

**HISTORIC BUILDING SURVEY OF
A BARN AT GREAT BROCKHOLDS FARM
RADWINTER
ESSEX**



Essex County Council

Field Archaeology Unit

February 2011

**HISTORIC BUILDING SURVEY OF
A BARN AT GREAT BROCKHOLDS FARM
RADWINTER
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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.

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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 and development

2.4 Farming in the 18th and 19th centuries

3.0 OBJECTIVES

4.0 DESCRIPTION OF WORKS

5.0 BUILDING DESCRIPTIONS

5.1 Barn 1

5.2 Other structures (buildings 1a - 5)

6.0 DISCUSSION

7.0 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 map of Essex, 1777 (plate 2)
- Fig. 3 Radwinter tithe map, 1828-9 (D/CT 279)
- Fig. 4 First edition 1881 6" OS map (sheet 9), surveyed 1878
- Fig. 5 Second edition 25" OS map, 1897 (sheet 9/16)
- Fig. 6 Existing plan of barn
- Fig. 7 Section A-A1 through barn

PHOTOGRAPHIC PLATES

- Cover shows farmstead viewed to north-east
- Plate 1 Barn 1 and other farm buildings viewed to north-east
- Plate 2 North-west elevation, facing the yard
- Plate 3 View along bay 3 midstrey
- Plate 4 Barn 1 and rear of farmstead viewed to south
- Plate 5 Interior of barn viewed to north-east
- Plate 6 Interior of barn viewed to south-west
- Plate 7 Typical face-halved and bladed scarf joint in wall plate
- Plate 8 Typical lapped scarf joint in sill plate
- Plate 9 Interior of barn viewed towards porch (north)
- Plate 10 Wall-framing on south-east wall, viewed to south
- Plate 11 Carpenters marks in porch (1-6 from right to left)
- Plate 12 Carpenters mark on T3 midstrey/porch post
- Plate 13 North range (buildings 2 and 3) viewed to north-west
- Plate 14 Barn 4 and shed 5 viewed to south
- Plate 15 Interior of barn 4 viewed to north-east

**HISTORIC BUILDING SURVEY OF
A BARN AT GREAT BROCKHOLDS FARM
RADWINTER
ESSEX**

Client: Carter Jonas on behalf of Mr A. Covey

FAU Project No.: 2324

NGR: TL 6132 3535

Planning Application: UTT/1377/10/FUL

OASIS No.: 92810

Dates of Fieldwork: 13th January 2011

1.0 INTRODUCTION

A programme of historic building recording was undertaken by Essex County Council Field Archaeology Unit (ECC FAU) on a post-medieval barn at Great Brockholds prior to residential conversion. The work was commissioned by the architects, Carter Jonas on behalf of the owner and carried out in accordance with a brief issued by the Historic Environment Management team of Essex County Council (ECC HEM), who also monitored the work.

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

The barn is likely to date to the late 18th century and forms an important part of a multi-phase farmstead that includes a 16th-century grade II-Listed farmhouse, a second 18th century barn and assorted late Victorian and modern (20th-century) farm buildings. The layout is based on the courtyard plan form around a south-facing stock yard, typical of the period. 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), while the development and impact of the agricultural revolution of the 18th

and 19th centuries in East Anglia is regarded as an important area for further research in the Regional Research Agenda (Brown & Glazebrook 2000).

2.0 BACKGROUND

2.1 Site location and description

Great Brockholds Farm (TL 6132 3535) lies to the south of the village of Radwinter, close to the neighbouring parish of Wimbish Green. Access to the farm is provided by a trackway off Top Road, Wimbish Green, that also leads to the neighbouring Little Brockholds Farm (fig.1).

The barn lies on the north-western side of the farm complex, which is positioned just to the north of a mid 16th-century Grade II Listed (LBS 412029) farmhouse (cover plate, right). All farm buildings are curtilage listed with the house but the most important are barns 1 and 4, that are the earliest farm buildings to survive.

Further to the south are the remains of a large moat that is likely to have origins in the 12th-13th century.

Most of the farm buildings have been largely redundant for some time, but barn 1 has been maintained and used as a grain store, and remains in good condition. The other farm structures are not part of the conversion plans but are described briefly at the back of this report to understand their character.

2.2 Planning background

A planning application for conversion of the barn to residential use was submitted to Uttlesford District Council (UDC) in August 2010 (1377/10/FUL). Mindful of the impact of conversion on the historic integrity of the building and the farm complex as a whole, and the importance of farming in the East Anglian region during the post-medieval and Victorian periods, ECC HEM advised UDC that a full archaeological condition should be attached to the planning consent, based on advice given in Planning Policy Statement 5: Planning for the Historic Environment (CLG 2010).

2.3 Historical background & development

Cartographic and documentary research was undertaken at the Essex Record Office (ERO), Chelmsford, to understand the origins and development of the farm. List descriptions and secondary sources were also studied. The results are presented below with accompanying

ERO references. Historic map extracts included in the report as figures 2-5 have been enlarged to provide greater clarity.

Brockholds was originally one of four manors in the parish. The manor house was named *Roos* after Robert de Roos, mentioned in 1301 and stood within a large moat. By 1385 the manor became the property of the Brockhole family from Kent through marriage (Morant 1763-8). Nothing remains of the manor house, but the moat and house platform survive as significant landscape features.

The existing timber-framed farmhouse was built in the mid-16th century (LBS 412029), presumably to replace the old manor house. Nothing remains of the contemporary farmstead, although it is possible that some of its timbers were reused to build the existing barns in the 18th century. The earliest map to show the farmstead is from 1777, where it is referred to as *Great Brockhalls* (fig.2). Like many maps of the period, it provides a more representative rather than accurate picture. It indicates three structures, most likely to be the farmhouse and two barns. Little Brockholds stands to the north-east and is likely to have been established at a similar time, perhaps as an estate farm to the main manor.

By the first half of the 19th century the existing farm layout had been established, with the building of a north range. The Radwinter tithe map of 1838-9 refers to it as *Great Brockells* and shows the two barns connected by a north-eastern range of buildings to form a south-facing yard (fig. 3). The main barn has two porches facing onto the fields and a structure attached to the south-west end, which is no longer standing. The accompanying tithe award (D/CT 279A) mentions a mixed farm with a large holding of c.245 acres, split between arable and pasture. The farm is owned by Richard ?Buchannon Wolf and tenanted by Edmund Franklin (D/CT 279A).

Later 19th century maps show minor changes to the courtyard layout. By 1881 the yard had been divided for stock-rearing. Between 1881 and 1897 the north range was rebuilt and new structures added either side of the yard entrance (fig. 5). One of these, attached to the main barn, was rebuilt in the modern period as shed 1a. Building 5 on the opposite side of the yard entrance is the only Victorian structure to remain.

In 1898 the 256 acre Great Brockholds was sold after the death of Mrs Birch-Wolfe for £1,750 (Radwinter Millennium Committee 2000). Jenkinhogs and Mortlocks Farms were also sold as part of the estate. It is possible that the barn roofs were replaced at this stage by the new owners, as they display characteristics of the period.

The northern range was rebuilt in the early-mid 20th-century as buildings 2 and 3 and at some stage the north-east porch was lost. Since the farm closed the barn has continued in use for storing grain and been well-maintained. Until recently the farmhouse has been rented out separately to tenants (D. Ellis pers. comm.).

2.3 Farming in the 18th and 19th centuries

The 18th and 19th centuries were a time of great agricultural improvement in East Anglia, resulting from increasing population, enclosure and better farming and husbandry techniques. Between 1750 and 1813 an increase in population from 5.7million to 10 million led to an increase in the demand for corn and a steady rise in corn prices, encouraging the first wave of farm improvement as farmers cashed-in. From the 1740s, new 'planned' farms were constructed to replace the older more scattered farmsteads to maximise efficiency. Typically their layout was symmetrical around a central courtyard, with the barn on one side and stables, stock sheds and stores for feed and bedding forming perpendicular wings around a yard open to the warmer southern side. Often the barn was retained from the early farm and if necessary refurbished to suit the new buildings.

Following a boom during the Napoleonic wars, farming slumped in the post-war period after 1815. However, thanks to further improvements in farming methods, by the 1840s the industry was expanding again. In fact the era between 1840 and 1870 witnessed a golden age of farming, when grain prices were at their peak, leading to an acceleration in farm building and improvement (Lake 1989).

It was in the Victorian period that the courtyard system was adapted to its full potential. Mixed farming, combining grain production with cattle rearing, was advocated by contemporary writers as a cushion against depression, which also suited the climate and soil conditions of East Anglia. Mixed farming was based on the traditional crop cycle whereby the animals provided milk and meat as well as horse power and manure for the fields, in exchange for fodder crops, hay and straw.

Many landowners kept abreast of 19th-century farming developments and either remodelled or modified their farms, retaining some of the older buildings while constructing new housing for livestock to give emphasis to the new stock-rearing techniques.

The boom years ended with a series of wet summers between 1875 and 1890 and droughts throughout the 1890s, leading to an agricultural depression that was to last until after the First World War.

3.0 OBJECTIVES

The purpose of the historic building record was, as outlined in the brief, to provide a detailed record of the barn in its present state prior to conversion.

As part of the work, the record was required to address the following: plan form of the site, 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 WORKS

The barn was recorded using drawings (floor plans, sections and elevations) supplied by the architects. A numbered block plan has been produced to show the location of the barn and accompanying structures, and their likely functions as discussed in the text (fig.1).

A series of photographs (digital and 35mm black & white print) were taken to record the main barn internally and externally. Specific shots were taken of any areas of important architectural detail, fixtures or fittings. General shots were also taken of other structures in the group. A representative selection of photographs is reproduced at the back of the report as plates 1-15. 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

5.1 Barn 1

This is the larger of two barns on the farmstead and its construction broadly dates to the late 18th century, although it incorporates various archaic forms that continued in use in agricultural buildings. The barn retains most of its historic fabric, apart from the roof that was replaced in the late 19th century, and some of the studwalls that have been rebuilt in the modern period. The exterior has been re-clad and the surrounding area cleared in preparation for the building works. Internally there are few surviving historic fixtures and fittings.

Barn 1 is timber-framed and weatherboarded, laid out over seven bays with dimensions of c.31m by 7m and a height of 7.6m. It stands on the north-west side of the complex parallel to barn 4, both of which are on a similar alignment with the farmhouse (fig. 1). Until recently it was used for storing grain and for this purpose a steel silo remains at the north-east end (fig. 6). As a working building, continuing in use after the rest of the farm became redundant it has been maintained and kept watertight through modern improvements, thus protecting the internal historic fabric.

5.1.1 External description

The walls are set on a brick plinth constructed from heavily-tarred 8½ inch soft red bricks indicative of an 18th or early 19th-century date (Ryan 1996), and arranged in English bond. It is therefore likely to be an original feature rather than inserted at a later date. Some repairs have been made to the plinth, and also to the walls, which have been re-boarded recently and new bargeboards and PVC rainwater goods added. The roof is pantiled and has a 40° pitch and is gabled either end.

The **south-east elevation** faces onto the yard and originally held large cart doors on the third and sixth bays. These were probably removed in the modern period to admit vehicles to the grain silo, leaving large openings (plate 2). Pintels and rebates are evident on the jambs for hinges, door battens and the lock-bar, which all typical features. Concrete bases have been added around the door posts (plate 3). Shed 1a has modern cladding and a profiled steel sheet roof. The internal studwork is also modern but may incorporate timbers from the late 19th century shed that it replaced.

The **north-west elevation** faces onto the fields. Its main feature is the porch towards the south end. Originally there were two porches, the second one of which was located in bay 6, at the opposite end, the opening to which has been blocked-in (fig. 6, plate 4). The neighbouring bay (bay 5, fig. 6) is bowing outwards, though there are no such defects on any of the other walls. The roof of the existing porch is set lower than the main building but has a pitched gabled roof contemporary with the main barn roof.

The **gable elevations**, like the rest of the building, have been re-clad and therefore display no historic fabric or detailing, such as pitching hatches, apart from the brick plinth upon which the framing is sat.

5.1.2 Internal description

The **internal layout** (plates 5 & 6) was originally of seven 4m-wide bays with two slightly-wider (4.3 and 4.5m) midstreys on the third and sixth bays (B3 & B6 on fig. 6). Intermediate trusses were added between the bays when the roof was replaced (shown in red in fig. 6). Often the midstrey is the widest bay to allow space for unloading the fully-laden carts at harvest time, and originally they would have held threshing floors for threshing the grain in the winter months. The current floor is generally formed of concrete and in bays 2 and 3 it is broken and tarred in black, with large cobbles by the doorway (plate 3). Bay 1 at the south-west end is bare earth. The north-east bay (B7) is obscured by the steel grain silo, although the framing appears to be unaffected. Bay 2 is boarded-out with 9 inch elm boards either side, suggesting livestock may have been kept in here at some time.

Structurally, the **main timbers** appear to be of oak and elm, jointed and double-pegged to the frame. The slightly irregular scantling, varying between 16 and 20cm², befits a late construction date, when good timber was becoming scarce. Some of the timbers are quite waney and some even retain bark. The bays are defined by both jowled and plain posts, which are rarely seen together in a contemporary build, and it is possible the jowled posts are reused, though their similar scantling would suggest not. The jowled posts are connected to the tie beams by slightly-curved double-pegged braces (fig. 7), while the plain posts, in truss T2 & truss T5, employ bolted knee-braces for this purpose (plate 6), which is generally a later form. There are no empty slots in these posts to suggest the knee braces are replacements for earlier curved braces. Two trusses contain carpenter's marks on brace and post: truss 4 (I and II, figs 6 & 7) and truss 6 (II and III, fig. 6). Both of these are chiselled rather than scored and therefore suit an 18th century date, though they form no obvious pattern.

Wall plates are commonly of one bay lengths and connected by double-pegged edge-faced and bladed scarf joints, the common post-medieval form (fig. 6, plate 7). Secondary plates were added on top to level the new roof when it was replaced. The ground sills are lap-jointed (plate 8) and are mainly contemporary with the brick plinth, though some have been replaced in the rebuilt areas.

Wall-framing is divided into two parts, or registers, by thick, quite waney 'joggled' midrails, double-pegged to the bay posts. Studwork in the lower register is studded and generally pegged to sill and rail, whilst the studs in the upper register are primary-braced (plate 9), which is generally a later form, although the two can sometimes be seen together. In the upper register only the central post and the braces (falling from either side to centre) are

pegged. The similar character of the studs between the two registers suggests they are contemporary, rather than the top register having been built onto an earlier frame.

The studwork, like the main timbers is slightly waney, with irregular scantling. There are nine studs per bay, neatly in-line between the registers. The largest studs measure up to 18 x 10cm and the smallest around 18 x 10cm. Some, but not many, are reused. Spacing between the studs varies between 24 and 34cm, which is quite narrow, but was perhaps necessary to support the weight of the original roof frame. Few of the studs are cut to hold wattle and daub and those that are, are probably reused. The barn was therefore either plastered originally or boarded, or possibly a mix of the two like many Essex barns of this date.

Much of the framing along the south-east wall (plate 10) remains intact. The bay 1 wall of the north-west wall and the adjoining gable has been rebuilt in the modern period and it is likely the second midstrey (bay 6, plate 9, by silo) was blocked at a similar time when its corresponding porch was lost. The character of the wall behind the silo was only partially observed, but is assumed to be in keeping with the rest of the barn.

The surviving **porch** has been largely rebuilt but contains some interesting features. The gable wall has been rebuilt across the entrance but the extent of the old cart doors can still be seen thanks to the remaining door post (fig. 6, plate 3) and the slot for the second one on the opposite side. In construction terms the porch is the same as the main part of the barn but although there has always been a porch here, it is only 'tied-in' to the building at the sill and top plate, rather than braced to the main structure (plate 9). This design fault may have been a factor in the demise of the second porch. Close analysis of the north-east midrail shows a sequence of scored carpenters marks to earlier studwork of the lower register, running from 1 to 6 from corner post to stud (plate 11). The bay post on the opposite side bears a carpenters mark for either the number 10 or 40, depending on whether the outer lines are natural or man-made (plate 12). Its location and the fact that the mark is scored rather than chiselled suggests the timber is reused.

The **roof** appears to be a late 19th-century replacement, perhaps fitted after the farm was sold in 1898. No evidence for an earlier roof form was observed, but if it was originally built for thatch it would have had a steeper pitch than the existing one.

The replacement roof is made from machine-sawn nailed pine and is of the raking queen strut type (fig. 7, plates 5 & 6). Intermediate trusses, presumably added to support the heavier pantile roof, are bolted together and employ an iron tie rod to strengthen the apex.

5.2 Other structures (buildings 1a - 5)

Five other structures surround the farmyard, none of which are part of the conversion. Each is summarised below to complete the record.

Building 1a

This is a modern shed attached to the barn, with a machine-sawn modern timber-frame, weatherboarded sides and a steel sheet roof (plate 3). It replaced a late 19th-century structure likely to be of similar character and it is possible that some of its timbers were reused in the build.

Shed 2

An open-sided 20th-century timber-framed and weatherboarded shed built from machine-sawn timbers with a corrugated iron roof (plates 4 & 13) that replaced part of the Victorian north range.

Dairy/cattle shed 3

This is the second part of the 20th-century north-east range (plate 13). It is a modern Fletton brick-built structure of two parts, probably a dairy/milking shed and cattle shed. It has a pantile roof.

Barn 4

A smaller, five bay barn contemporary with barn 1, with a porch to the south-east. Like barn 1, the roof has been replaced, although it retains its old weatherboarding and doors/hatches on the outer walls. It is generally in poor condition (plates 14 & 15).

Shed 5:

Shed 5 is another late Victorian structure. It stands open onto the yard and is now used for storage purposes (plate 14).

6.0 DISCUSSION

Based on its structural characteristics and the quality of materials, the barn at Great Brockholds Farm was probably built in the late 18th century, a time when farmers in East Anglia were improving their farms to take advantage of a buoyant corn market. Nothing is known about any earlier buildings associated with farmsteads associated with either the medieval manor or the current 16th-century farmhouse. With this in mind, it is interesting to

note that the barn has similarities with earlier forms of timber-framed construction, particularly its jowled bay posts with 'curved' braces and (generally) well-pegged studwork in the lower registers, all features that could be contemporary with the farmhouse. However, the mixture of jowled and knee-braced plain posts, the primary-bracing, joinery and the general lower-quality of timber, suggests a late 18th century date, when good timber became scarce and less substantial pieces and reused timbers were increasingly used in vernacular buildings.

As a vernacular building, the barn was originally either weatherboarded, as it is now, or plastered. Often the two were combined in the 18th century, with boarding along the lower half and plaster in the upper half. These walling treatments helped strengthen the thinner frames of the time, especially on a large barn such as this.

It is likely that the existing late Victorian roof, with its secondary trusses, was built to support a heavier tiled roof. The lack of an original roof in either of the two barns means that its early form cannot be assessed. However, as with most barns of the period, the roof was probably thatched, as would the other buildings be within the farmstead. The use of such traditional building materials meant that the barn and other buildings of the post-medieval farmstead blended in well with the contemporary landscape.

7.0 CONCLUSION

Great Brockholds Farm has origins in the medieval period as a moated manor site, but like many such sites in Essex the house was rebuilt in the post-medieval period beyond the moat. The main barn has significant historic character as part of the East Anglian vernacular tradition, as does the east barn (4). Both are important elements of the post-medieval farming history of Great Brockholds. They are the only relics of a mixed, planned farm set up during the first wave of agricultural improvement. Through the 19th and early 20th centuries the same classic courtyard style was maintained even if some of the other buildings changed.

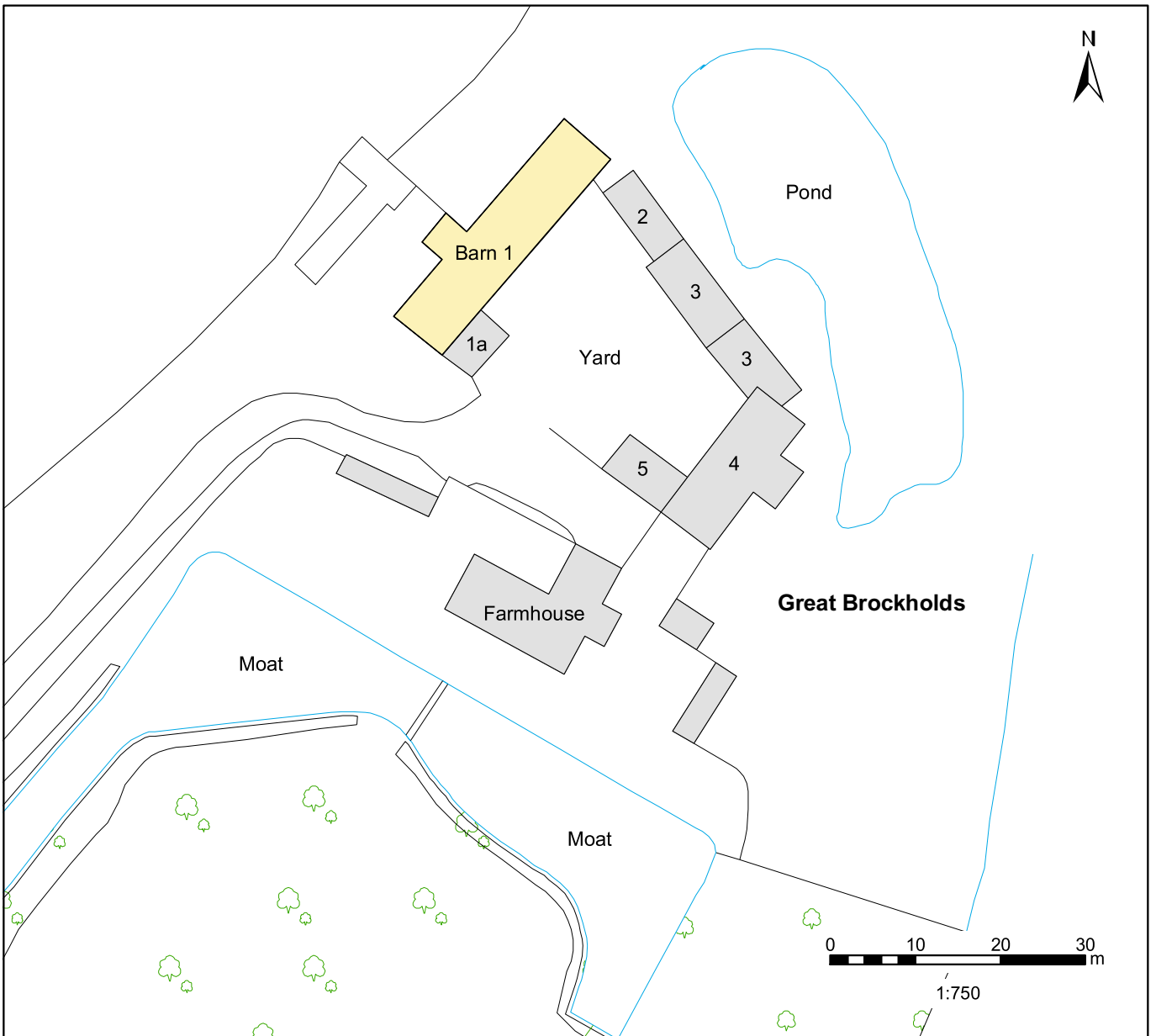
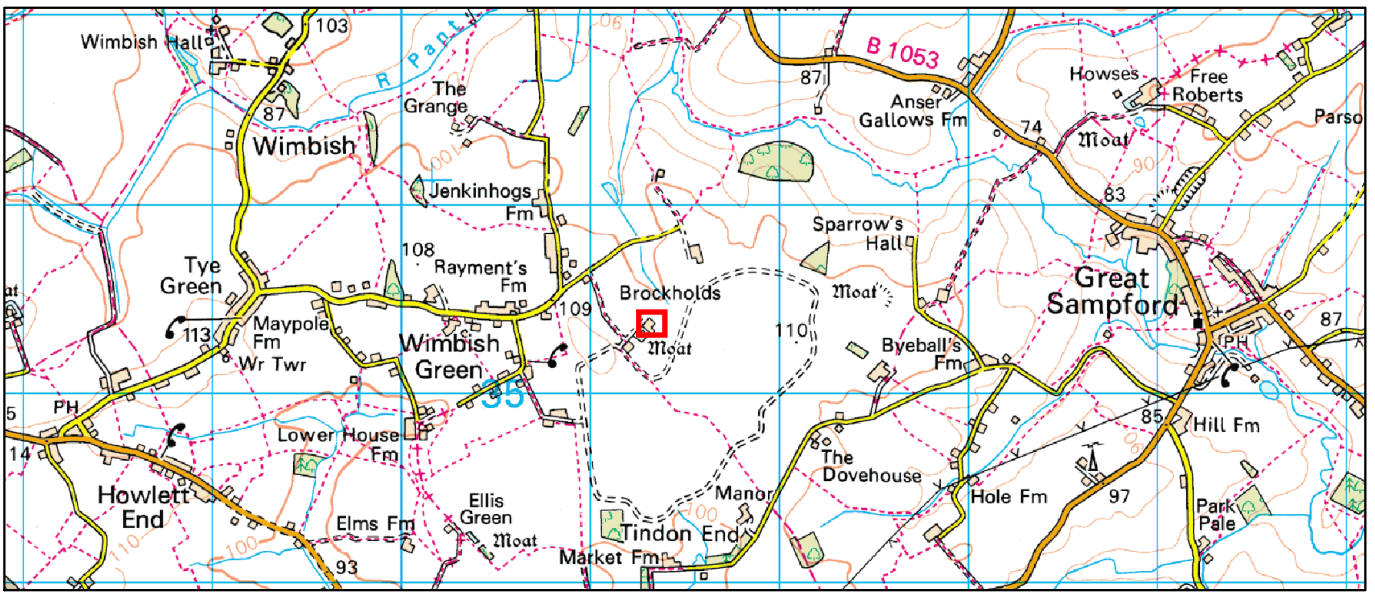
Although not of any great architectural significance, the barn is important in its contribution towards the study of Essex and East Anglian farm buildings. It is also important in understanding the extent to which archaic forms continued in use in vernacular buildings and appreciating that such structures were built to their owner's requirements or preferences and retain in many respects their own character.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thanks are due to Mr Daniel Hewett of the architects, Carter Jonas, for commissioning the works on behalf of Mr Covey and for supplying drawings used in the survey and this report. Thanks also to Mr David Ellis of Acorus Property Services for his interest and cooperation and for facilitating the work. 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 and monitored by Richard Havis of ECC HEM, on behalf of the Local Planning Authority.

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Fig.1. Site location and block plan

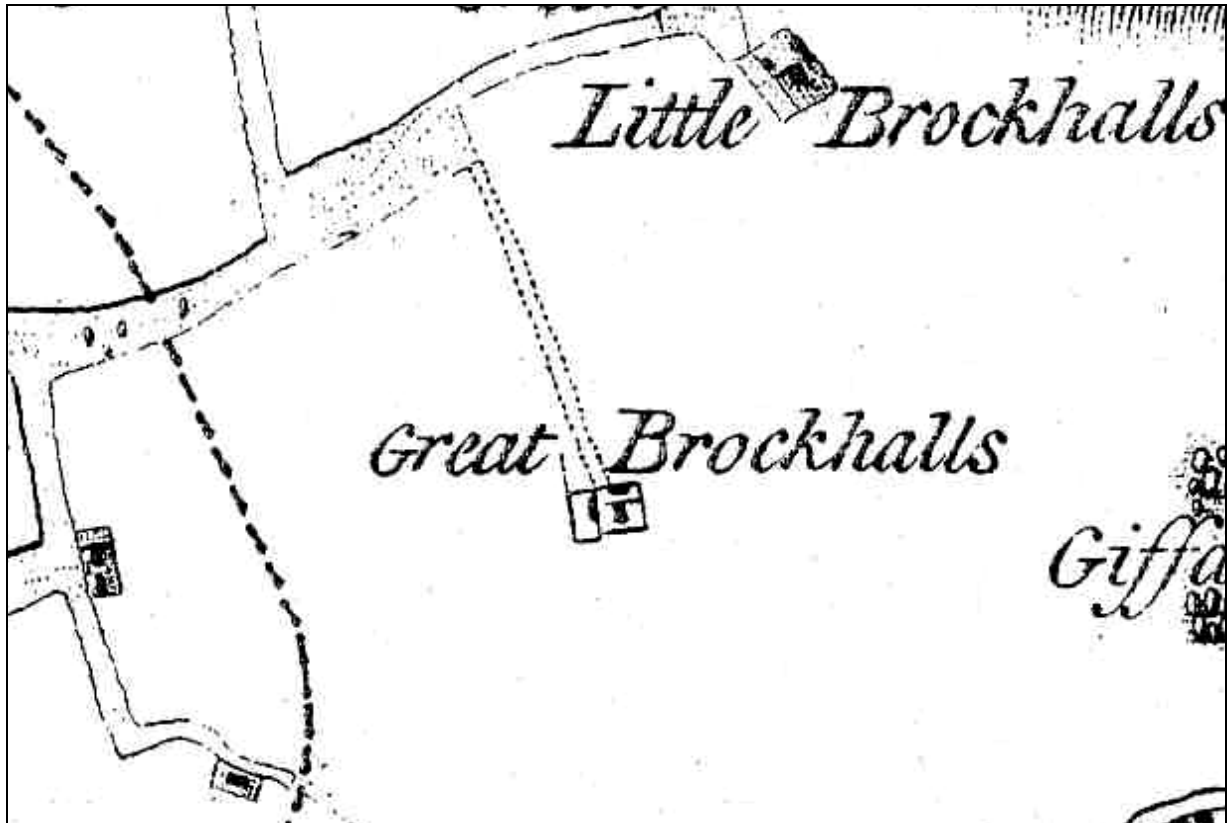


Fig. 2 Chapman and Andre map of Essex, 1777 (plate 2)

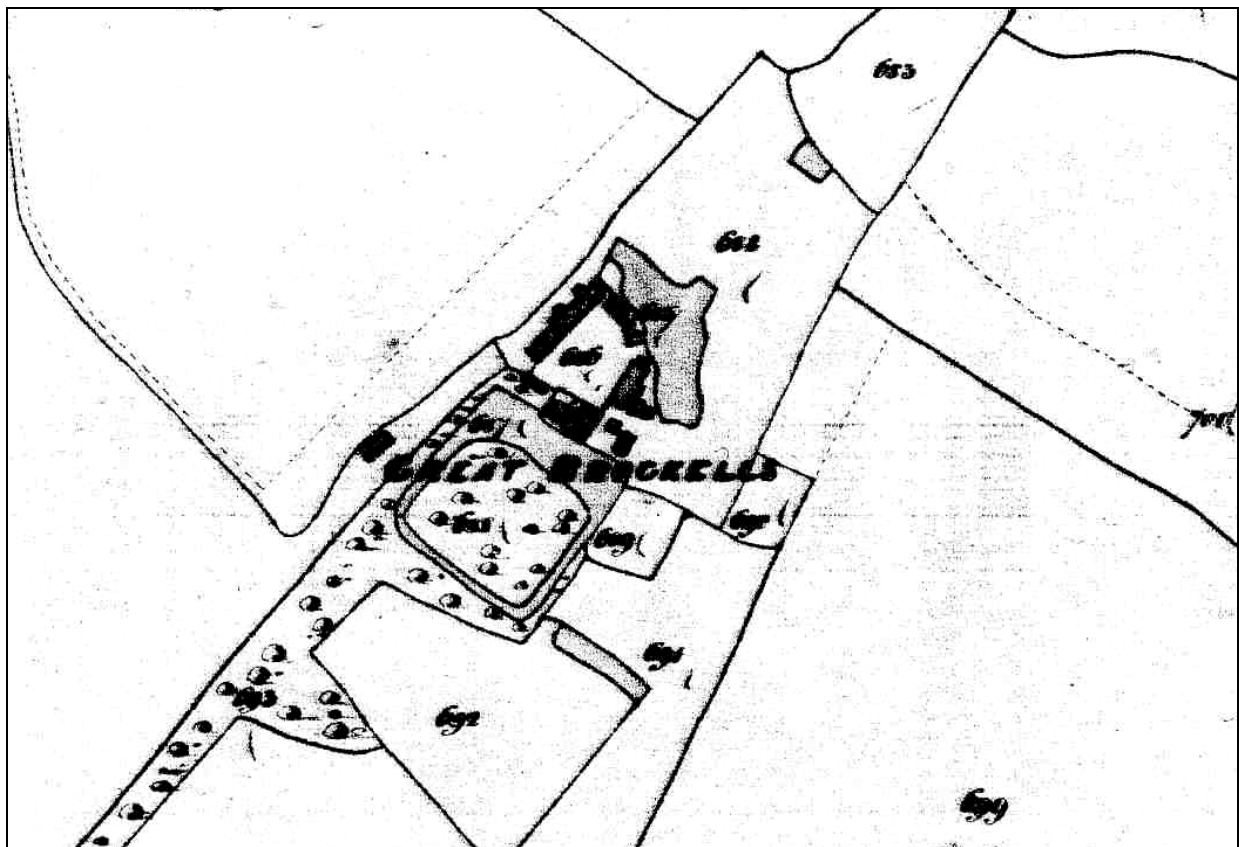


Fig. 3 Radwinter tithe map, 1828-9 (D/CT 279)

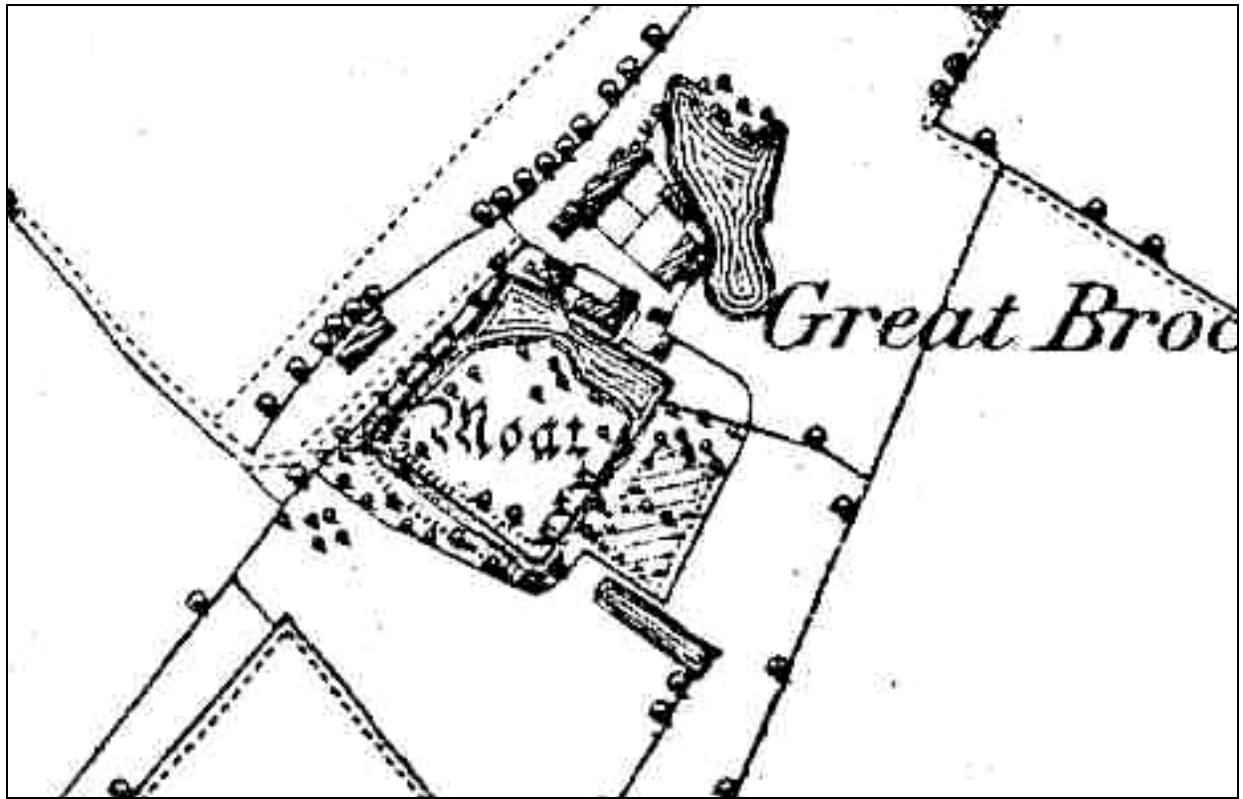


Fig. 4 First edition 1881 6" OS map (sheet 9), surveyed 1878

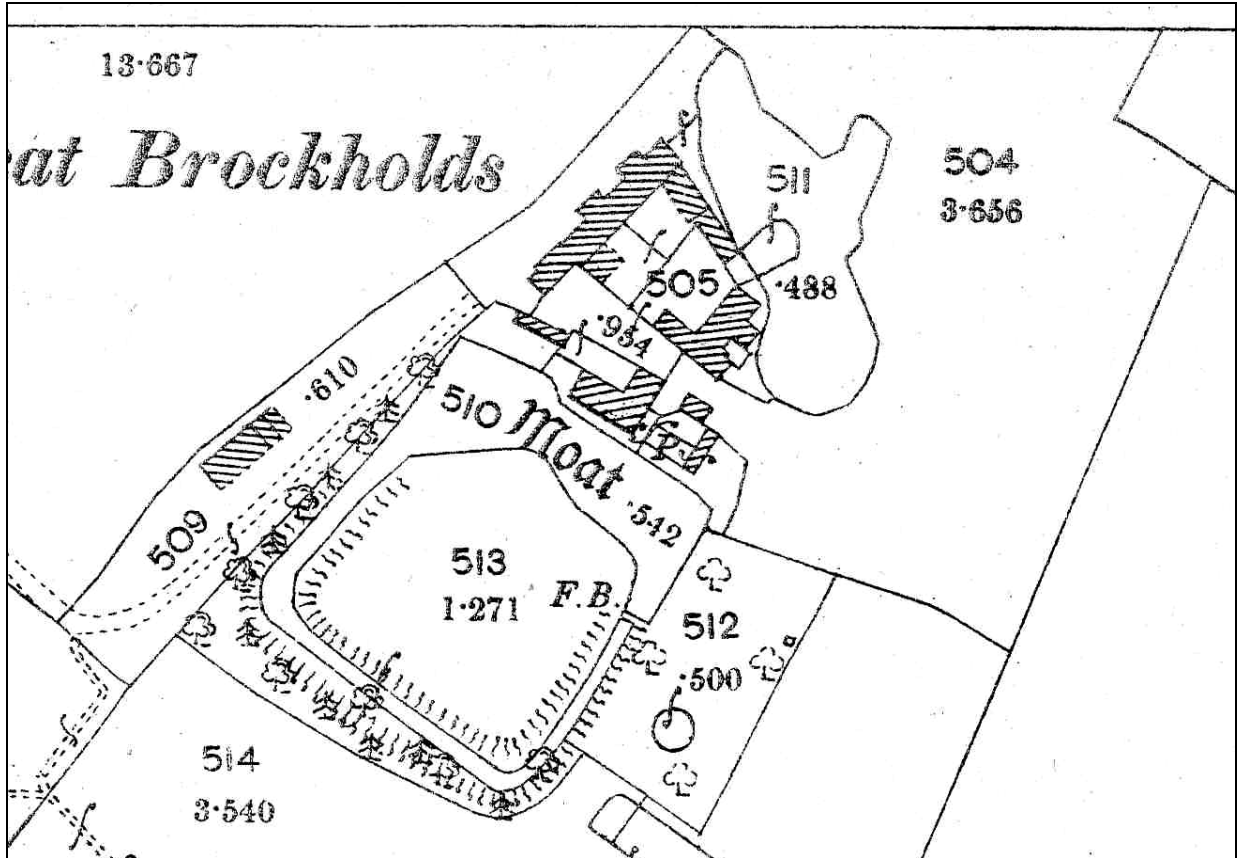


Fig. 5 Second edition 25" OS map, 1897 (sheet 9/16)

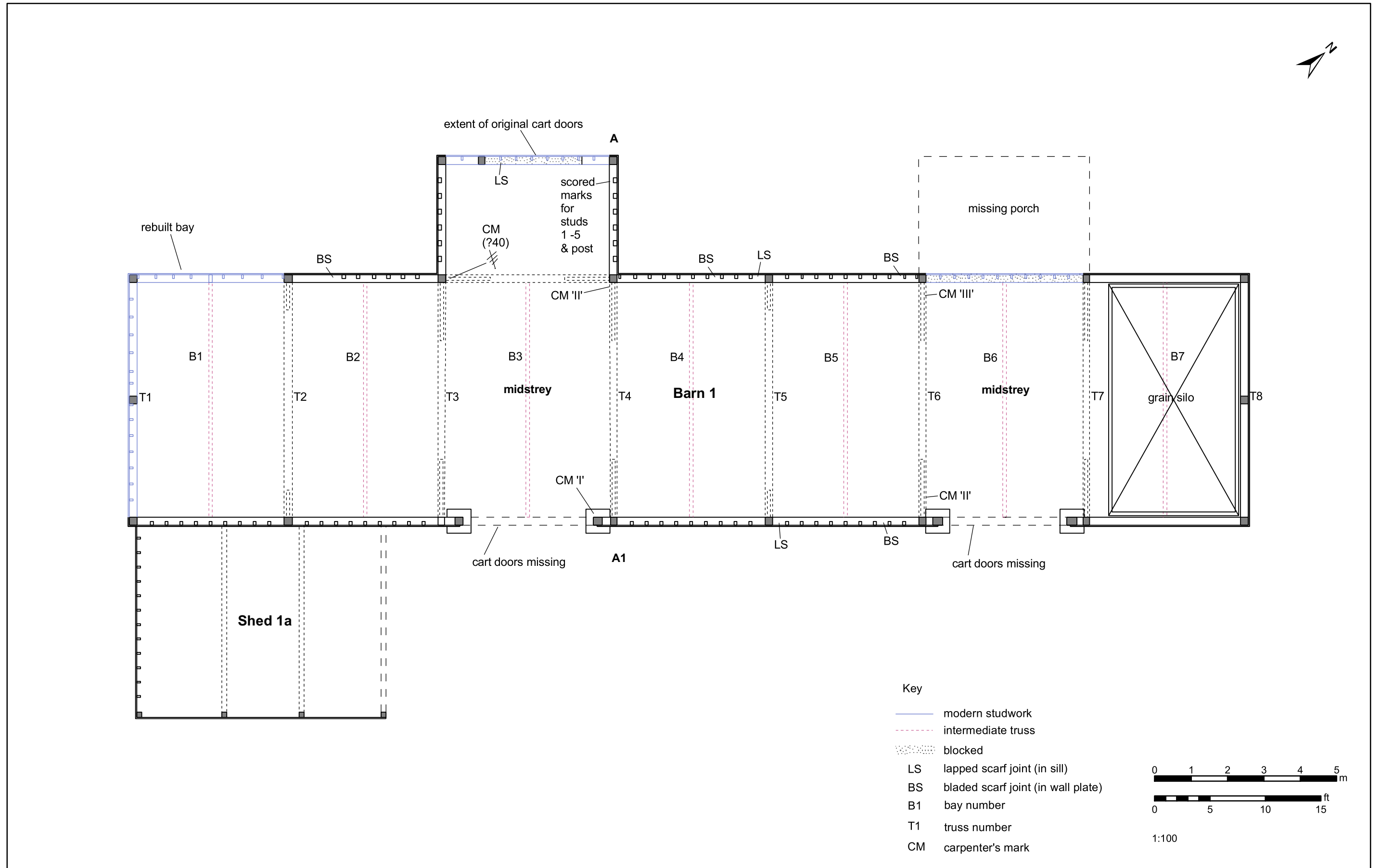


Fig.6. Existing plan of barn

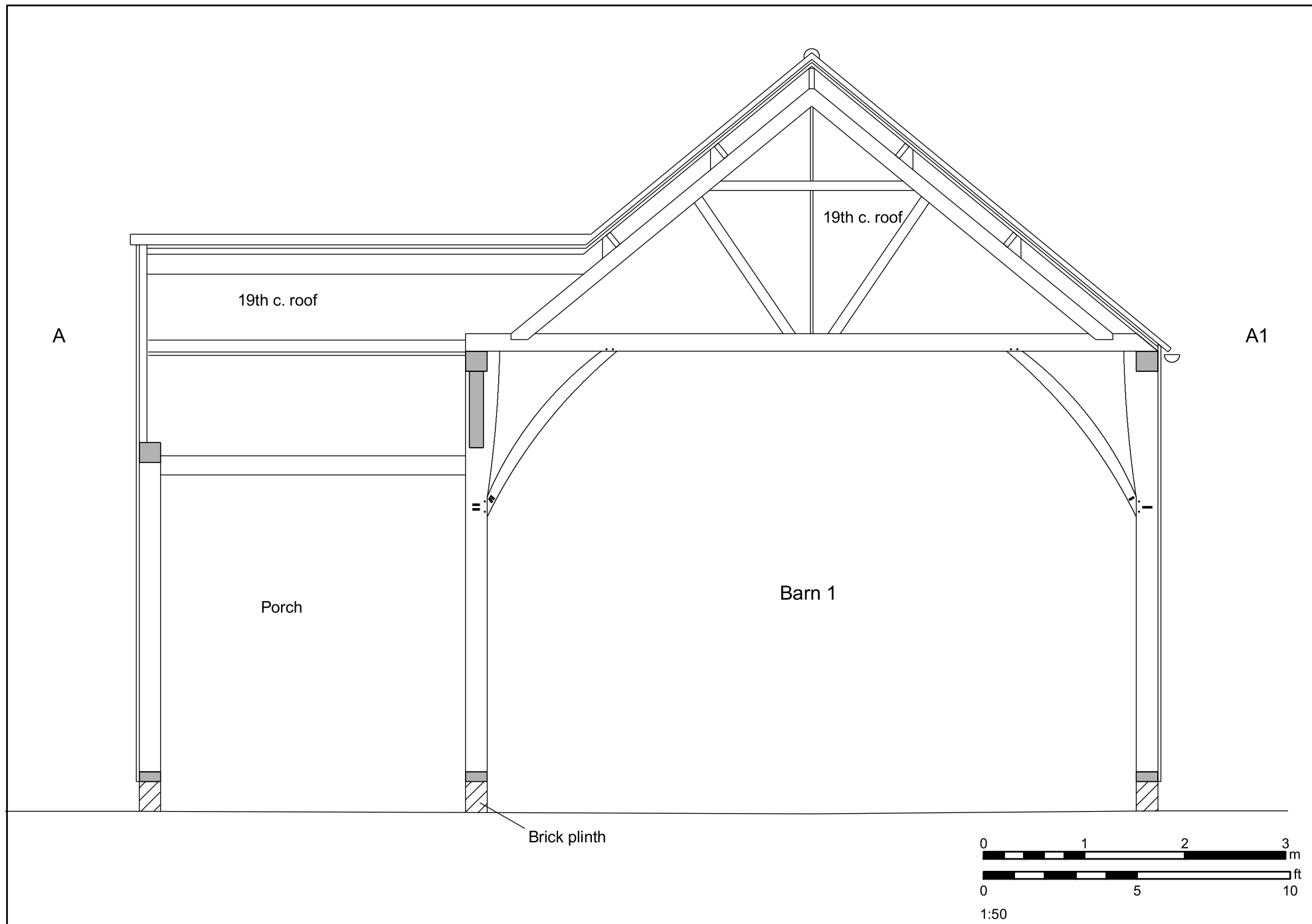


Fig.7. Section A - A1 through barn



Plate 1 Barn 1 and other farm buildings viewed to north-east



Plate 2 North-west elevation, facing the yard



Plate 3 View along bay 3 midstrey



Plate 4 Barn 1 and rear of farmstead viewed to south



Plate 5 Interior of barn viewed to north-east



Plate 6 Interior of barn viewed to south-west



Plate 7 Typical face-halved and bladed scarf joint in wall plate



Plate 8 Typical lapped scarf joint in sill plate



Plate 9 Interior of barn viewed towards porch (north)



Plate 10 Wall-framing on south-east wall, viewed to south



Plate 11 Carpenters marks in porch (1-6 from right to left)



Plate 12 Carpenters mark on T3 midstrey/porch post



Plate 13 North range (buildings 2 and 3) viewed to north-west



Plate 14 Barn 4 and shed 5 viewed to south



Plate 15 Interior of barn 4 viewed to north-east

Appendix 1: Contents of Archive

Site name: Barn at Great Brockholds Farm, Radwinter, Essex

Project no. 2324

Index to the Archive

Document wallet containing:

1. Research Archive

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

2. Site Archive

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

Appendix 2: EHER Summary Sheet

Site Name/Address: Barn at Great Brockholds Farm, Radwinter	
Parish: Radwinter	District: Uttlesford
NGR: TL 6132 3535	Oasis ref.: 92810
Type of Work: Building recording	Site Director/Group: Andy Letch, ECC FAU
Dates of Work: January 2011	Size of Area Investigated: N/A
Curating Museum: Saffron Walden	Funding Source: Mr A. Covey
Further Work Anticipated? No	Related EHER Nos.: HER 1440; LBS 412029
Final Report: Summary in EAH	
Periods Represented: Post-medieval	
<p>SUMMARY OF FIELDWORK RESULTS:</p> <p>A programme of building recording was undertaken on a probable late 18th century barn at Great Brockholds Farm prior to residential conversion. The barn forms part of a multi-phase farmstead that includes a Grade II-Listed 16th-century farmhouse, a second 18th-century barn and other more minor 19th and 20th century structures, although only the barn is to be converted. The farm lies to the north of a large medieval moated site, presently wooded.</p> <p>The barn is large and built of seven bays, originally with twin porches facing the fields, one of which is no longer standing. Until recently it has been used as a grain store, and a steel silo was still present during the survey. Externally none of the fabric is original. The outer walls have been re-clad recently and the roof was probably replaced in the late 19th century. Inside much of the original studwork remains, though there are no original fixtures and fittings. The framing incorporates 18th century timbers but the character of the barn is a mixture of early post-medieval and late 18th century elements, with very little reuse.</p> <p>This was the main barn at Great Brockholds in the late post-medieval period. Along with the second barn, it is the only relic of a large manorial farmstead that was rebuilt like many Essex farms in the first wave of agricultural improvement in the latter part of the 18th century.</p>	
Previous Summaries/Reports None	
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