

**LITTLE NUNTY'S FARM, NUNTY'S LANE
COGGESHALL
ESSEX**

HISTORIC BUILDING RECORD



**Essex County Council
Field Archaeology Unit**

January 2009

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Prepared By: Andrew Letch Position: Project Officer	Signature: Date: 16th January 2009
Checked By: Adrian Scruby Position: Project Manager	Signature: Date: 16th January 2009

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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.

Please contact the Archaeological Fieldwork Manager at the

Field Archaeology Unit

Fairfield Court, Fairfield Road, Braintree, Essex CM7 3YQ

Tel: 01376 331431

Fax: 01376 331428

Email: fieldarch@essexcc.gov.uk

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Essex CM1 1LF

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**LITTLE NUNTY'S FARM, NUNTY'S LANE
COGGESHALL
ESSEX**

HISTORIC BUILDING RECORD

Client: Strutt & Parker

FAU Project No.: 2009

NGR: TL 8283 2523

OASIS No.: essexcou1- 53787

Planning Application: 06/00313/COU

Date of Fieldwork: 18th December 2008

1.0 INTRODUCTION

A programme of building recording was undertaken by Essex County Council Field Archaeology Unit (ECC FAU) on the remains of a Victorian farmstead at Little Nuntty's Farm, Coggeshall, prior to conversion to holiday lets. The work was commissioned by the architects, Strutt & Parker, on behalf of the farmer, Mr. Hill, and carried out in accordance with a brief issued by the Historic Environment Management team of Essex County Council (ECC HEM), who also monitored the work.

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

The study of the development and impact of the agricultural revolution and Victorian High Farming is regarded as an important area for further research by the Regional Research Agenda (Brown & Glazebrook 2000, 42 & 45). The survey at Little Nuntty's shows the barn was built as part of a planned farm in the second half of the 19th century, with a cattle shed added later and then subsequently converted to stables.

2.0 BACKGROUND

2.1 Site location and description (fig.1)

Little Nuntty's Farm (TL 8283 2523) lies on the north side of Coggeshall parish, approximately 7km to the north-east of Braintree. The farm lies at the end of a narrow B-road that continues as a trackway northwards alongside ancient woodland (fig.1), including Nuntty's Wood to the north. It is sited on flat ground, with a large field to the west and woods either side. Just to the north, in Pattiswick parish, is Great Nuntty's Farm which is a well-preserved 18th century and earlier farmstead, currently awaiting conversion and the subject of a recent survey by ECC FAU (Letch 2008).

The farm has been redundant for some time and consists of two timber-framed and boarded structures, a barn and stables, and modern storage sheds and grain silos (fig. 1) which are to be demolished as part of the development. They stand on the site of the former farmyard and impinge greatly upon the farm's historic character (plates 1 & 2). The farmhouse is timber-framed and has been recently refurbished and extended. None of the buildings have statutory Listings.

2.2 Planning background

A planning application for conversion to holiday lets was submitted to Braintree District Council (BDC) in February 2006 (06/00313/COU) and approved in April 2008. Mindful of the impact of conversion on the historic integrity of the farm buildings, and the importance of farming in the East Anglian region during the post-medieval and Victorian periods, ECC HEM advised BDC that a full archaeological condition should be attached to the planning consent, based on advice given in Planning Policy Guidance Note 16: Archaeology and Planning (DOE 1990).

2.3 Historical background & development

Cartographic and documentary research was undertaken at the Essex Record Office, Chelmsford (ERO) to understand the origins and development of the farm. Other sources were also studied. Historic map extracts included in the report as figures 2 and 3 have been enlarged to provide greater clarity.

There are no direct documentary references to Little Nuntty's in the Records Office, but the origin of Great Nuntty's Farm appears to be from its location beside Nuntty's Wood, referred to as 'Noteheye' in Assize Rolls as far back as 1285 (Reaney 1969). According to Reaney, the name is likely to derive from 'the nut-hey or enclosure' or later the 'nun's nut-hay', referring to

the nun's of Castle Hedingham. If called upon, serfs from Pattiswick parish were responsible for collecting nuts from the manorial woods on Holy Cross Day (14th September) (1969 398).

The present Great Nuntty's Farm was established in the 16th-century and includes a contemporary byre, refurbished in the 18th-century when the farmstead was remodelled (Letch 2008). Little Nuntty's was part of the Holford Grange estate and was built as a planned estate farm sometime after 1833, as it does not feature on the Coggeshall Tithe Map of the same year (ERO D/P 36/27/1). Therefore, it is likely the farm was established during the Victorian Golden Age of Agriculture (1840-70), a period of agricultural prosperity when new farms were built around a central yard and many earlier farmsteads 'improved' in line with contemporary thoughts and farming methods.

The first cartographic reference is not until 1875, with the First Edition Ordnance Survey map (fig. 3). This shows both farms referred to as 'Nuntty's', which is unusual given their proximity but perhaps not a problem if the farms were in separate ownership. The map shows the barn on the western side of two yards with other buildings to the north, where modern grain silos now stand, and a pond to the south.

The second edition OS map of 1897 shows the stable building has been built, replacing a former outshot attached to the south wall of the barn porch (figs 3 & 4). Dashed lines show the stables were originally built open to the yard and are therefore more likely to have been for cattle, and subsequently converted in the early 20th century. A new outshot has been built north of the porch, as well as separate structures to the west (fig. 3).

It is assumed that much of the historic farmstead was demolished when the farm was upgraded in the second half of the 20th century, for larger farming machinery and grain storage. Grain silos and conveyors were built into the barn and former yard and modern machine sheds/stores added at either end (buildings 3 & 4).

In the past few years, farming has been relocated to larger farms nearby, leading to the buildings at Little Nuntty's becoming redundant. The farmhouse was sold off and plans submitted in 2006 to refurbish the older farm buildings to holiday lets (ECC HEM 2008).

3.0 OBJECTIVES

The purpose of the historic building survey was, as outlined in the brief (ECC HEM 2008), to provide a basic English Heritage level 2 photographic record of the farmstead along with written descriptions of the main buildings prior to conversion. Descriptions of the obvious modern buildings were not required, but a brief generic description and photographs are provided to complete the record

In addition, the survey was required to address the following: plan form of the site and its landscape setting, materials and method of construction, building chronology and phasing, function and internal layout, fixtures and fittings, additions and process flow.

4.0 DESCRIPTION OF WORKS

The standing buildings were recorded using drawings (floor plans frame survey and elevations) supplied by the client. A numbered block plan was produced to show the location of the structures within the survey (fig.1).

External and internal architectural descriptions were made and building function assessed. The buildings were open and free to access. A series of photographs (digital and 35mm black & white print) were taken to record the main buildings internally and externally. Specific shots were taken of any areas of important architectural detail, fixtures or fittings. A representative selection of photographs is reproduced at the back of the report as plates 1-12. The remainder can be found in the archive.

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

5.0 BUILDING DESCRIPTIONS

Full access was provided to the structures, which were recorded in their current condition. All are single-storied, with primary-braced timber frames and weatherboarded exteriors typical of farm buildings of the period. Since farming ceased they have been used mainly for storage purposes.

5.1 Barn 1

The barn represents the only remains of the original mid-19th century farmstead. It is in fair condition externally, with some missing and dried-out boards punctuated in places by grain feed apertures supplying a conveyor to the grain silo inside the barn (fig. 4). The north outshot retains disconnected grain drying machinery.

The barn is a short, 6m x 14m single-storied building constructed from primary-braced softwood timber on a high (1.5m) Flemish bonded 9-inch frogged red brick plinth, typical of the period. The exterior is weatherboarded and the roof clad in corrugated asbestos sheeting, presumably replacing an earlier tile or slate roof, as the pitch is not steep enough for thatch.

5.1.1 External description

The main elevation contains a porch facing east across the yard to the farmhouse (fig. 1), much of which is hidden from view by the proximity of the stables and shed 4, as well as a corrugated tin screen built around the northern lean-to (plate 3). The large cartdoors to the porch are original, with cast iron pintel hinges, but the low threshold 'leap' has been removed to gain easy entry. Beyond the corrugated iron fence is the later northern outshot, which houses grain processing machinery (plate 4). Most of the fixtures here (T-hinged doors, windows, etc) are relatively modern and it is likely to have been refurbished comparatively recently. The outshot lacks a proper plinth and the front wall has an unusual 'toothed' profile, which clearly identifies it as a later building phase.

The rear elevation, facing onto the fields to the west (plates 4 & 5), is largely intact, containing a pair of cart doors onto the fields, with three of the four leap boards surviving below. The two gable ends are featureless, apart from the conveyor feed on the north end (plate 4). The proximity of modern shed 3 to the southern gable has caused damp to be trapped and the boards to rot on this side.

5.1.2 Internal description

Internally the barn is divided into four short 2.5m wide bays either side of the central midstray which is 1m wider, traditionally to admit loaded wagons during harvest time. The barn contains various pieces of equipment, such as a feeding trough, wire cage panels and most obviously the mobile 'crew trailer' in the centre of the floor. There are scars in the concrete floor for removed modern fittings, the most obvious being the grain silo at the south end (fig. 4) which was supplied by an overhead conveyor travelling between the roof trusses (plate 6).

Wall framing is primary-braced and built in slender hand-cut softwood, with few if any repairs. Main timbers are 5 inches wide and long in length, the horizontal sections occasionally joined by single-pegged face halved and bladed scarf joints. No carpenter's marks were recorded. Studs are long and narrow, commonly about 3 inches wide, and are likely to be marked-up on the outside of the frame.

Either side of the porch are partly-blocked openings for former doorways. A cruder opening has been formed by knocking-out part of the plinth between the barn and stables (fig. 4, plate 7).

Roof trusses are built in stout pre-fabricated units altered latterly to carry the grain conveyor. A central bolted iron rod keeps the truss in tension and raking struts either side provide further strength, aided by vertical struts to the ends (plate 6). Those struts on the western side were removed when the conveyor was fitted. The trusses are supported by bolted knee braces to the midstrey but are otherwise un-braced, the bays being narrow and the frame relatively light, yet well-constructed. The underside of the roof is finished in pine sarking boards (plate 6).

5.2 Stables 2

The stables form a range enclosing the southern side of the stockyard, replacing the original barn outshot in the late 19th century and are therefore slightly later in date than the barn. It was originally built as a five-bay cattle shed but the front was enclosed in the early part of the last century to form stables for working horses with a wagon bay at one end, close to the house. The current building has been altered very little externally, apart from some fresh doors and replacement hinges, but has been somewhat dwarfed by the building of shed 3 against its southern wall.

The overall condition of the stables is quite good, and dry internally. It is similar in build to the barn, being single-storied and constructed from primary-braced softwood timber on a low brick plinth, apart from the inserted front wall that has a cruder build. Also like the barn, the exterior is weatherboarded and the roof clad in corrugated asbestos sheeting. Any fixtures relating to historic use such as stall partitions and troughs have been removed, making it difficult to determine the internal layout of the building, especially in its later form. The concrete floor is littered with odds and ends from the farm.

5.2.1 External description

The main elevation faces onto the yard to the north and is built on a light frame of halved, vertical timbers punctuated by half-heck stable doors (plates 3 & 8). Most of these are in a poor state and one of the doors is a modern replacement. Most of the original iron strap hinges to the others have been replaced by modern T-hinges. The eastern bay was used as a wagon bay and the doorway into it is wider, to allow access for carts (fig. 4, plate 8).

The rear wall of the stables is now incorporated within modern shed 3 (plate 9) and displays no features of historical interest.

5.2.2 Internal description

The interior comprises four open bays (plates 10 & 11), with a fifth bay partitioned off to form a wagon bay (fig. 4, plate 12). Although this is a modern partition, formed from light timbers and corrugated tin, it may represent an earlier feature, perhaps removed along with any horse stalls when the concrete floor was laid. The wagon bay displays the only historic fixtures recorded in the stables, namely boards from the rear of a cattle feeding trough relating to the earlier use of the building, and four harness racks set about the southern wall (fig. 4, plate 12).

Wall-framing consists of thin primary-braced softwood timbers, some machine-sawn, stood on a low three-course brick plinth (plate 10). Wall plates are in shorter, approximately one-bay lengths joined by single-pegged edge faced and bladed scarf joints. The north wall is clearly inserted between the bay posts as the framing here is in crude, widely-spaced halved studs, many with their bark still on and there are no stud sockets in the wall plate. The stable wall plate on this side is bolted onto a nailed fish plate from the porch plate and there are clear indications of damp in the valley between the stables and porch (plate 11).

Roof-framing is basic, consisting of tie beams and wide planked collars set within the bays and nailed to the rafters (plate 10). Knee braces are bolted between tie beam and bay post on the formerly open front to lend greater support.

5.3 Modern Sheds 3 & 4

These two structures stand either side of the traditional farm core, built from corrugated asbestos sheets on angle iron and timber frames (plates 1, 2 & 9). They are large prefabricated structures built to house modern farm machinery or straw bales, most likely a

mixture of both. In fact, given their size, these and the silos probably stored the harvests from more than one farm.

6.0 DISCUSSION

The mid-19th century farm concentrated primarily on arable farming and consisted of a yard with a barn (building 1) where grain was processed and stored, and a north range, most likely for horses (fig. 2). A smaller parallel structure behind (drawn with dashed lines in figure 3) facing onto the field, provided shelter for a small herd of cattle, suggesting this was formerly pasture land.

The late 19th century farm also provided accommodation for cattle to the west of the complex, perhaps with a small feed store nearby (fig. 3). Another cattle shed (building 2) was built onto the barn, and an outshot on the north side of the barn porch (fig. 3), providing a standard plan form of a square central stock yard enclosed on three sides, with the entry by the farmhouse.

The barn and stables display similar construction methods typical of 19th century farm buildings. Close inspection shows softwood primary-braced timber framing and bolted knee braces common to both. The stables, being slightly more recent in date, display a higher proportion of machine-sawn timbers.

In appearance the barn has changed very little apart from the roof, which has been re-clad in modern asbestos sheeting. Given the substantial roof trusses and low roof pitch it seems likely the barn was roofed in slate or tile, rather than thatch, and the stables are likely to have been the same. The well-ordered truss design suggests a more pre-fabricated form of building. The barn is now open-plan but was likely to have had some form of partitioning for crop storage and perhaps livestock that was removed along with the threshing floor, when the concrete floor was laid in the last working phase of the farm.

Stable 2 was built as an open-fronted cow shed and probably converted to stables in the early 20th century. The design and plan form of the earlier shed was likely typical of many others Essex examples, with access to the yard and feeding troughs along the rear wall. Little evidence remains for the layout of the stables and the only internal features to survive are the harness racks in the wagon bay, indicating four horses, or two teams. Other historic

fixtures such as the former wagon bay partition, stalls (if there were any), feeding troughs and hay racks have been removed.

7.0 CONCLUSION

Little Nuntty's Farm was established in the mid-19th century as a planned farm, tied to the Holford Grange estate, and following a mixed farming regime, as evidenced by the presence of buildings for crop storage and livestock, typical of other Essex farms. The buildings were timber-framed and weather-boarded, which is the vernacular norm, and most likely with tile or slate roofs. The farm expanded slightly in the late 19th century and the conversion of the cow shed to stables was noted during the survey. Perhaps the largest impact on the farm was the introduction of large-scale mechanised grain storage in the 20th century, when many of the old farm structures disappeared.

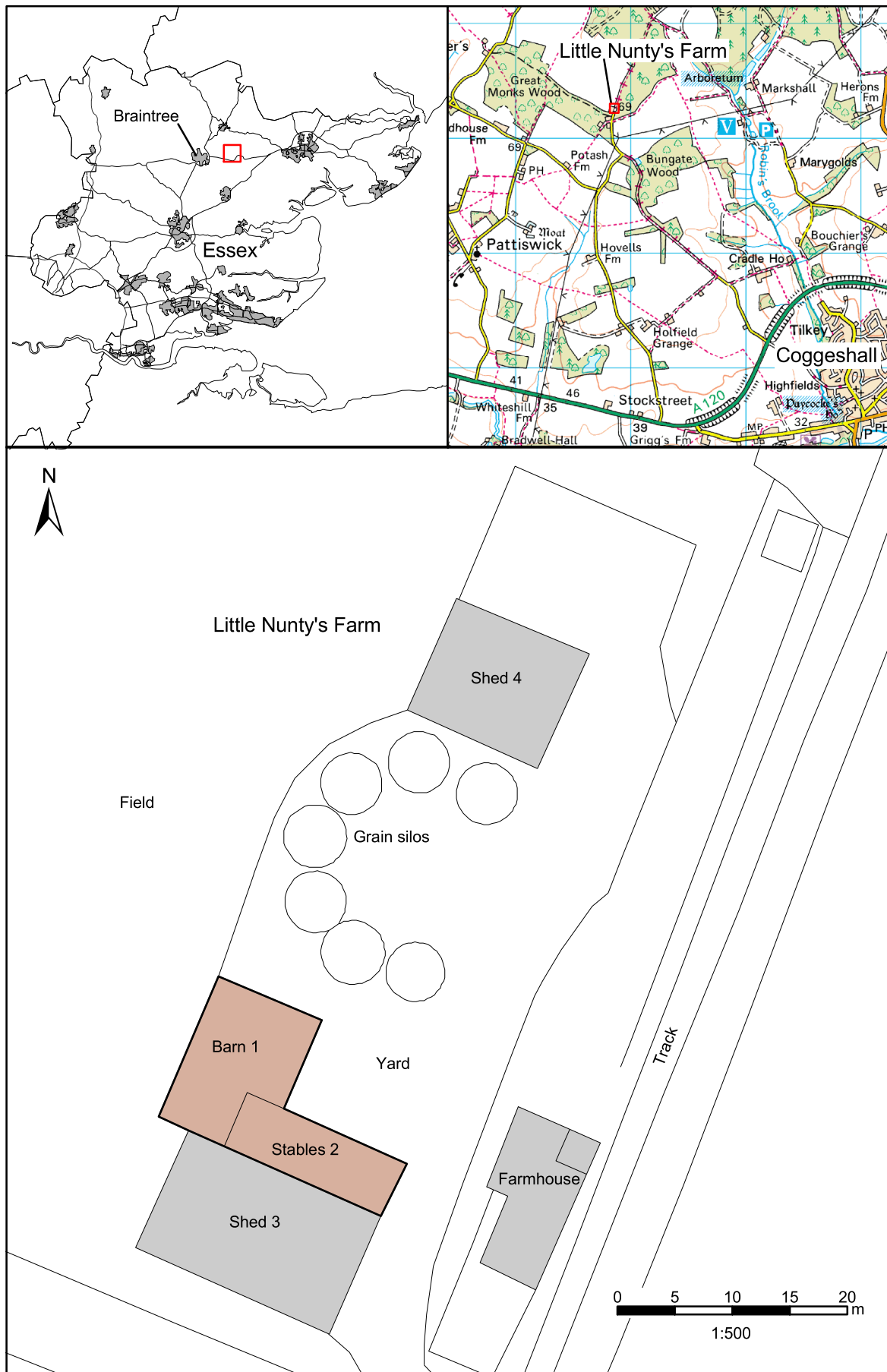
The barn and stables are significant as a small surviving part of a 19th century fully-planned Victorian farm, which is an unusual study project. The establishment of farms on new sites is relatively rare as most landowners 'improved' their existing farms (often developed during the 17th and 18th century agrarian revolution) to take advantage of mixed farming improvements during the so-called Victorian Golden Age of Agriculture. A new farm such as this indicates the enthusiasm for country estates to take advantage of the boom in agriculture and healthy markets brought about by good harvests, increased population and higher standards of living during the period of rapid industrialisation.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thanks are due to Nicola Bickerstaff of Strutt and Parker for supplying plans of the site and for commissioning the works on behalf of Mr. Hill, the farmer. The assistance of staff at the Essex Records Office is also acknowledged. 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 Teresa O'Connor of ECC HEM, on behalf of the LPA.

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Fig.1. Site location and block plan

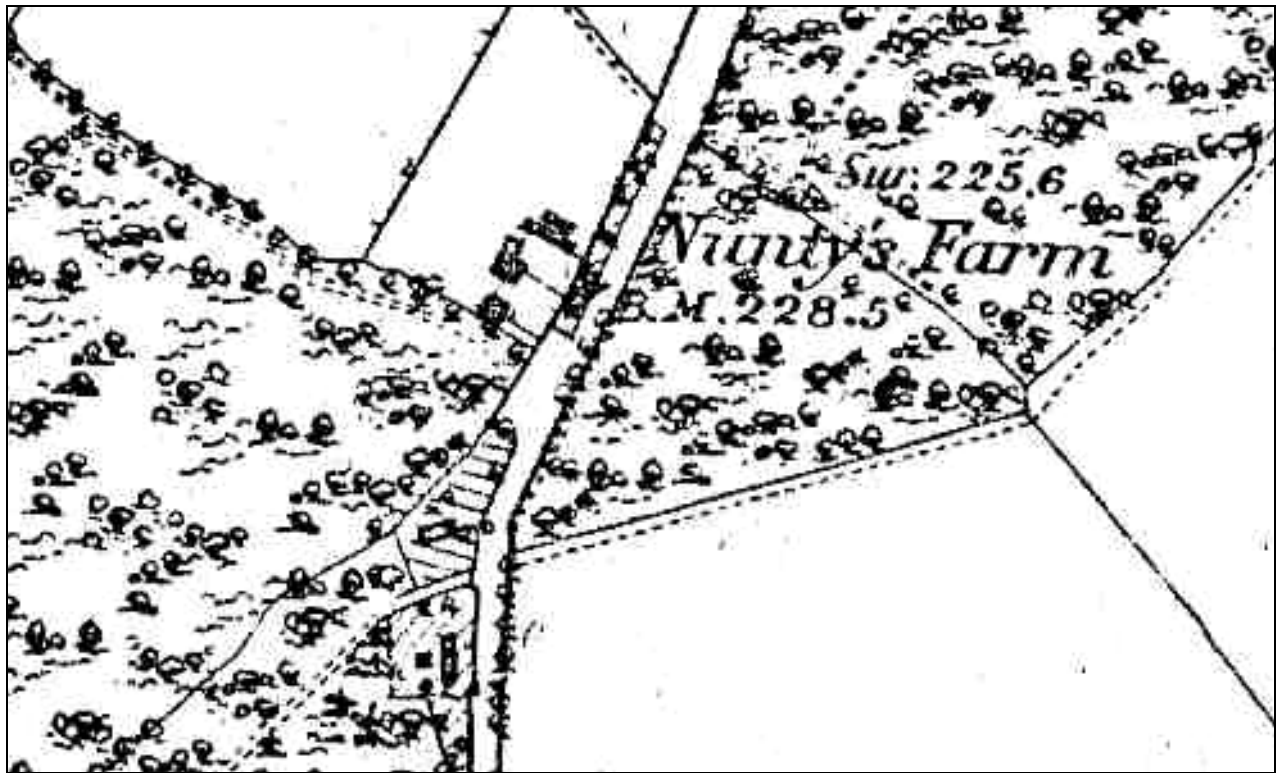


Fig.2 Enlarged extract from 1875 OS map (sheet 26)

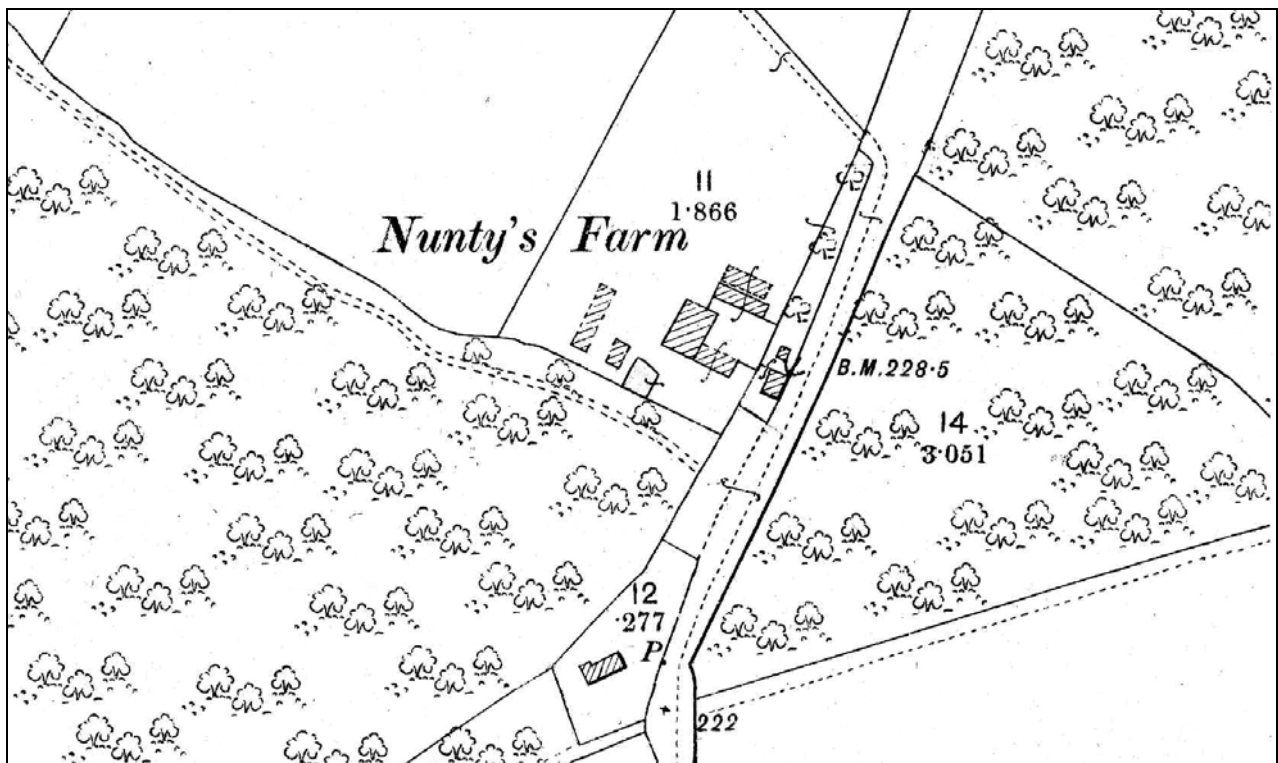


Fig.3 Extract from 1897 OS map (sheet 26/5)

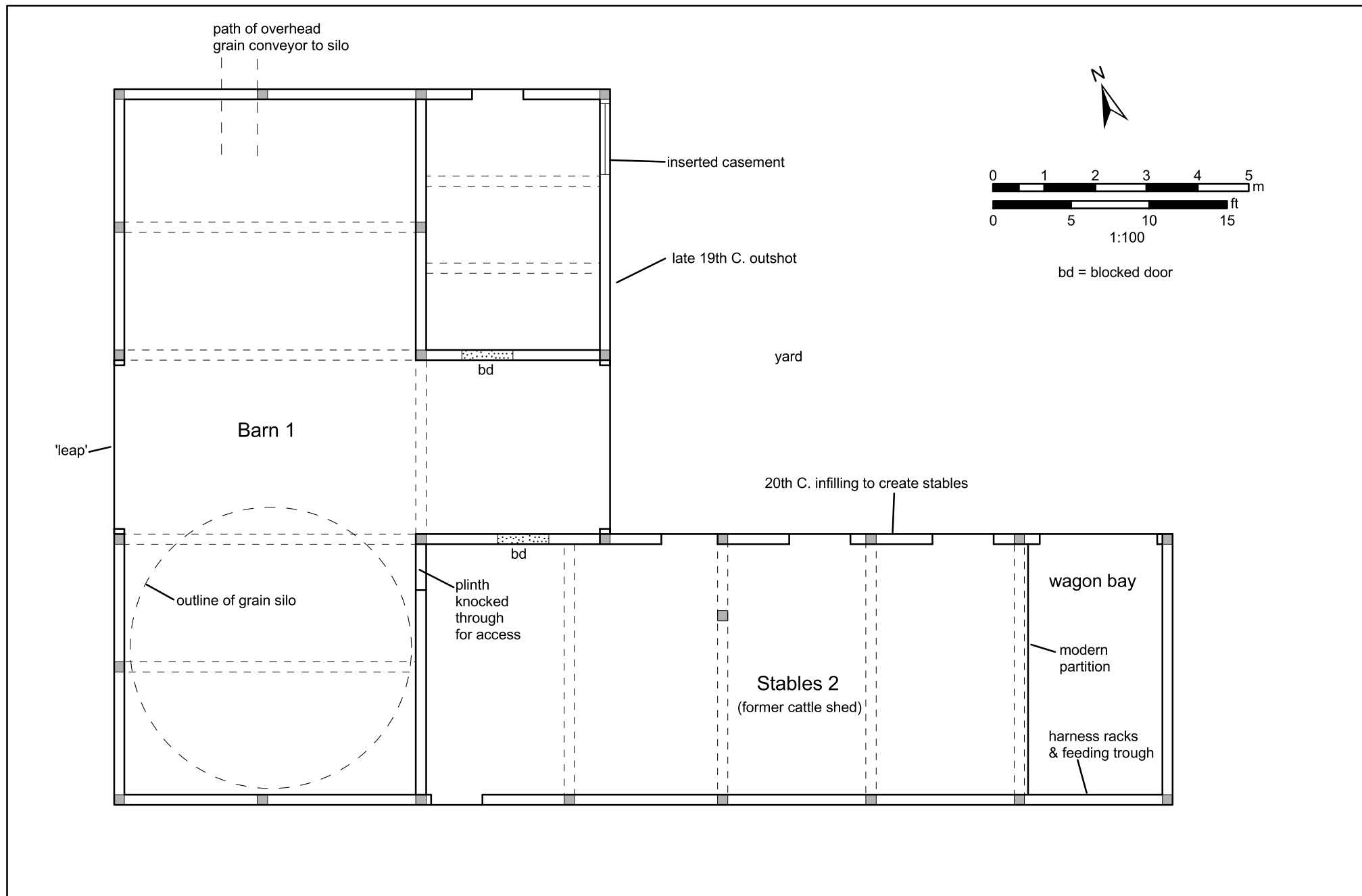


Fig.4. Plan of historic structures



Plate 1 Farm entrance and refurbished house viewed from south



Plate 2 View of farm from north



Plate 3 Barn and stables around former stock yard



Plate 4 Barn viewed from north-east



Plate 5 Western cartdoors facing onto fields



Plate 6 Interior of barn viewed to north

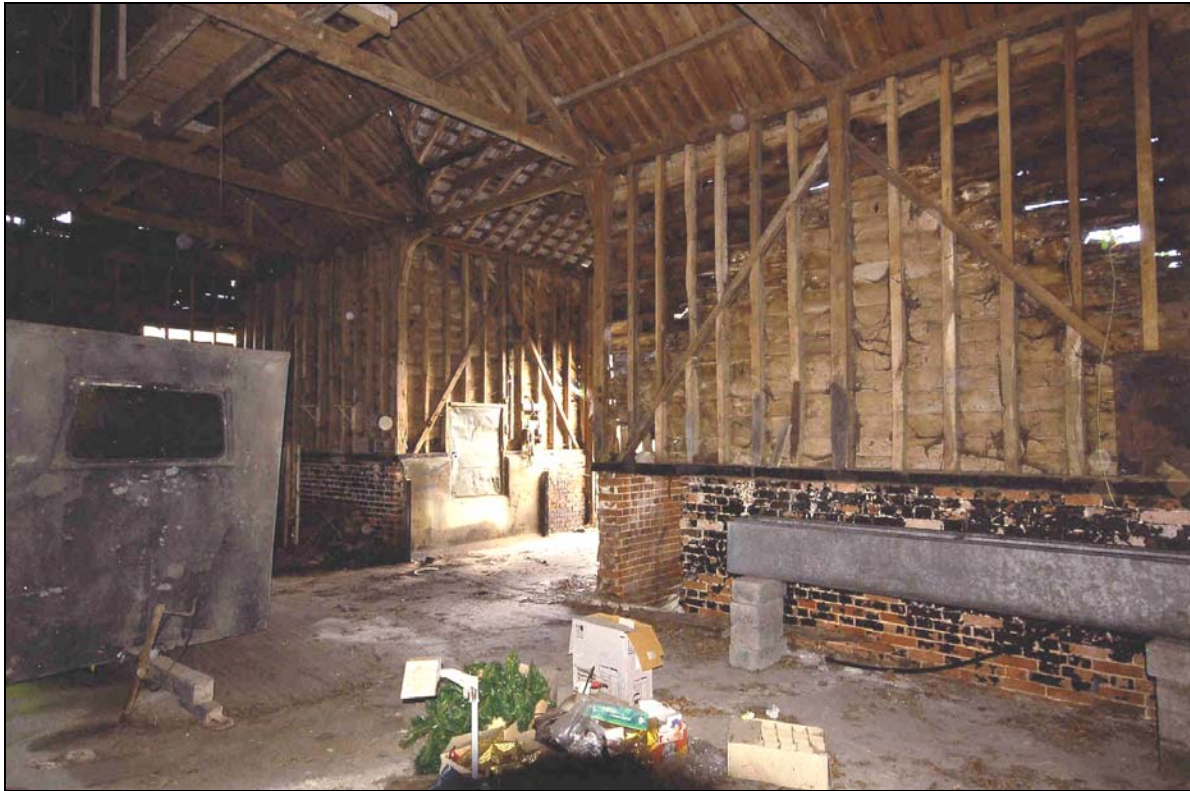


Plate 7 Interior of barn viewed to north-east and into porch



Plate 8 Barn porch and stables



Plate 9 Rear of stables viewed from south through building 3



Plate 10 Interior of stable viewed to partition at east end



Plate 11 Interior of stables showing construction around porch and later infilling at front



Plate 12 End wagon bay with remains of feeding trough and harness racks

Appendix 1: Contents of Archive

Site name: Little Nuntty's Farm, Coggeshall, Essex

Project no.: 2009

Index to the Archive:

Document wallet containing:

1. Introduction

- 1.1 HEM design brief
- 1.2 FAU written scheme of investigation
- 1.3 Client/archive report
- 1.4 Unbound version of report
- 1.5 CD containing digital photographs & copy of report, pdf-formatted

2. Site Archive

- 2.1 Photographic record (digital prints & monochrome 35mm prints & negatives)
- 2.2 Photographic registers
- 2.3 Site notes & annotated survey drawings
- 2.4 Strutt & Parker survey

Appendix 2: EHER Summary Sheet

Site Name/Address: Little Nunty's Farm, Nunty's Lane, Coggeshall, Essex	
Parish: Coggeshall	District: Braintree
NGR: TL 8283 2523	OASIS record No.: essexcou-53787
Type of Work: Building recording	Site Director/Team: Andrew Letch ECC FAU
Date of Work: 18th December 2009	Size of Area Investigated: N/A
Curating Museum: Braintree	Funding Source: Mr. C.P.E. Hill c/o Strutt & Parker
Further Work Anticipated? None	Related LB Nos. None
Final Report: Summary in EAH	
Periods Represented: Mid-late 19th-century	
SUMMARY OF FIELDWORK RESULTS: <p>Recording works were undertaken on the remains of a 19th century farmstead in advance of conversion to holiday lets. The group comprises a barn and stables, the latter of which was built originally as a cow shed. Other elements to the farm are believed to have been demolished when large modern pre-fabricated sheds and grain silos were built in the mid-late 20th century.</p> <p>The buildings are timber-framed and boarded with later corrugated asbestos roofs and typical of their type. The barn has been adapted for grain storage and there are few internal fixtures and fittings in either structure.</p> <p>Over a short period of time, Little Nunty's adopted the plan form of a typical Victorian mixed farmstead, with a barn and animal ranges set around a central yard. Although the structures have limited architectural value, their vernacular character and preservation as part of the rural landscape is important.</p>	
Previous Summaries/Reports: None	
Author of Summary: Andrew Letch	Date of Summary: 16th January 2008