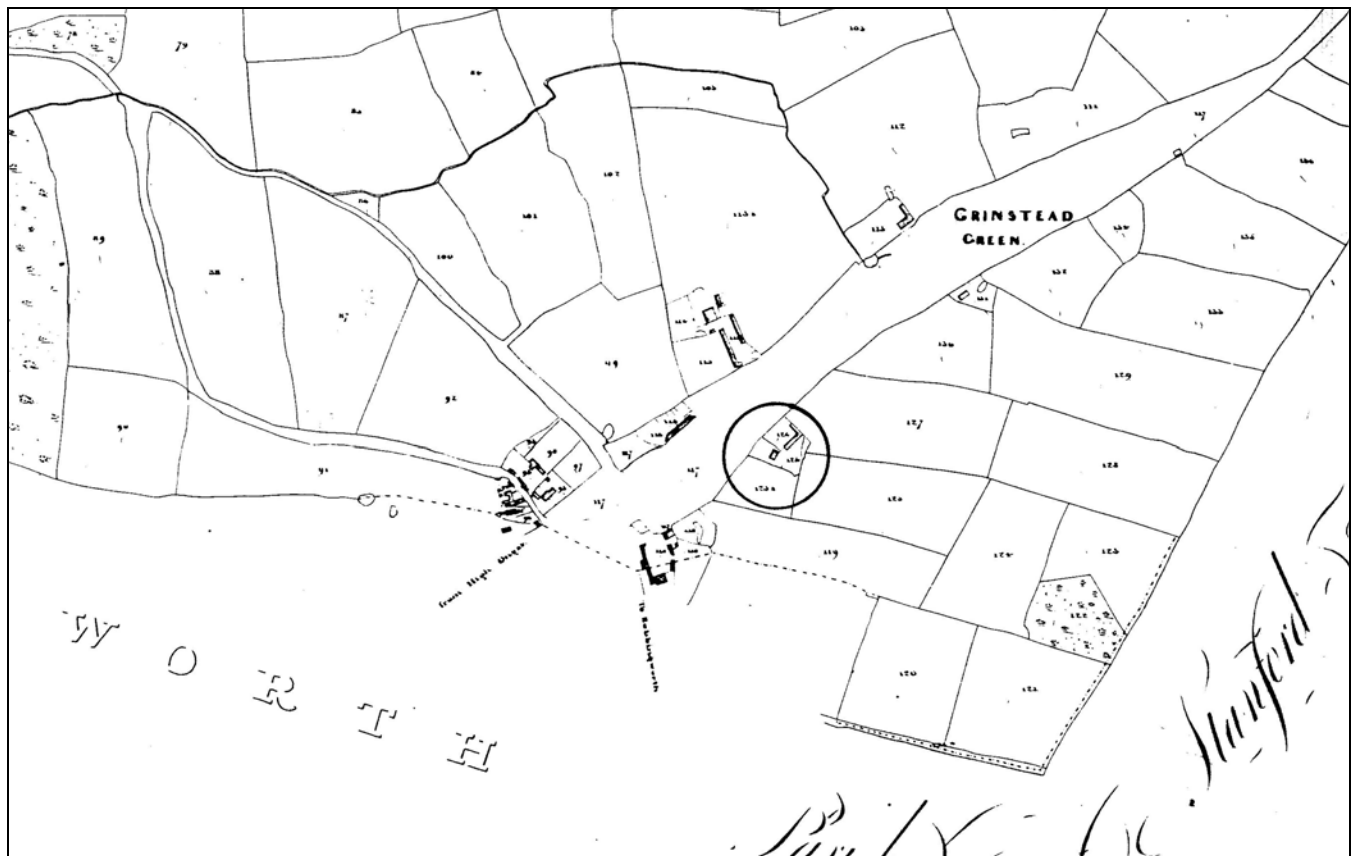


Fig. 3 Tithe map of Grinstead, 1840 (D/CT 153B) NB the map is orientated to the south

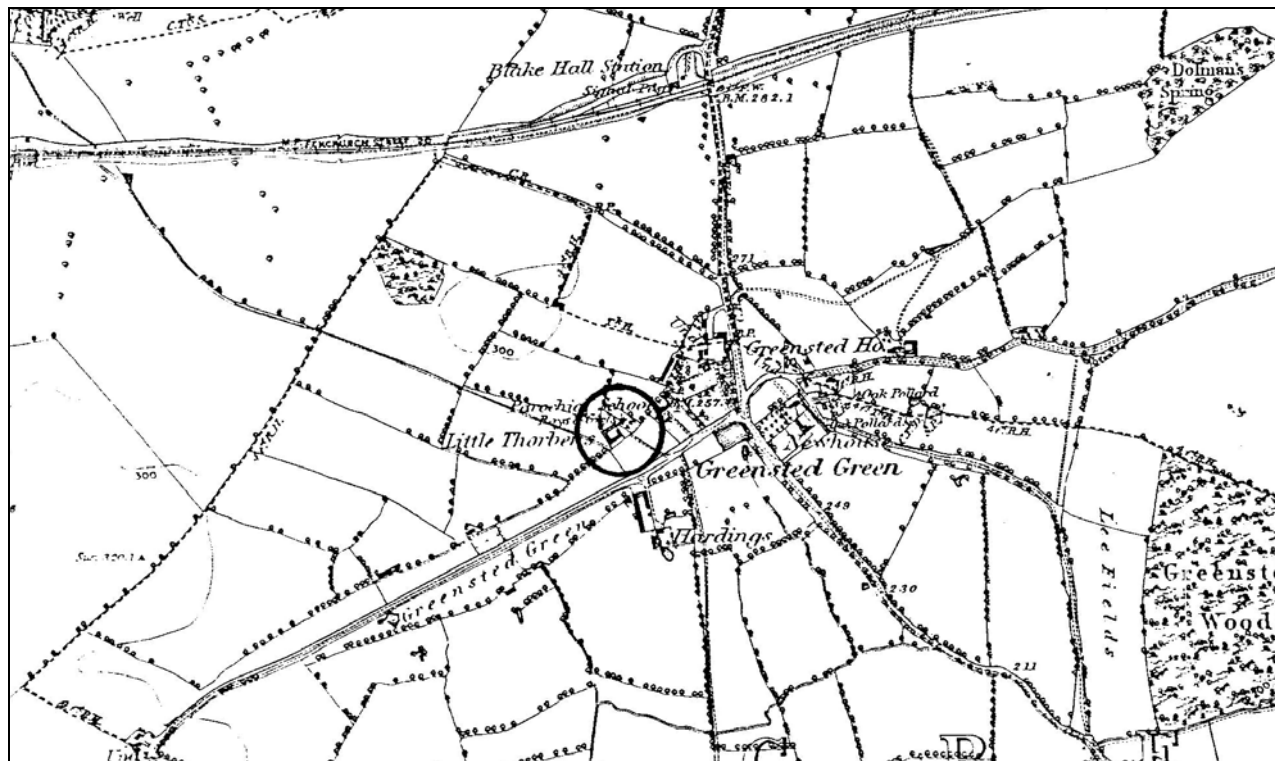


Fig. 4 First edition 6" OS map, 1878 (surveyed 1873-4) sheet 50 (enlarged)

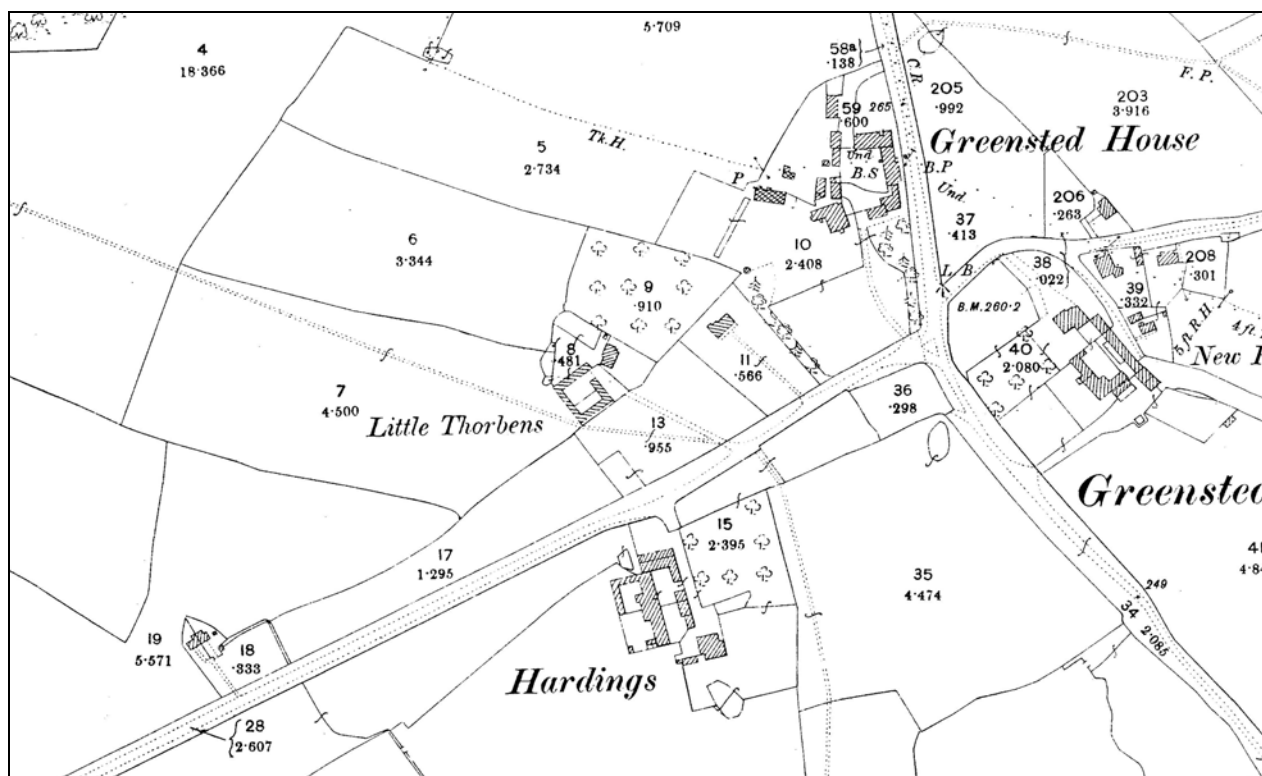


Fig. 5 Second edition 25" OS map, 1896 sheet 50.12

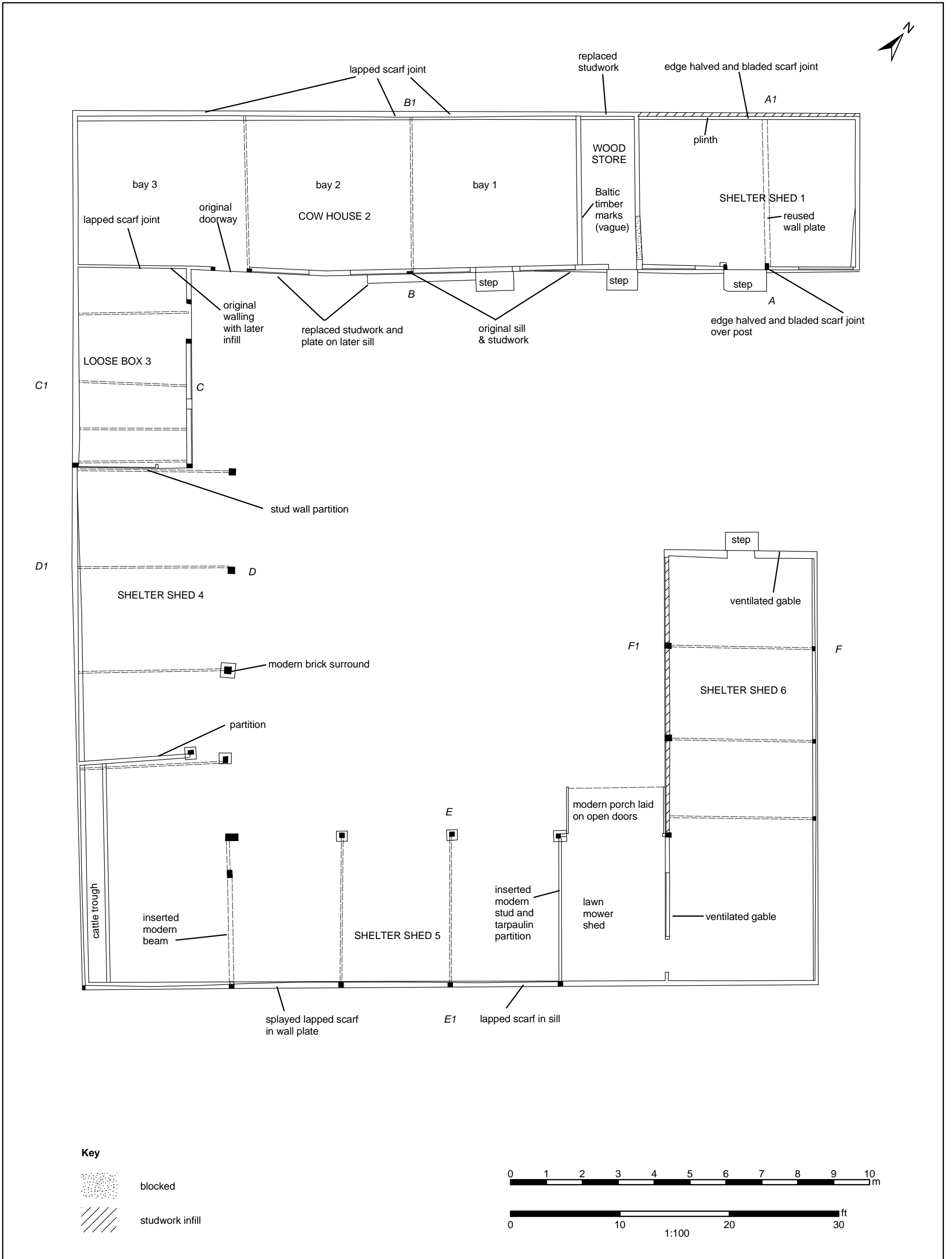
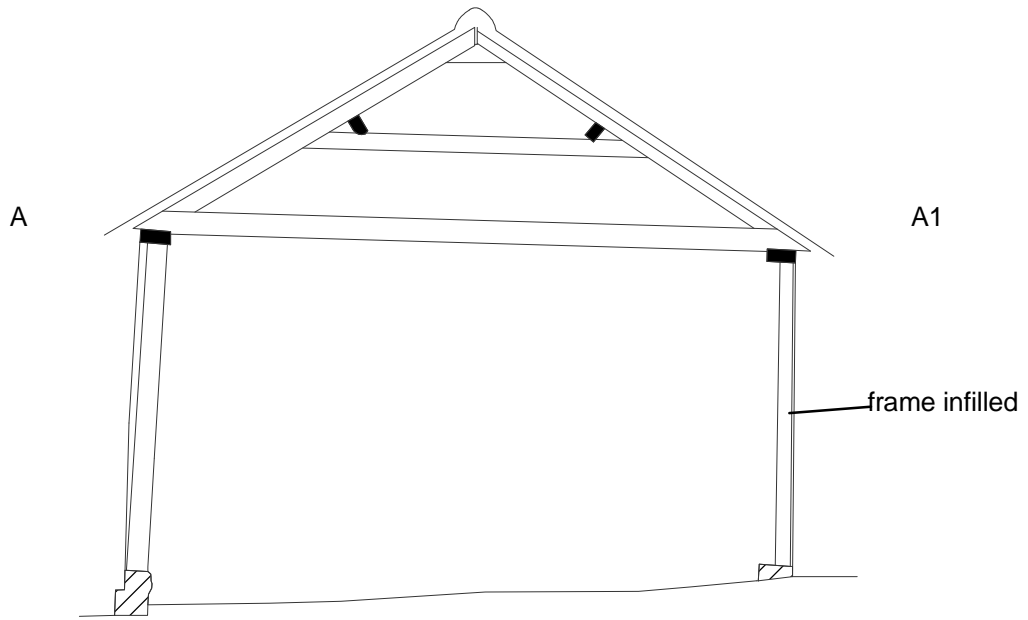
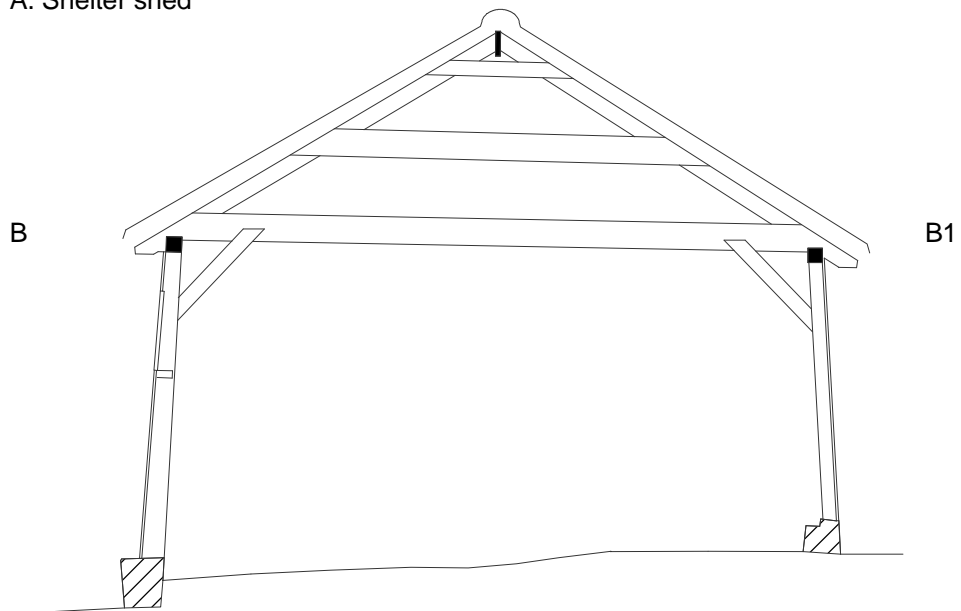


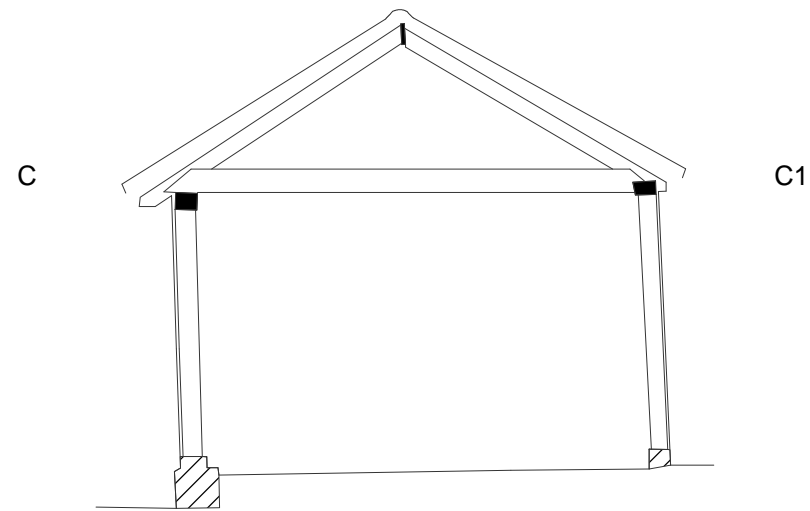
Fig.6. Floor plan




A. Shelter shed



B. Cow house 2



C. Loose box 3

Key
 brick

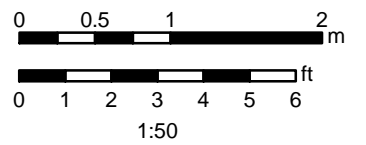
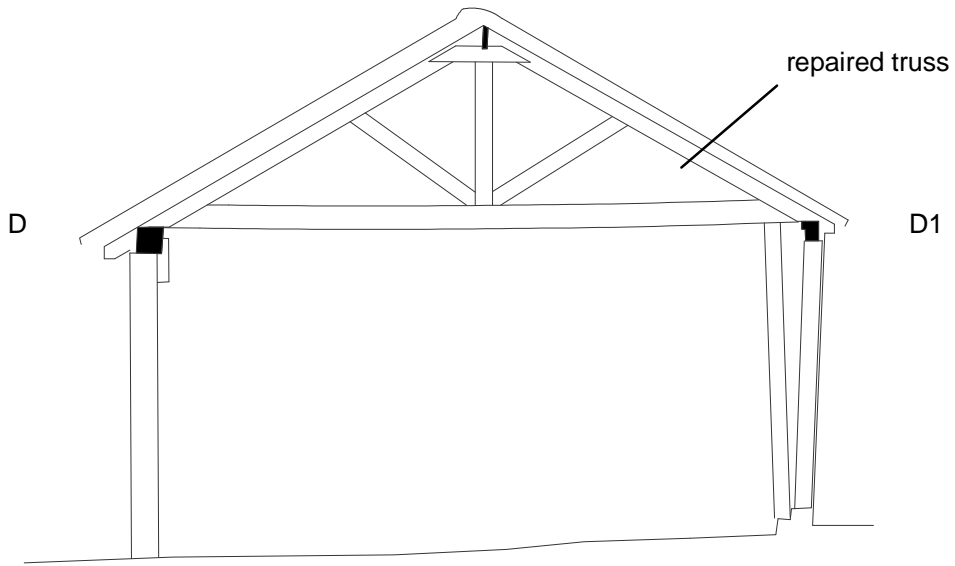
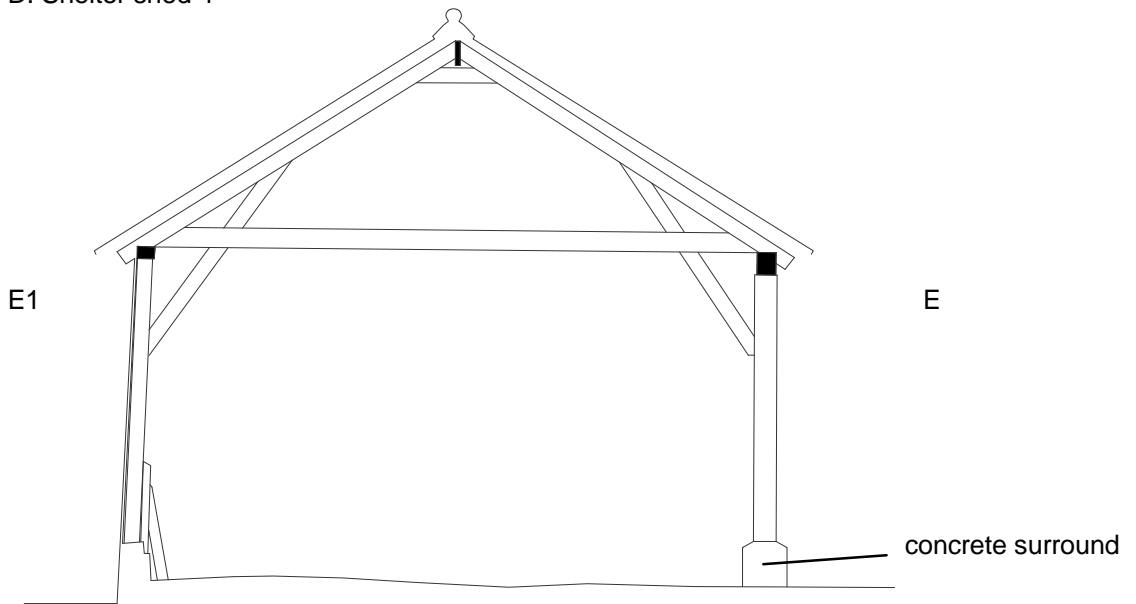


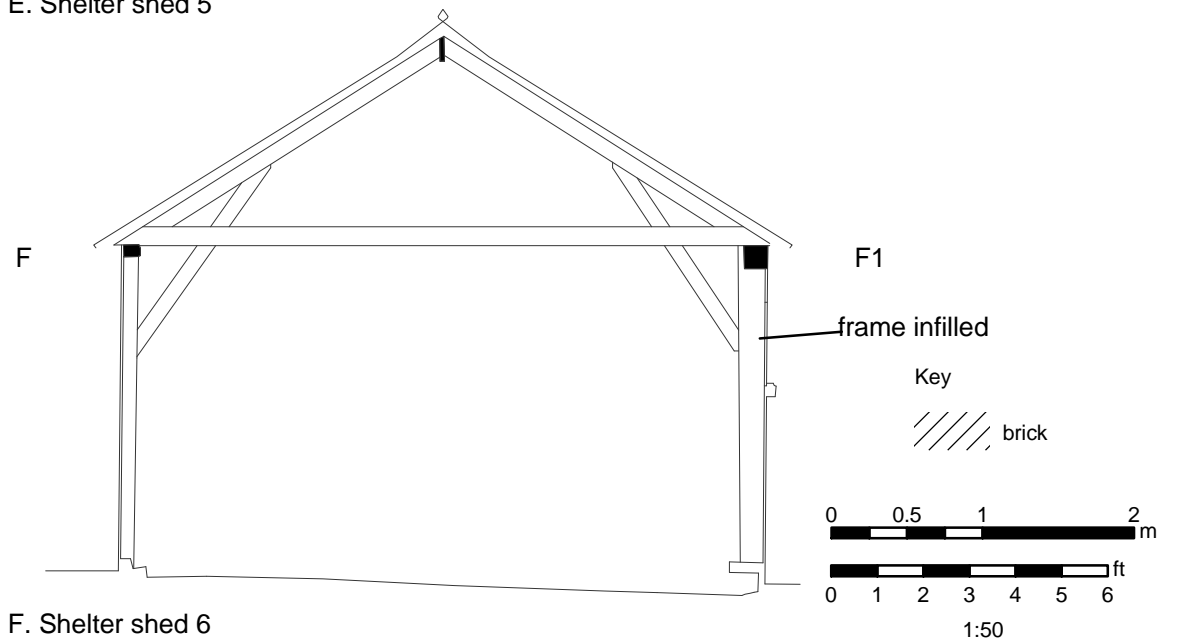
Fig.7. Sections A-C



D. Shelter shed 4



E. Shelter shed 5



F. Shelter shed 6

Fig.8. Sections D-F



Plate 1 Farm group viewed to west from house



Plate 2 Victorian shelter sheds viewed from north



Plate 3 Shelter sheds 5 and 6 viewed from west



Plate 4 Former Shelter Shed 1 viewed from south



Plate 5 Door into woodshed, Shed 1



Plate 6 Interior of Shed 1, viewed from north showing blocked doorway



Plate 7 Stone threshold to Shed 1



Plate 8 Edge-halved and bladed scarf jointed wall plate above in-filled wall framing in Shed 1

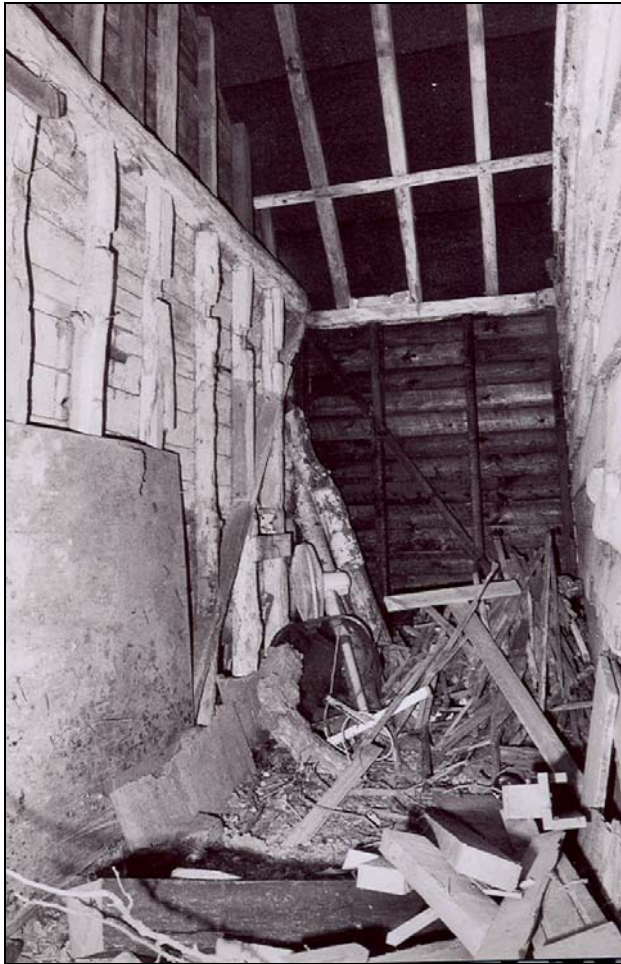


Plate 9 Interior of woodshed inside Shed 1



Plate 10 Possible Baltic timber mark (central //) inside woodshed



Plate 11 Front elevation of Cowhouse 2, showing wall scar between bays 1 and 2



Plate 12 Partial 18th-century walling in first bay of Cowhouse 2



Plate 13 Interior of Cowhouse 2 viewed from south-west



Plate 14 Original wall framing around doorway into third bay of Cowhouse 2



Plate 15 Front elevation of Loose Box 3



Plate 16 Interior of Loose Box 3



Plate 17 Close-up photograph of Shelter Shed 4

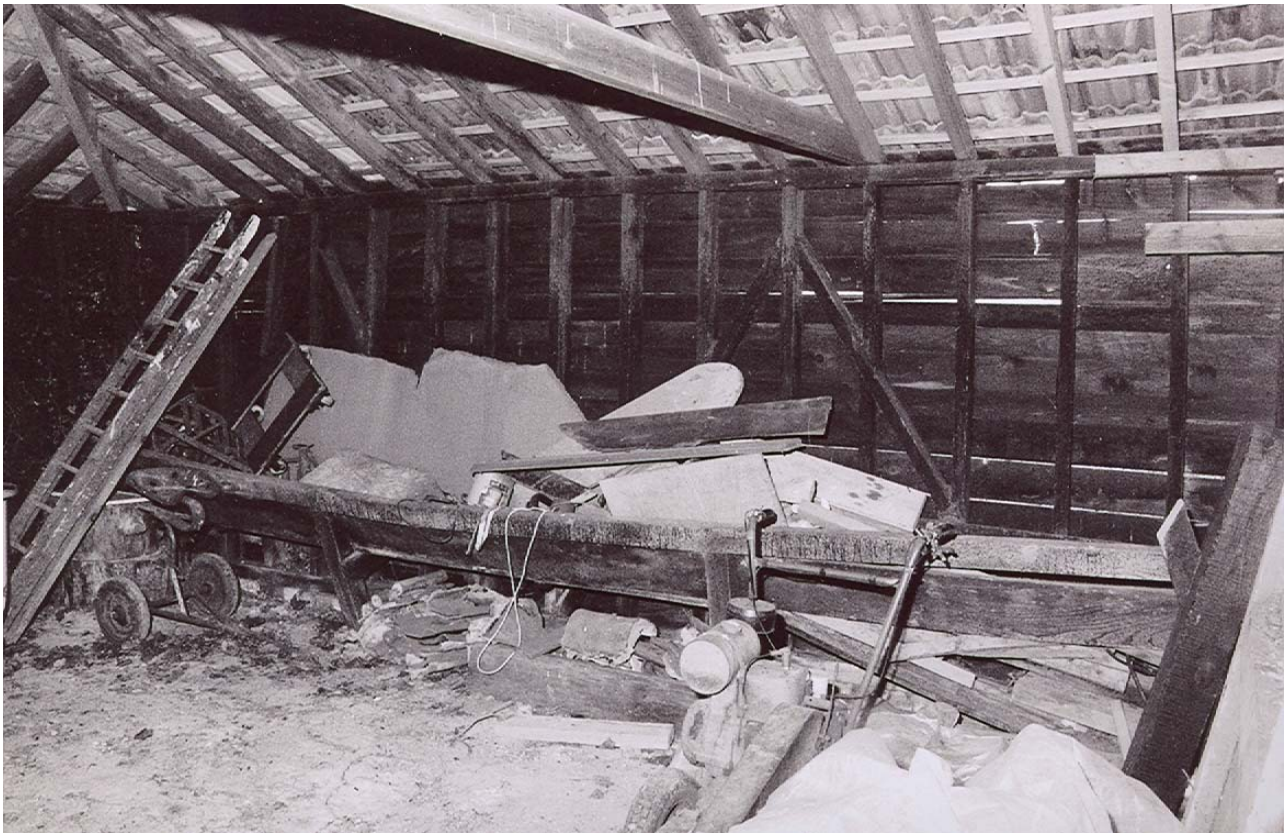


Plate 18 Interior of Shelter Shed 4, showing cattle trough on rear wall



Plate 19 King post trusses and internal north-west side of timber partition to Shelter Shed 4



Plate 20 Interior of Shelter Shed 5 viewed from south-west



Plate 21 Former Shelter Shed 6, viewed from west



Plate 22 Interior of Shelter Shed 6, viewed toward in-filled front elevation



Plate 23 Braced bay post inside Shelter Shed 6



Plate 24 Ventilated gable inside north-west gable of Shelter Shed 6

Appendix 1: Contents of Archive

1. Introduction

- 1.1 ECC HEM Brief
- 1.2 WSI

2. Research Archive

- 2.1 Copy of report
- 2.2 Copy of report pdf-formatted

3. Site Archive

- 3.1 Site photographic record (digital images, 120mm colour prints, 35mm monochrome prints)
- 3.2 Site notes & plans
- 3.3 Architect's Survey

Appendix 4: EHER Summary Sheet

Site Name/Address: Little Thorbens, Toot Hill Road, Greenstead Green, Ongar, Essex	
Parish: Greenstead Green	District: Epping
NGR: TL 522 033	Site Code: ONLT 06
Type of Work: Historic building recording	Site Director/Group: Andrew Letch ECC FAU
Dates of Work: 9th May 2006	Size of Area Investigated: N/A
Curating Museum: N/A	Funding Source: Mr. Q. McCauley
Further Work Anticipated? None	Related LB/EHCR Nos.: LBS 11779
Final Report: Summary in EAH	
Periods Represented: post-medieval to 20th-century	
<p>SUMMARY OF FIELDWORK RESULTS:</p> <p>A complete 19th-century planned cattle farm containing probable 18th-century elements was recorded prior to residential conversion. Based on the enclosed courtyard plan, the group contains open shelter sheds to the south-west side and loose boxes, stores and possible stables to the north-west site. The group stand opposite Little Thorbens, a Grade II Listed 16th-century cross-wing house.</p> <p>The enclosed group replaced an earlier L-shaped farm layout, partially adopted in the new plan form. Building 1, a former shelter shed adapted in the 19th-century, remains virtually intact from this phase alongside parts of building 2, which appears to contain thick primary-braced wall framing and reused timbers from the early phase. Construction of the 19th-century buildings is typical and largely uniform, in standard machine-sawn primary-braced timber. Apart from some modern roof rebuilding, little has changed from the original built form, except, in a parallel to the past, one of the later shelter sheds was enclosed in the 20th-century to form a workshop. Apart from a feeding trough, few fixtures and fittings remain.</p> <p>Little Thorbens is an unusual and significant Essex farm for several reasons. Firstly, its 19th-century vernacular form has been retained as a small agrarian group and not been added to, except for some rebuilding to the roofs. Secondly, it is rare in a county with good agricultural land to find a farm dedicated to livestock rather than mixed usage in the 19th-century. However, in terms of trends in agriculture, it fits into the 19th-century movement for planned 'improvement' in Essex in the middle to later part of the 19th-century.</p>	
Previous Summaries/Reports None	
Author of Summary: A. R. Letch	Date of Summary: 26th May 2006