

**An Archaeological Interpretative Survey of
Barn At Holmbush Farm, Hellingly, East Sussex**

Commissioned by Chris Birch

**Project Ref. 3317
Report No: 2008235**



by David Martin FSA IHBC MIFA & Jane Clubb

2008

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EAST SUSSEX**

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**Archaeology South-East
Institute of Archaeology
University College London**

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STANDING BUILDINGS

ARCHAEOLOGICAL INTERPRETATIVE SURVEYS

AN INTRODUCTORY NOTE

ABOUT THESE SURVEYS

The intended purpose of an *Archaeological Interpretative Survey* is to give an overview of the date, sequence of construction, and principal architectural features of a building. As such, they should not be regarded as a detailed archaeological record, nor should they be taken as definitive. Further research, particularly that undertaken during building works, is likely to refine and extend the archaeological record.

These reports are aimed at three groups of user, namely those owners who wish to know more about their property, those persons (architects and planners) who are charged with the responsibility for both conserving the buildings and ensuring that they are carefully adapted to the needs of the future, and finally the academic carrying out wider historical or archaeological research. A secure use for the future is, in our opinion, the only way of ensuring the long-term survival of any historical building.

INVESTIGATIVE TECHNIQUE

Unless noted to the contrary, the assessments involve a visual inspection of the fabric, both internally and externally, including any accessible roof voids and basement areas. Except where building works are being carried out, intrusive techniques are inappropriate. Interpretation of the fabric and fittings therefore relies principally upon inspection of the visible evidence. As part of the interpretative procedure, a measured outline survey of every property is undertaken.

THE WRITTEN REPORT

For ease of reference the written reports are divided into sections under a series of headings and sub-headings. The typical sequence of headings is as follows:-

- 1 Location of the building.
- 2 Sequence of development.
- 3 Detailed architectural description, arranged period-by-period.

THE DRAWINGS

A set of drawings produced from an measured outline survey is included within the body of each report. The purpose of these drawings is to identify the features included within the written text and to illustrate, as far as is known, the form of the structure during its various stages of development. For clarity the drawings have been prepared in the form of scale 'sketches', rather than detailed archaeological record drawings. For reasons of economy, the making of detailed archaeological drawings is restricted to stripped-out or exceptionally important buildings.

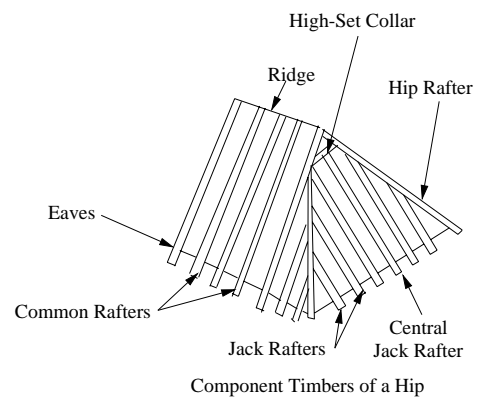
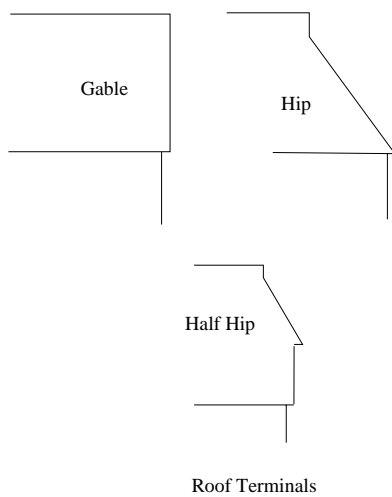
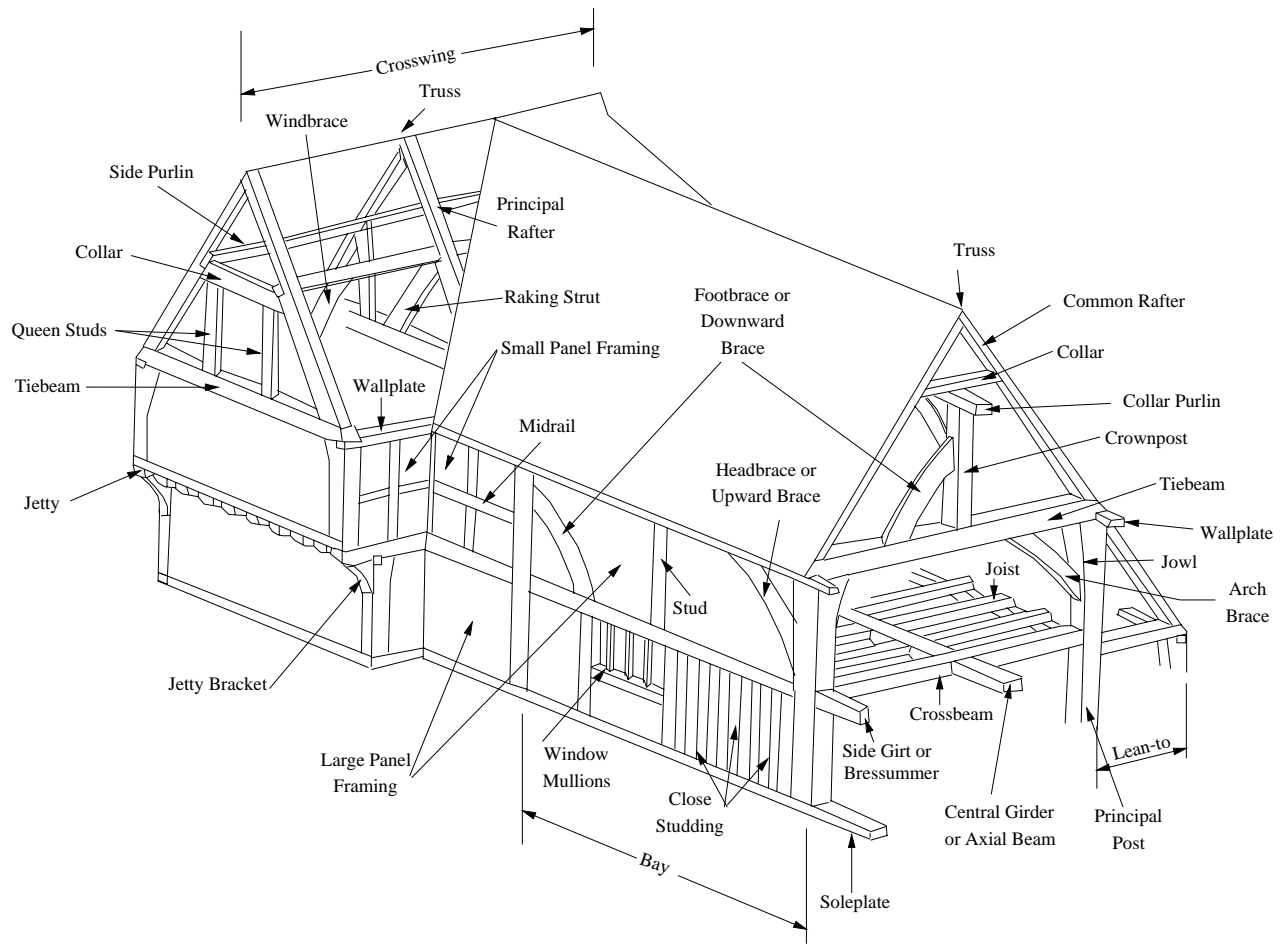
The symbols as used in the drawings attached to this report are as follows:

—————	Surviving Timber-Framed Wall
///////	Surviving Brick or Stone Wall
-----	Features evidenced but destroyed or masked from view
- - - - -	Beam or feature immediately overhead
.....	Conjectural or very approximate
■	Structural timber
?	Details unknown or doubtful

OTHER CONVENTIONS USED -

1 Doors are shown in plan only where known: hence rooms may appear to have no obvious means of access.

2 With the exception of rafters, wallplates, and some chimneys and roof-lines, sections show features cut by or immediately adjacent to the cutting line only.



GLOSSARY OF PRINCIPAL TERMS

REPORT NO. 1330

BARN AT HOLMBUSH FARM, HELLINGLY

NGR TQ 5827 1353

LOCATION [see Drawing No. 1330/1]

Holmbush is located three-quarters of a mile NNE of Hellingly church, on the eastern side of the A267 between Hellingly and Horam. The barn is parallel to, but set back from the road, being aligned upon a NNE-SSW axis (hereafter assumed N-S) with its full-height wagon doors facing west towards a former yard. The ground is relatively level to the west, but slopes away to the east and south.

OVERVIEW OF THE BUILDING [Drawing Nos. 1330/1-2]

Though the barn currently appears to be in a semi-derelict state, this extends mainly to the external weatherboarding: the main frame is very complete and appears to be in a generally good state of preservation.

To judge from the architectural features, and in particular the style of its roof (of which three other similar local examples are known) this five-bay barn dates from the late 16th or early 17th century [**Period A**] and was built for the storage and processing of arable crops. Originally it incorporated lean-to cattle outshuts at each end, though both these have since been removed.

In 1847 [**Period B**] a stone-walled stable was built at the north-eastern corner of the northern lean-to, which was still extant at this date, and at this same general period improvements were made to the southern end of the barn. Here a low boarded partition and associated raking struts were added to the south of the threshing floor, thereby improving the crop-storage facilities within this part of the building.

The 1st edition 1:2500 Ordnance Survey (O.S.) map indicates that by 1874-5 the southern end lean-to had been removed, and that at the northern end had been replaced by a cart shed of the same east-west dimension, but of larger footprint measured north-south. This is open-fronted to the north with a Sussex-bonded brick wall towards the west and makes use of the stable wall on the east. To the west of the barn is shown an attached yard, with a second range of north-south aligned buildings delineating its western side. This 19th-century brick-built range still survives, though today it is semi-derelict.

The 1847 stable appears to have been sized down by the removal of its southern wall; in that area was erected a small shelter backing onto the cart shed to the west, with two

pens in front.

In its later phases the barn appears to have been used solely for animal housing. The former crop-storage bays to the south of the wagon way were now accessed via an external doorway cut through the west wall, reached via the yard shown in the 1874-5 O.S. plan. The area is partially divided by a low axial partition, a feeding rack was attached to the front walls, with troughs against the rear wall and southern end wall. At the other end of the barn three separate stalls, with brick feeding trough, were formed by short divisions projecting southwards from the northern end wall.

All work carried out since period B is excluded from the more detailed architectural description which follows.

LISTED STATUS OF THE BUILDING

The barn complex, including the attached cartshed and stable at Holmbush Farm was listed grade II on 30 March 1999, its listed building reference being TQ 51 SE 12/10036. The description in the list entry is purely for the purpose of recognition and is normally, therefore, primarily based on external appearance, though in this instance it is clear from the description that an internal inspection was carried out. The date is given as c.1600. [Source: English Heritage, Images of England - website]. The description must not be treated as a comprehensive schedule of those elements which are legally protected as, no matter what the grade, the legislative cover not only relates to both the interior and exterior of the building described, but also extends to any other buildings within the historical curtilage which predate the 1st July 1948.

DETAILED ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION

PERIOD A (Late 16th C/Early 17th C) [Drawing Nos. 1330/3-4]

LAYOUT

The barn comprises five bays, with two bays to either side of a central wagon way, and lean-to outshuts (destroyed) at both the northern and southern ends. The main body of the barn measures 15.45 metres x 6.45 metres (50'7" x 21'0"). The outshuts continued across the full width of the barn, thereby extending the building's length. The size of the northern outshut is indicated by a joint in the walling of the later building, marking the point where the west wall of the 1847 stable abutted against the (then still extant) outshut. This indicates that the outshut's north-south measurement was 3.05 metres (10'0"). If, as seems likely, the southern outshut was of similar size, this

would give an overall length for the barn, when first built, of approximately 21.50 metres (70'8").

Access to the main body of the barn was initially via the full-height wagon doors in the front (western) wall, with cross-ventilation provided by the three-quarter-height doorway in the opposite wall. Because of the slope of the ground, there was always a considerable drop beyond this rear opening. As is normal practice, the two lean-to cattle outshuts must have been accessed separately: there is no evidence for doorways either built into or cut through the end walls of the main frame. Peculiarities in the design of both these end walls suggest that the animals within both outshuts were tethered facing the barn, and in the case of the northern outshut pegged mortices in the studs in the northern end wall of the barn suggest that stall divisions existed in this area. The same is likely to have been the case at the opposite end also, but here the floor of the lost outshut was considerably lower because of the natural fall on the ground.

WALL DESIGN

The frame is of typical local traditional pre-fabricated construction and the timberwork is of high quality, neatly cut and pegged, and of good scantling. All the principal posts have splay-cut/swelling jowls, and most are chamfered to their full height. As there are no stave holes or grooves cut into the framework, the barn can be shown to have been fully weatherboarded externally from the outset. Even so, it is worth noting that the wall braces are deliberately inset from the external face of the frame, despite the studs being flush with the main timbers. Locally, this is a technique normally reserved for use in late 16th-century and 17th-century buildings designed to be daub infilled with the braces concealed from view externally. It is therefore possible that at the time of the buildings conception the intention was to use daub infill and that this was varied to weatherboarding prior to the stave holes and grooves being cut. Alternatively, it is possible that the carpenters worked principally on the frames of buildings designed to be daub infilled and slavishly adopted the same techniques in this instance. There are three other known local barns with very similar roofs — Iwood, Court Lodge and Woodlands, all in neighbouring Warbleton parish and all of c.1600 date [East Sussex Record Office (ESRO) HBR/1/0414, HBR/1/0471 and HBR/1/0426]. All four were most likely built by the same carpenters. All were weatherboarded, though, intriguingly, at Woodlands the braces are inset and the carpenter started cutting stave holes for daub infill but aborted the procedure part way through fabricating the frame, whilst Iwood repeats the evidence at Holmbush, having in-set braces but no stave holes or grooves. The situation regarding the braces at Court Lodge is uncertain.

In the front and rear walls, the frame design is very similar. Within each bay (excepting the two wagon ways) the panels are divided equally into three by pegged studs. The lower panels are not braced. At the upper level the northern and southern end bays are triangulated by single footbraces rising towards the corner posts, whereas the bays flanking the doors have two braces, one at each end. At the midrail each footbrace interrupts a stud, which, being flush to the external face of the main frame, is neatly

housed past the external face of the inset brace and pegged to it. All of these braces survive: most are straight, though three are slightly curved.

The two end walls are treated somewhat differently. Each is divided by an intermediate post rising to the tiebeam and the upper panels of the frame incorporate footbracing to the principal posts. However, there are no studs in these upper panels, indicating that they were never clad, but were instead left open to the roof space of the lean-to outshuts beyond. In the northern end wall there are two tiers of crossbeams, one set at the same height as the side girts in the front and rear walls, and one roughly 400 mm lower. Between these two crossbeams, on each side of the intermediate post, was a single, short stud, whereas the lowest panels were each divided into three by jointed-in studs. North-facing empty, pegged mortices in each of the studs within the lowest tier explain the reason for the variation in the number of studs at the two levels: they were designed to support the head rails of stall divisions, forming in total six narrow (c 910 mm, or 3'0") wide stalls within the outshut. The configuration of the rails is identical to that found in barns with fixed feeding racks of the type illustrated in Martin, D and B, *'Farm Buildings of the Weald, 1450-1750'* (Heritage Books, 2006) pp.53-58. However, in this instance there is no mortice evidence for racks of this type. Similarly, at the southern end there are two tiers of crossbeams, though here the second, lower tier is set much lower: a full metre below that at the standard height. Furthermore, each panel here is divided into only two parts by a central stud: that in the top, eastern panel is set slightly off-centre. The most likely reason for this variation in design is that at this end the outshut was designed to have four, rather than six stalls, though it is also possible that, because of the much lower ground level, here the head rail of each stall division was fitted either into the soleplate or into the tall ground wall beneath it.

TRUSSES

All three open trusses are of similar form. The tiebeams have a slight camber, and in most cases are the same width as the principal posts which support them: that at truss B-B is wider and oversails the posts on its northern side. Curved arch braces, approximately 80 mm by 230 mm, rise from the principal posts. Normally these are set flush with the principal face of the truss, especially within those which flank the threshing floor where they invariably face towards the floor itself. In this instance this is not the case - they are set centrally within the truss. As with the roof and the bracing, this is yet another feature Holmbush shares in common with the barns at Iwood, Court Lodge and Woodlands.

DOORWAYS

In the front wall is a full-height wagon opening; the wallplate over this is 'strengthened' by an under-plate of 200 mm depth running immediately underneath the wallplate. In the rear wall, the opening was only of three-quarter height, having a double-pegged rail fixed 860 mm below the wallplate. The wall above the door head was divided by two

equally spaced studs. A peculiarity of the opening is that it is narrower than that at the front, having jambs 170 mm wide rising to the door head, set in from the principal posts by 120 mm, reducing the width of the opening from 3.15 metres (10'4") to 2.55 metres (8'4"). Such an arrangement is by no means unique, but is rare — only ten examples were found within a sample of just under 200 timber-framed barns recorded in the High Weald of East Sussex [Martin, D and B, *'Farm Buildings of the Weald, 1450-1750'* (Heritage Books, 2006) p.45].

At this date there was no separate pedestrian access to the main body of the barn, though doorways must have led into the two destroyed end outshuts.

FLOORS AND CEILINGS

As the threshing floor has been replaced in concrete, no evidence is visible to indicate its design. Unlike in some local barns, there have never been any first floors within the building.

ROOF

The roof is one of four examples of similar 'composite' type found in the local area: as mentioned above, the other three are all located within the neighbouring parish of Warbleton. It is two-tiered, with no windbraces and with butted side purlins in the three central bays, the trusses being strengthened by curved queen struts. However, this example differs slightly from the others in the group in that it has no purlins in the hipped ends — the pair of rafters carrying the hip are strengthened by the incorporation of a collar only. The three similar Warbleton barns have clasped side purlins in the hipped ends, hence their 'composite' designation (for a discussion of these roofs see Martin, D and B, *'Farm Buildings of the Weald, 1450-1750'* (Heritage Books, 2006) p.92). Staining on many rafters provides evidence that the barn was originally thatched.

PERIOD B (19th Century, part dated 1847) [see Drawing Nos. 1330/1-2]

In 1847 a stone stable was built at the north-eastern corner of the barn. Carved into a stone in the northern wall is the inscription 'I DANN 1847' (The 4 is reversed). The documentary history of the site has not been researched, but the valuation books of Burtenshaw confirm Dann as the farmer at Holmbush in the mid 19th century [ESRO. BUR/2/1/124 and 152]. His name and a similar date are neatly carved into a loose, formerly horizontal timber currently lying within the barn.

From a change in materials and a slight kick in the western wall (now within the later cart shed) it can be told that the northern lean-to was still extant when the stable was

built; similarly, the alignment of the northern boundary of the yard, visible in the 1st edition Ordnance Survey map of 1874-5, seems to respect the end of this lean-to. As the cart shed was built on the site of the lean-to, it must post-date the building of the stable in 1847, but the outline on the 1st edition O.S. map indicates that it had been erected by 1874.

Inside the barn the two southern bays were 'separated' from the rest of the space by raking shores and a low boarded partition, indicating that this area of the barn was still being used for crop storage at this time. From its style and constructional detail, this work appears to approximate to the date of the stable: it does not represent an early alteration to the building. Probably at the same time a door was cut through the west wall to the south of the wagon entrance to provide access to the space.

There were no alterations to the period-A wall design at this time, though when the northern lean-to was removed, the upper panels in truss A-A each had three wooden slabs added either side of the intermediate post in order to provide adequate support to the new weatherboarding.

NOTE: At the time of survey there was no internal access to the stone-built stable of 1847, though the listing description notes that the interior retains a central stall partition and feeding troughs.

Head Office
Units 1 & 2
2 Chapel Place
Portslade
East Sussex BN41 1DR
Tel: +44(0)1273 426830 Fax:+44(0)1273 420866
email: fau@ucl.ac.uk
Web: www.archaeologyse.co.uk



London Office
Centre for Applied Archaeology
Institute of Archaeology
University College London
31-34 Gordon Square, London, WC1 0PY
Tel: +44(0)20 7679 4778 Fax:+44(0)20 7383 2572
Web: www.ucl.ac.uk/caa

The contracts division of the Centre for Applied Archaeology, University College London 

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