

Historic Analysis of the Buildings in the Farmyard of Parsonage Farm, School Lane, Broomfield, Chelmsford, Essex.

O.S. Map Reference: TL 7035 0990

HER Site Reference: BROPF09

Introduction.

This analysis has been undertaken to fulfill a condition appended to the approval of planning permission, CHL/02460/07/FUL, granted by Chelmsford Borough Council to convert the farm buildings to domestic use. It conforms with a brief prepared by the Historic Environment Management (HEM) Team of the Historic Environment Branch of Essex County Council for archaeological recording of the buildings prior to conversion.

The site is at Parsonage Green on School Lane at the western edge of the present development of Broomfield. Adjacent to the site is a farmhouse, now separated from the farm site, The Parsonage is listed Grade II. It is of nineteenth century construction replacing what must have been an impressive earlier house possibly from at least the sixteenth century judging by the outline depicted on an estate map of 1756 where it is shown with impressive gardens and an orchard.

The farmyard site, the subject of this survey, contains two listed buildings the barn and an outbuilding range to the south of the site. The northern boundary has a further range comprising a stable/carriage shed range with further buildings attached to the west. The whole forms a partially closed farmyard with the house forming the eastern boundary. To the west of the main farmyard is a stock area comprising shelter sheds and other buildings but all yard divisions are now lost.

History.

The early history is vague but from the suppression of the monasteries in the sixteenth century the tithes and the Parsonage, held by the Priory of the Holy Trinity, London, were granted by Henry VIII to William Harris. They then passed to Richard Lord Riche who made them part of the endowment of his Free-school and Almshouse at Felsted. An article in a 1983 Broomfield Parish Magazine relates to the site. "It was about The Parsonage which was described as "Broomfield's grandest house". There were no references or dates for the article other than to set the scene for the fact that the mansion was now in the ownership of Lord Riche and leased to Robert Eton for 50 years. The annual rent given was 2 quarters and 2 bushels of red or grey wheat and 3 quarters and 5 bushels of barley malt that go to help the poor of Felsted.

No reference to Robert Eton and his 50 year lease was found but a series of leases from 1720 through to 1862 survive in the Essex Record Office and provide a fascinating insight to the contribution that the rent from this property and lands of 94 acres made to the Riche Charities. Morant, in 1768, refers to the various money rents payable to the Churchwardens of Felsted for the use and support of the Riche Foundation. "From Broomfield parsonage £50 6s 11d more from thence by grant of the late Earl of Nottingham, £18 in all £68 6s 11d" This was

the monetary gain to the Foundation when in 1753 the Hon. Edward Finch Esq. of Sackville Street, St. James, City of Westminster entered into a 21 year lease. Prior to that date the lease had been £18 6s 11d. However through the 19th century the rent escalated first to £180 in 1845 and £530 in the final lease found when the Marriage family took the lease on the property in 1862.

Morant describes The Parsonage as being improved by John Hill Esq. of Broomfield (1726-1732) and Richard Price Esq. of Hayes, Middlesex (1732-1753) so as to be fit for a Gentleman's seat and names the present lessee as the Hon. Edward Finch Esq.: brother to the Earl of Winchelsea and Nottingham, patron of Felsted School. [It is the Hon. Edward Finch who sponsors the estate map of 1756 that clearly shows the Charities lands.]

The house was replaced in the 19th century and it is clear that the lessees, whether they lived at and farmed the land or sublet, were affluent. Their commitments included a complete repair clause on the buildings of the holding, repairs to the chancel of Broomfield Church and an annual payment to the Vicar of Broomfield of 15s. 4p.

Morant also mentions the corn rents paid to the Almshouse, "From Broomfield-parsonage, 18 bushels of wheat, and 4 of malt". This contribution is carefully described in the leases as "2 quarters & 2 bushells of good sweet and merchantable White or Redd wheat and 3 quarters & 5 bushells of good sweet and merchantable barley wheat". An added stipulation was that it had to be delivered to the Almshouse in Felsted at set times during the year.

At the time of the Tithe Award for Broomfield Parish in 1846 the estate was still in the hands of the Felsted Charities and being leased to a Thomas Wall Crooks. He also owned land and a cottage in the parish that he was leasing out. But, he was also leasing a further 70 acres or so in the parish making him a major farmer in the area. The lands were well spread with areas near the river to the east and woodland to the south west all with fields linked to road access. Amongst his other leasings was further land in the north east of the parish that also included buildings assumed to be farm buildings.

Based on the listed mix of land and the descriptions of the buildings on the Parsonage site it is suggested that he was farming a larger area as arable for crop growing with although a lesser acreage still a considerable amount of pasture that would have supported cattle and also for the provision of hay for which storage still exists. This can also possibly be explained by the number of ponds in the areas of land listed as being pasture that would have provided water for the animals. A portion of his other lands also contained more pasture and a further set of buildings to the north-east of the parish possibly suggesting that he may have been a major milk producer in the locality.

After the transfer of the lease to the Marriage family in 1862, already millers and farmers in the parish, one has to assume that the arable side of the farm became more important. The Marriages finally negotiated to purchase the freehold of the property in the 1920's.

The Buildings.

The present farmyard buildings appear to date from the later seventeenth century onwards. This suggests a major rebuilding programme from about one hundred years after the Riche, and Felsted, connection is first noted, maybe to ensure the

ongoing provision for the Felsted Charities. The large barn confirms the arable land holding and the other buildings although not named but listed in the various leases provide for both dairy and hay production, both good saleable products. The buildings will be described from the references added to the site plan.

The Barn. 'A'.

This is a large timber-framed, double midstrey building, aisled to the west away from the midstreys. It is clad in weather boarding. The roof collapsed in 2006 some parts of which survive within the building. This large seven bay barn closes the western side of the farmyard opposite to the farmhouse.

It is of timber-framed construction, the main frame being mainly oak, with two midstreys to the farmyard. It is about 88 feet (26.8M) long and about 26 feet (8M) wide with the midstreys projecting another 12 feet (3.6M). It is aisled to the west with smaller doors opposite the midstreys restricted to aisle height. No remnants of threshing floors survive in the midstrey bays. It has a later lean-to between the midstrey and south-east barn wall with access doors on to the farmyard. This lean-to possibly goes with major repairs to the southern end of the in the nineteenth century. Another doorway, in the southern wall of the rear aisle of the barn again most likely relates to the repair phase.

Each of the midstreys are similar in size and detail, with side access doors in their north walls. The southern midstrey has a pigeon box in the gable. They have iron ties at sill level to the main barn frame.

The roof originally of side purlin construction collapsed some years ago and the aisle roof and midstreys are the only parts surviving. Some of the timbers have been collected and stored for possible reuse. They consist of a mix of original main truss, principal rafters in oak, some common rafters in a mix of oak and elm with many softwood rafters dating from the nineteenth century repairs.

The main roof was covered with plain clay tiles and the aisle with pantiles. The two midstreys still have their plain clay tiles in place. The majority of the wall cladding is nineteenth century weatherboard now in poor condition.

At the northern end high up and just below tiebeam level is a small narrow door with inside hasp and staple. This is too small for a pitching door and was possibly inserted as an escape door when the barn was filled with sheaves. In the same gable wall high up under the half hip is an owl box.

The visible remnants of plinth around the barn suggest that most of it is nineteenth century with a twentieth century rebuild at the north western end towards the pond. The south western end has possibly some seventeenth century brick but was rebuilt in the nineteenth century with a slate damp course added between brick and frame at the time that the sole plate was replaced. Under the replaced sole plate, to the southern end of the barn, eighteenth century bricks are in the plinth.

The existing midstrey doors are both nineteenth century as are the opposing doors in the aisles. The aisle doors were increased in width at the time of the nineteenth century repairs with the peg holes suggesting that only single doors, approximately 3' 6" wide, were in the original structure. Various areas of the frame also show repair and replacement whilst the south-western long bay of the aisle appears to have been completely rebuilt in the nineteenth century as has the area of the eastern half of the south gable wall.

Of the timber-framed main structure of the barn it suggests a construction towards the end of the seventeenth century using much reused timber most likely from a fifteenth century barn of similar proportions. This is shown by wallplates now used as midrails and posts, main posts with mortises from a previous constructional use and timbers sawn down in size from larger sections. This is also shown by the variation in section size of the various timbers through the barn.

On initial viewing this is a typical late seventeenth to early eighteenth century build with primary braced frame construction having full length studs pegged and those to the braces not pegged. It has return sole plates to the arcade posts from the aisle wall. The scarf joints are all relatively long, face halved and bladed with two face pegs to each blade. Some show a large central key peg through the joints.

What is unusual is the bay proportions through the length of the barn. Whereas one would expect the bay sizes to be consistent, as found in most Essex barns, in this barn they vary. From the north are two approximately twelve foot (3.65M) bays with a twelve foot (3.65M) midstreys bay. The two central bays are approx eleven foot (3.4M) centres followed by another twelve foot (3.65M) bay for the southern midstreys. Both midstreys also project about twelve feet (3.65M) into the farmyard. To the south of this is one bay about eighteen feet six inches (5.6M) long with no arcade post or truss at the midpoint although a full length post exists at the midpoint of the east wall. The only conclusion is that the barn was built to accommodate the requirements of the lease in providing certain amounts of crop to the Felsted Charities and it would allow easy space segregation of the amounts required. The barn was used for threshing shown by the leap board slots to the main midstreys and aisle doors and mortises for a mowstead division across the barn at the north midstreys.

The Stable Range, B.

This range consists of two builds and forms the northern boundary of the site with School Lane.

The east range is the earliest build and possibly dates from the first half of the eighteenth century. It is brick built in an imperfect brick bond from large well made bricks 9" x 4³/₈" x 2 3/4"/3" thick. Generally the bond is one course stretcher and one course with three headers often between each stretcher. The north wall shows more variation in the brickwork towards the western end. Here the bricks vary from the large brick to smaller well fired bricks with sometimes the addition of tile packers although it does not show any distinct break in build. This well fired brick is also noticeable at the higher levels at the eastern end maybe suggesting that the building was started from the east and the brick supply changed.

The half hipped roof is a side purlin construction with tenoned purlins. It contains much reused timber and the bay containing the dormer access to the hay loft is actually a reused section of fully framed side purlin roof whereas in the area to the east and west of it the common rafters lie onto the purlins. Many of these rafters are not full length and only run from the purlin. The collars all appear to have only bird's mouth jointing to the purlins. It has angle set anti-racking bracing nailed to the underside of the rafters. It is not certain whether this is original but may be due to the mix of timbers used in the roof construction requiring more

control. It is a feature more often found in nineteenth century buildings with full gabled ends. This roof is typical of many in the eighteenth century making use of earlier timbers where possible with only most of the principal timbers being new. The roof is covered with plain clay tiles.

The north wall has only one window opening, now bricked in, towards the eastern end. A small diagonally set brick stack projects through the northern roof about two thirds of its length from the east. A nineteenth century iron tie plate exists high up and about half way along the building and near it is a face halved scarf joint visible in the north wallplate with carpenters assembly marks visible to both parts, III.

The southern face of the building facing the farmyard has three original entrance doorways. The eastern stable type door is an original eighteenth century boarded and ledged door with good surviving 'horse proof' iron hasps and staples. The other two are twentieth century doors. To the east of the carthorse stable door approximately at the cross division wall another scarf is present in the wallplate. This one is marked,II, and suggests that the plates were laid out from the west that is the opposite impression that that gained from the brickwork of the north wall. It also suggests that this building was in fact longer when first built.

The first two bays from the east have pivoting windows to the right of the doors. The one to the east bay is wooden and with a pivoting opening light, while that between the two doors has the added security of vertical iron bars set to the inside. This can be explained by the different use of the two sections. Although in its last state the east bay [BA] was a loose box it was originally a carriage shed with an opening in the east gable wall. This did not need added security whilst the next bay [BB] was the nag or small carriage horse stable for six horses that would have needed ventilation when in use hence the additional bars.

At the end of this bay and entered from it by a narrow original eighteenth century door is a narrow tack room [BD]. The window to this little room is nearly square, again pivoting, with four mullions allowing five lines of small overlap panes of glass.

The western bay [BD] was the carthorse stable. The wide entrance door is set in a heavy timber-framed opening and high up to the right of it is a vent in the wall. This is a round topped opening with no form of closing so that air was always available. The front wall to the west of the door had a window, now bricked in.

The hay loft above the areas BB & BC with a gallery projection over BD was accessed by a high level inward opening door in a dormer set into the roof. This gabled opening is timber-framed with lath and plaster covering. The door is an original eighteenth century wide boarded and ledged door of similar construction to the other surviving doors. It is in a poor condition. The hay loft has a wide boarded floor with three access traps to the feed rack below in the stable BB. These traps are framed into the floor and have fitted trap covers removable from above. The area has a full height infill to area BA with an access doorway. A similar infill exists at the western end over the division wall between areas BC & BD. The door here accesses a gallery construction within the carthorse stable that also possibly had a stairway up from the stable floor. This would have allowed separate access to the hay loft from either end and the gallery construction would allow the hay to be tossed down to horse feed rack below.

Surviving features.

The eastern bay, BA, the carriage shed now has a concrete floor. The bay is open to the side purlin roof with the half hip rebuilt in the twentieth century. The gable wall shows a large infilled opening with brick vents formed in the wall to each side of it. They were one and a half bricks wide with a half brick centre mullion. The openings were five courses high. The division wall to the nag stable was timber framed with an access door to the front (south). This division is clad on both sides with wide horizontal boarding. Whereas the boarding to tiebeam height is very wide and random cut the boarding above is of regular machine cut parallel boards most likely imported. Beside the door opening is a vertical wall ladder to provide access to the hay loft above BB & BC. The area above collar level is infilled with lath and plaster. The main entrance door is set into a heavy timber frame and is also fitted with 'horse proof' iron hasp and staple to the inside to enable the person to shut the door after entering. The horses could have been brought through the door from the stable BB into the carriage area.

Outside the main entrance door is the water pump, seemingly complete and encased in a wooden box cover. The pump was fed from a well situated in the farmyard to the south of this building.

The area, BB, the nag/carriage horse stable has a brick floor of square sets. The fittings survive in a very complete and rare form. The area is divided into three bays, each of about six foot width. These bays each took two horses showing the smaller size of horse accommodated in this stable. The standard of fitting also shows the care usually shown to the riding or carriage horses. The divisions are timber-framed with a post at the outer end rising to ceiling level, and the return faces are clad each side in well finished boarding leaving a smooth surface to each side. Each of the openings is fitted with a decorative pelmet between each of the stall posts with small iron lamp brackets on which to hang a lamp. Each stall has a wooden feed trough originally with two iron tying rings to each, some of which survive. Above the feed troughs is a full length hay rack with trap openings in the ceiling above each stall to allow the hay to be dropped from the loft above. As before stated the window to this stable has iron security bars to the inside. The heavy timber door frame now has a twentieth century softwood boarded door. The outside of this doorway is laid with small yellow flooring bricks laid on edge projecting about five feet into the farmyard. Above the entrance doorway is the other end of the iron tie also visible on the north wall. The hay loft dormer is above this doorway. The timber division wall to the west of this area has the entrance to the small tack room at the front (south) end.

Area BC is the small narrow tack room. It was entered by a narrow, wide boarded, original eighteenth century door fitted with a key lock. This little room has a fireplace on the north wall, hooks and brackets to each of the side walls for harness, saddles, collars etc. and a small bench in the corner opposite the entrance door with a wooden medicine cupboard above. The little room is fully boarded out to both sides and to the ceiling under the hay loft above with good quality wide boards. This again has good surviving features including a brick floor. The small brick fireplace against the north wall has a stack rising through the hay loft and changing to a diagonally set square form as it exits the roof. The front window already described pivots open. Beside the window and opposite the door entrance the small workbench is supported on angle struts back to the side

wall. Above it the well made timber cupboard, with a one piece board door, most likely for storing horse medicines and even repair materials for harness. The side walls have many hooks and brackets to hang various types of horse harness, collars and fittings that are a mix of special shaped timber to basic iron hooks. Beyond the division to the tack room is a large open carthorse stable area BD. Much simpler in fittings than the other it had all the basic necessities for working horses. A continuous feed trough on the rear wall has rings for five horses with no divisions between. The hay rack has gone but shadow and fitting positions show where it was fitted above the feed trough. Heavy brackets made from tree branch cuts are fitted to one wall and would have supported the working horse heavy harness. No original window to this section but a plastered niche was constructed in the front, south, wall. Ventilation was provided by an open hole cut into the brickwork to the east of the main entrance door. It was cut in with a rounded top and plastered. This would have provided ventilation for the horses even with no window. The heavy timber-framed entrance doorway, the widest in this range to allow the heavy horse to enter, now has a twentieth century door fitted. The brick floor remains but is in poor condition. Remnants of the side board lining to the walls survive in part and show the timber lacing pieces in the brickwork where missing. The unusual part of this section is the gallery on the eastern side. This was accessed by a door from the hay loft or possibly by a stairs as well, now missing, rising up from the carthorse stable through an area of the gallery floor with a framed opening. The edge of the galley had protection rails fitted from front and rear to leave a gap in the centre. The hay loft has a wide boarded floor with three access traps to the feed rack below in the stable BB. These traps are framed into the floor and have fitted trap covers removable from above. The area has a full height infill to area BA with an access doorway to the vertical ladder from the carriage shed. A similar infill exists at the western end over the division wall between areas BC & BD. The door here accesses the gallery construction that would have allowed separate access to the hay loft from either end, and, the gallery construction would allow the hay to be tossed down to horse feed rack below.

The timber roof above this area is the poorest section of this building and may have been rebuilt or at the least heavily repaired. All the leases on this property had a very detailed full repairing condition and therefore this could come from repairs being carried out with available timber. It is on this part of the building that the brickwork on the rear wall was so mixed and maybe there were general structural problems at this end of the building. A further consideration with this western end of the building is that it may have originally been longer and that the adjoining nineteenth century range is a rebuild. At the junction of these two buildings the earlier brickwork is badly finished suggesting that it was broken at that end. This is further strengthened by the scarf joint in the wallplate being No. 11 so near the present end of the building. This could also explain the mixed roof construction at this end of the building.

Continuing beyond this brick range is a further brick range possibly built in the middle of the nineteenth century. This consists of three sections comprising a granary, BE, with two dog kennel entrances under. A loose box, BF, and the Goose yard, BG. These names are from references on the keys provided by the previous owner of the buildings.

The roof is of a lower pitch more typical of the nineteenth century and was originally covered with slate having raised ridge boards to the ridge and hips over which lead would have originally been formed. None of that survives. The roof is collar purlin construction with the collars mortise and tenoned into the principal rafters. The common rafters, of consistent section, lay onto the purlins that have simple splayed joints at collar positions. The area of the southern roof over the granary, BE, is now covered in corrugated asbestos sheeting. The brickwork is Flemish bond above an English bond plinth that projects to the face of pillars within the wall structure and is topped with shouldered plinth bricks. The bricks are all well fired and 9" x 4¼" x 2½" average size. The pillars on the north wall divide the length of the building into four sections whilst on the front, south wall, it is divided into three representing the three sections of the range. The pillars are well constructed with Queen closers used to keep perfect bond. The south west corner has a rounded corner to the gap between this building and the main barn. In the north brick wall is a diamond form vent to the rear of the loose box, BF. The entrance door to the granary is raised by five courses of brick above plinth level that ties in with the top of the timber-framed kennel entries, either side of the doorway, giving the normal raised floor found in granaries to deter rodent ingress. Inside the granary, BE, the brickwork was plastered as would be expected for a granary. The eastern wall is the present end wall of the eastern range. The division walls are unbonded inserts into the construction but appear original. All the eaves within the granary were originally infilled again to seal the building against rodents. The floor is modern boarding, 1" thick, from its last use by the Marriage family confirmed by a series of item tickets pinned to a nail, dating to 1977 for beet pulp nuts showing the milling and feed supply connections. The building has board slots surviving on some walls showing that it was divided for different crops. Lacing pieces in the brickwork may suggest that it was also partly boarded out in its original form. The door is a typical heavy door with a lock as would be expected on a granary building.

The central section, BF, is laid out as a loose box with feed trough in the north east corner. The walling in this corner has the remains of a brick corbelled structure that may have been the support for a hay rack above the feed trough. At the end of the feed trough, infills in the brickwork could show where it ended. The building has a white brick floor. The brick constructed diamond vent in the north wall was the only ventilation other than unfilled eaves, with no window openings in this section. The division wall to the west has been removed but has shadows to the walls and the floor is rough through this area. The roof through the loose box has a truss against the granary division wall and another to the west of the door opening.

The next section, BG, called the Goose yard is now open through to the loose box. It also has a white brick floor but set at a slightly higher level than that in the loose box. It has the last truss of the roof leading into the end hip of the roof. The eaves areas were again infilled to the Goose yard area. The access to this section was from the west with a central door. This leads out onto a brick surfaced area, now in very poor condition, that possibly extended to the edge of the adjoining pond that has a brick revetment, running north-south, with a constructed buttress or possibly steps down into the pond. This would have made a controlled area for geese.

Building C. Called the Coach House in previous descriptions.

This building range is in three sections. To the east is the Coach House section, CA & CB. The centre section is an open cart lodge, CC, and at the western end is a timber-framed building designated as the Cowhouse, CD, that has a later lean-to on the western end. The rear wall of the various builds now also forms the garden wall of the house and some garden buildings are attached to the south side.

The brick building shows much change in its life with the northern section comprising the present carriage bay with sliding doors and the adjoining stable and loose box to the southern end of this brick section, referenced CA & CB. This is a brick building always floored through its length and roofed with a side purlin roof covered in plain clay tiles. This roof is well constructed from what appears to be mainly oak timber. The heavy collars are mortise and tenoned to the principal rafters with the common rafters laid onto the purlins. It is typical of the first half of the eighteenth century and the best roof on the site.

The section CA now has the front to the farmyard with two sliding doors covering two of the bays and timber infill with an access door at the eastern end.

The western half of this wall has an approximately central doorway with small pivoting windows in the walling to either side. The rear wall to the garden had two high level windows in the northern half and one smaller window in the southern half. The eastern window was blocked when the adjacent garden buildings were constructed or extended with the adjoining window having a new frame constructed to accept the return wall of the garden building at about a third of its width.

The east and south walls also have a series of original niches built into the walls. One in the east wall, one in the third bay, one in the fifth bay and one in the sixth bay of the south wall with one in the fourth bay on the north wall.

Only one of the existing brick division walls is original. When first built the building was divided into three equal parts of two bays each. The central girding beam of each open section has chamfered and stopped detail to their undersides, the lamb's tongue stops being typical of the late seventeenth to early eighteenth century. The girding beams where brick division walls were built only have chamfers to the underside.

This immediately questions the original use for this building and one can only suggest that it was actually originally built as a carriage building and stable for the earlier 'big' house that has now been replaced by one from the nineteenth century.

The east wall has an infilled fireplace and the remaining sections of timber, in the north wall, to the heads of the openings of bays one and two could suggest lintols for openings. The eastern face of the gable wall to the outside has been faced with another wall removing any outside evidence for the stack. The ceiling joists to these two eastern bays were not whitewashed but have nail holes and lime stains typical of a lime plaster ceiling. The recess in the east wall of these bays is also plastered unlike those in the other bays. The joists to the next bay, now open through, were whitewashed showing a different use sometime in the buildings life. Originally this third bay to area, CA, divided from the two eastern bays would have had the front, north, wall continued in brickwork as evidenced by the broken brick edge against the sliding door. This would allow two further double bay

sections to the west, in the original layout, entered by the existing door from the farmyard.

Sometime in the later eighteenth century the building was updated to provide coachman's quarters at first floor level. A further division wall was built across the building about three feet into bay four. This enabled a stair to be constructed using the new wall and the third girding beam as main supports. This stair is neatly boxed with eighteenth century cock-bead wide boarding leading up to a landing area with the closed hay loft to the west and a doorway into a small room to the east. Beside the doorway, in the cross partition, is a fixed window to gain borrowed light from the dormer, inserted into the roof, to light the stairs from the small room. This room was fully plastered or boarded and ceiled at collar level. Over the two eastern bays was another room accessed by a central door from the small room. Now unlit it may have had a window in the east gable wall offset from the central stack. This room was fully plastered and ceiled at collar level and has a good surviving door.

In the centre of the inserted division wall at ground floor level was a small fireplace that now has its flue reduced back to first floor level in the landing area at the top of the stairs. The roof structure shows infilling where it once passed through.

To the south of the fireplace a later large cupboard fills the area to the south wall at ground floor level.

The western two bays and the narrowed bay, left to the east, were converted by the insertion of a timber division at the southern girding beam to make two equal loose boxes and the narrow bay accessed by an original door opening, has been fitted out as a stable with feed trough and hay rack to the south wall and a timber cross division with entry door to the inside (south) of the access door. This cross division had a pelmet detail similar to those found in the northern range in the nag stable.

The recess niche in the north wall at this point is actually cut by the inserted brick division wall. The two feed troughs for the loose boxes are an addition as they run across the position of the two southern wall niches.

The hay loft above is accessed from the area to the east of the north entrance door by a vertical ladder now in poor condition. The loft above is floored and has a dormer with inward opening loading door set immediately over the lower access door.

This is a mysterious, large building that through its changes over time is difficult to analyse other than work backwards and assume a similar use over time. The other suggestion is that the building was completely re-fronted in brick in the early nineteenth century as evidenced by the fact that the brick to the north west corner changes with a different brick in the return wall to that on the front wall. The return wall has diagonal pressure marks to the bricks suggesting eighteenth century whilst those to the front have horizontal pressure marks suggesting the early nineteenth century.

Linking this building to the timber-framed cowhouse beyond is a covered wagon lodge, CC. It was reroofed in 1942 and celebrated by a plate mounted in the roof. It states "*This roof was rebuilt by own craftsmen of elm grown on farm Oct. 42*". This new roof was a nailed truss Queen post roof of typical low pitch but covered with plain clay tiles. The rear wall is also rebuilt, possibly at the same time. It can be suggested that the rebuild of the roof increased its span from the width of the

cowhouse to that of the brick build. The upper gable of the building, CA, has a good area of pargetted plaster left above tiebeam level with a zig-zag design popular in the eighteenth/nineteenth century. It could be that the original roof to the cart lodge was a single pitch roof from the rear wall as this would not cross the pargetted area, or, the narrower span suggested by early maps would allow the ridge to be below that area.

The timber cowhouse, CC, to the west of this range suggests a build in the early nineteenth century or very late in the eighteenth century. The remaining original weatherboarding is relatively wide, in softwood, again suggesting the same time period. It has a relatively small section primary braced frame, again using reused timbers, with infill timbers of varying sizes. The tiebeams have knees bolted to the farmyard face and the tiebeams whilst at the rear, south, the tiebeams sit onto a wallplate on the garden wall. The garden wall at this point has good buttresses into the cowhouse with the top bricks forming a neat arc back to the wall. The floor was again brick with the original drain channel running near the farmyard wall and out to the west where it could discharge into the existing ditch. The northern section of the floor is now covered in concrete. The simple collar purlin roof has nailed on collars and the whole is again covered in plain clay tiles. The western end of the building had been converted to a loose box with a feed trough covering what had been an original entrance through the garden wall. Beyond the west wall, now opened through by the removal of the timber framed wall, was a nineteenth century lean-to structure with a hipped roof having an entry from the end of the cowhouse and from the outside to the west. This extended area is divided roughly in half with open timber divisions having gated entries to allow sorting and movement between each of the sections. This was possibly for calves.

Beyond the main farmyard to the west are a further series of buildings, AC, D, E, F & G, that show various changes and rebuilding over time. Nothing appears to be before the eighteenth to nineteenth centuries.

The first is the "Pig Yard", AC, connected onto and running west from the centre of the west aisle of the barn. This has a brick north wall rebuilt in cement mortar from nineteenth century brick onto a concrete plinth and the return wall to the south is also brick. The roof is twentieth century in machined softwood, collar purlin type with nailed joints. The open front to the south is supported by a relatively small section steel 'I' beam with round steel support pillars. The roof is covered with corrugated asbestos sheeting. No sign remains of any closed yard area to the south.

At the north of the site are two shelter sheds, D & E, with the remnants of another brick building, F, between them now trapped by a twentieth century timber framed and weatherboarded building, G, with corrugated iron roof. This last building although modern shows older bricks in the plinth that may be from the part demolished building to the north of it.

The shelter sheds to the north are both similar. Brick rear and return walls with good mid nineteenth century collar purlin roofs covered with single Roman clay tiles.

The eastern building, D, siding to the pond has the return wall rebuilt in soft red brick with horizontal pressure marks in Flemish bond with Queen closers to the end, but set onto older lower bricks. The rear wall is of similar well fired brick with

a near Flemish bond as found on other buildings on the site and most likely date to the middle nineteenth century. It originally had no return wall to the west end, the corner post survives, but relied on the wall of the intermediate building for its closure. It now has an extra brick pillar supporting the roof at this end. The front is supported by telegraph pole posts with spreader beams under the wallplate. The side purlin roof with nailed collars supporting the purlins is constructed from good machined sections. All the scarf joints are simple laps. The hipped ends and ridge have half round ridge tiles.

The western shelter shed, E, is similar but the rear wall to the west of middle is rebuilt as is the western return wall. It again had no return wall against the centre building. The hipped roof was similar and the front support posts were a mix of square and round posts with some having spreader plates at the top of the posts. The remains of the brick building, F, now trapped between the shelter sheds and the new build was not examined except where visible outside. It now forms a walled yard behind the modern build, G, and is accessed from within that building. It is built again from good brick most likely eighteenth century and it now ends at what was most likely a door opening on each side of the building as the visible ends have Queen closers. The walls were thick and may at one time have supported an upper storey. If so it could have been a small maltings building as the farm had to supply malted barley to Felsted. There is also a building shown on the eighteenth century map in this position.

Discussion.

This is a very interesting farmyard with many good features and also many questions impossible to answer. The barn is special in its unusual layout.

The southern brick building has many questions that are not easy to answer and the cowhouse could be earlier and have existed from the middle eighteenth century if it is the same building that appears on the estate map of 1756.

The fittings surviving in the north range are good and rare. This especially applies to the little tack room, that is almost left as its last use.

The first Edition of the Ordnance Survey surveyed in 1874 shows the yard divisions to the western area with the now truncated brick building having possibly another shelter shed running from it to the south. This created the divisions for the pig yard area. The pond is also shown with very straight edging to the east that bears out the revetment wall but also shows something similar to the west. Did the eastern shelter shed sink into the pond to require the rebuilding of the end wall?

The farming scene in the surrounding lands suggested a mixed farm and the selection of buildings for animals, working horses and the big barn confirm that. The unusual bay divisions of the barn appear to be the answer to a specific storage requirement that could relate to the conditions of the lease. Thus the wheat and barley for the Felsted Almshouse could be stored separately.

The big question remaining is the large southern brick building. Was it purely a service building to what was then a mansion house of some substance? Morant had referred to the Parsonage being improved in the period 1726 -1753 to make it suitable as a 'Gentlemans' residence. As the construction features of this building concur with the dates given it is likely to be a new service block. This

would have held the services immediate to the house with the similar northern building providing another service function perhaps malting and brewing. This farm and its buildings show a very long history through remarkably few owners, but, what has come from this is that a property, having an extremely long life under lease, was still improved and new buildings built to suit the changing needs of farming and living.

Notes.

Thanks to the present owner Michael Franklin for sponsoring this survey and providing all help in gaining free access to the buildings.

Elphin & Brenda Watkin. February 2009.