Fig. 1 Early C20 Ordnance Survey 1:2500

Old Hall Farm
Gissing.

Analysis
on behalf of
South Norfolk Council

NHER 31889
Old Hall Farm Gissing

Introduction
This short report is an analysis of the listed barns, stable and former dwelling at The Old Hall, Gissing. It is designed to inform the planning application for residential conversion which is with the Local Planning Authority. The existing list description is inadequate. The plan (fig.1) shows the site during the early 20th century and is more accurate and informative than other maps on this scale. The map has been annotated with letters to differentiate between the different buildings of historic importance.

Description
The location of each of the principal buildings is as indicated on the attached Early C20 OS plan

- Barn /stable A. This a timber-framed building of high quality with a pantile roof. It consists of a frame divided into bays by principal posts of which every other pair only were furnished with jowelled heads supporting tie beams.

These arch braced tie beams supported highly unusual trusses with cranked queen posts jointed to the tie, the principal rafters and the collar (Fig2). This is related to the familiar ‘upper cruck’ such as that at Morley Old Hall but has an entirely different function. At Morley the cruck is used in order to give head room in the attic by fixing a cruck shaped beam to the underside of the principal rafter and the foot of the beam to the tie beam situated well below the level of the wall plate.

The roof of building A is also furnished with wind bracing, two sets of butt purlins per pitch and collars to the intermediate trusses as well as the full trusses. The tie beams are arch braced. The use of intermediate trusses and the odd use of a cruck suggests a date in the first half of C17.

The building is now floored and the ground floor last served as stables with the mangers and hay cradles still in evidence. The floor appears to have been inserted as the transverse bridging joists are supported on timber corbels that have been nailed to
the principal studs rather than being integral. However, if the building started life as a barn it differs from other barns in that it has no side cart entrances and the entrances are from the gable-ends. The north gable-end is a late C19 or early C20 construction – deceptive in that the masonry is of re-used brick. The segmental arches and the door head are clearly made with later bricks and the C17 bricks have damaged arrises and wide, irregular joints.

- Barn B. This building is the show piece of the site and is constructed of brick laid in English bond and has a single cart entrance on its eastern face towards the northern end. On the western side at the southern end the building joins and opens into a slightly later barn at right angles. It also belongs to the C17 but probably somewhat later than building A.

![Barn B. east side](image)

The cart entrance is flanked by buttresses and there are ventilation loops throughout. The roof structure has the same curious crucks as in building A and thus become a special type and could be named 'the Gissing cruck'
As in building A there are intermediate trusses but this larger building has six lines of butt purlins as opposed to the four in building A. There are tension braces fitted into four bays at the northern end which is a development suggesting a date towards the second half of the C17.

The building underwent an odd transformation when barn C was joined to it. The southern pitch of barn C was continued across to replace the south bay of barn B thereby creating a hip. This may have been brought about by the masonry at the south corner of barn B having subsided leading to the failure of the gable and consequently the roof in that bay. It was decided that it was more economical to continue the roof of Barn C rather than attempt to rebuild the gable. The south east corner has been rebuilt up to eaves level.

- Barn C. This is a timber-famed barn of slightly inferior quality to the other buildings and with timber of lighter scantling. However, it is of considerable interest and dates to the second half of the 17th century. The trusses are not directly connected to the tie beams which are simply jointed to the wall plates where the lateral thrust from the rafters can be counteracted through the wall plates. In many cases the braces have been replaced with knees. The barn has mid rails. The trusses have collars and wind braces many of which have fallen. The frame is partly filled with wattle and daub; elsewhere this has been replaced with clapboard.
• Building D. Only one bay survives of this building along with the full length of its south wall which now forms the back wall of a later shelter shed on its courtyard side. The evidence shows that the building had a domestic function and could perfectly well have been a house if the demolished part included a chimney stack. There are several blocked windows two of which have retained their chamfered reveals and hood moulds and the remains of imitation ashlar reveals.

On the north gable end of barn B are two blocked holes which housed beams and the truss revealed at the gable suggests that it continued further north. Inside the surviving bay is a chamfered beam with barred stops and an upper floor with closely spaced flat joists with plastered boards – clearly for human occupation.
The most convincing evidence of the continuation of this block is the six inch Ordnance survey map of the 1880s which shows this block as still in existence (Fig. 8).

Fig. 7. Building D from the south. The gable end was built after the demolition of the rest of building D

Building D is the most surprising element in the group because it has all the signs of having been a house. It does not seem likely that it was simply a sham in order to improve the appearance of the buildings on the approach to the hall. This occurs for example at Godwick where the barn is given a fine domestic façade next to the site of
the hall with the interior serving simply as a barn. If this was the case at Gissing no attention would have been given to the interior.

- **Conclusion**
  The group of farm buildings are a very important survival of a C17 creation around a courtyard. It is rare to have so many buildings belonging to the same period and of such high quality. Later works such as the clay lump sheds on the western side of the site and the increased number of shelter sheds around the courtyard finishing with roofing over the yard have not seriously compromised the interest of the C17 buildings. The tantalizing survival of one bay of a C17 house is a most unusual addition to the group.

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June 2008