# Historic Farm Buildings in the 21st Century: Adapting to a Changing Landscape

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# Part I

**Figure 1: A view over fields in West Sussex.**

# Introduction

The architecture of farm buildings possibly reveals more about a society than monumental or civic architecture; those are the things imposed on the people, whereas farm buildings are of the people. A truth can be found in the farmstead, where utility is king and people lived a life entirely of survival – a survival which was essential to the life of people in cities, and remains so. Maintaining the spirit of these buildings buildings and their place in the landscape is an important part of preserving both the history and the character of the countryside. Once a building is adapted for a new use, its look, feel and the spirit of the place change and this has an effect on the landscape. One of the biggest dangers facing rural farm buildings today is domestic conversions, which have become quite common. Unfortunately once roofs are altered with chimneys and vents, and walls with masses of new windows, these important historic buildings begin to look like houses, not farm buildings. This not only changes the appearance of the buildings, it changes the agricultural landscape as well.

It is not just changes in farm buildings that are affecting the landscape; the reverse is also true. New homes, businesses and infrastructure are needed and as these are built the countryside changes. In many places modern development encroaches on farm buildings which would have once stood in open agricultural land and buildings once surrounded by fields are instead surrounded by houses. Many farm buildings are losing their relationship to the landscape or vanishing from it entirely due to deterioration brought on by age and neglect, the changing use of land and expansion of urban areas. In order to best preserve historic farm buildings, the impact of development on these buildings must be considered along with the affect types adaptation have on their spirit of place and on the surrounding landscape.

## Dangers Facing Farm Buildings

**Figure 2: A field near Eynsford, Kent.**

With the increased pressure to build hundreds of thousands of new homes in Britain, more attention is being put on the greenbelt. Strangely, as public concern grows over development and land conservation, concern for the historic buildings within these landscapes seems to dwindle. In the eyes of many, it would seem, historic farm buildings have become nothing more than the ornaments or the houses of the wealthy. In their fear for the natural environment, people have forgotten the built environment that traditionally accompanied it. It is time once again to show care and concern for these buildings, before they disappear entirely or carelessness and naiveté destroys their relationships with their traditional landscape, and therefore their context both in space and in time.

Farm buildings without fields have no meaning, no raison d'être, no sense of place and no sense of history. They lose their relationship with their histories and therefore time is lost to

them. They become less like working buildings and more like artifacts in a museum - interesting to look at but impossible to understand in a reduced, destroyed or entirely contrived context. Farm buildings are increasingly being surrounded by development and this reduces our understanding and appreciation of them. The history of farm buildings can only be understood if the history of farming is, so how will people, in the future, understand these buildings if they are without their farms?

## Preservation Principles

In 1990, the Historic Farm Buildings Group organized a conference which would consider the challenges facing farm buildings and debate the methods for preserving them. At this conference, two particularly important ideas were put forth. The first came from the Peak District National Park, a representative of which stated, "Sustaining the farming community underpins any heritage concerns. If we don't sustain the farming, then we have shot out the bottom of all we are trying to do."[1] The second idea came from Shropshire authorities who "…while appreciating that something must be lost in residential conversions, accepted that with careful monitoring, something could also be saved."[2] These ideas remain important today and should be considered as part of a philosophy about the preservation of the countryside and of farm buildings.

Unfortunately, it remains difficult to list farm buildings. Many have been altered considerably over the years, so that a historic structure may be hidden under a modern roof or cladding. Farm buildings are also, by their very nature, in far reaching places that are forgotten or difficult to access. This means that many important buildings have likely escaped attempts to survey the countryside.

When it comes to the preservation of farm buildings, continued agricultural use is always preferable; this maintains both the spirit of the place and its context. Sometimes, however, agricultural use may no longer be viable. In these situations it is down to human ingenuity to find

[1] Wade Martins, Susana, ed. *Old farm buildings in a new countryside : redundancy, conversion and conservation in the 1990s: Historic Farm Buildings Group One Day Conference at the Westminster Centre, Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors, London, 29 November 1990.* Reading: Historic Farm Buildings Group, 1991. Print. P. 6
[2] Ibid.

a new use for these buildings before they vanish entirely. Some uses are more appropriate than others for preserving a building and the agrarian spirit that lives within it.

The most difficult, and often least successful, type of adaptive reuse for farm buildings is domestic conversion. Most authorities seem to agree that this should be done only as a last resort if there is no other way to save the building. It is not difficult to imagine why: once a place becomes a home, there are numerous things that have to change. Many openings are often created to make new windows where there were few or none before. Barn doors are typically too large and unwieldy to be used on a daily basis, so a new human sized door is cut. Chimneys and vents are added to the roof, perhaps a deck is added on the side, and soon the simple, utilitarian form of the barn is broken up with numerous new additions that in no way invoke its agrarian past. While continued agricultural use would be best, and a use which keeps the fabric unchanged preferred, sometimes domestic conversions happen, either because there was no other way to save the building or because someone just did not know better.

**Figure 3: This converted barn on Whidbey Island, Washington, USA looks a bit too much like a house. Image is "Oh yeah" by Jenna Elia Pfeifer.**

# Building Types:

**Figure 4: A variety of farm buildings at the Weald and Downland Museum in West Sussex.**

It is important when discussing farm buildings to understand just what is meant by the term. Numerous building types fall into the category of farm buildings, including the farm house, barn, granary, oast houses, stables, sheepcotes, cow-houses, piggeries and dovecotes; the arrangement of any combination of these buildings makes up the farmstead. Not all of these building types will be studied here, but the ones that will be are described in greater detail.

## Barns

**Figure 5: The Wheat Barn at Cressing Temple.**

The most thought of, and possibly most important, building on a farm is the barn. Simply put, a barn is a building for the processing and storage of grain crops. Storage is usually temporary as barns are typically used more for production. The most common are threshing barns, which take their name from the process carried out within them. The threshing process separates the grain from the stalk; from the medieval period until the mid-nineteenth century, when the threshing machine was invented, this was done using a hand flail to beat out the grain[3]. Winnowing followed, a process which removes the chaff from the grain, using a draft, by tossing

[3] Brunskill, R.W. *Traditional Farm Buildings of Britain and Their Conservation.* New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2007. Print. P. 40.

the grain until all the chaff was blown away. This required many of the same elements as threshing and was done in the same space. Both these tasks required proper light, height and the ability to control ventilation; the space for it was called the threshing floor. As farming practices improved, yields increased and this meant increasing the size or number of threshing floors in barns and of course increasing the size of the barn itself. The largest and finest of these are the aisled barns.

The aisled barns are massive, with their roofs reaching almost to the ground. Inside, there is a central nave with smaller aisles to either side. These barns are divided into structural bays; the smallest would have three bays, most five and the larger ones ten[4]. Typically, a barn with fewer than five bays had only a single threshing floor, while barns of more than five bays had two[5]. The aisles were usually used for storage but in England's southern and eastern counties a practice developed of fitting the aisles with stalls for cattle, though only in a few cases[6].

Though barns are typically for a farmer's storage and threshing, some were used to store tithes as well. In these barns the tithes – a tax paid for the support of a parish priest – were stored. Tithes were paid in various ways, but one common way was as a proportion of grain grown on the land and barns had to be built for their production and storage.

[4] Brunskill, R.W. *Traditional Farm Buildings of Britain and Their Conservation.* New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2007. Print. P. 45.
[5] Darley, Gillian. *The National Trust Book of the Farm.* London : National Trust : Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1981. Print.
[6] Brunskill, R.W. *Traditional Farm Buildings of Britain and Their Conservation.* New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2007. Print. P. 46.

## Animal Accommodation

**Figure 6: The dovecote at Rousham House in Oxfordshire.**

Until the mid-eighteenth century[7] pigs generally ran in herds in the woods under the charge of a swineherd. At that time, however, common land was increasingly enclosed and the home for pigs became the farm. The pigsty developed into a low-ceilinged loose box with a small exercise yard. Sometimes poultry were kept in a loft above, where the body heat from the pigs could warm it in the winter.

Dovecotes are found on farms from medieval times[8] and from the early seventeenth century they could be built by any landowner. They were, however, built mainly by landlords and monasteries as a status symbol. Dovecotes had a large number of nesting boxes and low door

[7] Brunskill, R.W. *Traditional Farm Buildings of Britain and Their Conservation.* New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2007. Print. P. 77.
[8] Brunskill, R.W. *Traditional Farm Buildings of Britain and Their Conservation.* New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2007. Print. P. 82.

to allow access to the eggs.  Unfortunately for small landowners, the birds kept by the upper classes would forage in their fields and ruin their crop. Though these troublesome birds were once only allowed for the privileged anyone could keep poultry. They ran freely on the farm during the day, but at night they were shut securely in the poultry house. It was typically raised off the ground and had warm nesting boxes.

It is the various types of animal accommodation which are the most difficult to find new uses for. The buildings are often small, with little ventilation, poor lighting and low ceilings. This means that many of these buildings, including not just piggeries and dovecotes, but sheepcotes, cow houses and others, are in danger of dereliction due to disuse.

## Oast Houses

**Figure 7: This large complex of oast houses near Maidstone has undergone a domestic conversion.**

Hops became a common crop in Kent and Sussex in the fifteenth century, and their cultivation developed until, as early as 1574[9], artificial drying in a kiln was recommended because the process of natural drying was unsuitable for large yields. These hop kilns are known as oast houses. Complete oasts have storage space for green hops, the kiln, and another storage space for dried hops waiting to be packed. The characteristic cowl was invented in the 1790's as a device to block the wind and allow air to circulate below; it rotates through the use of a weather vane[10]. The majority of surviving oast houses date from the nineteenth century.

[9] Brunskill, R.W. *Traditional Farm Buildings of Britain and Their Conservation.* New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2007. Print. P. 97.
[10] Brunskill, R.W. *Traditional Farm Buildings of Britain and Their Conservation.* New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2007. Print. P. 99.

## The Farmstead

**Figure 8: Far more can be understood about the buildings at Cressing Temple if they are studied as a whole.**

While each individual building on the farm is important, they are best considered as a complete farmstead. Each building on a farmstead is part of a system and it is only by studying a complete system that the processes a farm carried out and the change it underwent become truly understandable.

The buildings on the farmstead are designed to see the grain from planting through to sale or use. They therefore included buildings for the storage of grains, which is best stored where surfaces are dry and clean, ventilation is good and vermin kept at bay. A granary raised above the ground met these requirements. The granary fell into four types: freestanding, raised over a cart-shed, raised over a stable or combined with food preparation. The most common arrangement was a granary raised over a cart-shed, but the freestanding granary is most common in south-east England.

Farms in certain areas contain buildings that serve multiple uses. Unlike places in most mixed farming areas, like Essex, where grains and animals had their own buildings, in upland areas a hybrid building formed. Field barns in these areas have multiple uses: animals can enter below and hay and fodder can be stored in the loft above. These field barns are typically a significant distance from the main farmstead and therefore, to make life easier for the farmer, had to serve numerous functions.

The buildings of the farm offer much more historical evidence when considered as a unit than when studied individually. The interaction of these buildings is often their most important aspect, but this is becoming endangered as the context of farms is ruined by development or farmsteads are broken up into separate ownership for various uses because buildings have become redundant.

**Figure 9: The Grange Barn at Coggeshall is a historic farm building that also became redundant.**

Over time examples of these building types have become fewer; this is even truer of the especially ancient ones. Of the medieval structures that survive most are barns or dovecotes. Barns also predominate the survivals from the sixteenth through eighteenth centuries. Most numerous are the survivals from the mid-eighteenth to early nineteenth centuries[11].

There are also two different types of old farm buildings, according to Nigel Harvey. In a speech given at the Historic Farm Buildings Conference, he explained this. The first type is historic farm buildings, typically defined as built before 1900. This date is chosen due to its agricultural significance: after this date the new construction of farm buildings almost ceased in Britain due the increased import of cheap food. The second type of building is the redundant

[11] Harvey, Nigel. "Old Farm Buildings, The Background." *Old farm buildings in a new countryside : redundancy, conversion and conservation in the 1990s: Historic Farm Buildings Group One Day Conference at the Westminster Centre, Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors, London, 29 November 1990.* Ed.Wade Martins, Susana. Reading: Historic Farm Buildings Group, 1991. Print. P. 8.

farm building. These are buildings which, due to change in agricultural practices are no longer useful on the farm. Although they are rarely completely disused, they are often only minimally used for things like extra storage, which does not justify anything more than minimal expenditure on repair and maintenance. Harvey notes that despite the difference between these two types "Most historic farm buildings are redundant, and most redundant farm buildings are historic."[12]

The question, of course, is what to do with any of these buildings. All are in danger of demolition or dereliction, but for the purpose of this dissertation, buildings not considered historic by the above definition will not be discussed. Many may question whether, in this urban era, farm buildings are even worth saving. In the same speech, Harvey also said, "Few other industries can show such a varied and continuous series of structural documents to illustrate their past" and that these old farm buildings also serve to remind us there is nothing new about agricultural change, redundant buildings or the adaptation of these redundant buildings to new purposes[13]. It is important to keep these buildings, both for their archaeological significance – they provide continuous documentation of agricultural change – and their cultural significance. At the same Historic Farm Buildings Conference, John Sell stated, "They root our culture in time and give it continuity, they root our culture in place.[14]" This, perhaps, is even more important than any archaeological evidence they could provide.

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[12] Harvey, Nigel. "Old Farm Buildings, The Background." *Old farm buildings in a new countryside : redundancy, conversion and conservation in the 1990s: Historic Farm Buildings Group One Day Conference at the Westminster Centre, Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors, London, 29 November 1990.* Ed.Wade Martins, Susana. Reading: Historic Farm Buildings Group, 1991. Print. P. 8.

[13] Ibid.

[14] Sell, John. "Farm Buildings, the Architectural Achievement". *Old farm buildings in a new countryside : redundancy, conversion and conservation in the 1990s: Historic Farm Buildings Group One Day Conference at the Westminster Centre, Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors, London, 29 November 1990.* Ed.Wade Martins, Susana. Reading: Historic Farm Buildings Group, 1991. Print. P. 9.

# Regional Landscapes

**Figure 10: Although this field is near Shoreham in Kent, rapeseed fields can be found all across the UK.**

The building types typically found on a farmstead will vary from place to place, as will traditional materials and farming practices. For the purposes of this paper only two regions have been chosen for in depth study, the English counties of Kent and Essex, although examples from other areas are included. It is helpful to understand more about the farming traditions of these two regions, their landscapes and the protection they offer.

## Kent

**Figure 11: A view of the Kent Downs AONB near Shoreham.**

The county of Kent is known as the "Garden of England" as its gently rolling hills and many fertile river valleys lend themselves well to farming. These hills allowed for a variety of farming activities to take place.

In the valley between hills there may be a river; this creates a flood plain in the valley bottom. Throughout the winter it may be submerged in water and grass is the only crop which can survive this – arable crops cannot be grown here so the flood plains are instead used for grazing livestock[15]. In some areas, such as the Darent Valley, there is another level a few meters

[15] *From Hops to Lavender, a self guided walk through Kent's Darent Valley*. London: The Royal Geographical Society with Institute of British Geographers, 2012. Print. P. 21.

higher and farther away from the river which no longer floods as it historically would have[16]. These fields often contain rich soils in which crops like hops, fruits and vegetables can be grown.

Further up the valley on the sloping hillsides the soils are less fertile but still arable for cereal crops like wheat, barley and oats[17]. The fields here are still cultivated just as they historically were. In a few places, higher up on the hills, the ground becomes extremely steep. During the Second World War these areas were used as the need to grow more food increased[18]. They were once cultivated using small tractors or horses, but today's tractors and combine harvesters are too large for safe use on such steep hills[19]. Instead these fields have been allowed to revert to native chalk grass and in the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, or AONB, they are carefully maintained to provide a habitat for native species[20].

At the very top of the hills in many areas is woodland. Farmers consider the soil here too poor to give a worthwhile yield for cultivating, so it remains productive woodland[21]. In some areas, like Meenfield, owned by Sevenoaks District Council, traditional management is still practiced, and trees are still harvested[22]. This harvest provides building materials just as it would have historically.

There are a few building materials native to Kent. One is rag-stone or Kentish rag, a very hard, blue-grey limestone found in the area around Maidstone. In the Downs and greater Kent flint is the more common stone and, in the past, a commonly used building material. As time passed brick became common in the north and east areas of the county while timber became

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[16] *From Hops to Lavender, a self guided walk through Kent's Darent Valley.* London: The Royal Geographical Society with Institute of British Geographers, 2012. Print. P. 18.
[17] *Ibid.*
[18] *From Hops to Lavender, a self guided walk through Kent's Darent Valley.* London: The Royal Geographical Society with Institute of British Geographers, 2012. Print. P. 19.
[19] *Ibid.*
[20] *Ibid.*
[21] *From Hops to Lavender, a self guided walk through Kent's Darent Valley.* London: The Royal Geographical Society with Institute of British Geographers, 2012. Print. P. 17.
[22] *Ibid.*

more popular in the south and the Weald. In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, timber became common-place throughout the county. Thatch remained the roofing material of choice for barns, though by the nineteenth century the roof of the farmhouse was mostly tiled.

Perhaps the most stereotypically Kentish building is the oast house, with their white cowls that are still seen all across the countryside today. They are built of stone or brick with roofs of timber. The round ones had conical roofs with curved, purpose made tiles. The white cowls adorning these roofs dot the Kent countryside and give it a special character.

A large part of Kent is offered protection by the Kent Downs AONB. Though the landscape across Kent is generally similar, it is interesting to note differences between two areas. The first is the Darent Valley near Shoreham, which is in the AONB, and the second an area near Chilham which falls just outside it.

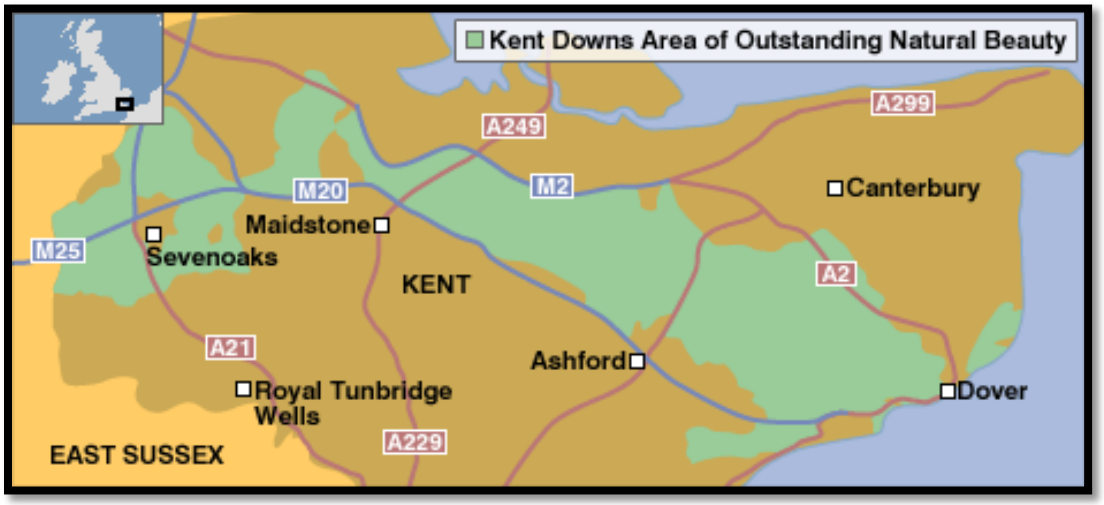


**Figure 12: A map of the Kent Downs AONB. Image from BBC News.**

On a walk from Shoreham to Eynsford, in the AONB, traditional landscapes surround. Livestock still graze in the flood plain, hops, lavender and rapeseed are cultivated in higher fields, cereal crops above that, in the steeper hills there is native grassland and the hilltops are crowned with woodland. Were it not for the cars and occasional train, the place would feel

unchanged. The Kent Downs AONB is twenty percent woodland and one of Britain's most wooded AONBs[23]. In this area, forestry is the second largest land use, following agriculture[24]. The woodlands are part of what makes the area so beautiful; they add greenery and texture to the landscape when viewed from afar, and from within the woods, in April and May, the carpet of bluebells is a stunning sight.

**Figure 13: A field near Shoreham, Kent.**

Looking down on the Darent Valley from the woods the farmlands are visible. In May the green countryside is broken up with swathes of yellow rapeseed and hedgerows remain, giving the landscape a patchwork look. Cattle and sheep still graze along the river and grains are still grown in the field. In this place, the AONB has served its purpose well. The landscape remains much the same as it always was and although this freezes it somewhat strangely in time it means

[23] *From Hops to Lavender, a self guided walk through Kent's Darent Valley.* London: The Royal Geographical Society with Institute of British Geographers, 2012. Print. P. 17.
[24] *Ibid.*

traditional agriculture is still practiced because little else can be done. Historic farm buildings here remain well situated in their historic landscapes.

A similar walk took through Chilham, Old Wives Lees and onto the Stour Valley Walkway will produce some interesting sights. Chilham, Old Wives Lees and even much of the Stour Valley are in the Kent Downs AONB, but they surround an area which is not protected by it. Chilham train station, although only three-quarters of a mile from the village, falls outside the AONB and there is a pocket of development. All around this are protected landscapes, so views to the hills remain similar to what they were historically.

Farm buildings are numerous here, but many of them are not in a spectacular state. Two of the buildings, still on working farms, are in rather poor shape. One is disused and partially collapsed, making difficult to determine an age. The other is almost certainly a pre-1900's structure, and although still standing and utilized, some of the boards were visibly rotted while others had plants growing out of or through them. A visit really here may bring into question what is best for the buildings; some of the ones in traditional use, generally considered the best course, were in the worst shape, while others in very non-traditional use were extremely well-kept. Many of the buildings fell outside of the AONB, and their deterioration shows how important that extra protection can be and that these buildings need to be better understood by everyone if they are to be saved.

## Essex:

**Figure 14: A view over Dedham Vale AONB in Essex.**

Though Kent lends itself well to farming, the landscape and location of Essex was perfect to encourage an agrarian society. The landscape is flat, dry and expansive – and most importantly arable – allowing for large-scale farming. It has a terrain and climate suitable for creating fertile land and lies in close proximity to major markets – particularly London – which made farming especially lucrative. Produce could easily be brought to London by barge and sold in markets, then manure brought back on those same barges from the city streets to fertilize the fields. It was a nearly perfect system.

Essex may not have the same hills as Kent, but farming practices are laid out in much the same way. In the floodplains only grass is cultivated and these areas are used for grazing livestock. Further away from the rivers and up the gentle slopes, a variety of crops are cultivated. This differs little from historic farming in Essex; around the 1840's, roughly three-quarters of

Essex farmland was arable and cultivated for crops while the remaining quarter was pasture land for livestock[25].

Not only did the landscape and location allow for successful farming, so did the people and traditions of the area. Much of the region of East Anglia lacked a manorial tradition, allowing instead for individual experimentation from yeoman farmers. Alongside the typical crops they planted root crops, such as turnips and carrots, as early as the 17th century and also bred turkeys and pigs extensively – a practice not particularly common in Britain. The success and signature of farming culture in Essex came down to versatility and variety: along with turkeys and pigs farmers also raised dairy cattle, sheep and pigs; vegetables could be useful and profitable as they could be used as fodder or sold in markets; wheat was planted to make bread and barley to make beer. Despite the vast variety of activities, many of them did not require specialized buildings. In fact, buildings of the region hardly vary in form, though they do in material.

Throughout Essex, timber is the dominant building material. However, brick did see a rise in popularity, especially in the Victorian era, and many of the brick farm buildings of Essex are especially beautiful. Although farm buildings by their very nature serve only a utilitarian purpose, the bricklayers took pride in their work and patterns can often be seen in the brickwork where none was necessary. In later times it was understood that many of these building types needed ventilation to better serve their purpose. Bricklayers created vents simply by selectively leaving out bricks, often in ways that made pleasing patterns. The thought that went into these buildings shows how important they really were; though built only for their functionalism, they served an important enough purpose that they also deserved beauty.

[25] Hunt, E.H. and Paim, S.J. "Essex Agriculture in the 'Golden Age', 1850-1873". *Agricultural History Review,* vol. 43.2, 1995: 160-177. Web. Retrieved 6 May 2015. P. 162.

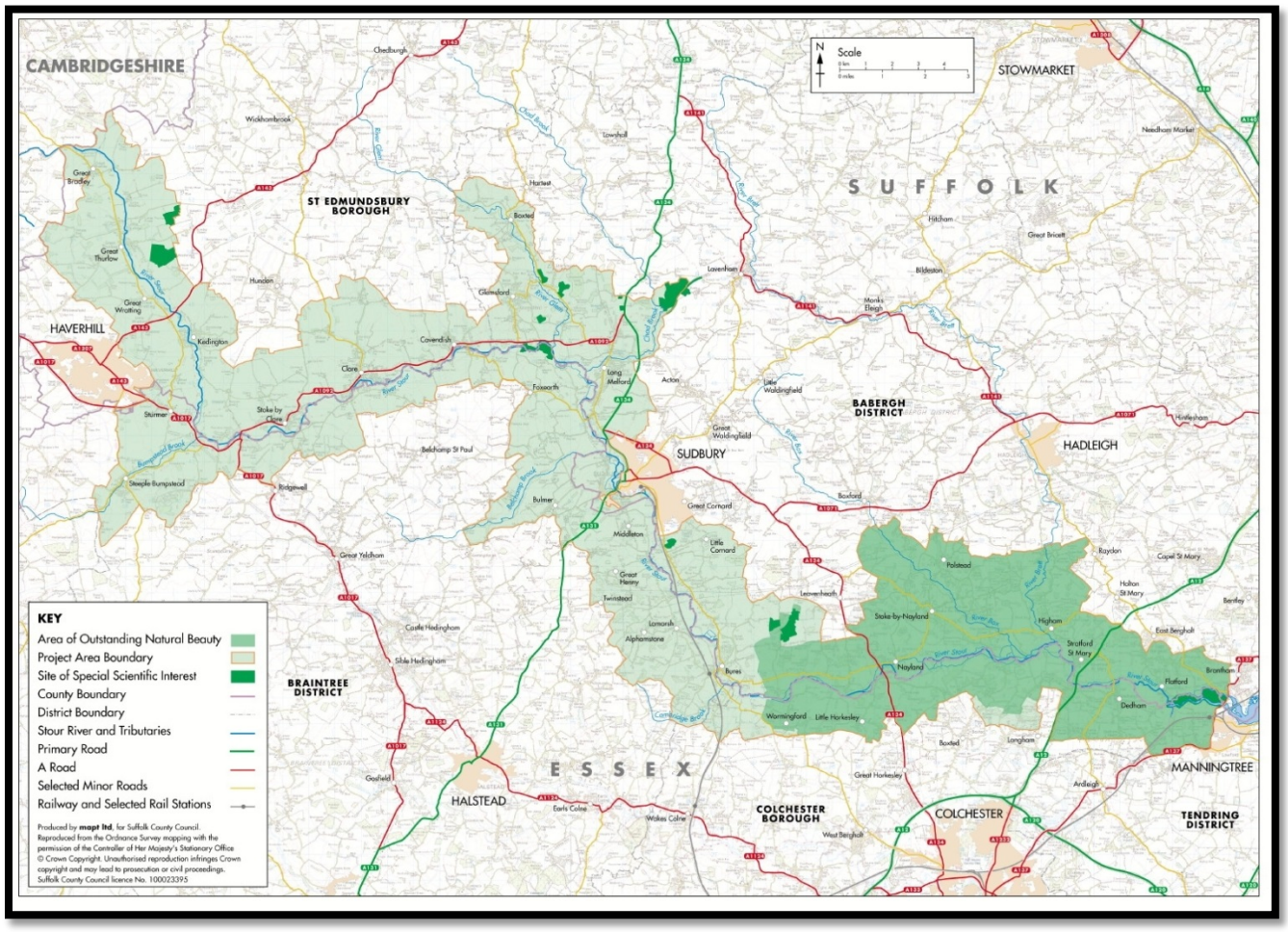


**Figure 15: Map of the AONB and Site of Special Scientific Interest on the border between Essex and Suffolk. Image from the Dedham Vale AONB and Stour Valley Project.**

One of the most beautiful places in Essex is the Dedham Vale AONB. A walk from Manningtree to Flatford and Dedham will pass the places from which Constable painted some of his most famous works. Flatford is where John Constable was raised; he painted Flatford Mill many times, a building which his father owned.

**Figure 16: A farm near Manningtree with elaborate brickwork.**

Examples of historic farm buildings can be found along the path to Flatford. Near Manningtree train station there is a beautiful brick farmstead not which appears to be in traditional use, if only as stables and storage. The remarkably elaborate brickwork and cohesive design of the farmstead with a single, continuous material, suggest that it is Victorian.

Flatford itself has a wide variety of building types and uses. Some of the historic cottages are still inhabited, while others have been taken over by the National Trust. The granary is now a bed and breakfast which from the exterior seems to be quite a successful renovation. It keeps its thatched roof and the windows and doors appear original – that is, there do not seem to be any new openings in the historic fabric. Dedham Vale as a whole is an ideal image of what the Essex countryside, and indeed the entire English countryside, could be. Since Dedham Vale is an AONB and Flatford is in the hands of the National Trust, the entire landscape is well looked after and quite idealized, creating a nearly unattainable benchmark. Despite this, the area's

designation – and fossilization – has kept it in agricultural use and the buildings and landscape continue in traditional work.

**Figure 17: Sheep grazing in a field in the Dedham Vale AONB.**

# Part II

**Figure 18: A detail of the structure in the Wheat Barn at Cressing Temple.**

# Buildings at Risk

Despite an increased interest in farm buildings towards the end of the last century, many are in declining condition and remain at risk. This may be for a variety of reasons including everything from accidental damage, to neglect, to irreversibly altered contexts. For any of these reasons buildings may be put on the Heritage at Risk Register. There are also buildings which may not be on the Register but are nonetheless threatened. A few examples will demonstrate that even the greatest buildings or well-maintained ones can become endangered.

## The Dovecote at Burnt House Farm

**Figure 19: The condition of the dovecote is getting increasingly worse. Image from Historic England.**

An example of this is the dovecote at Burnt House Farm in Chartham, Kent. The building is included in a study by students at the School of Architecture, Canterbury College of Art from 1980. It is a Grade II listed building and Scheduled Ancient Monument. Its reasons for being listed as a Scheduled Ancient Monument, according to the Historic England entry, are:

> "The dovecote at Burnt House Farm is a good example of a rare 18th century combined dovecote, and survives particularly well in mostly original condition. Its siting within a contemporary farmyard, in association with a group of similarly detailed buildings, provides evidence for the planned, ordered and decorative design of farm buildings advocated by 18th century agricultural writers."[26]

[26] "The Dovecote at Burnt House Farm." *The National Heritage List for England.* Historic England, 2015. Web. Retrieved 31 March 2015.

The building achieved its status as an ancient monument 1999, due in large part to its clever design.

The dovecote is a three story building intended to house pigs on the first floor, hens on the second and doves on the third. The body heat from the pigs warmed the entire building, keeping the poultry comfortable in colder months. It is built into a hillside so both the pigs and the hens enter at ground level. After a fire around 1700, Burnt House Farm was rebuilt to a careful plan; it includes fine brickwork throughout which gives it a unified feeling. The entire farmstead survives and is listed Grade II, but only the dovecote is a Scheduled Ancient Monument.

Today, though all the other buildings on the farmstead remain in good condition, the dovecote is on the Heritage at Risk Register. The building is now vacant and in poor condition; it is prioritized as grade B, a category defined as, "Immediate risk of further rapid deterioration or loss of fabric; solution agreed but not yet implemented."[27] The listing states that there is a new owner who plans to repair the building for low-key use.

The problem facing the dovecote is one of funding. The characteristics of piggeries, poultry houses and dovecotes make them difficult to reuse on a modern farm because they tend to have low ceilings, small doors and little ventilation. The dovecote at Burnt House Farm is in private ownership and it is unreasonable to expect the owners to divert funds to the maintenance of a building whose design – while highly functional at its inception – has rendered it largely useless. Historic England can list the building as a Scheduled Ancient Monument, but this status alone will not protect it: if they do not ensure that there are resources available for the upkeep of the building its condition may still decline.

[27] "Dovecote at Burnt House Farm ,Chartham - Canterbury". *The Heritage at Risk Register*. Historic England, 2015. Web. Retrieved 31 March 2015.

## Frindsbury Barn

**Figure 20: Frindsbury barn after it sustained fire damage in 2005.**

A second significant building at risk is Frindsbury Barn, located near Rochester, Kent. The barn's Grade I listing proves that it is of great importance. Built around 1300, it is the longest medieval timber framed structure in Great Britain[28]. In 2005, a series of fires destroyed four of its fourteen bays.[29] The SPAB gave financial help to fund emergency repairs that would secure the building. Though these repairs were successful in slowing its decline, it remains on the Heritage at Risk Register. Previously in priority category A, "Immediate risk of further rapid deterioration or loss of fabric; no solution agreed"[30], it has since been changed to category C, "Slow decay; no solution agreed"[31], largely thanks to SPAB funding. It is, however, entirely shocking that after ten years, no solution for the repair and future use of this important building has been agreed upon, though the Heritage at Risk entry indicates this is under discussion[32].

[28] Stummer, Robin. "Who Will Save the 'Cathedral of Middlesex'?". *The Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings.* SPAB, 2009. Web. Retrieved 9 March 2015.
[29] Ibid.
[30] "Barn 30 yards south east of the manor, Upnor Road (south side), Frindsbury Extra - Medway (UA)". *The Heritage at Risk Register.* Historic England, 2015. Web. Retrieved 30 March 2015.
[31] Ibid.
[32] Ibid.

## Fant Farm


**Figure 21: The current proposal for the development of Fant Farm. The arrow shows the location of the farm buildings. Image from Kent Online.**

Even buildings in good repair and under good ownership can be threatened in other ways. Fant Farm, near Maidstone, Kent, is of a group of buildings which includes Fant House, two barns and four oasts; both the oasts and Fant House are listed Grade II[33]. This farmstead is not threatened by deterioration or demolition, but its relationship to the landscape is in danger of being lost entirely.

Maidstone Borough Council is searching for a location to build 19,600 new homes. A considerable number of these were to be built on the one-hundred-fifty acres of former agricultural land surrounding Fant Farm. This previous attempt to include the development of Fant Farm in the Local Plan was turned down[34], but now Gleeson Developments wants to put

[33] "Oast House at Fant Farm to South of Fant House". *The National Heritage List for England.* Historic England, 2015. Web. Retrieved 31 March 2015.
[34] Stewert, Jefferey. "Anger at Fant Farm Housing Plan". *Maidstone Green Party News.* 21 October 2014. Blogger. Web. Retrieved 20 March 2015.

270 new homes on the site[35]. Although this plan is to build houses on one corner of the land and leave the rest as a park, this reduction in the size of the agricultural land would still damage the relationship of the farm buildings to the landscape. A new development will open the door for further building in the future; before long the relationship of the historic buildings to their landscape will disappear entirely.

[35] Smith, Alan. "Residents reject proposal to build 270 homes on Fant Farm, Maidstone". *Kent Online.* 16 November 2014. KM Group. Web. Retrieved 20 March 2015.

# Case Studies

**Figure 22: The barn at Marks Hall Garden has been converted into a visitor's center. Though its use is new, it still stands beside agricultural fields.**

A more in depth look at a few examples will demonstrate the importance of applying proper design knowledge and theories when restoring or adapting historic farm buildings, as well as the importance of taking the traditions of the landscape into consideration. Increasingly thought and care goes into the adaptation of historic buildings, and more care is being put into the maintenance of traditional rural landscapes. However, little concern is given to the relationship of the two, despite their codependence; they rely on each other for their success, one cannot be entirely effective without the incorporation of the other. Farm buildings were designed to compliment a specific landscape; this must be taken into consideration if the spirit of the buildings is to be maintained. While these examples look at the restoration, adaptation and design of the buildings, their context is also studied with the understanding that historic buildings belong in a historic landscape.

## Bagham Barn


**Figure 23: The main entrance to Bagham Barn Antiques.**

Bagham Barn is a Grade II listed 17th century barn near Chilham in Kent[36]. The structure is timber frame with a tile roof, weatherboarding and a brick base. Fifteen years ago, it was derelict[37]. It had been removed from agricultural use and was not in a position where it could be used on a farm again: all around it was built up, with train tracks on one side, a busy highway on the other and a school and warehouse on the third. Only one side remained a field, though a road ran through that only about fifty yards from the barn.

[36] "Barn 25 Yards South of Bagham Farm House". *The National Heritage List for England.* Historic England, 2015. Web. Retrieved 31 March 2015.
[37] "Bagham Barn Antiques - History". *Bagham Barn Antiques.* Bagham Barn Antiques, 2015. Web. Retrieved 30 January 2015.

The barn was eventually bought by someone looking for a place to open an antiques store. The location is perfect: a two minute walk from the Chilham train station and fewer than ten miles from Canterbury, on the main highway to Ashford and Maidstone. In a way, much of what destroyed its context and put an end to its agrarian use is what allows the barn to be a successful business today.

To turn the barn into a place which could house a business, much work had to be done. The roof was partially collapsed and much of the structure appeared to be rotting[38]; it was unusable for any purpose, let alone as a showroom for expensive antiques. The planning permission from the beginning was for a store; presumably the local authority considered this an acceptable way of saving the barn from the brink of destruction. It is lucky that this barn even found a new use, since its noisy location meant no one would have wanted it for a home. Instead it became a business and what resulted was a succesful, and overall well done, renovation that restored the building in a way which kept it looking like a barn.

Even from the road, it is easy to see that Bagham Barn Antiques is a barn. Although the main doors now have large glass panels, this is the only immediately noticeable change to the façade. In its shape it remains the same barn it always was. A few windows were added along a secondary wall, but they are small and not immediately noticeable. The lack of openings is much of what keeps it looking like a barn, but of course this is only possible because the barn is now a business that does not require much natural light.

The barn's relationship to what little land it still stands on is acceptable. This land is now a parking lot, partially paved and partially covered in gravel. What saves it from looking like any other store is that there are numerous displays and items outside, most of them related to

[38] "Bagham Barn Antiques - History". *Bagham Barn Antiques.* Bagham Barn Antiques, 2015. Web. Retrieved 30 January 2015.

gardening. The clutter this creates is somehow reminiscent of a working barn, which would likely have piles of tools and equiptment outside. The relationship of the ground to the façade is not typically agricutltural, but it is not offensive either.

The main part of the barn's interior is entirely successful. The doors open into a space which retains its double height, and the original beams are still visible, rather delightfully with a few cobwebs still clinging to them. There is a grand stair case up to a mezzanine level which does not feel inserted, and on this level as well the original beams are visible. The slanting ceilings in the mezzanine with their sometimes low height still feel like a barn, not a house or a modern store. There are numerous rooms inserted wherever they fit and although this breaks up the large spaces, it gives the building a pleasant feel, and where original elements are still visible, it reminds one it is a barn.

Unfortunately the barn also has secondary spaces where the renovation was not completed to the same standard. In these rooms you may as well be standing in a newly-built furniture show room. There are no original elements visible and the only way you might know you are in a barn is if you look out the window and see the rest of it. This area of the barn, which mainly suffers due to the beams being drywalled over, had previously suffered the worst damage. Before the ronovation, this area was almost entirely collapsed. Much of the original fabric may not have been salvageable and in this situation it is enough that the barn looks intact from the outside and the main spaces keep original elements.

**Figure 24: The main, double height space in Bagham Barn. The structure remains visible and it is open to the ceiling.**

**Figure 25: A view of the main space from the mezzanine level.**

The only element which truly keeps Bagham Barn from feeling like a barn is its context. When the railroad first came through it probably did not affect it too much, and when the roads further subdivided the land they probably made do. In some ways these may have been helpful additions, as the farmer was likely recompensed for the land lost. Something, however, must have happened which forced the owners of Bagham Farm - of which the barn and house still survive - to sell more land, this time to a school. After the school was built, there would not have been enough land for farming to remain viable and it fell into decline. Now a final development is ruining the barn's context completely.

**Figure 26: The roof of Bagham Barn can be seen in this photo and the new construction is visible in the background. Also shown is how close the rail road is to the barn. This image shows how entirely ruined the barn's context now is.**

Recently, the last remaining open field beside the barn has been developed for housing. In March foundations had already been laid for numerous single family homes, terrace houses and apartments. This final development will entirley ruin the barn's context with its surroundings. No matter how good a renovation is, if the relationship to the landscape is destroyed, it will never truly look like a barn again.

## Feeringbury Farm

**Figure 27: The barn at Feeringbury Farm after the renovation. The new doors are visible as is the highly innovative roof. Image from Goodfellow Communications.**

The barn at Feeringbury Farm in Essex is a Grade II listed Tudor building - although with Georgian aisles – originally dating from the sixteenth century[39]. It is a massive structure, encompassing seven thousand square feet of space[40], but was nonetheless converted into a home and work space. The renovation was extremely successful and stands as an example of what can be achieved with proper care and quality design. The entire process was showcased on Channel 4's *Grand Designs* in its eleventh series; a second episode revisiting the story was aired the following series. This nationally aired series showcases some of the best design in the country

[39] "Barn of Feeringbury Farm, 60 Metres South East of Feeringbury Manor". *The National Heritage List for England.* Historic England, 2015. Web. Retrieved 10 February 2015.
[40] "The Large Timber Framed Barn, Essex". *Grand Designs.* Channel 4, 5 October 2011. Television.

and shapes many people's idea of good design. By featuring the renovation of this barn, the show may have helped raise expectations of domestic conversions.

The barn was converted into a home quite recently; it was completed in 2011 after eighteen months of work. The previous owners gave the massive barn to their son, Ben Coode-Adams, and his wife, Freddie Robbins, so they could turn it into their home and work-space[41]. Planning permission was easy to come by via a loophole: if over half the space is for work, residential can be incorporated as well[42]. This allowed the owners to turn the historic barn into their home and studio.

This couple was perfect for turning a barn into home. From the beginning, they wanted none of what they referred to as "nice-ification"[43]. They wanted to maintain as much of the historic fabric as possible – even when it was far more difficult to do so – and they did not want to build a cozy place within the large space. They refused to insert a large second level, and instead essentially bulit a house at one end of the barn out of old grain silos they found previously stored in the barn.

The initial budget for the renovation was £650,000, but they spent £800,000[44]. This was largely due to their diligence in maintaining the historic fabric. Not only were the two six and a half foot wide silos reinserted, one as a bathroom and one as a staircase, but the mezzanine they created is made of recycled wood and iron. The owners reused as many found objects as possible, turning things like a pipe into a shelving bracket. All the new insertions were made perfectly plumb to show how distorted the original structure has become[45].

[41] "The Large Timber Framed Barn, Essex". *Grand Designs.* Channel 4, 5 October 2011. Television.
[42] Ibid.
[43] Ibid.
[44] Ibid..
[45] Ibid.

**Figure 28: A view of the interior of the barn showing the silos inserted at one end to create a separate space. Image from Goodfellow Communications.**

**Figure 29: The interior of the barn towards the work space, which is just beyond the partition. Image from Goodfellow Communications.**

The barn was repaired in Georgian times and at that time inferior softwoods were used. The conservation officers nonetheless insisted as much of the structure be kept as possible, so the owner was forced to splice a new piece of good wood with the bad, something Ben considered, "making the wrong wronger"[46]. It may go against his beliefs, but it still left him with a beautiful result.

One of the elements of the renovation which made the end result successful but

[46] "The Large Timber Framed Barn, Essex". *Grand Designs.* Channel 4, 5 October 2011. Television.

added to the cost was insulation. The owners wanted the structure to remain visible from the inside, just as it has always been. In order to achieve this all of the weatherboarding was removed from the exterior of the barn, 125 millimeter fiber board insulation was installed, and finally new weatherboarding replaced on top[47]. This painstaking process cost quite a lot, but the results were certainly worth it; the exposed structure on the inside is absolutely stunning to look at and keeps it feeling like a barn.

By far the most expensive part of the renovation was the roof. In order to please the local authority and et light to the interior, a special kind of roofing was installed. It is a corrugated metal roof - not original to the barn, but what it had in its previous iteration - but instead of being entirely solid, it is cut into mesh to form skylights. The manner in which it is cut means that from the outside it looks a solid, even at night, but inside the skylights are visible and let much needed natural light into the space. This special roof cost £130,000 alone, but is a huge part of what makes the barn inhabitable on the inside while still looking like a barn from the outside.

Overall the renovation was successful. The barn remains in context in the landscape, with fields on three sides, and the interior, although now a workshop and home, still feels like a barn. The space did have to be cut in half to porvide sound proofing and a fire barrier between the work and home spaces, but much of this is glass and the main space is still open to the ceiling, giving a good indication of what it must have been like a hundred years ago. The renovation at Feeringbury shows the beauty an excellent domestic conversion can achieve and it is satisfying that this is the example most widely viewed by the public via a popular television show.

[47] "The Large Timber Framed Barn, Essex". *Grand Designs.* Channel 4, 5 October 2011. Television.

## Looking At Past Success:
## Cressing Temple and Coggeshall

**Figure 30: The Grange Barn at Coggeshall today.**

Cressing Temple and Coggeshall are home to two of the oldest barns in Great Britain, and stand rather remarkably only about seven miles apart. Cressing Temple was one of the first holdings of the Kinght's Templar and is home to two thirteenth century barns. The barley barn was built between 1205 and 1220 and is the oldest timber framed barn in the world, while the wheat barn was built a few decades later in 1280. The Grange Barn at Coggeshall was also built in the thirteenth century, but to serve a Cicstercian abbey. It sustained fire damage sometime around 1450 and those repairs are visible in its structure. All three of these barns were taken into public ownership at around the same time; Cressing Temple in 1987 and Coggeshall in 1982.

**Figure 31:The Grange Barn at Coggeshall shortly before it was compulsory purchased. Image from the National Trust.**

Saving Coggeshall from destruction was a seventeen year long fight; the owner wanted to build houses on the land, and wanted to demolish the barn to make more room even though it was already listed[48]. Eventually it was compulsory purchased by Braintree District Council, though it was later handed over to the National Trust[49]. The barn was in an extremely dilapidated state when it was finally purchased, and numerous repairs had to take place. The biggest problem was deciding the philospohy for repairing it, but in the end they did only repairs with no conjectural rebuiding, except at one end where they found original structures[50]. The barn is now open to the public and can be rented for various events such as weddings. In warmer months, theater performances are often held here.

Although the Grange Barn at Coggeshall was saved from destruction, it is now surrounded by houses and at the center of town. Most of the land surrounding it was sold for development, and it is now a grand barn with no farm and with little context.

[48] Boutwood, James. 27 Personal Interview. March 2015.
[49] Ibid.
[50] Ibid.

**Figure 32: The Barley Barn at Cressing Temple.**

In the case of Cressing Temple, the owner was far more helpful and wanted the county to purchase the buildings rather than see them go into decline[51]. It was sold to Essex at a knockdown price and has become a symbol of the county's desire to preserve history. Shortly before the purchase the barns sustained storm damage and repairs had to be carried out[52]. Today half of the wheat barn has a museum inserted into it with a mezzanine level looking out over the space. This museum gives interesting information and is worth having, but it is unfortunate that it breaks up the space. The barley barn remains one open space and is absolutely stunning to stand in.

Both barns at Cressing Temple can be rented for events. They hold weddings, as well as exhibitions and performances. The site remains in a largely agrarian context; although there is a busy highway to one side, as you enter the site all you see are fields which are still in agricultural use, even if the barns are not.

The continued difficulty facing both of these places is finding a proper new use for the barns. Although all three barns can be rented out, they lack any climate control and are often

[51] Boutwood, James. 27 Personal Interview. March 2015.
[52] Ibid.

either freezing or excessively warm; this does not make them attractive spaces to prospective clients. Coggeshall is especially difficult, because it is at the center of town and any noise carries to its neighbors. For now, these buildings are protected, but if maintenance is to coninue throughout generations, a new use needs to be found for them that is both profitable and appropriate; hopefully it will not be long before a use is found, but until then at least these magnificient barns are safe.

## The Next Fight:
## Harmondsworth Barn

**Figure 33: A view of Harmondsworth Barn from the south east. Image from English Heritage**

The barn at Harmondsworth lies outside of Kent and Essex, falling instead under the Greater London Authority. It is included here as an example of the danger facing even the most important of buildings and its struggle will likely soon be fought by heritage organizations. This example also shows one of Britain's greatest buildings at risk, and if the great buildings can be threatened, the good ones are in even more danger.

The Great Barn was constructed in the 1420's, replacing a previous structure which stood there in the times of the Priory of Harmondsworth. The barn is massive at fifty-eight meters long, with a central nave and twelve bays. It served as storage for grains, as well as a place for threshing; the barn's stores were not from tithes but rather from the farm itself.

The current barn was built under the ownership of William of Wykeham, Bishop of Winchester; it took fifteen months to complete, finishing in September 1427 for the price of fifty

to one-hundred pounds.[53] At Henry VIII's command in 1543, the property was exchanged and four years later sold to the Paget family, in whose ownership it stayed until 1774. Though over time the property of Harmondsworth was subdivided into a number of smaller farms, the barn remained in agricultural use until the last active farmer on the estate, WG Potter, left in the 1970's.[54] After this time the barn remained in use for storage and was well maintained until 2006, when it was bought as a speculative investment by an offshore company, reportedly for the price of one pound[55]. This company carried out no maintenance on the barn and its condition rapidly began to deteriorate. In 2011 English Heritage purchased the barn to rescue it from further deterioration and carry out much-needed repairs. It is now part of the National Collection and at times opened to the public.

Harmondsworth barn is a Grade I listed building as well as a Scheduled Ancient Monument[56]. This and its recent transfer into the hands of English Heritage should be enough to secure the future of the building. Unfortunately the barn is still under threat. New plans to expand Heathrow Airport by adding a new runway threaten the barn and the nearby Grade II listed church of St. Mary the Virgin. If the plans go through, the two buildings will be surrounded on three sides by runways and highways, and flights leaving and entering Heathrow will pass within a few dozen feet of their roofs[57], rendering them largely unusable.

[53] "History of Harmondsworth Barn". *Harmondsworth Barn.* English Heritage, nd. Web. Retrieved 9 March 2015.
[54] "History of Harmondsworth Barn". *Harmondsworth Barn.* English Heritage, nd. Web. Retrieved 9 March 2015.
[55] Stummer, Robin. "Who Will Save the 'Cathedral of Middlesex'?". *The Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings.* SPAB, 2009. Web. Retrieved 9 March 2015.
[56] "The Great Barn, Harmondsworth". *The National Heritage List for England.* Historic England, 2015. Web. Retrieved 9 March 2015.
[57] Stummer, Robin. "Who Will Save the 'Cathedral of Middlesex'?". *The Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings.* SPAB, 2009. Web. Retrieved 9 March 2015.

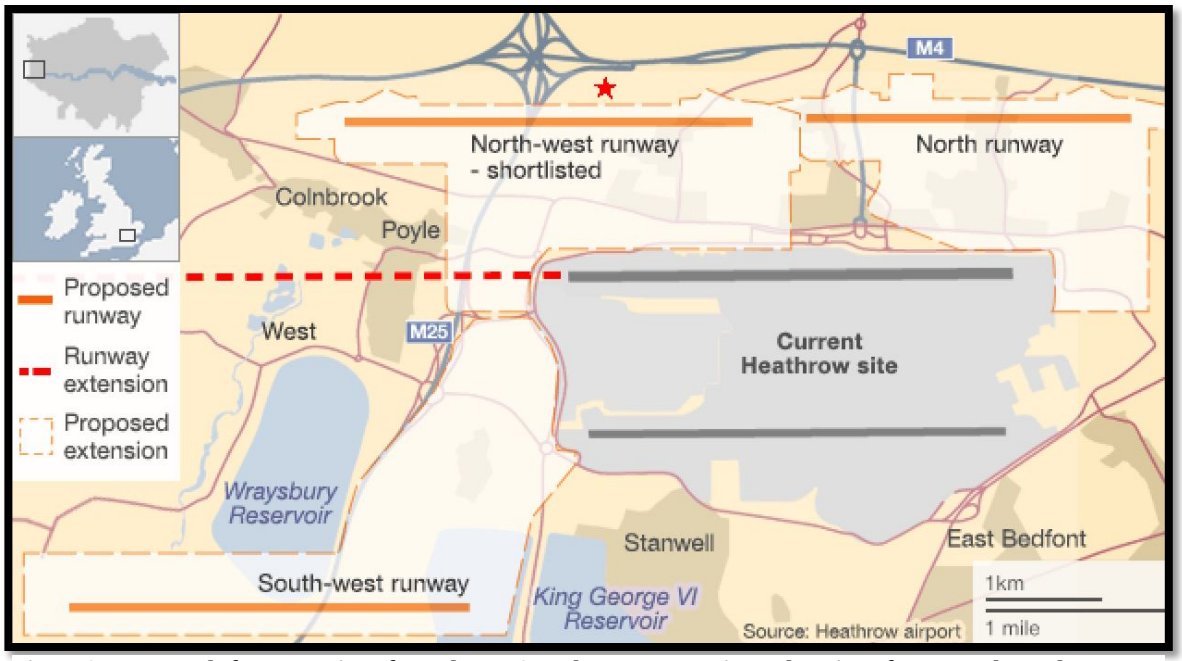


**Figure 34: Proposals for expansion of Heathrow. Star denotes approximate location of Harmondsworth Barn. Image from BBC News.**

The fate of both buildings in Harmondsworth has yet to be determined; it remains uncertain where the new runway will go. Whatever happens, the Great Barn still stands in an extremely altered landscape; the barn is still surrounded by modernity, even if a new runway does not bring it even closer. It also will still need a viable new use to secure its future, and as Cressing Temple and the Grange Barn at Coggeshall demonstrate, this is not easy to find for such an immense structure. Most unfortunately, the threat facing Harmondsworth Great Barn – an extremely important structure – is indicative of the threats facing more modest structures that even heritage organizations tend to forget about.

## The Beauty in the Breaking:
## Stanwood Memorial Barn


**Figure 35: The Stanwood Memorial Barn. Image by S. King.**

The final example of adaptive reuse comes from five thousand miles away in the United States where the issue of historic buildings of all types, including agricultural buildings, is not handled as comprehensively as in the United Kingdom. This barn is about as far away as possible in Washington State, in the northwest corner of the country where most buildings are practically modern by European standards. Washington is one of the newest states, the forty-second, to be admitted into the Union; it became a territory in 1853 and a state in 1889. Although pioneers and European settlers lived there before these dates, it was not well inhabited until after. Nonetheless, in the century between the first white settlements and the depopulation of rural

areas, over 30,000 barns were hand built in the state[58]. They were the landmarks people navigated by and marked the passage of time and generations of families. Many of these barns were built after 1910, when the census shows that most Washington residents were living in towns and cities[59].

In recent years, the state has recognized the importance of preserving rural heritage and numerous easements, tax incentives and grants have been made available to those wishing to conserve a historic farm building. The Heritage Barn Preservation Initiative was established in 2007, and between 2007 and 2013, awarded grants that helped save forty six heritage barns throughout the state[60]. These grants are only awarded to barns on the Washington Heritage Register or the National Register of Historic Places; a barn must be at least fifty years old and retain a significant amount of historical integrity to be awarded a place on the Heritage Register. Even if buildings in the United States are on the National or State Registers, there is no legislation limiting the changes which can be made to them and any owner may have their building removed from the list. In 2008, a survey was done of 112 of the 292 barns listed on the Heritage Barn Register. Of these, forty-four remain in agricultural use, forty-nine were converted to non-agricultural use, eighteen stood vacant and one had collapsed[61].

The example given here was not even on the register, though it was likely built around the turn of the last century. Its condition had deteriorated so much by the early 1990's that it was used only to store a dead tractor and other forgotten equipment. This building is an example of

[58] "Heritage Barns Statewide Survey and Physical Needs Assessment", 30 June 2008. *Washington State Heritage barn Advisory Committee.* Washington State Department of Archaeology and Historical Preservation, Web. 10 December 2014.
[59] Ibid.
[60] "Historic Barns Eligible for Rehab Grants". *Historic Friday Harbor, 2014.* Town of Friday Harbor Washington. Web, 10 December 2014.
[61] "Heritage Barns Statewide Survey and Physical Needs Assessment", 30 June 2008. *Washington State Heritage barn Advisory Committee.* Washington State Department of Archaeology and Historical Preservation, Web. 10 December 2014.

an old dairy barn, though most barns of this era and in this region were built on essentially the same plan: a main aisle with a single row on either side for the feeding and housing of stock, with a loft above for storing fodder.

This barn is proof that the reuse of building need not always be planned, nor is success ever predictable. It does not have to be a practical use, inhabitable or even hospitable for people or animals. Sometimes buildings just evolve and become something different and unexpected. This barn could not house livestock or farming equipment though it lay within miles of agricultural land. Due to its state of rapid decline, it was dangerous to enter. It was decaying and left to stand as a monument to the past until it eventually disappeared entirely. Somehow, though, this barn became more than a rotting outbuilding; it became a memorial, a monument to life and an important part of a community.

**Figure 36: The Memorial Barn being painted over to make way for a new message. Image by Ginger Kauffman.**

The community of Stanwood is a small one of only a few thousand people, many of whom still work on and own family farms. It is one of those places where the same families have lived for generations and people recognize each other in the street. The Memorial Barn was situated on one of only three main roads into the town and the only road that connects Stanwood to its farms.


**Figure 37: The Memorial Ban from the fields. Image by Jeremiah O'Hagan.**

When high school seniors began tagging the barn, signing their names and graduating year on its walls, the farmer was displeased. A little graffiti only drew more of the same until eventually the interior walls were covered in it. Some twenty or twenty-five years ago, however, the barn became more than just a place for kids to sign their name. People began painting the exterior of the barn as a memorial to a lost loved one. Over time the farmer became complacent and soon the barn was constantly utilized. Anytime a young person from the community died, their name went up on the barn. Friends and family gathered to create a memorial in their honor,

knowing full well that in a few weeks or months, someone would paint over it with a new message.

Maybe someone who drove by it only once would think it the illegal graffiti of rebellious teenagers, or the product of a hippie farmer or eccentric artist making a statement. They may not like it; they may even consider it an abomination or blight on the landscape, but they do not know what it is or what it means. Unlike so many other farm buildings, the landscape and context surrounding the Memorial Barn expanded. It not only included its traditional landscape but grew to include an entire town. Just as the Grange Barn at Coggeshall may prove difficult to understand without its historic landscape, the Memorial Barn became impossible to appreciate if you fail to realize its entire context. This barn, perhaps, has still lost some of its agricultural, working spirit, but in its place gained the spirit of an entire community, and became something far greater than what it once was. This is adaptive reuse at its finest.


**Figure 38: Graffiti at the Stanwood Memorial Barn. Image from Tear Down This Wall.**

# Part III


**Figure 39: The Stanwood Memorial Barn in one of its many iterations. Image from Steve Halverson.**

# Conclusion:
# Reconciling Tradition and Change

**Figure 40: This image of a Victorian railway viaduct near Eynsford shows how previous changes have become an important part of the landscape.**

There are elements like windows and doors and roofs that can detract from the aesthetics of a place, but true reuse is not about how it looks or how it works, but how it feels. Places like the Memorial Barn are not always kind to the eye, and it certainly fails to function, but it still manages to be an amazing place with a broken spirit that makes it beautiful. The Memorial Barn, like all barns, is a place of memory. Each farm building is a memorial, a relic of a time long past, a reminder of another moment in human history. They are a monument to man's constant struggle against nature and the human ability to shape our surroundings. The rural landscape cannot be left as a mere memory, recorded only on the canvases of Constable or Gainsborough.

**Figure 41: Cattle graze in Dedham Vale.**

The idyllic landscapes of these artists are in fact utilitarian, as are the traditional buildings within them. Historic farm buildings seem to closely resemble the land they are made from, and are representative of the people who made them. Despite their pure functionality there is beauty in the simplicity of farm buildings; they need only be useful, not aesthetically pleasing in any way, and yet they are attractive. Sometimes it is in the unnecessary details, the brick patterns or carefully shaped vents, which show the beautiful simplicity of the countryside and prove that even the people who live there appreciate beauty, of the buildings and the landscape.

For hundreds of years, these people did not try to overpower the landscape. They made their structures no more ostentatious than they needed to be; rather than compete with the landscape, the buildings complement it. Rural architecture became a reflection of the people who live there – simple, hardworking and resilient. It speaks about the people and their society, in harmony with the landscape  in a way most new builds could never be; new means either a country home for the rich, or an industrial complex for the capitalist; the old was a way of life.

The lives of these people deserve to be remembered and understood, but this can only happen if their traditional buildings and landscapes are cared for in an informed way. Cities may be the habitats of the future, but they will still be built on the goods of the country and it is worth remembering when planning cities and developing the land that not only was farming once a way of life, but farms are still a necessity for survival. If planned properly, enough agricultural land can be preserved to support life in the future and the historic farm buildings in this land can be preserved along with it.

Most of the buildings studied here are some of the grandest in the region, but they too have been threatened by modernity and urban expansion. Even in cases where the structures remained intact, like Bagham and Harmondsworth, their entire context changed without a thought. In the case of Bagham, English Heritage made sure as little as possible changed in the fabric of the barn, but was absent when the fabric of the landscape was altered. Fant Farm is further evidence that the context of farm buildings is given very little thought. The oasts are remaining intact, but the land is threatening to change forever. Some of these buildings, like Frindsbury Barn and the dovecote at Burnt House Farm, show that despite efforts to protect important buildings, even Grade I listed buildings and Scheduled Ancient Monuments can be at risk. A greater amount of attention needs to be paid not just to these buildings but to their context if the countryside is truly to be saved in any way; these grand buildings are offered the greatest protection, and their struggles are an indication of the threats facing lesser structures.

This paper has also given examples of buildings where a success was created. At Coggeshall and Cressing Temple it took years of fighting, but two of Britain's most important barns were saved and remain protected today. They still struggle with finding an appropriate new use, and Coggeshall is no longer in its original rural context, but they have been preserved for the

future. The barn at Feeringbury Farm shows that, with proper care and attention to detail, even domestic conversions can be successful and give old farm buildings new life.

**Figure 42: Sheep graze in Dedham Vale. In the background the lights of Manningtree threaten to alter the landscape.**

Everything loses something in transition; perhaps the real test of good reuse if it gained more than that which it lost; if it adds to the story instead of rewriting or erasing it. The spirit of a place is ephemeral; you cannot freeze it in time. Even if you keep a building exactly the same, the world will change around it; despite our best efforts, context and landscapes will change. It must therefore be remembered that when you touch a place, a building or a landscape, you can never fully maintain its spirit, but if you maintain a relationship between the two, the memory of the place will remain alive. Farm buildings and rural landscapes must be adapted for modernity if they are to survive, and a new use means a new life – you can only hope, in the process of change, to give to it as much life as you take, and perhaps, if all goes well, you will give even more than you took.

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