

# **Curtis Farm, Kersey, Suffolk**

## **Heritage Asset Assessment**



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# Curtis Farm, Wickerstreet Green, Kersey, Suffolk

(TL 98095 42245)

## Heritage Asset Assessment

*This report provides an historic analysis at Historic England (2016) Level 2 of a grade II-listed building and is intended to inform and accompany an application for Listed Building Consent. The site was inspected on 13<sup>th</sup> July 2020.*

### Summary

Curtis Farm lies in open countryside approximately half way between the villages of Boxford and Kersey. In 1840 it formed a medium-sized tenanted holding of 78 acres occupied by the eponymous Philip Curtis, and faced south-west towards a long, narrow medieval green of which the modern lawn represents an intact fragment. A photograph of 1959 shows its original facade with a red-brick service cross-wing projecting to the left, but this was transformed almost beyond recognition by at least two major phases of renovation and extension during the mid- and late-20<sup>th</sup> century. Despite these changes the house is of considerable historic interest, with a high-quality timber-framed parlour and chimney bay of *circa* 1580 at right-angles to the road on the south-east. This replaced the parlour of a medieval open hall in the centre of the house which was rebuilt in turn during the mid-17<sup>th</sup> century, neatly illustrating development of English domestic houses over the same period. The weathering scar of the lower medieval hall is visible on the upper storey. The 16<sup>th</sup> century chimney was rebuilt at the same time as the hall and retains all three of its fireplaces along with an impressive ‘concertina’ external shaft. The parlour gable contains a particularly rare arched window lighting its attic chamber and another window with fine roll-moulded mullions survives in the front wall. Most of the front and rear walls of the 17<sup>th</sup> century hall were removed during the 20<sup>th</sup> century when the building’s historic orientation was obscured by its various extensions and the construction of a new access road to the east.



Figure 1. Location plan highlighting the house to the north-east of Wickerstreet Green.

## Documentary History and Map Regression



**Figure 2a.** Hodkinson's map of Suffolk published in 1783 showing Wicker Street Green roughly equidistant between the villages of Boxford to the south-west and Kersey to the north-east. (See detail in figure 2b). The landscape was still littered with small medieval greens and heaths at this date, but most were enclosed soon afterwards.

Curtis Farm lies in the hamlet of Wickerstreet Green on the north-western side of the lane between the villages of Boxford 2.25 km to the south-west and Kersey 3 km to the north-east. The house is set back from the road and originally adjoined the north-eastern edge of a linear green of some 75 m in width that extended to the south-west by approximately 0.5 km as shown on Hodkinson's map of 1783 and the 1840 tithe map. The lawn to the west of the property represents a rare fragment of this green, having remained unaltered since the early Middle Ages. Similar greens, often known as tyes, were common in the region by the 13<sup>th</sup> century, with individual parishes often possessing as many as a dozen, but few survive today. Wickerstreet Green was enclosed to form gardens and orchards during the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, but its boundary remains recognisable, still defined by the medieval and Tudor houses of its greenside settlement. The term 'street' was used locally to describe a linear hamlet, and 'wicker' may relate to the Anglo Saxon 'wic' meaning a dwelling or place. Until boundary changes in the 20<sup>th</sup> century the farm and green lay outside Kersey parish in an area known as Hadleigh Hamlet attached to Boxford parish. According to White's 1844 Directory of Suffolk 'Hadleigh Hamlet is a small township of scattered houses containing 610 acres of land about 4 miles west of Hadleigh in the parish of Boxford but in Cosford Hundred and the manor of Hadleigh Hall'. Boxford lay in the Anglo-Saxon Hundred of Babergh while Kersey lay in Cosford and for centuries the Hamlet formed a major administrative anomaly, presumably reflecting ancient ties of ownership. The 1840 tithe apportionment records Curtis Farm as a medium-sized arable holding of 78 acres owned by Anna Hoy and occupied by the eponymous Philip Curtis, who had been replaced by John and Mary Curtis by 1844. Most of the land lay in Hadleigh Hamlet (61.5 acres) with the rest over the border in Kersey, and Ann Hoy kept a further 5 acres of woodland in hand. The changing outlines of the buildings on the site since 1840 are described in the captions to figures 5-11 below.





Figure 2b. A detail of Wickerstreet Green on Hodskinson's 1783 map. Curtis Farm is represented by the group of stylised buildings at its northern end, with the broken line marking the ancient Hundred boundary (and that of Kersey parish) to the east.



Figure 3. Colonel Mudge's first edition one-inch Ordnance Survey of 1805. Curtis Farm is indicated by stylised buildings to the north-east of the green (mis-labelled 'Wicker Stead Green') with a track leading north-west to what appears to be another farm that no longer survives.





**Figure 4.** The one inch map of 1838 by Colonel Colby showing the track meandering across the green with the L-shaped outline of Curtis Farm commanding its entire length to the north-east. The adjoining track now terminates in a field.



**Figure 5a.** The long, narrow green on the Boxford and Hadleigh Hamlet tithe map of 1840. North lies towards the top right-hand corner. The house at Curtis Farm (by whatever name it was then known) adjoined a track leading from the Kersey road to a 'barn and yard' in separate ownership on the north-west (plot 430). This may well have occupied the site of another recently demolished medieval farmhouse as suggested by the 1805 map, with the remaining barn not of sufficient significance to be shown in 1838.



**Figure 5b.** A detail of the 1840 tithe map (Suffolk Record Office). The house at what is now Curtis Farm is shown with a simple L-shaped outline facing the track to the south-west. The shaded rectangle is unusual and may represent a walled garden. Plot 453 was named only as 'homestead' and the farm also included the 'cottage and garden' at plot 454 on the other side of the road.



**Figure 6.** The highly accurate First Edition 25 inch Ordnance Survey of 1885. Apart from the section to the west of Curtis Farm the green had been enclosed to form new fields and gardens since 1840. The L-shaped farmhouse still adjoined the track leading to its own farm buildings and the now empty site of the neighbouring barn.



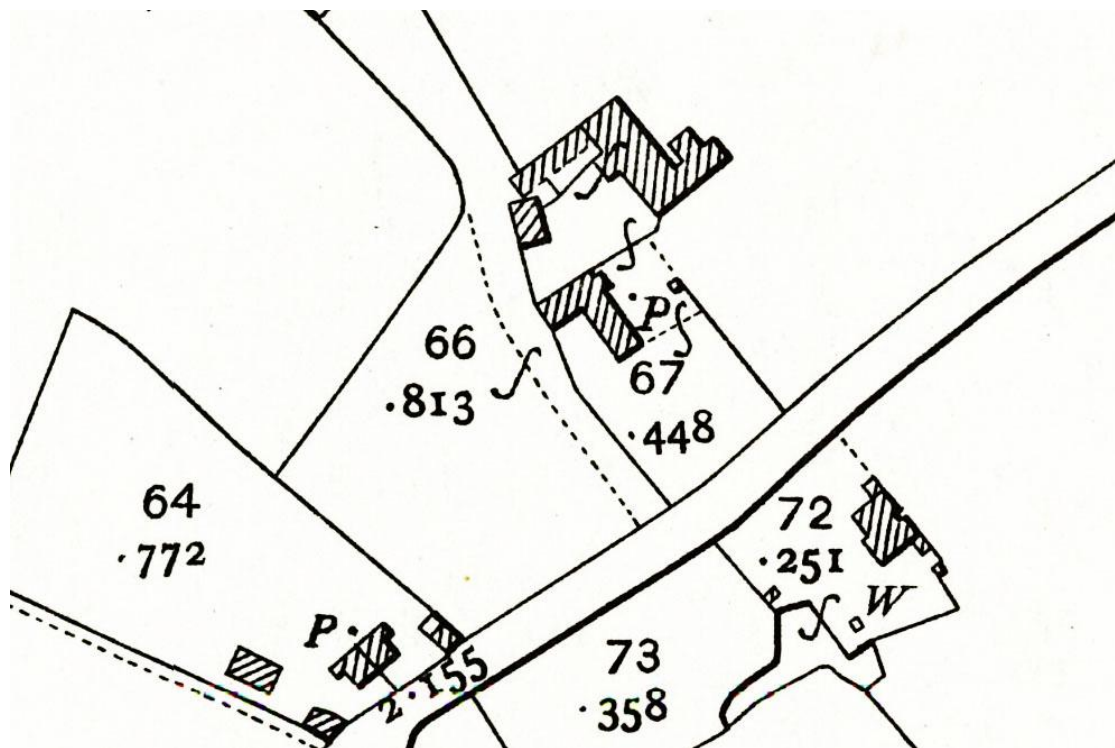


Figure 7. The Second Edition 25 inch Ordnance Survey of 1902. The projection of an external chimney is visible against the rear (north-eastern) gable of the northern wing, with a pump (P) in close proximity.

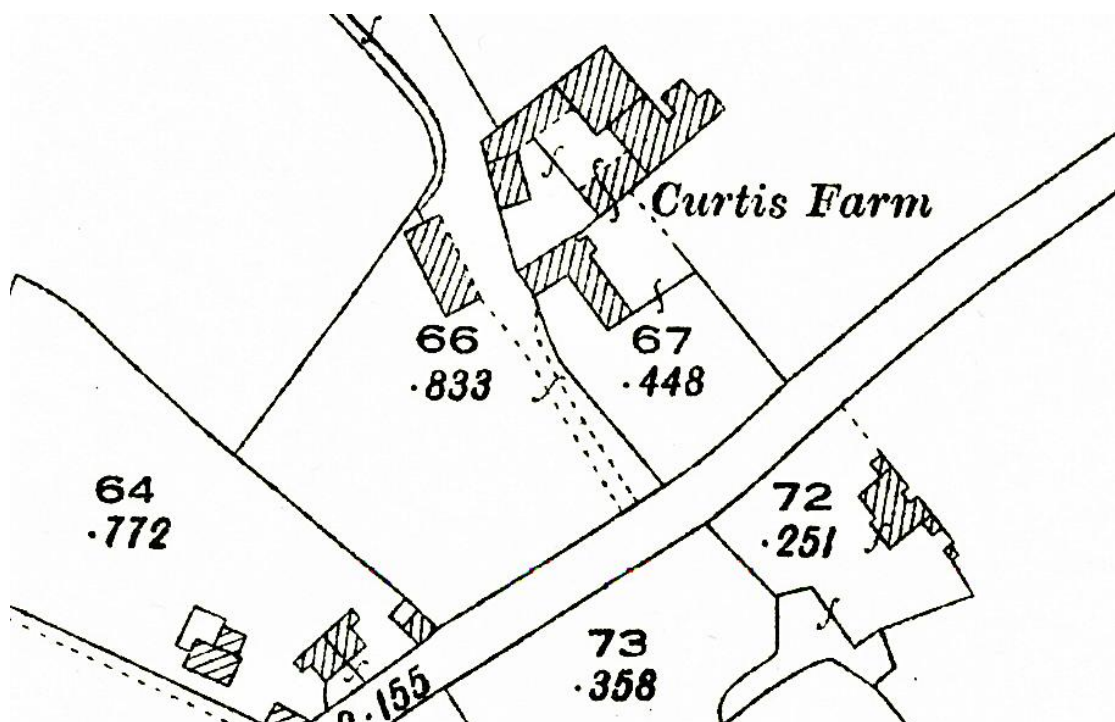
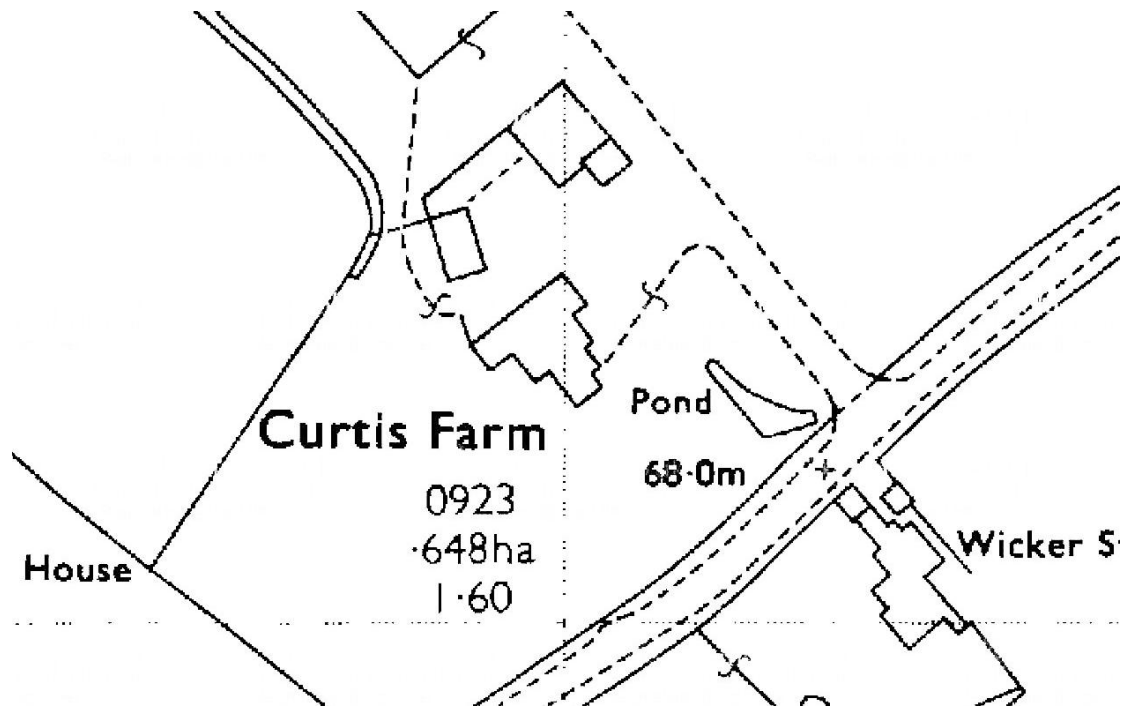


Figure 8. The 25 inch Ordnance Survey of 1924. The farm was named for the first time on this map, and had been provided with a new cart lodge to the west of the entrance track (its open eastern wall indicated by a broken line).

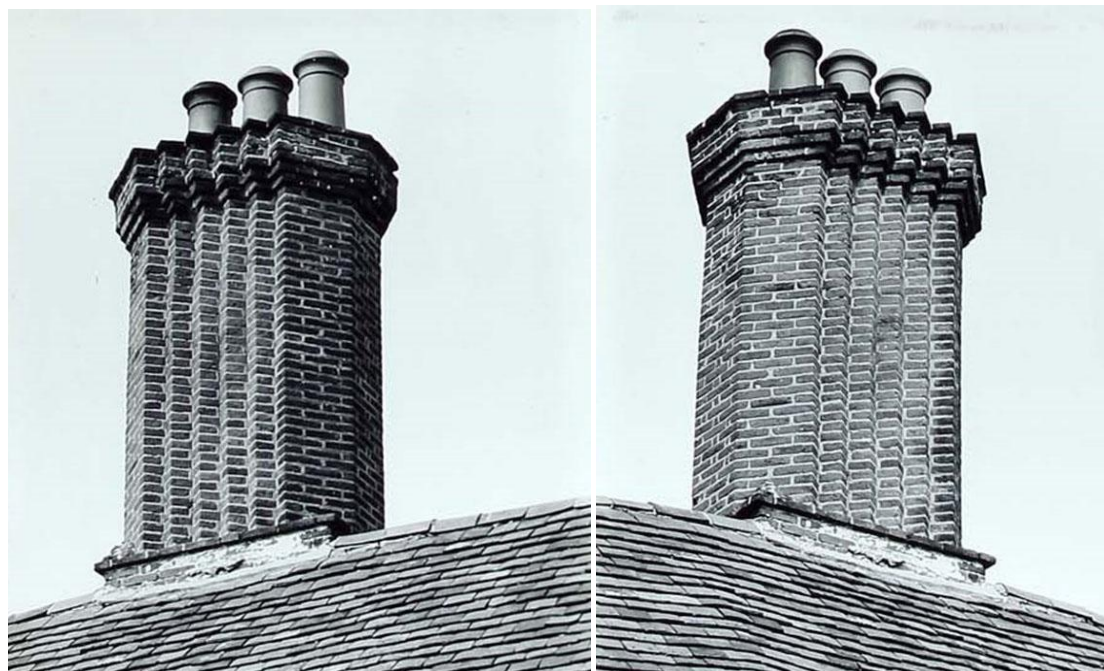




**Figure 9. The 25 inch Ordnance Survey of 1973. A dramatic transformation had occurred since 1924 with the site now entered by a new drive on the east and a series of extensions on the same side of the house – along with a new addition in the western return angle of the two original wings. The glazed conservatories were not yet present. These alterations occurred after 1959 as the six inch map of 1958 shows the site as it was in 1924 and a photograph of 1959 omits any addition to the facade (figure 11).**



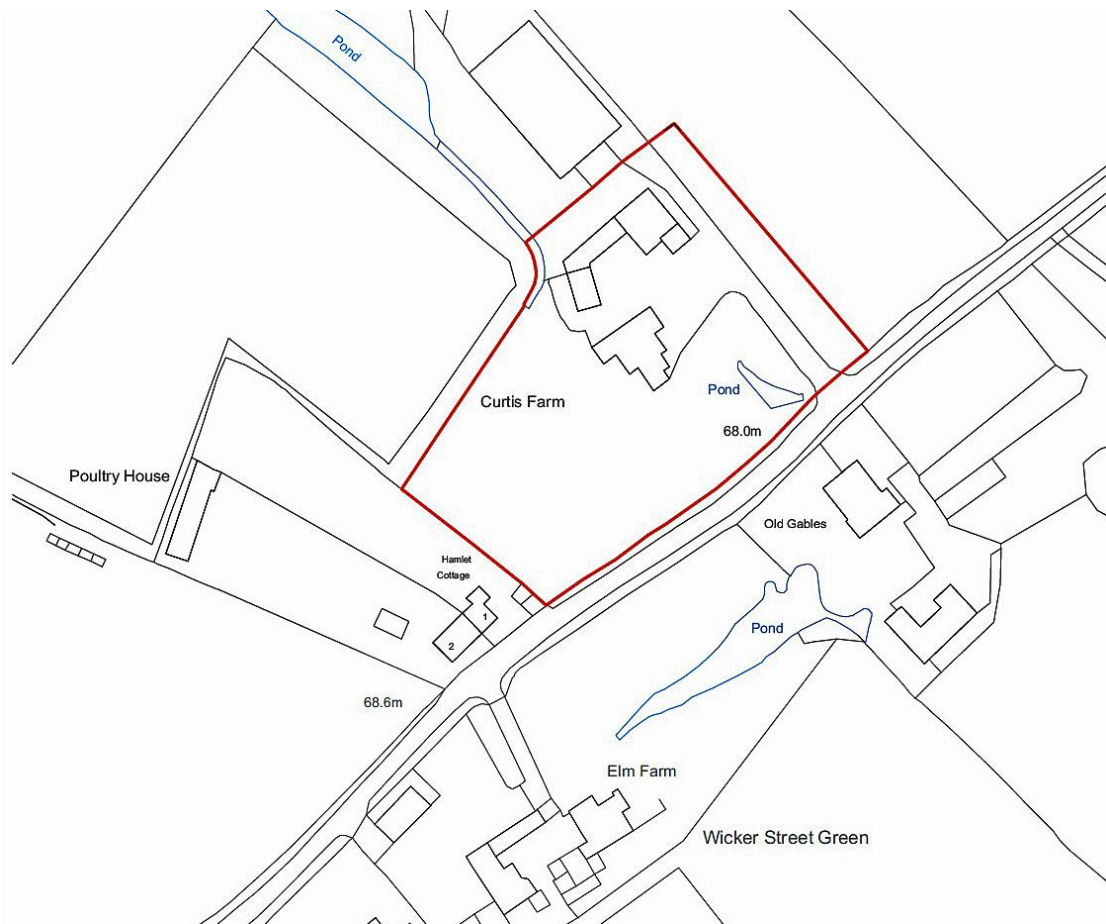
**Figure 10. The identical arched gable window at 4 Nayland Road in Bures (illus. 3). Gable windows of this kind are very rare and as the rest of the framing is strikingly similar to that of Curtis Farm it was probably the work of the same carpenter. The Bures example lit a first-floor room without a ceiling.**



**Figure 11. Royal Commission photographs of 1959 showing the south-western elevation with details of the chimney before the house was extensively altered in or about the 1960s. This elevation was the principal facade, commanding a fine view along the entire length of the medieval green, but is now almost unrecognisable (illustration 4). Note the farm entrance track in the foreground, as shown on the historic maps, and the ‘lobby entrance’ doorway in front of the main chimney (illustration 5). The presence of an additional door in the ostensibly early-19<sup>th</sup> century brick wing to the left suggests the house was sub-divided, but there is no evidence of this on the maps and it may have formed a separate service entrance. The good 17<sup>th</sup> century ‘concertina’ chimney has since been heavily repointed but appears to have escaped the usual rebuilding.**



## Building Analysis

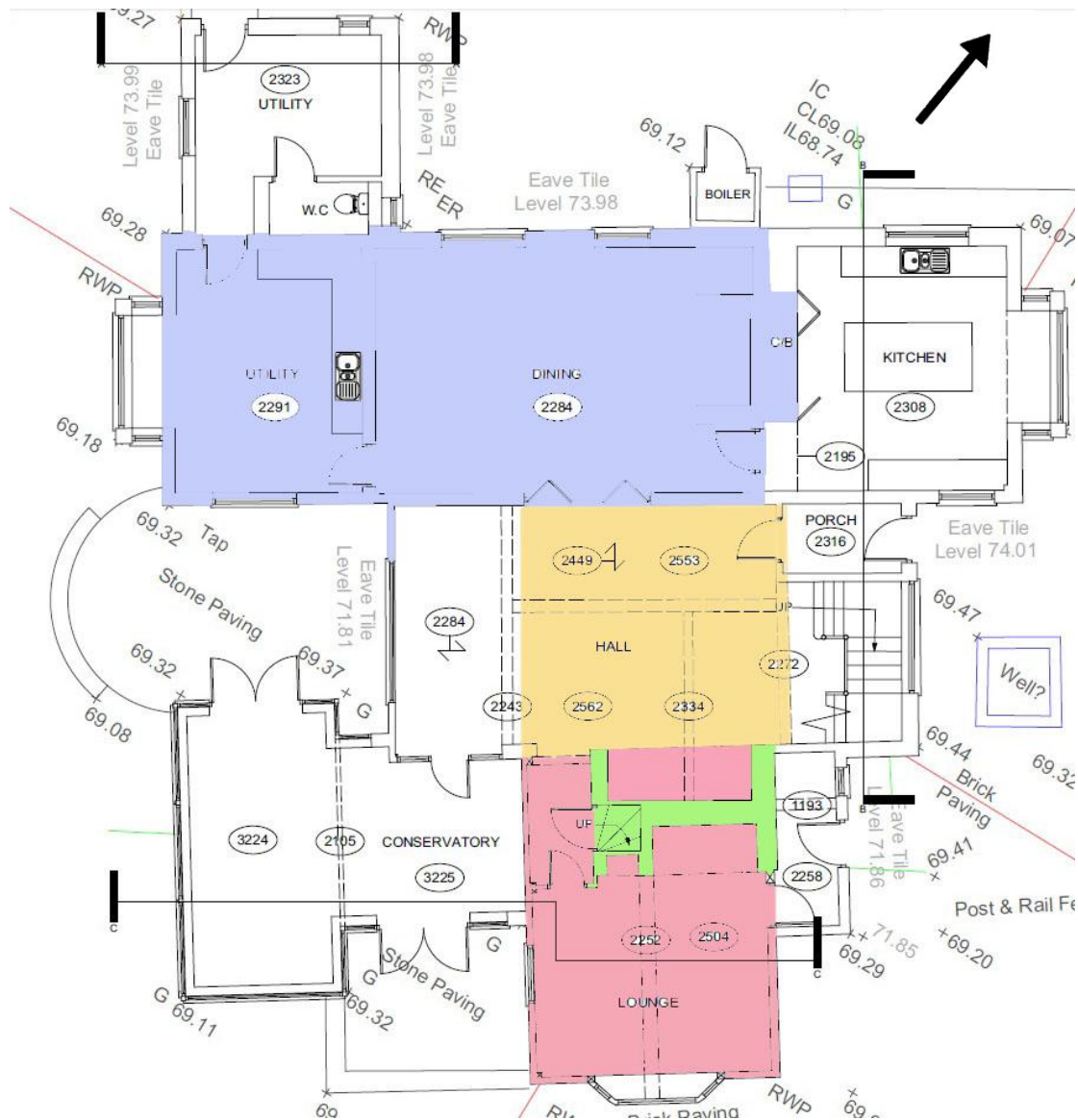


**Figure 12**

**Current site plan supplied by Wincer Kievenaar Architects. The outline of the house omits the conservatory and the two-storied extension to the north – added in 1992 and 1994 respectively.**

## Introduction

Until an extensive renovation in or about the 1960s Curtis Farm was an L-shaped farmhouse with a traditional ‘three-cell’ layout of the type illustrated in the Appendix: a central hall on an approximately north-west/south-east axis was flanked by a projecting service cross-wing on the north-west and by an in-line parlour to the south-east. The house faced the remains of the medieval Wicker Street Green to the south-west and was approached from this direction by an unmade track that also served the farm buildings to the north-west and continued to the site of what appears to have been a neighbouring farm as indicated by the 1805 Ordnance Survey (figure 3). As often found in local farmhouses, all three of the building’s principal cells were rebuilt at different periods as highlighted in figure 13, and each of these is described and discussed in turn below. The text is intended to be read in conjunction with the descriptive captions to the illustrations and the Appendix on page 28. The transformation of the building in the 1960s and 1990s involved the addition of several substantial extensions and the construction of a new access to the east of the site which has confused its historic orientation: the south-western facade photographed in 1959 is now adjoined by a large conservatory and can be mistaken for the back of the building while the former back wall adjoins the gravel drive and could be regarded as the front (compare figure 11 and illustration 4). These 20<sup>th</sup> century changes are summarised in a separate section.



**Figure 13**  
Ground plan by Wincer Kievenaar Architects adapted to highlight the principal phases of construction in colour.

### Key

#### Red

A late-16th century parlour and chimney bay that was initially built to replace the smaller, unheated parlour of an earlier, lower hall on the site of the present hall to the north-west.

#### Brown

A mid-17th century hall that replaced an earlier hall on the same site that appears to have been slightly narrower. In the 1960s the front and rear walls of this replacement were entirely removed below the level of its ceiling.

#### Green

A mid-17th century brick chimney incorporating a newel staircase and three original fireplaces that replaced the original chimney built with the parlour. The new chimney



was slightly wider than its predecessor, cutting the north-east wall of the chimney to accommodate the wider 17th century hall (with which it was probably contemporary).

### **Blue**

A red-brick service wing of the early-19th century that may incorporate some timbers of a 16th century predecessor in its north-eastern gable. The roof of this structure was entirely rebuilt in the 1960s.

### **Uncoloured**

Additions of the mid- and late-20<sup>th</sup> century. The house retained its 19<sup>th</sup> century L-shaped outline in 1959 but the rear extensions to the north-west had appeared by 1973 (figure 9). The glazed conservatory was added to the south-western facade in 1992 and the two-storied extension to the north in 1994 (Babergh DC Application. Nos. B/LB/92/00558 and B/LB/94/01185 respectively).

## **Listing Entry**

The property is listed at grade II and its entry in Historic England's Schedule is reproduced below (entry no. 1285443, last revised in 1980):

### **KERSEY WICKER STREET GREEN**

#### *Curtis Farmhouse*

*A timber-framed and plastered building on an L-shaped plan with wings extending to the south-east and south-west. Roof tiled, with a good 17th century ridge chimney stack with saw-tooth shafts. The south-east wing has exposed timber-framing and is probably of 15th/16th century hall house origin with floor and fireplaces inserted in the 17th century. The south-west wing is of 17th century origin with modern refacing. Two storeys. Modern casement windows with leaded lights. There is an original window with diamond mullions. The interior has exposed timber-framing and there is an old winder staircase possibly with original solid risers under modern casing. At the north-east side there is a modern addition.*

This account is inaccurate in several respects. The south-eastern wing (coloured brown and red in figure 13) was built in two phases during the late-16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries and contained ceilings and a chimney from the outset – although there is evidence of a medieval open hall on the site. The 'south-west wing' (i.e. the wing to the north-west of the house that projects to the south-west and is coloured blue) appears to have been wholly or largely rebuilt in brick during the 19<sup>th</sup> century and there is no evidence of 17<sup>th</sup> century fabric – although it is possible that more was exposed in 1980. The only original window now visible contains decorative roll-moulded mullions (illus. 18-19) rather than utilitarian 'diamond' mullions (i.e. square mullions set diagonally as found in standard medieval and Tudor windows).

## **The Late-16th Century Parlour (red)**

The best preserved part of the house is a high-quality timber-framed structure of the late-16<sup>th</sup> century at its south-eastern end. The largely intact frame extends to 16 ft in total width and forms a parlour of 11.5 ft in length with an integral chimney bay of 7.5 ft to the north-west (illus. 6). As noted below the brick chimney within this narrow bay is a slightly later replacement of the original. The ground-floor ceiling consists of substantial flat-sectioned common joists with chamfered edges and neatly cut step-stops, and there is evidence of a similar ceiling in the first-floor parlour chamber of which only the chamfered axial joist now survives (illus. 20 & 22). The wall studs are closely spaced in the Elizabethan fashion with internally trencled braces on the upper storey and were designed to be visible both internally and externally as the original timbers are heavily weathered. Both the parlour and chamber

were initially lit only by gable windows as the present windows in the south-western facade are later insertions which interrupt the frame (i.e. pegged mortices for missing studs are visible in the mid-rail and roof-plate above). This is an unusual feature as most late-16<sup>th</sup> century parlours would have boasted two if not three windows. Unfortunately there is no evidence of the exact nature of the original gable windows as the present sills and jambs are replacements (probably dating from the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century restoration when the external framing was stripped of its Georgian plaster and the existing Mock Gothic leaded-lights were introduced). The gable was visible from the nearby Boxford-Kersey road and may well have contained projecting oriel windows with ostentatious roll-moulded mullions matching those which still light the chimney bay (illus. 18-19). The original arched window lighting the attic chamber is a highly unusual feature which has a direct parallel at 4 Nayland Road in nearby Bures St Mary (figure 10). Arched rather than mullioned windows are normally found in 16<sup>th</sup> century shops or workshops where they were ideal for selling and displaying retail goods as well as maximising the admission of light. The Bures example lay above a carved first-floor oriel window in the gatehouse of a large inn, and was designed purely for decoration as the interior lacked a first-floor ceiling. The clasped-purlin roof structure, step-stopped ceiling chamfers and other features of the inn are strikingly similar to those of Curtis Farm and are likely to be the work of the same carpenter in about 1580 (as the previous structure on the site was described as ruinous in a Bures manorial survey of 1577). Twin arched windows can also be seen in the gable of 21 High Street in Lavenham, but these date from a generation earlier.

The chimney bay was intended to accommodate a slightly narrower chimney with back-to-back ground-floor fireplaces heating both the present parlour and an older hall to the north-west. The diagonal weathering scar of this hall can be seen on the timbers of the present hall chamber in illustrations 14 and 15: the building was much lower than its replacement, and its sloping rafters divided the weather-worn area to the right from the unweathered section to the left. Similar anomalies are found in many Tudor houses and reflect the rapid change in expectations of domestic comfort during the 16<sup>th</sup> century. The typical local farmhouse of 1500 consisted of a smoky open hall, often with very low eaves given the absence of a ceiling, flanked by a small parlour and twin service rooms as described in the Appendix. By the middle of the century a single narrow fireplace had usually been inserted to serve the hall, but more drastic action was required to meet the ever-increasing demand for heated parlours. New houses were built with dedicated chimney bays between their halls and parlours for the large stacks needed to heat both rooms, but the insertion of such 'high-end' chimneys into older halls meant the loss of a high proportion of floor space: if the hall was to retain its former length the parlour was all but filled. As a result, many medieval parlours were simply demolished and rebuilt on a larger scale with chimney bays and often much taller walls to accommodate the first-floor parlour chambers that were also becoming popular. The new chimneys were often provided with a third fireplace to heat the second-best bedroom on the first floor – which needed a ceiling of its own to retain the heat. Hall chambers, in contrast, were still used for storage and often remained unheated until the 19<sup>th</sup> century. A visitor to Suffolk in 1600 would have seen many houses with low medieval halls and service bays adjoined by much taller parlours with chimneys at the junctions of the two ridges. Similar stepped roof lines are still common today, and until its hall was rebuilt to match its parlour in the 17<sup>th</sup> century this is precisely the arrangement that such a visitor would have found at Curtis Farm.

## **The Mid-17<sup>th</sup> Century Hall and Chimney**

Much of the rebuilt hall was removed during the heavy restoration of the 1960s but part of its front wall is still visible on the first floor (illus. 16). Its timbers are narrow and widely spaced compared to the older parlour, but are weathered externally and were still exposed inside and out. This weathering can now be seen from the cupboards in the roof-space of the 20<sup>th</sup> century lean-to extension (illus. 17). Accurate dating is impossible given the limited evidence,



but framing of this kind is typical of the mid-17<sup>th</sup> century before exposed framing was replaced by plaster and pargeting (i.e. 1640-80). The clasped-purlin roof structure is original but lacks the curved wind-braces normally found before *circa* 1650, and re-uses a number of heavily soot-encrusted rafters that were almost certainly salvaged from the medieval open hall it replaced. These can be recognised from the bedroom by their darker colour but are more obvious in the roof void above. The ceiling joists on the ground floor also contain a variety of chamfer stops that suggests a degree of re-use in the 17<sup>th</sup> century or possibly remodelling at a later date. A linear scar on the joists towards the service wing may relate to the partition of a former cross-passage, particularly as it respects the existing rear (north-eastern) door, but any firm evidence was lost when the framing of the front and rear walls was removed in the 20<sup>th</sup> century (illus. 9 and 11).

The present brick chimney is a fine 17<sup>th</sup> century example that unusually retains all three of its original fireplaces and a particularly impressive concertina or saw-tooth external stack. The latter's cantilevered upper courses have probably been renewed but it is much better preserved than most early stacks despite its modern re-pointing. The brickwork clearly post-dates the parlour and chimney bay as it cuts the latter's rear corner-post and projects through its external wall (illus. 8 and 10). There is little doubt that the original 16<sup>th</sup> century chimney was rebuilt at the same time as the hall in the mid-17<sup>th</sup> century to respect its greater width. With just 14.75 ft between its principal wall timbers the parlour was narrow relative to most houses of similar quality, reflecting the adjoining medieval hall, and the new hall was almost 2 ft wider with 16.25 ft between its roof-plates. This increased width lay entirely to the rear, with the front wall in the same plane as the parlour. The chimney may have been replaced partly to accommodate a first-floor fireplace for the first time, but also to incorporate the newel stair that rises against its south-western side (illus. 24). This stair probably retains its original door with good strap hinges and may have been positioned to fit a new 'lobby entrance' instead of a cross-passage. The photograph of 1959 in figure 11 shows a door that opened into a narrow lobby in front of the stack in a manner that became increasingly fashionable during the mid-17<sup>th</sup> century and gradually replaced the traditional cross-passage. Enclosed lobbies gave direct access to the hall, parlour or upper storey and avoided the draughts and wasted space associated with cross-passages. The 16<sup>th</sup> century chimney bay must also have contained a stair as there is no evidence of a separate trap in the parlour ceiling but it may have risen directly from the hall or against the back wall in a way that would not have been acceptable to later generations. All three fireplaces retain good evidence of the red-ochre pigment with which all early brickwork was enhanced, and the lintel in the parlour chamber bears good apotropaic symbols that deterred evil spirits from entering the house via the otherwise unprotected chimney flue (for a society that believed in the reality of witchcraft).

## The Service Cross-Wing

The cross-wing to the left (north-west) of the hall and parlour would have contained the buttery and pantry illustrated in the Appendix but has been extensively modernised and its original form is no longer recognisable. The service rooms of early houses were often built as cross-wings projecting in front of their respective halls in this way. The 1959 photograph appears to show a red-brick structure of the early-19<sup>th</sup> century, and this is consistent with the small area now exposed in the roof of the 20<sup>th</sup> century lean-to (illus. 17), but fragments of timber-framing against the rear gable suggest part of a 17<sup>th</sup> century or earlier structure may survive within (illus. 13). The walls are completely hidden elsewhere by modern render, both inside and out, but appear to consist largely if not wholly of brick so the extent of any such survival is unlikely to be great. The present gable chimney is a 20<sup>th</sup> century reconstruction with an old lintel that appears to have replaced the external stack shown on late-19<sup>th</sup> and early-20<sup>th</sup> century maps, and at least some of the exposed timbers were probably inserted at the same time. The entire roof was rebuilt in modern softwood when the wing was extended

to the rear (illus. 26). The early-19<sup>th</sup> century rebuilding in red brick is likely to have occurred as part of the same refurbishment of the site that included the present farm sheds to the north-west, although fragments of earlier timber-framing survive in the converted barn.

## 20th Century Restoration

The traditional L-shaped profile of the house was transformed almost beyond recognition during a major restoration in the 1960s that included the addition of two large gabled extensions to the rear and a lean-to addition to the south-western facade (between 1959 and 1973). The building's visual and physical orientation was altered by the construction of a new access to the east and in particular by the addition of a large conservatory to the south-west in 1992. The most recent external change involved the construction of a two-storied extension to the north-west in 1994. The fabric of the 16<sup>th</sup> century parlour and the 17<sup>th</sup> century chimney escaped these changes largely intact, although there is evidence of smaller (probably Georgian) fireplaces that would have been removed to reveal the originals. The 16<sup>th</sup> century first-floor ceiling in the parlour bay was also taken out at some stage. The service wing was heavily modernised, rendered and re-roofed, but had probably been rebuilt in brick in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The ceiling in the hall remains intact but its rear (north-eastern) wall was entirely removed to the height of its roof-plate (which is probably hidden by the plaster ceiling above the modern staircase) and the studs of the front wall survive only on the upper storey with a large central gap as shown in illustration 16. A dovetail joint in the middle of the front roof-plate suggests that a tie-beam was also removed. The present internally exposed timbers of the south-western lean-to are modern and there is nothing to indicate the original studs were re-used.

## Historic Significance

Despite its extensive restoration in the latter part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century Curtis Farm is of considerable historic interest and retains a number of impressive early features. The building neatly illustrates a standard development of English domestic houses during the Elizabethan period, with a new parlour and chimney bay built against a medieval hall that was rebuilt in turn during the 17<sup>th</sup> century. The high quality framing of the parlour is largely intact with an original window of roll-moulded mullions and a rare instance of an arched window lighting its attic chamber. The survival of all three fireplaces in the 17<sup>th</sup> century chimney is also unusual, complete with their original redde and a number of evil-averting symbols, and the concertina stack is among the most impressive in the area. While the restoration involved the removal of much of the contemporary 17<sup>th</sup> century hall and obscured its historic orientation the building still fully warrants its grade II listing.

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*Leigh Alston is a building archaeologist and architectural historian who for 20 years lectured on the understanding and recording of timber-framed structures in the Departments of Archaeology and Continuing Education at Cambridge University. He worked as the in-house building archaeologist for Suffolk County Council's Archaeological Service for 10 years and still fulfils this role for its successor, Suffolk Archaeology CIC. He also undertakes commissions on a freelance basis for the National Trust, private clients and various county archaeological units. Leigh co-founded the Suffolk Historic Buildings Group in 1993, serving as Chairman for 13 years, and has been involved in several television programmes including 'Grand Designs' and David Dimbleby's 'How We Built Britain'. Publications include 'Late Medieval Workshops in East Anglia' in 'The Vernacular Workshop' edited by Paul Barnwell & Malcolm Airs (CBA and English Heritage, 2004) and the National Trust guidebook to Lavenham Guildhall.*

## Illustrations (pp. 15-27)



**Illus. 1.** The house from the present entrance to the west with the impressive 17<sup>th</sup> century ‘concertina’ chimney between the hall and parlour on the left. This was the rear elevation of the house until an extensive renovation in the 1960s which saw the addition of the lean-to against the chimney and both gabled projections to the right.



**Illus. 2.** The south-eastern gable, facing the Kersey road, with the remains of the medieval Wicker Street Green on the left. Until the 1960s the house consisted only of two wings adjoining at right-angles: the conservatory on the left and the projections to the right are modern additions. The gable windows are also modern (compare figure 11), and many of the associated timbers have been renewed. The chimney appears to survive from the 17<sup>th</sup> century but has been heavily repointed.





**Illus. 3.** A detail of the original arched attic-storey window in the south-eastern gable. The central stud is a later insertion. Arched 16<sup>th</sup> century windows are usually found only in shop facades and examples at this height are rare. A close parallel of the same late-16<sup>th</sup> century date can be seen nearby at 4 Nayland Road in Bures (figure 10).



**Illus. 4.** The original south-western facade, seen from the medieval green. Compare the photograph of the same elevation in 1959 (figure 11). The red-brick fabric of the left-hand wing has been disguised with cement render. The lean-to in the angle of the two historic wings was added in or about the 1960s while the glazed conservatory and the two-storied projection on the left date from 1992 and 1994 respectively. The original first-floor window with moulded mullions in illus. 18 is hidden behind the conservatory.



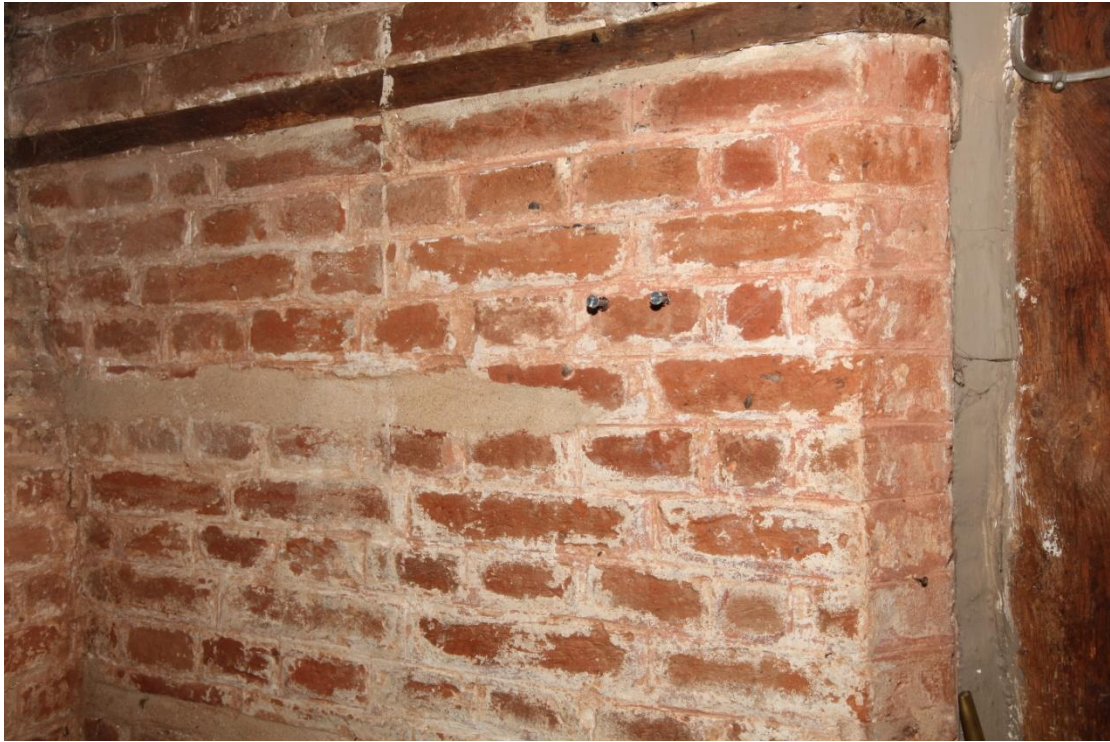


**Illus. 5. The studs of the south-western facade from the conservatory which was initially added in 1992. The 1959 photograph shows a ‘lobby entrance’ door in this position, and the central two studs are insertions that are not pegged to the mid-rail – suggesting the door was either an original feature or more probably occupied the position of an original window. The weathered storey posts of the chimney bay are visible to left and right but all six central studs lack weathering and are recent replacements.**



**Illus. 6. The good 17<sup>th</sup> century fireplace in the heavily timbered late-16<sup>th</sup> century parlour with the projection of the integral staircase to the left of the lintel. Although the brickwork occupies a dedicated narrow chimney bay it projects through the original external wall on the right and is clearly a replacement of the narrower stack for which the frame was designed. A number of ‘taper’ burns are visible on the lintel.**





**Illus. 7.** A detail of the parlour fireplace showing its original pointing and reddle (red ochre). Almost all early brickwork was enhanced with paint in this way to hide the irregular colour and texture of its individual bricks – but most fireplaces have been over-cleaned and good examples such as this are no longer common. In many cases the bonding pattern was applied in white or black paint.



**Illus. 8.** The north-eastern side of the brick chimney with the corner-post of the parlour on the left. The lintel and brickwork project through the timber-framed wall and are weathered, having been exposed to the elements until the addition of the lean-to in the 1960s. This unusual feature demonstrates that the present chimney post-dates the frame.





**Illus. 9.** The central hall from its western corner, showing the door to the parlour on the right. The north-eastern wall on the left was completely removed in the 1960s when the gabled extension containing the modern staircase was added. The ostensibly original boarded door to the 17<sup>th</sup> century stair is visible in the side of the chimney (to the left of the parlour door). Note the scar of a missing partition on the ceiling joists at top left that may relate to a former cross-passage screen.



**Illus. 10.** Like its counterpart in the parlour the hall fireplace survives largely unaltered from the 17<sup>th</sup> century but the timber frame was built for a smaller, earlier chimney and the fireplace cuts the corner post on the left. Note that the axial joist of the ceiling is central to the wider hall and not the binding joist above the chimney.





**Illus. 11. The central hall from the north-east, with the 20<sup>th</sup> century folding doors to the brick service wing on the right. The original front wall facing the green lay beneath the light-coloured modern ceiling beam in the background but was entirely removed on the ground floor when the lean-to extension was added beyond. The joists and wall studs of this extension are modern.**



**Illus. 12. The right-hand corner of the hall fireplace showing a pair of storage niches.**





**Illus. 13.** The fireplace against the rear (north-eastern) gable of the original service wing. The modern kitchen beyond is an extension of the 1960s. The 19<sup>th</sup> century Ordnance Surveys show what appears to be an external chimney projecting from this gable but the present fireplace is a 20<sup>th</sup> century reconstruction that re-uses an early lintel. Some of the adjoining timber may be *in situ* but most has also been re-used. The rest of the wall fabric in the wing is hidden by modern render but appears to be of brick.



**Illus. 14.** The first-floor chamber above the central hall looking towards the chimney bay with the parlour chamber beyond. The studs to the right bear the diagonal weathering scar of the lower hall against which the chimney bay and parlour were originally built (illus 15). The diagonal timber to the left is an integral arch-brace rising from the truncated corner post shown in illus. 10 but the rest of the studs appear to be original despite the fact that they are nailed rather than tenoned to the frame. The clasped-purlin roof of the hall chamber lacks wind-braces but re-uses sooted rafters.





**Illus. 15.** A detail of the framing to the right in illus. 14. The frame of the hall chamber is a 17<sup>th</sup> century replacement of a lower predecessor that almost certainly represented a medieval open hall. Its roof-plate at top right is lapped and pegged to the end of the late-16<sup>th</sup> century parlour roof-plate which is clearly weathered where it once projected above the medieval roof. The angle of this medieval roof is reflected by a diagonal weathering scar to the tie-beam and wall studs, with those at top-right once exposed while the area to the left was protected with the missing roof and remains unweathered.



**Illus. 16.** The front (south-western) wall of the hall chamber showing its intact roof-plate with original studs and mid-rails on each side of a central aperture cut to link the chamber with the lean-to extension of the 1960s. These studs are widely spaced relative to those of the parlour but are weathered externally and were evidently exposed.



**Illus. 17. The interior of the cupboard within the roof of the lean-to extension shown to the right in illus. 16. The red-brick fabric of the service cross-wing is visible to the left with the weathered studs and mid-rail of the original south-western facade on the right.**



**Illus. 18. The fine original window of roll-moulded mullions in the south-western facade of the chimney bay with the parlour chamber on the left.**





**Illus. 19.** A detail of the mullions in illus. 18. High-quality roll-moulded examples of this kind were fashionable in high-status buildings throughout the 16<sup>th</sup> century but were quickly superseded by quarter-round ovolo mouldings at the turn of the 17<sup>th</sup>. The later beading on the sill conceals small circular holes for saddle bars in the centre of each light to which leaded panels of glass would have been tied initially. These holes are still visible in the underside of the roof-plate above.



**Illus. 20.** The south-eastern internal gable of the parlour chamber showing its heavy frame with internally trenched braces and arched window. The axial joist on the left is tenoned and pegged to the tie-beams at both ends and is evidently an original feature.





**Illus. 21.** A detail of the rare arched window in the roof gable of the parlour. This appears to have lit an attic chamber as there is evidence of a missing original ceiling in the chamber beneath, although in other respects the framing is identical to that of 4 Nayland Road in Bures which lacked an attic floor.



**Illus. 22.** The parlour chamber from its south-eastern gable showing the well preserved 17<sup>th</sup> century fireplace above the ground-floor example in illus. 6. This too retains its original reddled finish. Note the empty mortices in the axial joist for the large, flat-sectioned common joists of a missing original ceiling. The principal rafter above the fireplace contains a pegged mortice for another curved wind-brace that projected into the chimney bay and was cut by the later brickwork of the present chimney.



**Illus. 23.** A detail of the timber lintel above the fireplace in the parlour chamber. The ‘daisy wheel’ and Marian M are well-known 17<sup>th</sup> century apotropaic symbols intended to protect the chimney against evil spirits, and the burns are likely to have been applied as part of a ritual prayer to serve the same purpose. The rebate in the lintel’s soffit must relate to a smaller inserted fireplace that was removed in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.



**Illus. 24.** The newel stair built into the south-western side of the chimney between the hall and parlour (as seen from the direction of the parlour chamber to the south-east). The lower section of the newel post appears to be original and while the tread-boards are modern they may conceal the original steps beneath. The stair and chimney may have been built when a ‘lobby entrance’ was inserted into the house, replacing the previous cross-passage.





**Illus. 25.** The clasped-purlin roof of the parlour bay showing its curved wind-braces in the typical style of the mid- and late-16<sup>th</sup> century. The purlins and braces continued into the chimney bay on the left but were cut when the chimney was rebuilt. The hall roof is also of clasped-purlin form but lacks wind-braces and contains a number of re-used rafters including several heavily sooted examples salvaged from a medieval open hall.



**Illus. 26.** The softwood roof of the brick service wing, rebuilt either as part of the 1960s restoration or when the wing was extended in the early 1990s. Re-used sooted rafters that were probably salvaged from the medieval open hall on the site are visible in the roof of the hall range to the left.



## Appendix

### The Standard Room Plan of Medieval and Tudor Houses

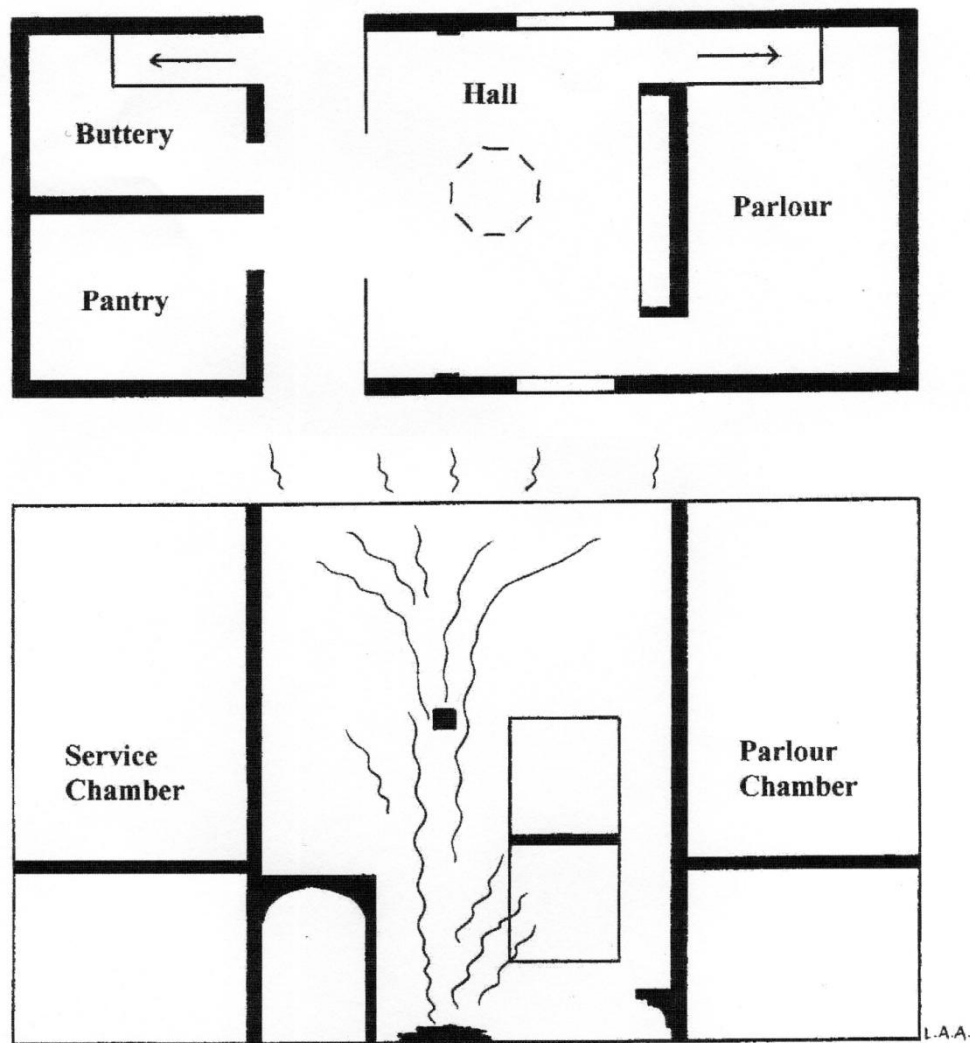
Although identical houses are rare, almost all domestic buildings constructed between the mid-13<sup>th</sup> and the early-17<sup>th</sup> centuries reflect the same room layout (see accompanying diagram). Until the opening decades of the 16<sup>th</sup> century the only heated space in a typical house comprised an open hall with an open hearth akin to a bonfire burning on its floor. In the absence of a chimney the hall, as its name suggests, was open to its roof in the manner of a barn to allow smoke to escape through the roof covering and through tall, unglazed windows which rose from normal sill height to eaves level. The hall was a communal space with little or no fixed furniture, and was used as a dining room, a dormitory for household servants and apprentices, and as a kitchen and general purpose working area at varying times of the day. The hall was also designed to display the wealth and status of its owner, and at meal times was arranged like a modern college dining hall, with the head of the household sitting with his immediate family behind the 'high table' at one end, while his servants and employees were arranged in order of precedence at secondary tables along the side walls. The lower an individual's status in the household, the further he sat from the 'high' end of the hall. The high table was often raised on a platform or dais, but contemporary references to the high and low ends of houses relate rather to social than physical hierarchy. Halls were usually divided into two structural bays, separated by a pair of principal posts carrying a tie-beam that spanned the walls at eaves level, with the great windows in the high-end bay towards the dais. Fixing pegs for the high-end bench, which was often attached to the wall, can sometimes be seen in surviving examples. The front and back doors of the house (which often stood open for ventilation purposes) lay opposite each other at the low end of the hall, forming a cross-passage that was partly screened by boarded partitions to exclude the weather.

The open hall in the middle of the typical medieval house was flanked by additional rooms that were usually floored over. Beyond the high end of the hall lay a single room known as a parlour, that served as the main bedroom for family members and guests and contained at least one bed (perhaps consisting of nothing more than a straw mattress) and perhaps a few pieces of furniture that normally included a storage chest. The parlour was entered by a door to one side of the high-end bench, and sometimes a second door on the opposite side of the bench opened onto a stair to the solar (upper room) above. Medieval living took place primarily on the relatively warm ground-floor, and the two solars of the house were used chiefly for storage purposes. An increasing demand for domestic privacy during the later 16<sup>th</sup> century saw the provision of additional bedrooms on the first floor, and the 'parlour chamber', as the room over the parlour came to be known, was often provided with its own fireplace. Principal bedrooms, used more and more for sitting and entertaining as well as sleeping, remained downstairs until well into the 17<sup>th</sup> century.

Beyond the low end of the hall lay two service or storage rooms termed butteries and pantries (or collectively as 'spences', i.e. dispensing rooms). As their names suggest, these were used for storing wet and dry goods respectively, and represent the household larder. The front service rooms of town houses often contained shops, and the buttery sometimes served as a dairy in rural contexts. Two doorways lying side by side in the middle of the low-end wall gave access to these rooms, usually in conjunction with a third door against the back wall that opened onto a stair to the service chamber above. Although the original arches of these doorways have frequently been removed, their position may be revealed by the distribution of peg holes used to secure the mortise and tenon joints of the wall timbers.

The tripartite plan described here is found in both large manor houses and small peasant cottages in the countryside, but is sometimes condensed in towns where houses consisting of only a hall and subdivided parlour (or occasionally a hall with service rooms) may be found. Houses of high status might also possess rear courtyards, containing additional

accommodation or perhaps bake-houses and workshops, but rarely add to the tripartite arrangement in their main ranges. Rectangular houses under a single roof are common, but more ostentatious town houses frequently contain their parlour and service rooms in relatively expensive cross-wings with jettied gables built at right-angles to their halls. From the beginning of the 16<sup>th</sup> century chimney stacks were inserted into open halls, and new houses built with ceilings throughout, but the standard layout endured. By the end of the same century fireplaces were typically provided in parlours as well as halls, and often the parlour chamber was also heated (but rarely the hall chamber). Not until the second quarter of the 17th century did the cross-passage plan begin to disappear from new houses, to be gradually replaced by a number of different layouts of which the 'lobby-entrance', where the main door opens into a narrow 'lobby' in front of a chimney stack between the hall and parlour, was the most common.



### The Standard Medieval House Plan

Curtis Farm would have reflected this layout when viewed from the green to the south-west. Its open hall probably survived when the original parlour was replaced by the present parlour and high-end chimney bay in the late-16<sup>th</sup> century, but was rebuilt during the mid-17<sup>th</sup> century. A scar on the ceiling joists of this new hall may relate to a cross-passage screen. Medieval service cross-wings often projected in front of their respective halls but the present wing appears to have been largely or wholly rebuilt in red-brick early in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.