

BUILDING RECORDING AT  
PALMERS END FARM,  
ELDERSFIELD,  
WORCESTERSHIRE

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Illustrated by Carolyn Hunt

20<sup>th</sup> November 2002

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Project 2293  
Report 1121  
fieldwork WSM no 32055

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## **Building recording at Palmers End farm, Eldersfield, Worcestershire**

### **Chris Patrick**

#### **Part 1 Project summary**

An archaeological building recording project was undertaken at Palmer's End Farm, Eldersfield, Worcestershire (NGR SO 8241 3104). It was undertaken ahead of plans to convert the buildings into a dwelling for which a planning application had been submitted.

The survey at Palmers End Farm recorded a timber-framed threshing barn and a cowshed dating to the 18<sup>th</sup> century along with later structures including a 19<sup>th</sup> century cowshed and milking parlour. Several late 20<sup>th</sup> century steel-framed barns were also present.

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## Part 2 Detailed report

### 1. Background

#### 1.1 Reasons for the project

Building recording was undertaken at Palmers End Farm, Eldersfield, Worcestershire ([NGR SO 8241 3104](#)), on behalf of Mr K Gorman, architect, acting on behalf of Mr John Dudfield. The client intends to convert the farm buildings into residential accommodation and has submitted a planning application to Malvern Hills District Council (reference MH/02/0207), who consider that a building of historical and archaeological interest may be affected (WSM 31076). Palmers End Farm is located approximately 1km north-west of the village of Corse Lawn in the parish of Eldersfield, Worcestershire (Fig 1). The buildings recorded are all present on the First Edition Ordnance Survey Map of 1888 (Fig 2).

#### 1.2 Project parameters

The project conforms to the *Standard and guidance for the archaeological investigation and recording of standing buildings or structures* (IFA 1999).

The project also conforms to a brief prepared by the Planning Advisory Section of Worcestershire Archaeological Service ([AS 2002a](#)) and for which a project proposal (including detailed specification) was produced ([AS 2002b](#)).

#### 1.3 Aims

The aims of the building recording project were to ‘record the techniques used in the construction of the building and the phases of development..... the functional and historical use of the building and its association with surrounding buildings and landscapes’ ([AS 2001a](#)).

### 2. Methods

#### 2.1 Fieldwork

##### 2.1.1 Fieldwork strategy

A detailed specification has been prepared by the Service ([AS 2002b](#)).

Fieldwork was undertaken on 7<sup>th</sup> October 2002 and consisted of a photographic survey of the interior and exterior of all buildings and analysis of their development. All photographs were taken with scales included. Photographs were taken with 35mm cameras using black and white and colour transparency films.

#### 2.2 Building recording

The project conformed to the specification for a photographic survey as defined by the Royal Commission on the Historic Monuments of England (RCHME 1996)

#### 2.3 The methods in retrospect

The methods adopted allow a high degree of confidence that the aims of the project have been achieved. When the building recording took place, the conversion of the buildings was already well advanced. The threshing barn had been stripped of its roof and outer wooden

cladding and a small building attached to the southern end wall on the cattle shed had also been removed. Although this did mean some information on the later development of the barn was lost it did give a good view of the barns box frame that would not otherwise have been visible.

### 3. Construction and function of buildings

#### 3.1 Unit descriptions (Figure 3)

**Unit 1.** This is single storey, rectangular brick-built cow shed extension butted against the south gable end of Unit 2 (Plate 1). The structure is built of machine-made bricks fixed in a Double Flemish bond. The building appears to have once had an extension on its southern side that had been demolished by the time of the building recording along with the south wall of Unit 1. Two windows were present in Unit 1, located in the western and eastern walls, the window in the western wall had been added as part of the conversion scheme and the window in the eastern wall was original but had been altered as part of the conversion. The unit was roofed with ceramic tiles and supported by three king post roof trusses (Plate 2). The floor was brick at the north end and concrete at the south end with a drainage channel approximately in the centre running from north to south (Plate 3). A doorway is present in the northern gable wall leading into Unit 2 (Plate 4).

**Unit 2.** This is a two-storey cow shed structure with a hayloft above. It is brick-built with a English garden wall bond abutting Unit 3 to the south. Unit 2 has a window and a door in the eastern wall leading from the farmyard (Plate 5). Inside on the floor was a concrete stall area sloping down into a central drainage channel, running north to south with a brick floored passage along the eastern side (Plate 6). Iron air vents were present for ventilation at ground floor ceiling level. The above the cattle shed area on the first floor was a hayloft. The eastern and western walls on the first floor were open at the time of the recording but had previously been timber clad. The roof was covered by ceramic tiles and was supported by two king post roof trusses.

**Unit 3.** This is a timber box-frame, three bay threshing barn with large doorways opposite each other in the eastern and western walls (Plate 7). At the time of the building recording the barn had been stripped completely to its box-frame. The barn had previously had a ceramic tile roof with the walls cladded with wooden boards. The southern gable wall of the barn has been replaced by a brick wall of English garden wall bond, that also forms the northern gable wall of Unit 2 (Plate 8). The sill beams at the base of the frame had previously sat on a stone rubble plinth that had been largely removed at the time of the recording, leaving the frame resting on wooden props (Plate 9). The rubble plinth survived only in the north-east corner of the structure. The barn had three bays formed by six wooden post uprights measuring 200mm x 200mm and the southern brick gable wall with three tie beams spanning the structure between pairs of posts and with wall plate beams connecting the posts around the perimeter of the structure (Plate 10). Sill beams were also present inside the barn running aligned east-west dividing the floor space by linking the bases of the posts either side of the doorway. Braces were also present on the western side doorway, strengthening between the post and the sill beam and the post and the tie beam.

The walls of the barn are made by studs and rails forming a secondary frame within the main frame formed by the posts, sill beams, ties beams and wall plate. There were three vertical studs in each of the wall panels with four in the surviving north end wall with two rows of rails. The timbers were all fairly regular in size measuring approximately 110mm x 190mm and were jointed together using wooden pegs. The walls would once have been covered with wooden boarding.

The roof was supported on three wooden trusses and the brick gable end wall. The northern end gable wall had the rafters supported by two collars, the collars were then braced by Queen posts (Plate 11). There are three Queen posts sitting on the tie beam bracing the lower collar and above this two further Queen posts brace the upper collar. A final post rests on the

upper collar supporting the apex of the roof. The other two trusses span across the centre of the barn and have a single collar with additional braces between the tie beam and the rafters.

**Unit 4.** Unit 4 is a single storey shed running along the northern edge of the farmyard (Plate 12). The structure had eight bays but at the time of the recording the first had been partially demolished as part of the conversion, while bays five, six, seven and eight had collapsed (Plate 13). The building was timber-framed but had been heavily modified in places with modern breeze block walls. The best preservation was at the rear northern side of the structure where the wooden sill beam rested upon a substantial stone foundation that also doubled as revetment for a ditch running east to west behind Unit 4 (Plate 14). The rear wall was formed of a series of wooden vertical studs with a single row of horizontal rails topped by a wall plate and infilled with brick-nogging in stretcher bond. Many of the bricks had been replaced by modern machine made bricks but some thin hand made bricks remained. The front southern side of the building was open with posts spaced at regular intervals with braces supporting a wall plate and ties beams spanning across to the back wall (Plate 15). The bays were divided up into stalls by posts and staves (Plate 16), in many places these had been patched up with corrugated iron or replaced entirely with breeze-blocks. The floor was covered with machine made bricks. The roof was a simple principal rafter roof covered in corrugated iron, this seemed to have replaced the original.

Other buildings present in the farmyard were modern steel-framed barns covered in corrugated iron (Plate 17).

### 3.2

## Development

The earliest buildings at Palmers End Farm are Units 3 and 4, the threshing barn and the timber framed cattle shed. The threshing barn probably dates to the late 18<sup>th</sup> century but the uniform size of the vertical studs forming the wall may date it to the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. The main alteration to the barn is the removal of the southern gable wall and its replacement with a brick wall, adjoining Unit 2. The reason for this seems to be that the barn was moving southwards, this was probably due to a combination of the barns lack of proper foundations and that the level of the farm yard being lowered at some time. To rectify the movement a new back wall was added including a substantial brick buttress in the south-eastern corner (Plate 18). The doorways into the barn also seem to have enlarged, on the south side of the western doorway there is a vertical stud beam beyond the main post, which is not present on the north side and seems to have been removed. On the eastern doorway the two stud beams either side seem to have been moved apart by shortening the horizontal rails between them and the posts and the wall plate has also been altered. This was probably done to allow larger vehicles into the barn such as tractors. Previously horse drawn carts would have entered the barn through one set of doors unloaded the sheaves of corn to be stored in the bays on either side and then exited through the opposite set of doors. Large doorways into the threshing barn were also important for two other reasons, threshing was usually carried out in the winter months so it was important to allow as much light as possible into the barn. Secondly the threshing floor would have been located in the middle bay of the barn and so that after separating the wheat from the chaff by threshing, winnowing could take place by opening the doors to allow a through draught to blow the chaff away. No purpose built threshing floor was identified in the barn and the operation was probably carried out on the hard clay surface of the barn floor. Later in the barn's life a second floor was added in the southern bay probably for storage purposes.

Unit 4 was probably a cattle shed and dates from around the same period as the threshing barn. It was used to accommodate cattle, particularly through the winter months. Small mixed agricultural farms were common place as the manure gathered from the cattle would be used of the fields as fertiliser for the crops and the straw produced was then in turn used to feed the cattle through the winter. The shed is small but in the 18<sup>th</sup>/19<sup>th</sup> centuries cattle would have been smaller and kept in smaller numbers.

Unit 2 was also a cow shed/milking shed and may have superceded the Unit 4 cow shed. The building probably dates from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century when it became common to keep cattle in

more spacious, well lit and hygienic accommodation, opposed to the ill lit and poorly ventilated conditions of before, hence the windows and the central floor drain. The animals would have been tethered along the western wall in stalls, steel stanchions for the tethering are still present but are probably modern replacements of the originals. Manure would have been collected from the central drain during mucking out. An interesting feature is the curved edged bricks around the door, which were often used in cow houses to prevent the animals injuring themselves on sharp corners as they passed through (Plate 19). The doorway leading from the Unit 2 to Unit 3 has been added as part of the present conversion work.

Unit 1 was a single storey extension to Unit 2 and also appears to have been a cowshed/milking shed. A doorway has been added between Unit 1 and Unit 2 and a timber lintel inserted. The brickwork was left in a fairly rough finish where the doorway had been knocked through and a sliding steel gate had been added. An enamelled sign nailed to one of the roof trusses refers to a milking machine manufacturer and it seems that this room would once have housed milking equipment and the demolished building to the south may also have been part of the dairy.

The steel-framed structures on the eastern side of the farmyard are late 20<sup>th</sup> century additions to the farm.

#### 4. **Conclusions**

The recording of the buildings at Palmers End Farm allowed the development of the farm to be worked out. There seemed to be four main phases of development of the farm. Phase 1 consisted of Units 3 and 4; the timber threshing barn and the timber framed cowshed. These probably date to the 18<sup>th</sup>-early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. Phase 2 saw the modification to the south end end of the barn and the construction of the Unit 2 cowshed. Phase 3 saw the construction of the Unit 1 milking shed extension to the Unit 2 cowshed. These buildings probably date to the later 19<sup>th</sup> century and there was probably not much time between the building of Unit 2 and Unit 1 judging from the building styles and the materials used. The final phase saw the construction of the late 20<sup>th</sup> century steel framed-barns on the eastern side of the farmyard. Some of the buildings present today may have replaced earlier structures and the farm may have had earlier origins.

Palmers End seems to have been a small mixed farm established some time in the in the 18<sup>th</sup> century and seemed to continue in a similar small scale until comparatively recently. The development of the buildings seem to reflect the movement from mixed farming to a more pasture based farm and also reflects the changes in animal husbandry practices that occurred in the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.

#### 5. **Publication summary**

The Service has a professional obligation to publish the results of archaeological projects within a reasonable period of time. To this end, the Service intends to use this summary as the basis for publication through local or regional journals. The client is requested to consider the content of this section as being acceptable for such publication.

*An archaeological building recording project was undertaken at Palmers End Farm, Eldersfield, Worcestershire (NGR SO 8241 3104). It was undertaken ahead of plans to convert the buildings into a dwelling for which a planning application had been submitted.*

*The survey at Palmers End Farm recorded a timber-framed threshing barn and a cowshed dating to the 18<sup>th</sup> century along with later structures including a 19<sup>th</sup> century cowshed and milking parlour. Several late 20<sup>th</sup> century steel-framed barns were also present.*

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## 6. The archive

The archive consists of:

- 6 Photographic records AS3
- 3 Colour transparency film
- 3 Black and white photographic films
- 1 Scale drawing
- 1 Computer disk

The project archive is intended to be placed at:

Worcestershire County Museum

Hartlebury Castle

Hartlebury

Near Kidderminster

Worcestershire DY11 7XZ

Tel Hartlebury (01299) 250416

## 7. Acknowledgements

The Service would like to thank Mr J Dedfield and Mr K Gorman for their kind assistance in the successful conclusion of this project.

## 8. Personnel

Chris Patrick carried out the fieldwork and report preparation. The project manager responsible for the quality of the project was Simon Woodiwiss. Illustration was by Carolyn Hunt.

## 9. Bibliography

AS, 2002a *Brief for building recording at Palmers End Farm, Eldersfield, Worcestershire*, Archaeological Service, Worcestershire County Council unpublished document dated 28<sup>th</sup> May 2002

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CAS, 1995 (as amended) *Manual of Service practice: fieldwork recording manual*, County Archaeological Service, Hereford and Worcester County Council, report, **399**

IFA, 1999 *Standard and guidance for the archaeological investigation and recording of standing buildings or structures*, Institute of Field Archaeologists

RCHME, 1996 *Recording historic buildings: a descriptive specification (3<sup>rd</sup> edition)*, Royal Commission on Historical Monuments of England

## 10. Abbreviations

WSM                      Worcestershire Sites and Monuments Record











Plate 1. Units 1-3 the milking parlour, cowshed and threshing barn looking north-west



Plate 2. Unit 1, roof trusses in the milking parlour.



Plate 3. Unit 1, milking parlour interior, looking north

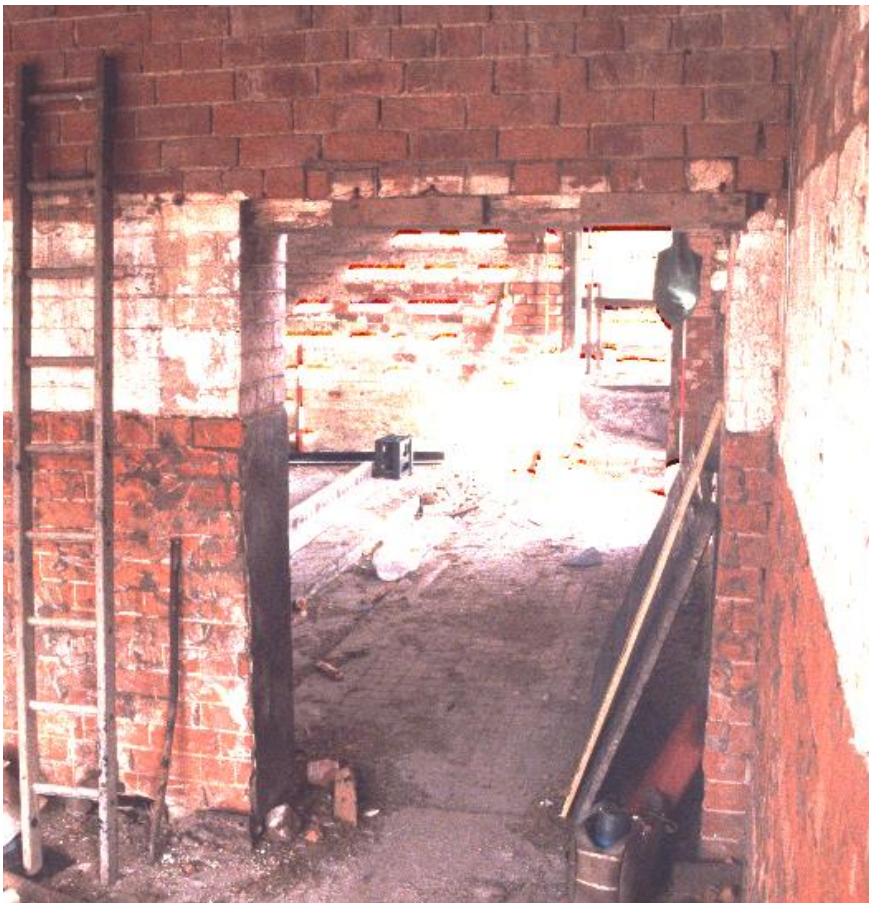


Plate 4. Doorway between milking parlour Unit 1 and Unit 2





Plate 5. Units 1 and 2 looking west

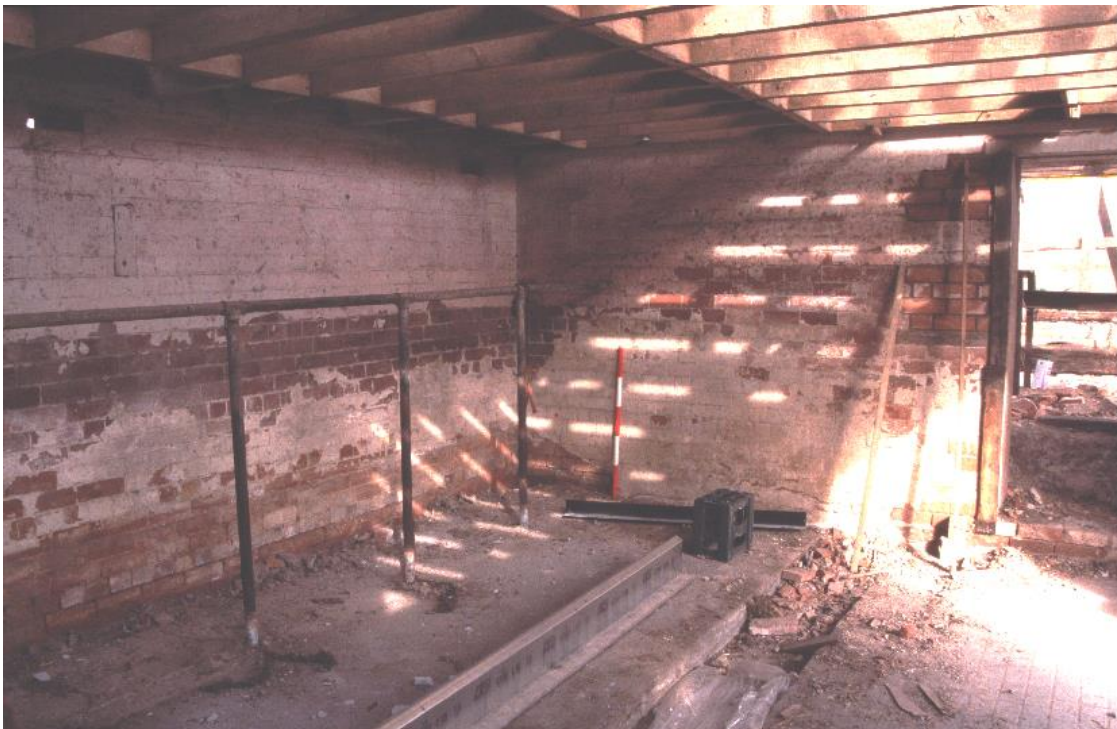


Plate 6. Unit 2, cowshed interior facing north-east showing the stanchions for tethering cattle and the central floor drain.



Plate 7. Units 1-3, looking east



Plate 8. Unit 3, looking south showing the replacement brick wall at the southern end of the threshing barn





Plate 9. Rubble plinth and sill beams at north end of threshing barn



Plate 10. The threshing barn, eastern elevation.





Plate 11. North wall of threshing barn from interior looking north-east



Plate 12. Southern elevation of Unit 4 cowshed





Plate 13. Collapsed eastern end of cowshed, Unit 4



Plate 14. Rear wall of cowshed, Unit 4 showing brick-nogging





Plate 15. Unit 4, post with braces at front of cowshed



Plate 16. Interior of cowshed, Unit 4 showing stalls



Plate 17. Modern steel framed barns along eastern edge of the farmyard



Plate 18. Buttress at south-eastern corner of the threshing barn.





Plate 19. Doorway into Unit 2 cowshed with rounded bricks