

**A historic building survey at  
High House Farm, Woodham Road,  
Battlesbridge,  
Chelmsford, Essex**



**report prepared by  
Leigh Alston**

**on behalf of  
Churchgate Project Management Ltd**

Chelmsford Museum accession code: 2008.34  
CAT project code: 07/11f  
HEM site code: REHH07  
NGR: TQ 776 955



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**CAT Report 470**  
April 2008

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## Historic building record

*This report provides a written and photographic record at English Heritage (2006) Level 2 of a grade II-listed farmhouse and a complex of former farm buildings (NGR TQ 776 955). It is intended to fulfil a condition of planning permission for partial demolition and alterations (application CHL/01648/07/FUL) and has been prepared to a brief designed by the Historic Environment Management team of Essex County Council (Teresa O'Connor, October 2007) and an associated Written Scheme of Investigation (CAT, November 2007).*

### 1 Introduction

This written report is accompanied by an appendix on CD which contains a full photographic record in the form of 8.2 megapixel digital images (Appendix 1), but also includes prints of key features (Appendix 2). Each image is separately described in the written report. The site was surveyed on 29th November 2007 when the accompanying photographs were taken (wherever practical, a white metre rod with centimetre subdivisions was included for scale purposes). Each of the historic buildings is identified by a unique number (1-4) as shown on the block plan of the site (Fig 1 below). Two adjacent modern buildings, which fall outside the scope of the survey but are discussed for the purpose of historic context, are also numbered for ease of reference (5-6).

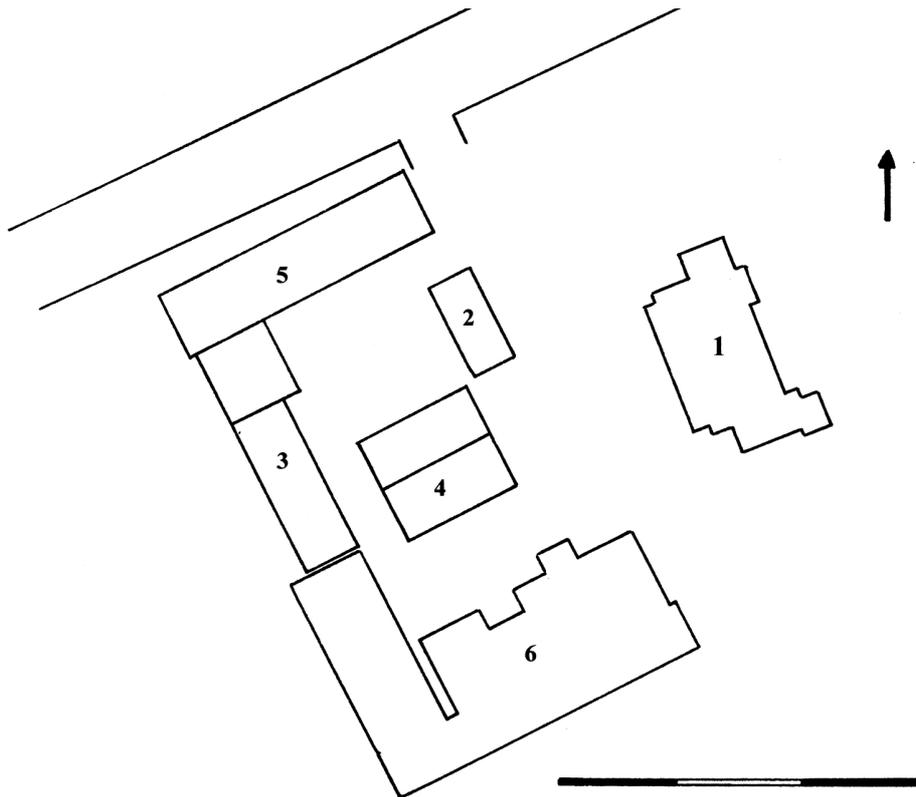


Fig 1 Block plan of farm buildings showing historic elements numbered as follows (30 m scale).

1. Listed farmhouse. 19th-century, timber-framed and weatherboarded, with some late 17th- or early 18th-century framing at the northern end. Heavily altered in the late 20th century
2. Probable cart lodge. Mid 19th century, timber-framed in three bays. Subsequently enclosed. Converted for domestic purposes in the late 20th century.
3. Open-sided shelter shed. Mid 19th century, timber-framed in 5 bays. Enclosed and converted for domestic purposes in the late 20th century.
4. Workshop. Early 20th-century white brick.
5. Barn. Mid 20th-century red brick on site of earlier barn.
6. Complex of animal sheds and Dutch barn, mainly mid 20th century but possibly incorporating parts of a 19th-century building.

## 2 Summary

High House Farm adjoins the southern side of Woodham Road (B1012) in the ecclesiastical parish of Rettendon and the civil parish of Rettendon and Battlesbridge (Battlesbridge is not a parish in its own right). Its conspicuous site overlooks the valley of the River Crouch and the hamlet of Battlesbridge, and lies approximately 750 m south-east of the Norman church of All Saints. The weatherboarded exterior of the farmhouse is highly characteristic of coastal Essex and is of considerable historic significance in this respect. Its proportions and layout, with a Mansard roof, central stair-lobby, gable chimneys and rear service lean-to, is typical of 18th- and 19th-century farmhouses in the region. Its interior, however, was heavily altered in the 1970s and retains few historic features. The timber-framed external walls and internal partitions are largely hidden by plaster and precise historic analysis is therefore hampered, but the majority of the present building appears to date only from the early 19th century. The northern half of the structure (excluding its roof and lean-to) survives from an older house on the site and appears to date from the late 17th or early 18th century; its walls consist of re-used 16th-century timbers but incorporate primary bracing and cannot therefore pre-date the mid 17th century. More information may well be revealed during any forthcoming remedial work.

The farmyard to the west of the house contains a variety of mid 20th-century block-work buildings of no historic significance, but includes two timber-framed structures of the mid 19th century. A redundant cattle yard is formed by an open-sided shelter shed of 5 bays to the west and another of 3 bays to the east. The 5-bay structure was originally divided by a lateral partition into compartments of two and three bays respectively, and the 3-bay structure appears to have been open to all sides in the manner of a cart-lodge. Both buildings underwent partial conversion for domestic purposes in the 1970s or 1980s and are of limited historic value in consequence. The roadside barn which forms the northern side of the yard is a mid-20th-century brick replacement of an earlier barn shown on 19th-century maps. A brick shed of c 1920 to the south appears to have been designed as a workshop with exceptionally large windows flanking a central entrance but has since been heavily mutilated and is, once again, of limited historic value as a result. A complex of mid 20th-century animal sheds to the south of the cattle yard may incorporate elements of an earlier building on the site but any remains have been altered beyond recognition.

## 3 Documentary and cartographic survey

High House Farm adjoins the southern side of Woodham Road (B1012) in the ecclesiastical parish of Rettendon and the civil parish of Rettendon and Battlesbridge. Its site is conspicuous in the landscape, overlooking the valley of the River Crouch and the hamlet of Battlesbridge to the south, and lies approximately 750 m south-east of the Norman church of All Saints.

The house faces west and is aligned on a north-south axis at right-angles to the nearby road (Fig 1) and is shown as such on a 1778 map of Rettendon (Fig 2). The various houses on the map differ in appearance and seem to be accurate representations of the actual buildings, albeit somewhat stylised, and the depiction of High House reflects its present symmetrical façade with a central door flanked by windows on each side, although the chimney is also central. It is possible that the 1778 house contained a lobby entrance with central chimney, but was altered and partly rebuilt to insert the present central stair lobby in the late 18th or early 19th century. The farm buildings are too stylised to recognise on the map, but lie to the west of the house as at present. The property was owned by one Thomas Turner, along with 107 acres of land.

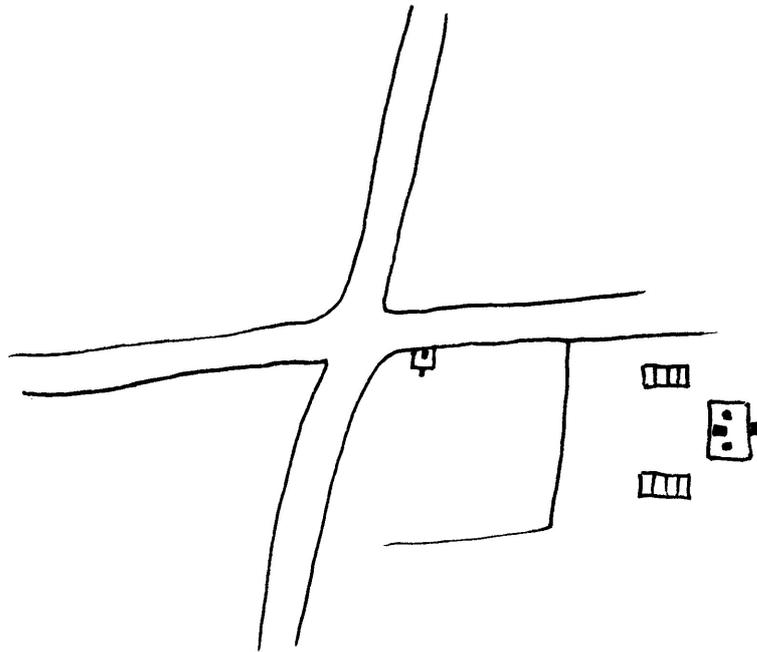


Fig 2 Depiction of High House in 1778 (right), redrawn from a manuscript map (ERO D/DSu P6).

The Rettendon tithe map of 1838 shows a similar situation, with what appears to be a large roadside barn with two south-facing porches and a series of narrow buildings forming the boundary of a yard to the west of the house. The present farm buildings are not shown, but a second apparent barn with a central north-facing porch lies to the south of the yard, and a large pond lies to the north of the farmhouse. The farm was owned by one Thomas Spittey at this date and occupied by Robert Raven.

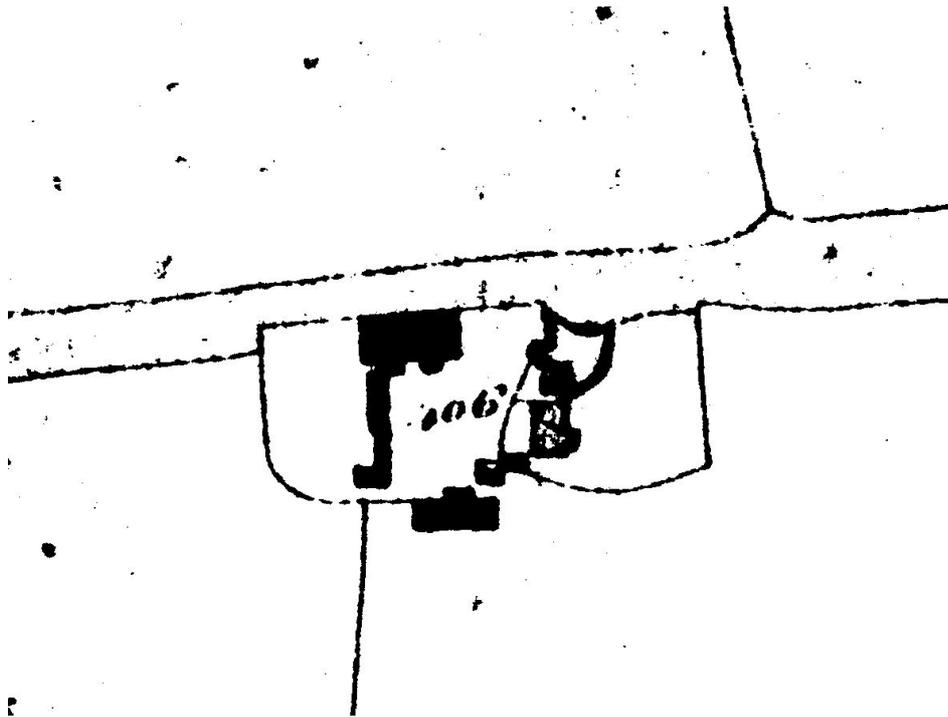


Fig 3 High House as shown on the Rettendon tithe map of 1838 (ERO D/CT287A).

By the time of the First Edition Ordnance Survey of 1875 (Fig 4), the farm layout had altered considerably, and the remaining cart lodge (2) and shelter shed (3) are shown. The northern barn had lost the easternmost of its former two porches and the probable porch had also been removed from the southern barn. The profile of the farmhouse is significantly wider than shown in 1838 and it seems likely that its rear lean-to had been added since the former date.

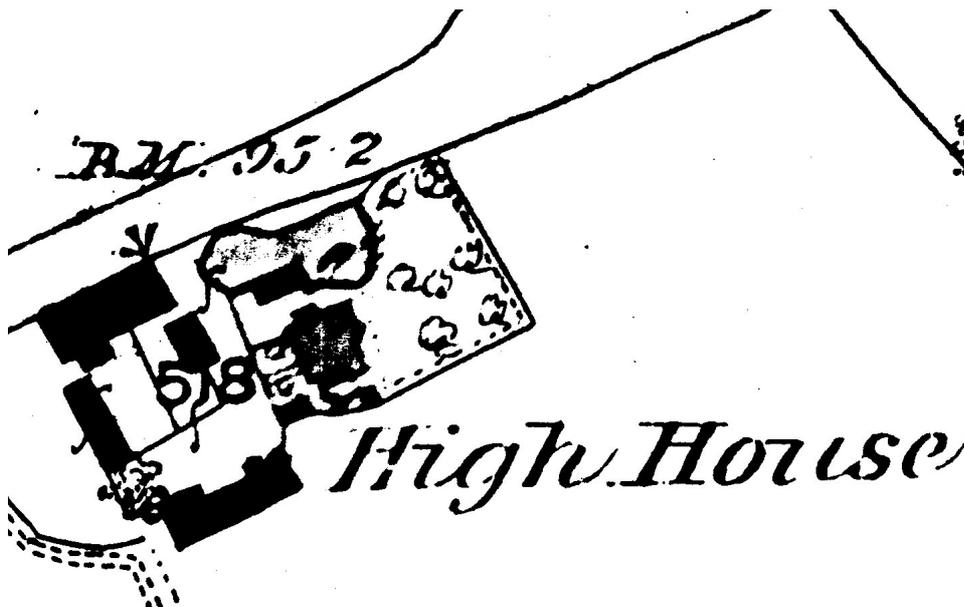


Fig 4 The First Edition Ordnance Survey of 1875.

The Second Edition Ordnance Survey of 1897 (Fig 5 below) shows the same layout as in 1875, although the yard had been sub-divided and the pond reduced in size. The New Series Ordnance Survey of 1922 (Fig 6) shows the addition of the workshop (4) to the south of the yard and the red brick out-house which adjoins the south-eastern corner of the farmhouse.

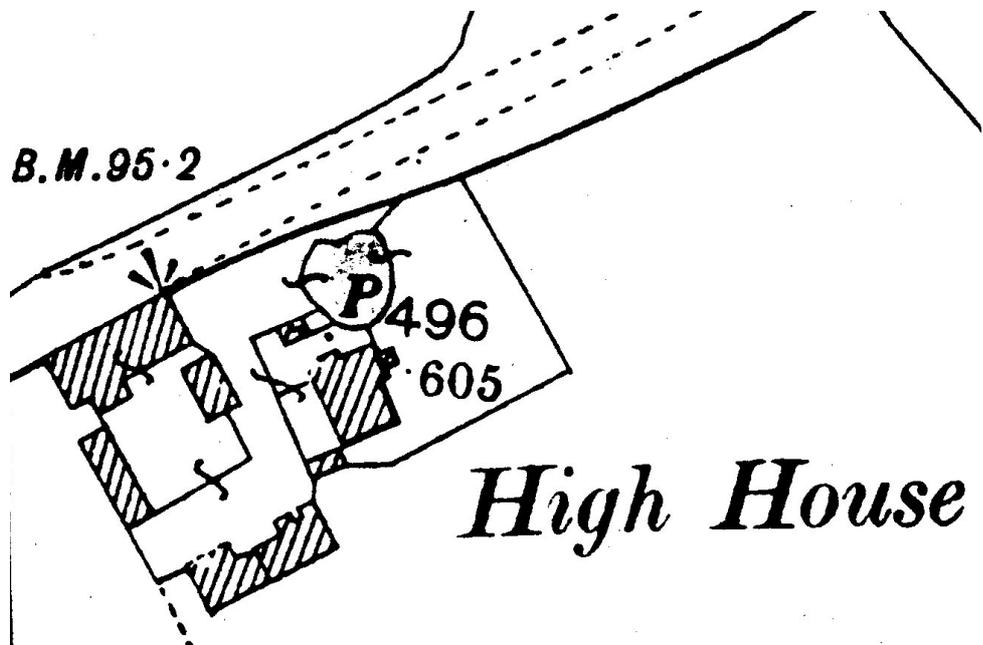


Fig 5 The Second Edition Ordnance Survey of 1897.

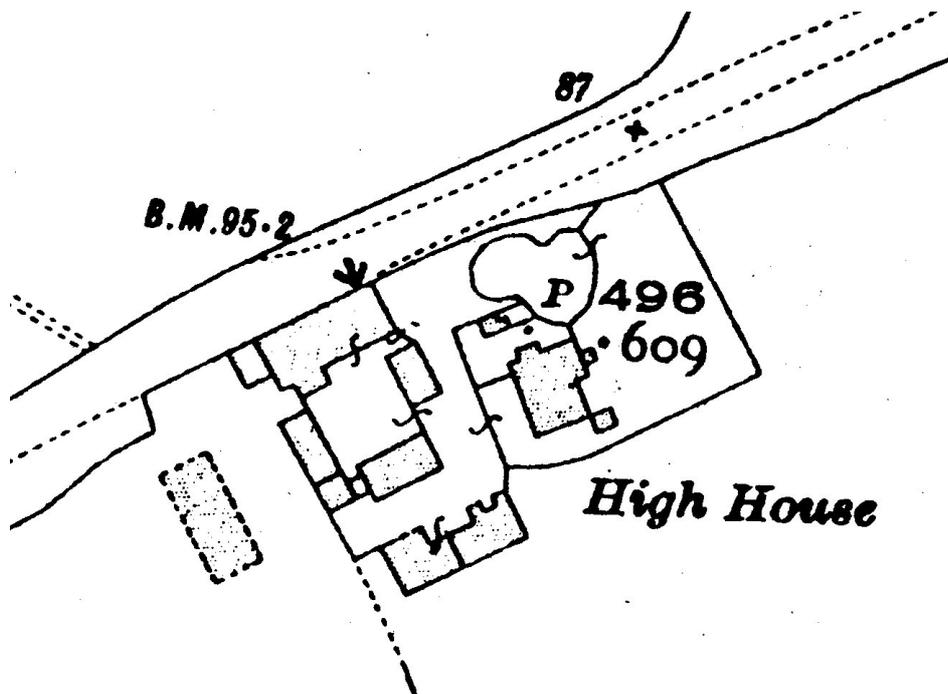


Fig 6 The New Series Ordnance Survey of 1922.

#### 4 Descriptive record

The four historic buildings within the development area, ie the farmhouse, cart lodge, shelter shed and workshop, as numbered 1-4 respectively in Figure 1, are described separately. Each description refers to a measured ground-plan which includes a scale in metres (Figs 7-10). The buildings numbered 5 and 6 in Figure 1 are mid to late 20th-century structures of no historic significance which are included for the purposes of site context but are not separately described below

##### **Building 1. Farmhouse (late 17th to 19th centuries)**

The grade II-listed farmhouse is a timber-framed structure clad in white-painted weatherboarding in the tradition of coastal Essex, and was listed chiefly on the basis of its external appearance. The building extends to 11.6 m in length by 8.2 m in overall width, including its rear lean-to, and contains a central stair lobby between principal rooms heated by gable chimneys in the fashion of the 18th and 19th centuries.

The house was extensively refurbished in the 1970s and stripped of any historic fixtures and fittings, although part of an 18th-century fire surround survives in the northern room behind a blocked Art Deco surround of the 1930s (photo. A2.3). The Mansard roof and the framing of the southern half of the structure date only from the 19th century, as indicated by the poor quality of the framing visible where the weatherboarding has been removed. The fabric of the northern half appears to date from the late 17th or early 18th century; its framing contains more substantial timbers but incorporates primary diagonal bracing and re-used 16th-century material in a manner not found at earlier periods. The fireplaces elsewhere in the house, which probably dated from the 19th century, are missing and appear to have been stolen. More evidence of the building's origin and development may be revealed during forthcoming alterations. The rear lean-to is of mid 19th-century origin as it appears on the Ordnance Survey of 1875 but not the tithe map of 1838 (Figs 4 and 3 respectively). The depiction of the house with a central chimney in 1778 (Fig 2) may reflect a genuine alteration of the late 18th or early 19th centuries, but may not have been accurately observed.

As an example of an Essex farmhouse of traditional weatherboarded appearance, High House retains a degree of historic interest and integrity despite extensive internal alterations in recent decades.

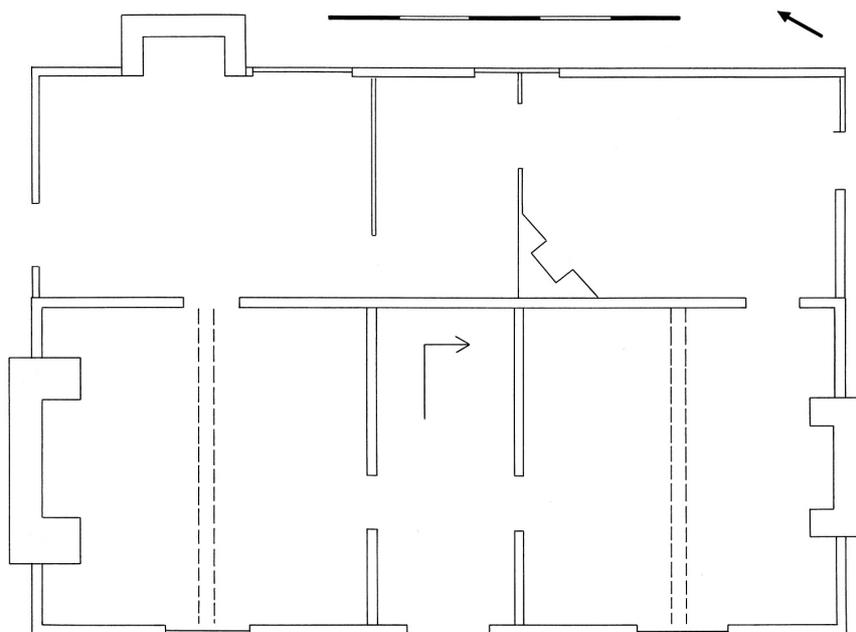


Fig 7 The farmhouse. Ground-plan showing positions of chimneys, windows and doors, together with the central stair opposite the entrance lobby.

### Building 2. Cart lodge (mid 19th century)

Building 2 in Figure 1 is a north-south aligned timber-framed structure of three bays which extends to 8.2 m in length by 3 m in overall width (27 feet by 14) and rises to 2.1 m at its eaves (7 feet). It dates from the mid 19th century, and is shown on the Ordnance Survey of 1875 but not the tithe map of 1838. The building was converted for domestic purposes in the 1970s or 1980s, rendering precise interpretation of its original appearance impossible at the time of inspection. The northern gable was open framed with massive knee-braces between its corner posts and tie-beam, and a similar brace remains visible at the northern end of the western elevation. The southern bay was divided from the others by a missing lateral partition (indicated by empty mortises in the tie-beam), but it is not clear whether this area was enclosed or open. There is evidence of two horizontal rails in the eastern elevation, as shown by notches in the corner posts, but it is unclear whether these were original or later insertions. The structure is shown as a free-standing structure at the entrance to the farmyard on the Ordnance Survey of 1875 and was probably designed as a cart lodge, but may have been subsequently converted into a shelter shed for cattle. This building contains no historic fixtures or fittings and its historic integrity was lost during its recent domestic conversion.

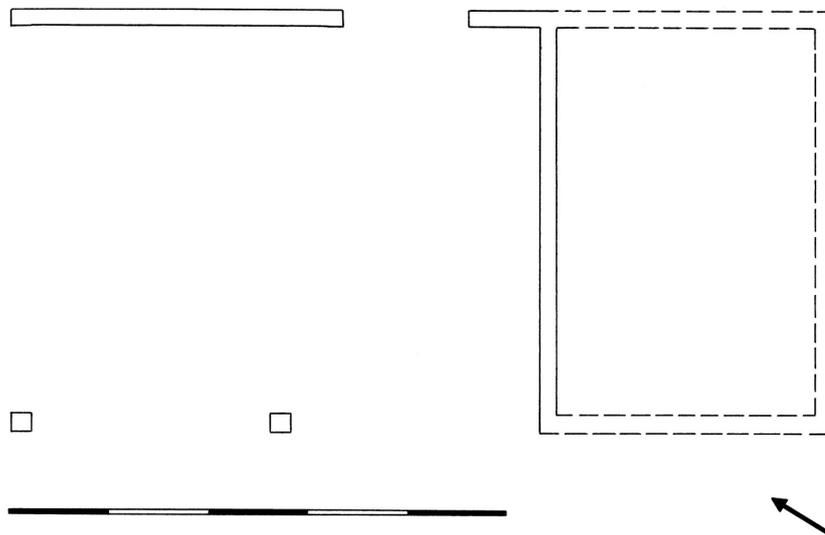


Fig 8 The cart lodge. Ground-plan showing the open arcade to north and west, and the partition which divided the southern bay from the rest. The original structure of the walls indicated by broken lines was lacking or obscured at the time of inspection.

### Building 3. Shelter shed (mid 19th century)

Building 3 lies to the west of the farmyard and consists of a timber-framed structure of five bays on a north-south axis which extends to 13.7 m in length by 4 m in overall width (45 feet by 13.5) and rises to 2.1 m at its eaves (7 feet). Its eastern elevation was open along its entire length, with posts rising to short horizontal rails beneath the roof-plates (and lacking braces), but the two northern bays were divided from the rest by a missing lateral partition (indicated by empty mortises in the tie-beam). The western elevation and gables formed solid walls, but, as with building 2 above, precise analysis is hampered by the building's conversion for domestic purposes in the late 20th century. It contains no historic fixtures or fittings.

The building evidently formed a shelter shed adjoining a probable cattle yard to the south of the barn, and dates from the mid 19th-century refurbishment of the site; it is shown on the Ordnance Survey of 1875 but its position was occupied in 1838 by two smaller buildings on the same alignment. Its internal partition would have related to a dividing fence in the yard which is not shown on the Ordnance Surveys. The historic integrity of this building was lost during its domestic conversion, although it remains of historic interest, along with building 2, insofar as it illustrates the diversification of local farming from arable to mixed dairy production during the mid 19th century.

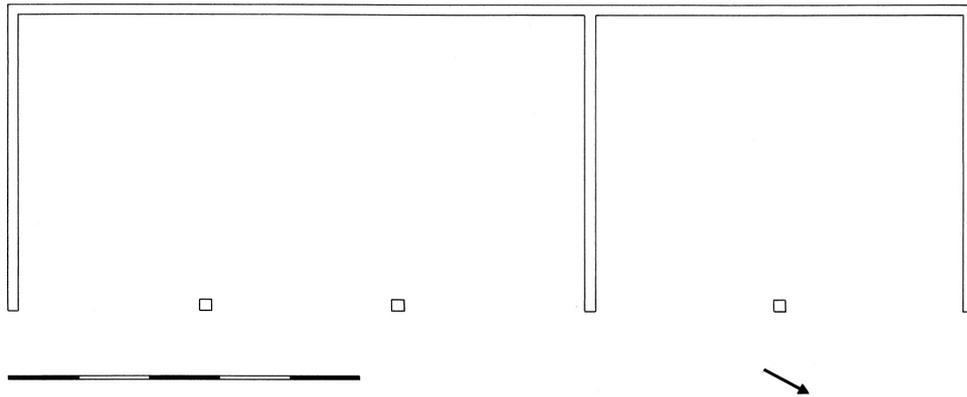


Fig 9 The shelter shed. Ground-plan showing the open arcade to the east and the internal partition dividing the two northern bays from the rest.

#### **Building 4. Workshop (early 20th century)**

Building 4 is a white brick structure which forms the southern side of the cattle yard but faces south on an east-west axis and is adjoined by a modern lean-to shed to the north. It extends to 10 m in length by 5.2 m in overall width (33.5 feet by 17) and rises to 3.3 m (11 feet) at its eaves. The building is shown on the New Series Ordnance Survey of 1922 but not the Second Edition of 1897, and dates from the early 20th century. It originally contained a full-height central entrance and was lit by a large full-height window on both sides, together with small lights in the upper gables. These windows have since been reduced to more normal proportions. This unusual building now operates as a workshop, and may well have been designed as such given its exceptionally large windows of industrial scale. It may also have operated as a machine shed, but contains no relevant fixtures or fittings. It remains of some historic interest as an example of the increasingly mechanised nature of local agriculture during the early 20th century.

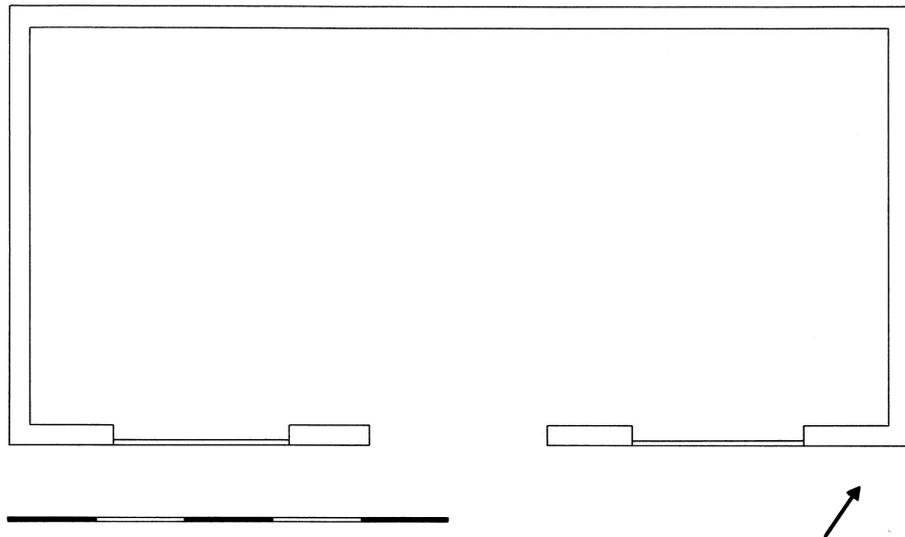


Fig 10 The workshop. Ground-plan showing the central southern entrance flanked by exceptionally tall windows on each side.

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## Appendix 1 (on accompanying CD): full photographic record

### Description of photographs in Appendix 1

#### *Photo no.*

- 1 General view of site from Woodham Road to north-west.
- 2 General view of site from Woodham Road to west, showing roadside barn (5) to right.
- 3 Farmhouse. Exterior from north-west, showing central entrance.
- 4 Farmhouse. Exterior from south, showing modern gable lean-to.
- 5 Farmhouse. Exterior from north-east, showing profile of rear lean-to.
- 6 Farmhouse. Exterior from north showing rear elevation (access restricted).
- 7 Farmhouse. Exterior of southern gable, showing modern additions.
- 8 Farmhouse. Exterior of southern gable, showing re-used timber beneath weatherboarding.
- 9 Farmhouse. Exterior of southern gable, showing detail of weatherboarding.
- 10 Farmhouse. Internal northern gable, showing altered 18th-century fireplace.
- 11 Farmhouse. Detail of altered 18th-century fireplace in northern room.
- 12 Farmhouse. Interior rear wall of northern room, showing door to lean-to.
- 13 Farmhouse. Interior of northern room, showing door to entrance lobby.
- 14 Farmhouse. Interior of northern room, showing front elevation.
- 15 Farmhouse. Modern stair in entrance lobby from south-west.
- 16 Farmhouse. Interior of central entrance door from north-east.
- 17 Farmhouse. Internal southern gable, showing modern fireplace.
- 18 Farmhouse. Interior rear wall of southern room, showing door to lean-to.
- 19 Farmhouse. Interior of southern room, showing door to entrance lobby.
- 20 Farmhouse. Interior of southern room, showing front elevation.
- 21 Farmhouse. Interior of rear lean-to, showing door to northern room to left.
- 22 Farmhouse. Detail of re-used primary-braced studs in rear wall of northern room.
- 23 Farmhouse. Internal first-floor northern gable, showing removed fireplace.
- 24 Farmhouse. Northern end of first-floor axial joist. Chamfer stops short of chimney.
- 25 Farmhouse. Internal first-floor southern gable, showing removed fireplace.
- 26 Farmhouse. Northern attic room from south.
- 27 Farmhouse. Southern attic room from north.
- 28 Farmhouse. Detail of roof apex from north, showing ridge-board and re-used rafters.
- 29 Cart lodge. Exterior from north-east, showing barn (5) to right.
- 30 Cart lodge. Exterior from west, showing farmhouse in rear.
- 31 Cart lodge. Exterior from north-east, showing half-hung entrance door.
- 32 Cart lodge. Exterior of northern gable, showing massive corner brackets.
- 33 Cart lodge. Exterior from north-west, showing brackets to western elevation.
- 34 Cart lodge. Exterior of western elevation.
- 35 Cart lodge. Exterior from south.
- 36 Cart lodge. Interior of northern gable, showing corner brackets.
- 37 Cart lodge. Interior of northern room, showing rendered eastern elevation.
- 38 Cart lodge. Interior of southern room, showing western elevation and partition mortises in ceiling.
- 39 Detail of original partition mortises in ceiling of southern room.
- 40 Cart lodge. Interior of southern room from north.
- 41 Cart lodge. Roof structure, showing hipped southern gable to right.
- 42 Shelter shed. Exterior from yard to north-east.

- 43 Shelter shed. Exterior, showing former open arcade of eastern elevation.
- 44 Shelter shed. Exterior from south-east, showing open arcade with workshop to right.
- 45 Shelter shed. Exterior from south-west, showing southern gable.
- 46 Shelter shed. Interior, showing post of open arcade with southern gable to right.
- 47 Shelter shed. Interior, showing detail of partition mortises in tie-beam soffit.
- 48 Shelter shed. Interior of rear western wall, showing lack of arcade posts.
- 49 Shelter shed. Interior from northern gable, showing waney tie-beam.
- 50 Workshop. Exterior from south-east showing blocked tall windows to south.
- 51 Workshop. Exterior from south-west, showing blocked windows to right.
- 52 Workshop. Exterior of southern elevation with blocked tall windows and central door.
- 53 Workshop. Detail of blocked tall window to left of entrance in southern elevation.
- 54 Workshop. Interior from west, showing entrance to right.
- 55 Workshop. Interior from east showing entrance to left.
- 56 Workshop. Interior of southern façade from west.
- 57 Workshop. Interior of southern façade, showing blocked tall window to right of entrance.
- 58 Workshop. Interior of southern façade, showing blocked tall window to left of entrance.
- 59 Workshop. Exterior from north-west, showing modern lean-to.
- 60 Barn. Exterior from yard to south.
- 61 Barn. Interior from west, showing mid 20th-century construction.
- 62 Animal sheds to south of site viewed from south-east with barn to right.
- 63 Animal sheds to south of site viewed from south (eastern section).
- 64 Animal sheds to south of site viewed from south (western section).

## Appendix 2: selected printed photographs



A2.1 General view of site from Woodham Road to north-west, showing farmhouse with 20th-century roadside barn (5) to right. Note commanding view of valley to south.



A2.2 Farmhouse. Exterior from north-west, showing central entrance with probable 18th-century section to left and 19th-century section to right.



A2.3 Farmhouse. Internal northern gable, showing altered 18th-century fireplace on ground floor.



A2.4 Cart lodge. Exterior from north-west, showing massive brackets to western elevation and (left) to northern gable.



A2.5 Cart lodge. Interior of southern room, showing western elevation with empty partition mortises in tie-beam above.



A2.6 Shelter shed. Exterior, showing former open arcade of eastern elevation.



A2.7 Shelter shed. Interior, showing southernmost post of open arcade to left with southern gable to right.



A2.8 Workshop. Exterior from south-east, showing blocked tall windows to right and left of central entrance.



A2.9 Workshop. Interior from west, showing entrance to right.



A2.10 Barn. Exterior from yard to south, showing corner of cart lodge to right.



A2.11 Barn. Interior from west, showing mid 20th-century construction.



A2.12 20th-century complex of block-work animal sheds to south of site viewed from south-east, with barn to right.

# Essex Historic Environment Record/ Essex Archaeology and History

## Summary sheet

<b>Site address:</b> High House Farm, Woodham Road, Battlesbridge, Chelmsford, Essex	
<b>Parish:</b> Rettendon	<b>District:</b> Chelmsford
<b>NGR:</b> TQ 776 955	<b>Site code:</b> Chelmsford Museum accession code - 2008.34 HEM site code - REHH07
<b>Type of work:</b> Building recording	<b>Site director/group:</b> Colchester Archaeological Trust
<b>Date of work:</b> 29th November 2007	<b>Size of area investigated:</b>
<b>Location of finds/curating museum:</b> Chelmsford Museum	<b>Funding source:</b> Churchgate Project Management Ltd
<b>Further seasons anticipated?</b> No	<b>Related EHER and UAD nos:</b>
<b>Final report:</b> CAT Report 470	
<b>Periods represented:</b> late 17th, 18th, 19th centuries and modern	
<p><b>Summary of fieldwork results:</b></p> <p><i>The weatherboarded exterior of the farmhouse at High House Farm is highly characteristic of coastal Essex and is of considerable historic significance in this respect. Its proportions and layout, with a Mansard roof, central stair-passage, gable chimneys and rear service lean-to is typical of 18th- and early 19th-century farmhouses in the region. Its interior, however, was heavily altered in the 1970s and retains few historic features. The timber-framed external walls and internal partitions are largely hidden by plaster and precise historic analysis is therefore hampered, but the majority of the present building appears to date only from the early 19th century. The northern half of the structure (excluding its roof and lean-to) survives from an older house on the site and appears to date from the late 17th or early 18th century; its walls consist of re-used 16th-century timbers but incorporate primary bracing and cannot therefore pre-date the mid 17th century. More information may well be revealed during any forthcoming remedial work.</i></p> <p><i>The farmyard to the west of the house contains a variety of mid 20th-century block-work buildings of no historic significance, but includes two timber-framed structures of the mid 19th century. A redundant cattle yard is formed by an open-sided shelter shed of 5 bays to the west and another of 3 bays to the east. The 5-bay structure was originally divided by a lateral partition into compartments of two and three bays respectively, and the 3-bay structure appears to have been open to all sides in the manner of a cart lodge or milking shelter. Both buildings underwent partial conversion for domestic purposes in the 1970s or 1980s (ostensibly) and are of limited historic value in consequence. The roadside barn which forms the northern side of the yard is a mid 20th-century brick replacement of an earlier barn shown on 19th-century maps. A brick shed of c 1920 to the south appears to have been designed as a machine shed or workshop with exceptionally large windows flanking a central entrance, but the building has been heavily mutilated and is, once again, of limited historic value as a result. A detached building to the south of the cattle yard, which may have been a stable, is shown on early 20th-century maps but has been rebuilt or altered beyond recognition.</i></p>	
<b>Previous summaries/reports:</b> None	
<b>Keywords:</b> post-medieval, farmhouse, building recording	<b>Significance:</b> neg
<b>Author of summary:</b> Leigh Alston	<b>Date of summary:</b> April 2008