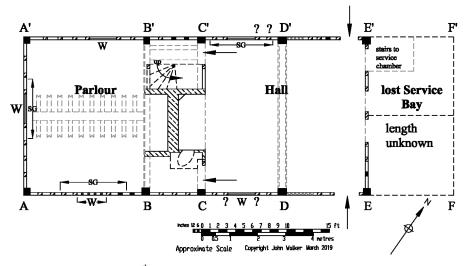
Heritage Report on Moss Farmhouse Tannington Rd, Worlingworth, Suffolk IP13 7LT





Original 16th century ground plan of Moss Farmhouse

By John Walker Vernacular Buildings Historian April 2019

Contents

19

Annex 2

Com	
Page	
3	Introduction
3	Original layout of the house
5	Hall on the ground floor
7	Parlour and chimney bay on ground floor
9	Hall chamber on first floor
10	Parlour chamber and chimney bay on first floor
12	Roof
13	Timber framing and date of building
13	Summary
14	Terminology for Timber-Framed Buildings
	Drawings
15	Drawing 1 Reconstruction of ground and first floor plan as built in 16th Century of Moss Farmhouse, Tannington Rd, Worlingworth, Suffolk IP13 7LT
16	Drawing 2 Reconstruction of front wall and west gable as built in 16th Century of Moss Farmhouse, Tannington Rd, Worlingworth, Suffolk IP13 7LT
17	Drawing 3 Ground and first floor plan showing later partitions present today of Moss Farmhouse, Tannington Rd, Worlingworth, Suffolk IP13 7LT
18	Annex 1 Historic England Listing for Moss Farmhouse

2 06/04/2019

Wedged Partitions in Historic Timber Framed Buildings

Heritage Report on Moss Farmhouse, Tannington Rd, Worlingworth, Suffolk IP13 7LT

Map Ref: TM 238 675



Fig 1: Moss Farmhouse from the east in March 2019

This report provides an historic analysis at English Heritage (2006) Level 3 of the fabric of Moss Farmhouse, Worlingworth, Suffolk IP13 7LT. It analyses only the 16th century farmhouse and does not consider the later outshot along the rear of the property or include any documentary or map evidence of ownership or development.

Introduction

Moss Farmhouse is a timber framed building facing south east, but for this report is assumed to face south and that the building runs east to west. It is listed as sixteenth and seventeenth century, developed in two phases (Annex 1). It is in fact a single build, of the second half of the 16th century, originally as a three cell, two storey, floored farmhouse of the standard type found in north Suffolk, but has lost one bay from its east end. Subsequently it was divided into two cottages in the late 19th/early 20th century. The south west principal corner post has partially collapsed causing both the front wall left of the chimney and the west gable to partially collapse. The left hand cottage has been stripped of its later fitments, exposing the surviving timber frame. The right hand half is lived in and not all of its the timber frame is exposed.

A reconstruction of the 16th century layout of the house is shown in Drawing 1 and a reconstruction of the front elevation and west gable in Drawing 2 on pages 15 and 16. Drawing 3 shows the later partitions in the eastern half on page 17.

Original layout of the house

In north Suffolk the standard 16th/early 17th century farmhouse is a two storey in-line building which consisted of a two bay hall flanked at one end, the low end, by one or two unheated service rooms and at the other end, the high end, by a parlour, all with chambers above (Figs 2 & 3). The entrance to the building

Fig 2: Thurstons, Rendham, Suffolk An example of a high end stack house

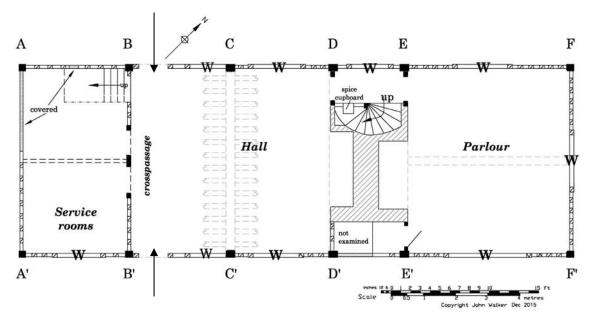


Fig 3: Ground plan of Thurstons, Rendham, Suffolk an example of the typical layout of a north Suffolk 16th century post-medieval farmhouse

is by opposed doors at the service end of the hall, forming what is called a cross-entry or crosspassage, while between the hall and parlour is a chimney stack which provides fireplaces that heat both the hall and the parlour on the ground floor, plus usually just one fireplace on the first floor which heated the parlour chamber. The chamber over the hall was rarely heated in the 16th century. The hall fireplace was a working fireplace usually with a brick oven, with a smaller fireplace in the parlour. The first floor was usually accessed by a circular stairs on the side of the chimney stack, but often there is also stairs off the cross-entry to the service chamber. The plan is still medieval but is now heated by a chimney stack at the high end of the hall and with a chamber over the hall. These are often called high end stack post medieval houses.

Moss farmhouse had this layout (Fig 4). The left hand section was the parlour, and the right hand section east of the chimney stack was the hall, each with a single chamber above. The service end has been lost. All the principal posts in Moss Farmhouse are visible, but few of the studs are visible or have been removed. Reconstructing the layout is largely dependent on the pegs in the midrails, principal joists, wallplates and tiebeams. These indicate the position of the original studs and braces.

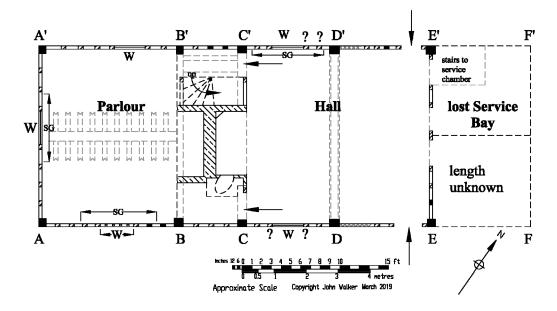


Fig 4: Original ground plan of Moss Farmhouse, Worlingworth in 16th century

Hall on the ground floor

In the east end wall of the hall, now the east gable, only one of the original studs survives (EE´ drawing 1a). However pegs in the midrail indicate that there were gaps for three doors in the wall, two in the middle which would have led into two service rooms in the lost right hand bay. The third was against the rear wall, and doors in this position are usually for the stairs to the chamber over the service rooms (Fig 5). Similarly gaps in the pegs in the midrails of the front and rear walls show there were originally doors in these walls against the service end of the hall (EE´ in Drawing 1a), now the east end of the house, forming the cross-entry. One interesting aspect here is that the rear door is smaller than the front door, something has been noted elsewhere, but is not common. The present front door to the right hand cottage is more or less in the position of the 16th century front door.



Fig 5: North-east corner of hall on ground floor (left the north cross entry door; right of principal post E' the doors to the stair & service end)

The hall is of two bays with the chimney stack at the west end (Fig 4). The hall is about 5.7m (18ft 8in) long by 5.6m (18½ft) wide. The bays are almost equal, the east bay being about 150mm (6in) larger than the west bay. On the ground floor only one original stud definitely survives in the side walls of the hall, the in the rear wall of the east bay (drawing 1a). The rest of the ground floor walls are plastered over and some studs may still be in situ under the plaster. Gaps in the pegs indicate that the house was built with a window in the front wall of the west bay of the hall on the ground

floor with a larger one in the rear north wall of the bay. For the latter it is possible to see this has a groove above in the midrail for a sliding shutter. Similar grooves are visible elsewhere over the windows as marked on drawing 1, and probably most, but not all, of the windows had a sliding shutter.

The large central binding joist in the centre of the hall (DD' drawing 1a) is visible but the common joists are plastered over and none are visible (Fig 6). It is therefore not possible to see if there is an opening in the ceiling for an original set of stairs within the hall. Such stairs are unlikely; I have



Fig 6: Hall on ground floor looking south (modern window replaces a narrower window)

06/04/2019 5



Fig 7: Hall fireplace with evidence of an oven to left and corbelling for the stairs to the right

never seen stairs within the hall of buildings of this type. In Moss Farmhouse later stairs have been inserted against the north wall of the west bay of the hall, and are clearly a later addition as they block an original window in the north wall. Also the sawn edge of the floor boards, cut to insert the stairs, is visible on the south side of the stairs (drawing 3a).

The hall fireplace has retained its original shape, but the brickwork around it has been subject to considerable rebuilding, with the original bressumer having been removed and replaced by an iron girder (Fig 7). There is evidence of a brick oven on the south side of the fireplace, now completely removed, and of corbelling on the north side of the opening for a circular stairs to the parlour chamber. To the south of the fireplace there is now a later brick wall which extends to the front wall, with a single peg in the bridging joist above it (Fig 7), suggesting a door into the lobby on the south side of the fireplace (CC' in drawing 1a). This area was probably just storage space, not an entrance to the parlour as it would have been partly blocked by the brick oven. To the north of the fireplace pegs in the principal post C' indicate there was an arched headed doorway through into the parlour (Fig 8). This is now blocked by the later stairs.



Fig 8: East face of principal post C' with pegs for an arched headed door



Fig 9: Parlour looking south to front wall

Parlour and chimney bay on ground floor

All the later fitments have been removed from this area, exposing the surviving timber framing (Fig 9). The parlour is 4.2m (13¾ft) long by 5.6m (18½ft) wide. All the principal joists, midrails and principal posts survive, as do most of the studs in the rear wall of the chimney bay (Fig 10). No studs survive in the rear wall of the parlour or the west gable, while in the front wall two original studs remain but none in the front wall of the chimney bay, the latter probably removed when a door was inserted for the left hand cottage. With two exceptions all the common ceiling joists remain, along with the central east-west principal joist.

The parlour was lit by three windows, one in each external wall (drawing 1a). Those in the west gable and the front wall have grooves over them in the midrail for sliding shutters. The midrail over the rear window is partly obscured, and it is not known if this too had a sliding shutter. The soffit of the midrail over the front window is visible and has small rectangular mortices 64 by 38mm (2½ by ½in) for four mullions. Such mortices were usually for moulded mullions. It is not possible to say if the window was glazed as insufficient of the window survives, but probably not as the window above it in the parlour chamber on the first floor has mortices for unglazed diamond mullions.



Fig 10: Rear wall of chimney bay showing ground and first floor studs (blocked door is a later insertion)

The timber framed ceiling is complete apart from the two common rafters immediately in front of the fireplace in the southern half of the ceiling, which looks as if an opening was created for stairs at some stage, though this is not a good position for any stairs (Fig 11). Apart from this, there are no openings in the ceiling for stairs. The common joists are 140mm by 102mm (5½ by 4in), laid on their largest side, and finished square with no chamfers, something which usually indicates that the ceiling was plastered over from the start and the common joists not visible.

06/04/2019 7



Fig 11: Parlour fireplace with immediately in front of it two cut common joists.

The original fireplace has survived intact, complete with its bressumer (Fig 11). Unusually it is the same size as the hall fireplace. Usually it is smaller as in Thurstons in Figure 3. There is a later stairs now occupying the whole area to the north of the fireplace (Fig 12), but originally there would have been a circular stairs against the fireplace - as evidenced by the corbelling in the hall fireplace (Fig 7) - that would have occupied about half the space, leaving room for an entrance passageway between the hall and parlour as at Thurstons (Fig 3). Mortices in the binding joist BB' show there was a floor over where this passage would have been (Fig 13).



Fig 12: Stairs now in lobby on north side of fireplace in the chimney bay



Fig 13: Looking west at east face of bridging joist BB' showing mortices for joists over lobby in chimney bay on north side of chimney stack

There would have been a partition either side of the fireplace under the binding joist in truss BB', providing a partition between the parlour and the stair lobby to the north of the fireplace and between the parlour and the front lobby to the south (Fig 11). However there are no mortices in the binding joist (BB') over the fireplace for any studs, but this joist is chamfered on the parlour side and finished square on the other, east side (Fig 13). If there had not originally been a partition under this joist, it would have been chamfered on both sides. Possible confirmation for the partition is that the north principal post B' has a mortice on it south face for a door head, but this is not pegged and may be a later alteration. The original partition must have been wedged as shown in Annex 2. Wedged partitions are found around many 16th and early 17th century fireplaces in Suffolk, probably

because the carpenters building the houses were unsure about the size the bricklayer would build the chimney. In the hall of Moss Farmhouse there is a peg for a stud in the binding joist CC' on the east side of chimney stack (Fig 7), so the problem in the parlour may have been uncertainty over the size of the parlour fireplace as the one built is larger than usually found in 16th century parlours.

Hall chamber on first floor

Today this space is divided into a number of rooms, but was originally a single two bay room over the hall. Three studs survive in the east wall and one in the north wall of the west bay. In the east bay the framing is covered on the north wall and part of the south wall (drawing 1b). The open truss DD' has braces to the its chambered tiebeam – the north one is missing – as does the closed truss at the east end of the hall chamber – here the north one as been partly removed (Figs 14 & 15). The chamber was lit by windows in the west bay, a large one in the south wall and a small one in the north wall, both with grooves for sliding shutters. The chamber was originally open to the roof, but now has a plastered ceiling.



Fig 14: West face of cambered tiebeam over east gable EE' - north end to the left, south to the right

The hall chamber was probably entered from the service chamber by a door in the middle of east wall. There is a wider space between the two central studs in this wall, just about enough for a door, but more importantly the tiebeam is heavily cambered rising about 30cm (a foot) in the centre to provide greater height over the door (Fig 14). The first floor is relatively low, only about 1.55m (5ft 1in) from the floor to the soffit of the straight tiebeam in truss BB'. The tiebeam of the open truss in the centre of the hall chamber is also heavily cambered to allow easier access between the two parts of the room (Fig 15).



Fig 15: West face of tiebeam on truss DD' - south end to the left and north to the right

It is not known if there was an original fireplace heating the hall chamber at its west end as the wall is plastered over. It was unusual, but not unknown, for the hall chamber to have an original fireplace.

There was a door to the south of the chimney stack which today gives access from the hall chamber to the parlour chamber, but which originally probably only gave access to a small unlit lobby beside the chimney stack with no access to the parlour chamber beyond – see below. There was no door to the north of the fireplace. Pegs in the tiebeam and a mortice in the north post C' for an arch brace



Fig 16: West face of north end tiebeam and principal post C' in chimney bay - pegs picked out in white

show that there were three studs here with an arch brace rising across them from the north post C' (Fig 16). This is an unusual feature as most houses of this type have a door in this position so that the hall chamber could also be entered directly from the stairs behind the chimney stack. A later door appears to have been inserted and then subsequently blocked.

Parlour chamber and chimney bay on first floor



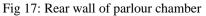




Fig 18: Front wall of parlour chamber

As on the ground floor all the later fitments have been removed from this area exposing the timber framing (Figs 17 & 18). All the wallplates, tiebeams and principal posts survive in this area and all the studs survive in situ in the rear (north) wall (Fig 17), but none elsewhere, apart from the lower part of front wall studs which now support the ground floor ceiling joists (Figs 9 & 19). All three external walls had arch braces rising from the west end principal corner posts A and A´ (drawing 2b); only the brace in the north wall survives. All of these were, or are, half the thickness of the studs and halved across the internal face of the studs, and thus were not visible externally. The room was originally open to the roof.

The parlour chamber was lit by three windows, one in each wall (drawing 1b). The soffit of the wallplate is accessible over the front wall window showing this had four diamond mullions and was



Fig 19: Midrail in front wall of parlour where pegs & the surviving lower stubs of the first floor stude show that the first floor window was not directly over the ground floor window

unglazed. Most likely the other two windows also had diamond mullions. The front and west windows have grooves for sliding shutters, but not that in the north wall. One interesting feature is that the first floor windows in the north and south walls of the parlour chamber are not directly over the ground floor windows. That in the north wall is offset to the west of the one below in the parlour, while that in the front wall is offset about 127mm (5in) to the east (drawing 2a & Fig 19). Also the first floor front window in the west bay of the hall chamber is larger than that below in the hall (drawing 2a). This lack of symmetry in the positioning and size of windows has been noted in a number of 16th century houses, though little has been published on it.¹

The parlour chamber was originally unheated. A Victorian fireplace has been inserted into the chimney stack (Fig 20). The room was accessed via stairs on the north side of the stack in the chimney bay, entry being somewhat restricted by the low tiebeam BB', which is why it has been cut out north



Fig 20: East side of parlour chamber (Victorian fireplace at right hand end of chimney stack)

of the chimney stack (Fig 20). There are no mortices in the tiebeam to the south of the chimney stack, but again there would have been a wedged partition under the tiebeam with a door at the north end against principal post B', while south of the chimney stack there could have been a solid stud partition with no access to or from the hall chamber. If so, it would mean that the parlour chamber had no access to the rest of the first floor because, as described above, there was no original door north of the chimney stack in truss CC' to give the hall chamber access to the stair lobby and parlour chamber. This would mean that the occupier of the parlour also controlled the parlour chamber, providing a separate apartment at the west end of the house. It was not unusual for 16th and early 17th century houses to be divided on the first floor, with no access at first floor level between the two ends of the house.

Roof





Fig 21: West gable AA

Fig 22: Truss BB' looking east







Fig 23: Truss CC' looking west

Fig 24: Open truss DD'

Fig 25: East gable EE'

The house has an East Anglian queenpost roof with jowled queenposts supporting a square set side purlin (drawing 2b & Figs 21-25). The roof is continuous over the whole house showing that the building is a single build. This is confirmed by the wallplates which are also continuous over both parts. The roof is largely complete including most of the braces to the collars and purlins, and a large proportion of the original rafters. The roof was not examined in detail as it was not very accessable over the eastern section above the hall chamber. The queenposts rising from tiebeam BB' on the parlour chamber side of the chimney stack also have braces rising to the collar, as have those on the open truss DD' in the centre of the hall chamber and the east end truss EE'. The south queenpost on tiebeam BB' is an interesting twisted shape suggesting that the parlour chamber was not an important room (Fig 26). At this time the best bed tended to be on the ground floor in the parlour.



Fig 26: South queenpost on truss BB'



Fig 26: Edged halved and bridled scarf joint in south front wall east of post C.

Timber framing and date of building

The house was probably built in the third quarter or the 16th century or shortly after. The building has close studding on the ground floor and wider spaced studs on the first floor with secondary arch bracing in the side walls (drawing 2). These braces, as usual in Suffolk until the later 17th century, are half the thickness of the studs and halved across the internal face of the studs, and thus only visible internally; unfortunately this feature of being visible only internally is not datable in north Suffolk. The principal posts are jowled (Figs 14 & 16), that is they swell out at the top to form a threeway joint between the post, wallplate and tiebeam. This is a feature that continued in use in houses until at least the late 17th century. The common joists are laid on their largest side, a feature that continued into the 17th century when joists began to be laid on their narrowest edge. Also the common joists are tenoned into the main joists with soffit tenons (Fig 13), again not a datable feature. The scarf joint used in the wallplates is a short edged halved and bridled scarf joint (Fig 26). This is the late medieval scarf joint which continued in use well into the 17th century in north Suffolk. The windows were probably not glazed, suggesting it was built before 1600 by which time I would expect a house of this standard to be glazed. The East Anglian queenpost roof appeared in north Suffolk in the late 14th century and continued into the opening decades of the 17th century. The open hall of medieval houses started to be replaced by fireplaces and floored halls in the first half of the 16th century, but particularly after 1550, and by around 1580 they also tended to be built with attics. These factors suggest it was built in the second half of the 16th century, probably in the third quarter.

Summary

Moss Farmhouse started life as an almost standard north Suffolk post-medieval 3-cell farmhouse, all in line under a continuous East Anglian queenpost roof, fully floored with chambers above, but no attic. It has lost its service bay from the east end and, with the exception of parts of the rear north wall, most of its original studs. An interesting aspect of the house is that the parlour and parlour chamber formed a separate apartment probably with no access at first floor level to the hall chamber.

Note

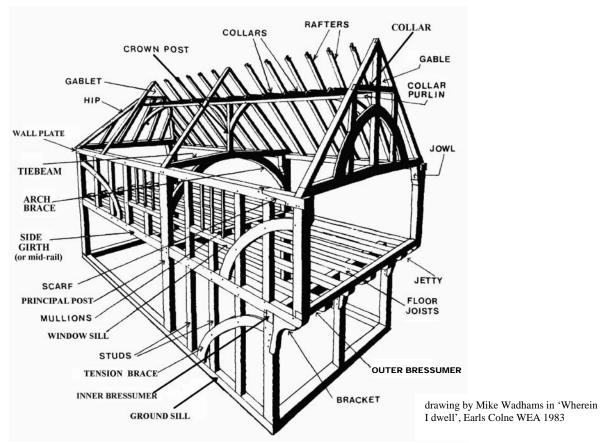
Walker, John: Willingale, Dukes Farmhouse: an important 16th century transitional house, Essex Archaeology & History 31, 2000 pp 249-52

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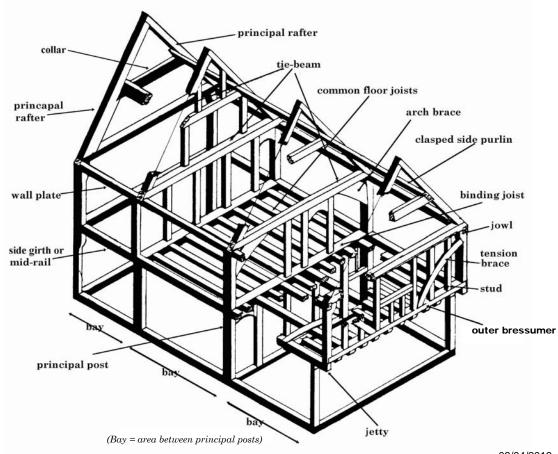
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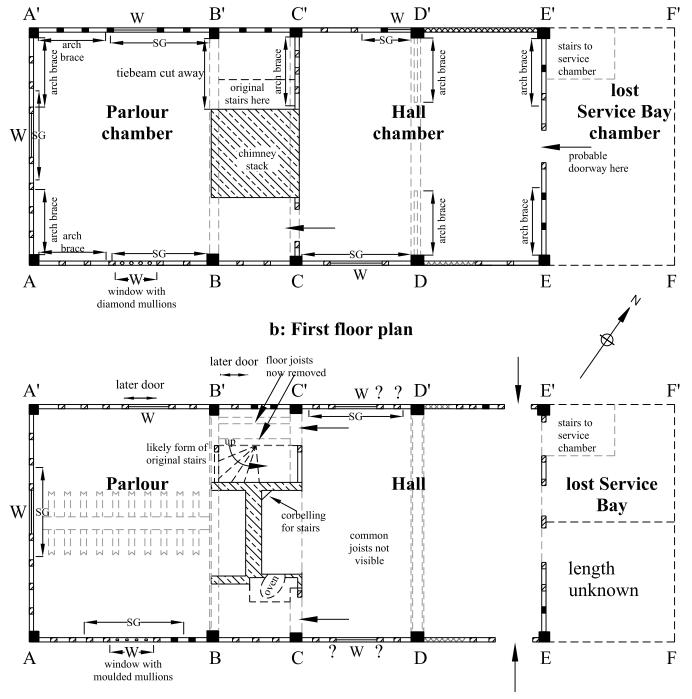
TERMINOLOGY FOR TIMBER FRAMED BUILDINGS

Medieval Crosswing with crown post roof



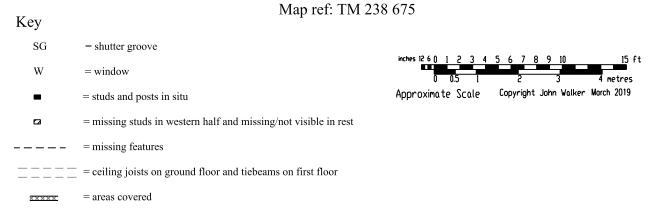
Post Medieval Crosswing with side purlin roof with diminished principal rafters

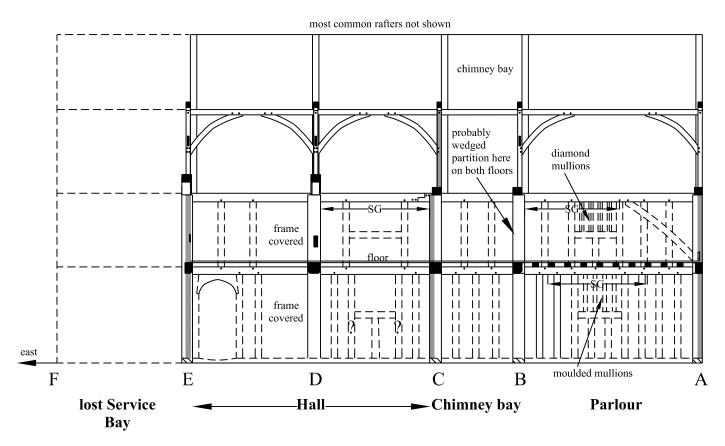




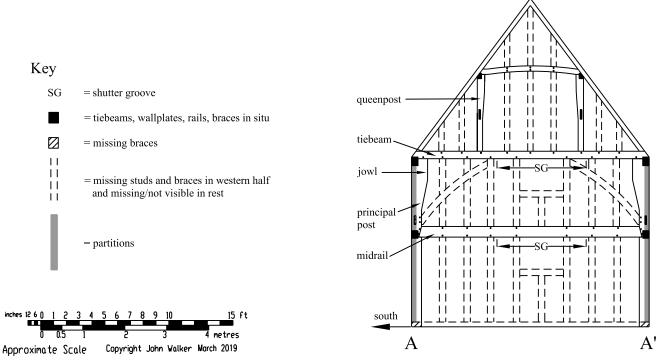
a: Ground floor plan

Drawing 1 Reconstruction of ground and first floor plan as built in 16th Century of Moss Farmhouse, Tannington Rd, Worlingworth, Suffolk IP13 7LT





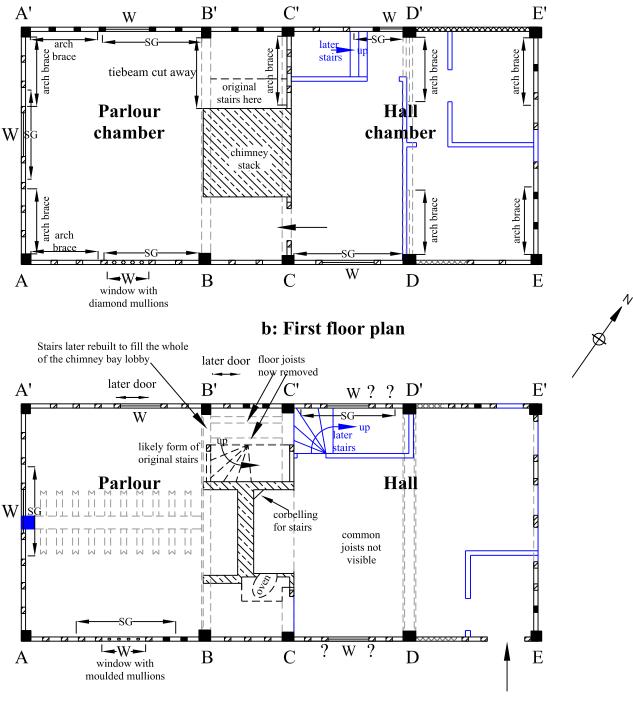
a: Reconstruction of south front wall viewed internally



b: Reconstruction of west gable AA' viewed internally

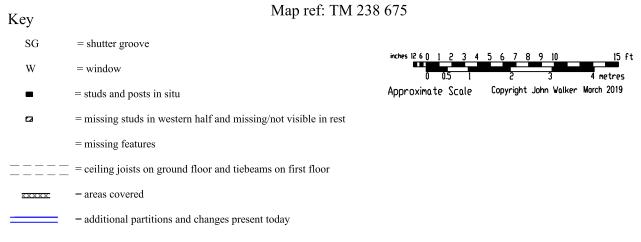
Drawing 2
Reconstruction of front wall and west gable as built in 16th Century of Moss Farmhouse, Tannington Rd, Worlingworth, Suffolk IP13 7LT

Map ref: TM 238 675



a: Ground floor plan

Drawing 3 Ground and first floor plan showing later partitions present today of Moss Farmhouse, Tannington Rd, Worlingworth, Suffolk IP13 7LT



Annex 1



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@ Mr Hubert Smith

IoE Number: 281390

Location: MOSS FARMHOUSE,

WORLINGWORTH, MID SUFFOLK, SUFFOLK

Photographer: Mr Hubert Smith
Date Photographed: 28 September 2004
Date listed: 23 June 1988
Date of last amendment: 23 June 1988

Grade II

The Images of England website consists of images of listed buildings based on the statutory list as it was in 2001 and does not incorporate subsequent amendments to the list. For the statutory list and information on the current listed status of individual buildings please go to The National Heritage List for England.

WORLINGWORTH

TM 26 NW 5/109 Moss Farmhouse

WORLINGWORTH TM 26 NW 5/109 Moss Farmhouse - II Former farmhouse, now 2 cottages. Late C16 and C17. Timber framed and roughcast-rendered with a pantiled roof. 2 storeys. 2-cell form. 3 windows, C20 metal casements. 2 mid C20 doors. Internal stack. Colourwashed brick and slated rear lean-to. 2-bay right hand cell has heavy irregular tie beams supporting a queen-post roof; some exposed studding on upper floor. Bridging beam in ceiling of ground floor room has wide chamfers. Left hand cottage not fully examined but thought to be of later date.

Wedged Partitions in Historic Timber Farmed Buildings

Note by John Walker - published in the Essex Historic Buildings Group Newsletter 7, 2017, p6-7



Undershot crosspassage and service end of 47 Castle Street, Saffron Walden. Open hall was to the left, now with inserted chimney but no mortices for partition between undershot crosspassage (indicated by arrow) and service room.

Upper Town Cottage, Nazeing, in south west Essex is a medieval hall house, tree-ring dated to 1461-65, built with an open hall between two crosswings and a clasped side purlin roof. It has an undershot crosspassage and a single service room but no evidence of any mortices for a partition between the crosspassage and the service room (Fig 1). This phenomenon has been noted elsewhere by J T Smith at 3 St Andrew's Street, Hertford (*Hertfordshire Houses: Selective Inventory*, RCHM 1993, pp86-87). This is a c1500 half-wealden with an undershot crosspassage and its service bay is divided into two rooms with an axial partition. The half wealden at 47 Castle Street, Saffron Walden is similar with no mortices for a partition between the crosspassage and the service room (picture above).

However, at Upper Town Cottage Elphin Watkin observed that the common joists over the crosspassage were soot stained from the medieval open hearth, while the joist over where the partition should have been was stained only on its crosspassage side (Fig 1). The soffit of this joist was clean as are all the surviving joists over the service room. Clearly there had been a partition between the crosspassage and the service room, but one that was not morticed and tenoned as we normally expect.

Most likely the studs in this partition were wedged, using a method I have seen in a number of buildings in Suffolk, some just over the border with Essex. Here a groove is cut along the top

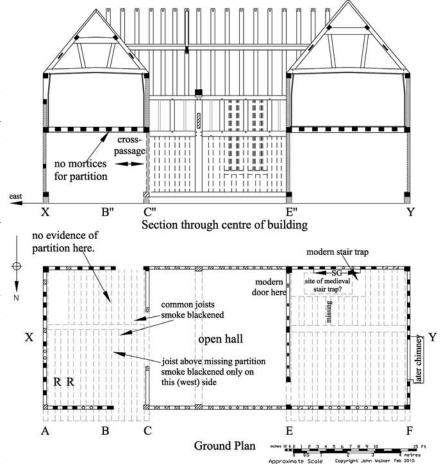


Fig 1: Plan and long section of Upper Town Cottage, Nazeing, Essex



Fig 2: Top of stud grooved for wedge in Nayland. Suffolk (photo by Andrea Kirkham)



Fig 3: Wedged partition around chimney in early 17th century lobby entrance in Stutton, Suffolk

of the stud (Fig 2) and when erected under a joist, a tapered peg which is flat on the top is driven into the groove locking the stud into position under the joist (Fig 3). The bottom of the stud is usually morticed and tenoned into the horizontal timber at the base of the partition. The space between the study is then infilled with wattle and daub, completely concealing the wedge. The only indication that the partition might be wedged is the lack of any pegs for mortices (Fig 3). Usually we assume where there are no pegs in a medieval or 16th or first half 17th century building, that the partition is a later insertion, as happened at a house in Nayland, Suffolk where, following removal of plasterboard during building work, a primary wedged partition was exposed (Fig 4). Some studs were temporarily removed, but when the owner was advised that it was an original partition, they were replaced.

When these partitions are removed there are usually no visible marks left on the soffit of the joists to show there was ever a partition, as is the case at Upper Town Cottage. It is also possible that both Upper Town Cottage and 47 Castle Street, Saffron Walden had similar partitions dividing the service bay into two rooms.

I have found these wedged partitions in Suffolk particularly around chimney stacks at the high end of the hall in 16th and 17th century houses. Possibly this was because the carpenter was uncertain about the size and exact position of the chimney the bricklayer would build. But it does occur in partitions not associated with

chimneys, as in the houses mentioned above, and may have been common under stair traps. The 15th cen -tury open hall house, Honey Hall in Levenheath, Suffolk, has 'V" grooves for wattle in the back of the stud forming the door jamb to the low end stairs which rose from the crosspassage to the service chamber, suggesting the stairs were partitioned off from the service room, but there are no mortices in the joists for such a partition.



Fig 4: Wedged partition in Nayland. Suffolk (photo by Andrea Kirkham)