

CONSPICUOUS DISPLAY: THE EXTRAORDINARY GARDEN AND BUILDINGS OF A MINOR GENTRY FAMILY IN MID-SUFFOLK

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PASSING ALONG A very by-road early in 1916, my attention was called to an undoubted Elizabethan brick erection in a farmyard. Ye gods! there were initials and arms carved in stone shields within the pediments above each of the windows (now innocent of glass, with even their oak frames agog); and well-moulded corbel steps up both ends – and it is not only used for a stable but allowed to crack down one entire side.

With these words of surprise and disbelief Claude Morley, a keen local antiquarian, recorded his first impressions of Boundary Farm, Framsdén – an isolated farmstead situated near the top of what is, for Suffolk, a relatively steep-sided valley, a mile or so to the south-east of the small market town of Debenham. As its name implies, the farm is on the northern boundary of Framsdén parish, the boundary actually running through the farmhouse, putting part of it in Winston parish (Fig. 9).

But more surprises were awaiting Morley. Closer inspection of the farmhouse showed that each of the upper windows was supported by two beautifully carved (and painted) oak brackets; that the ‘overhung upper storey’ of the north side was ornamented by a pendant acorn of considerable size at each corner; and that the bead course along its lower edge, finely carved throughout, had in its centre ‘J.W.’ He was then shown what he considered to be ‘the gem of the premises’. This was a summerhouse:

Brick, long and narrow Elizabethan brick; roofed openly with curved oak joists; some twelve or fifteen feet square with doors all arched above (apparently the typical four-central Tudor arch), on three sides. Inside, across the threshold that was only held to the swaying jambs of the doorway by rusty iron clamps – inside, now tenanted by nothing but fowls . . . were the remains of the most beautiful fleur-de-lis in especially high relief, alternating with perfect Tudor roses and smaller fleur-de-lis, moulded upon the plaster ceiling, both upon the central horizontal square, and upon the four sides falling from it obliquely to the walls, down which the same once probably descended, since a double string-course surmounted their top. But very much of this is already lost (Morley 1916).

The summerhouse was also seen, in 1920, by another local antiquarian, the Rev. Edmund Farrer. He described the position of it as being ‘across the fore court, on the northern side of the house, and quite close to the high road but facing south, and overlooking part of the garden and orchard’. From it one could look out in three directions,

for there are circular-topped archways in front and on either side, and four small windows – one on either side of the southern arch, and one between each side arch and the corner of the building, which measures, in itself, 16 feet square. The roof is pitched, covered with old red tiles, and has gables on either side, but is now in a very dilapidated condition, as is also the interior, for its beautiful domed and plastered ceiling retains but portions of its decorations in the shape of fleur-de-lis and Tudor roses, and also some sprigs of a flowering lily (Farrer 1920, 55).

The position of the summerhouse can be confirmed on the Ordnance Survey first edition 1:2500 map of 1885 (Fig. 9). It can be seen as a small rectangle attached to the front garden wall. Unfortunately very little now survives of this building beyond two stubs of brick walling

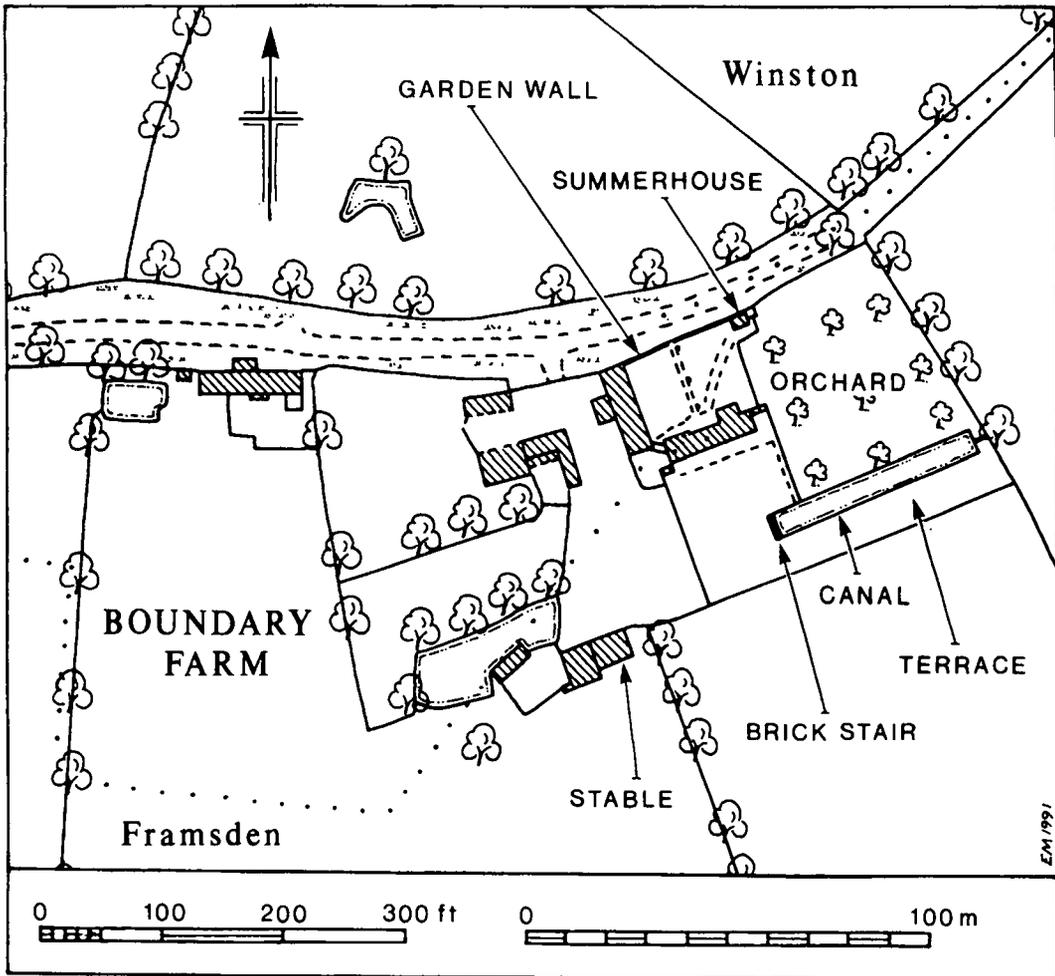


FIG. 9 – Boundary Farm: map of the farmstead, based on the Ordnance Survey 1:2500 scale map of 1885. The west end of the stable block is shown with various later additions, as can be seen in Plate IV.

projecting from the garden wall, and traces of the foundations. These remains do however indicate that the building measured $14\frac{1}{2}$ ft east–west and probably $13\frac{1}{2}$ ft north–south, and that it was bonded in with the garden wall and therefore contemporary with it. The wall increases in height to 6ft in the area of the summerhouse, and a ledge along the top of the wall at this point was probably designed to support the ends of the rafters of the roof. The garden wall is built in English bond with bricks measuring $9\frac{1}{8} \times 4\frac{1}{4} \times 2\frac{1}{4}$ in, suggesting a date before the mid 17th century. (For a conjectural reconstruction of the summerhouse, based on the two descriptions, see Fig. 10.)

The position of the summerhouse, attached to the front wall of the property, bounding the highway, seems to indicate that it was designed so that the occupants could use it to observe both traffic along the road and the inner tranquility of the garden. It could also, of course, be seen and admired by passers-by, perhaps a not unimportant consideration. Late 16th-century summerhouses in similar positions can still be seen at Seckford Hall near Woodbridge and at Melford Hall in Long Melford.

Although the plaster ceiling in the summerhouse has gone, there is still a wealth of

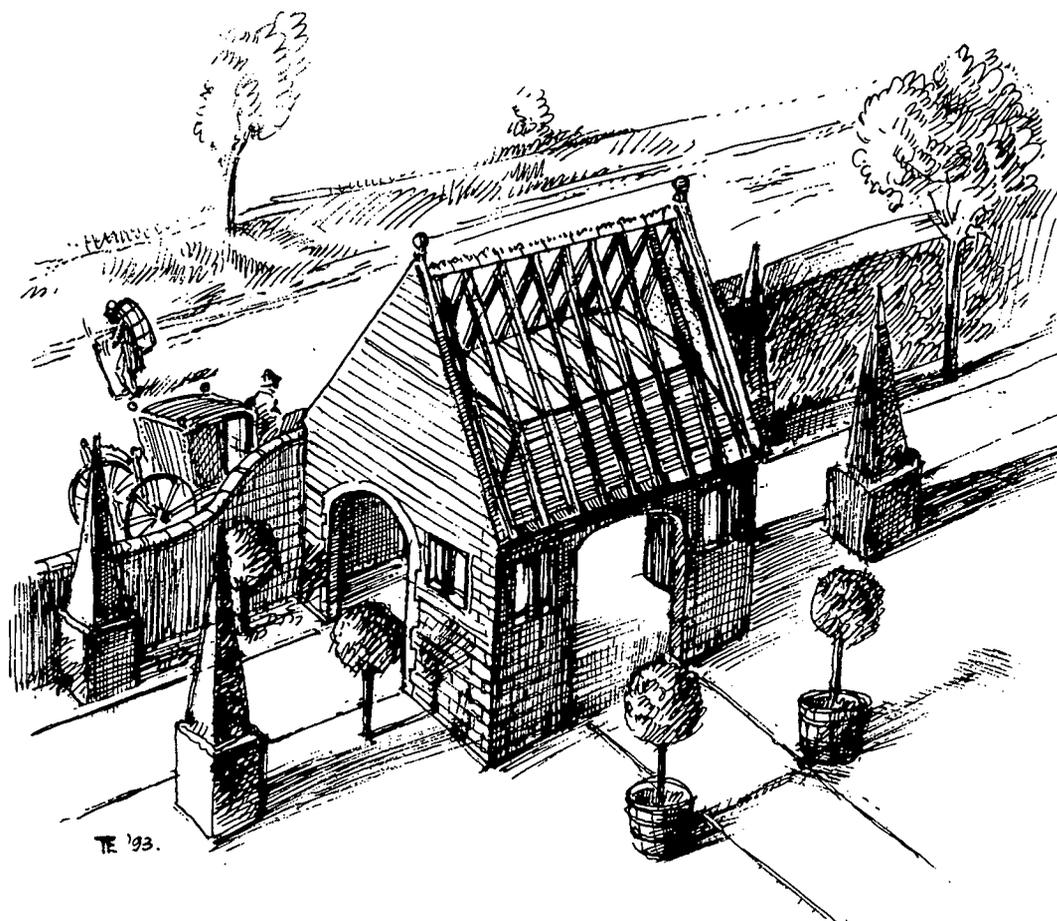
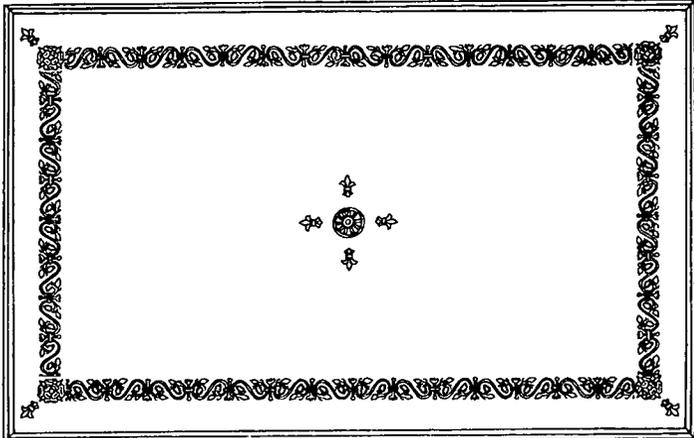


FIG. 10 – Boundary Farm: reconstruction of the early-17th-century summerhouse, as it may originally have appeared, based on the descriptions by C. Morley, 1916 and E. Farrer, 1920.

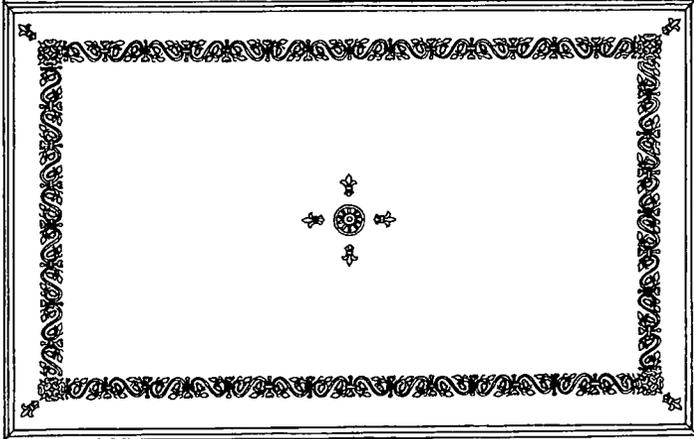
plasterwork, probably contemporary, in the farmhouse – in the parlour at the east end and the chamber above it (Fig. 11), in the large two-bay chamber over the hall (now divided into two small rooms and a passage) and in an adjoining chamber over the service area (Fig. 12). The same moulds were used for all this plasterwork, clearly indicating that it is the work of one craftsman. In each bay an axial east–west beam divides the ceilings into equal halves – in the upper rooms these beams are covered with plaster, but not in the parlour – however, in the parlour chamber the plaster is known to cover a moulded beam, suggesting that the plaster is a secondary feature in these rooms. In the parlour and the parlour chamber, each half of the ceiling has a rectangular border made up of a repeating vine-scroll, with roses at the corners (Pl. Ia). The parlour is further decorated with a spoked-wheel design (possibly a stylised rose, but very different from the well-modelled double roses at the corners) at the centre of each compartment, with four small fleurs-de-lis arranged saltirewise about it; small fleurs also project out from the roses at the corners of the compartments. The hall chamber has the largest and most elaborate of these plastered ceilings: there each bay has four vine-scroll bordered compartments, each with a wheel and four fleurs at the centre, and a large fleur inside each corner, pointing inwards, and a small fleur on the outside, pointing out; there is also a frieze of vine-scrolls and roses along the tops of the walls. The service chamber may have been similar to the hall chamber, but the central

Boundary Farm : Parlour

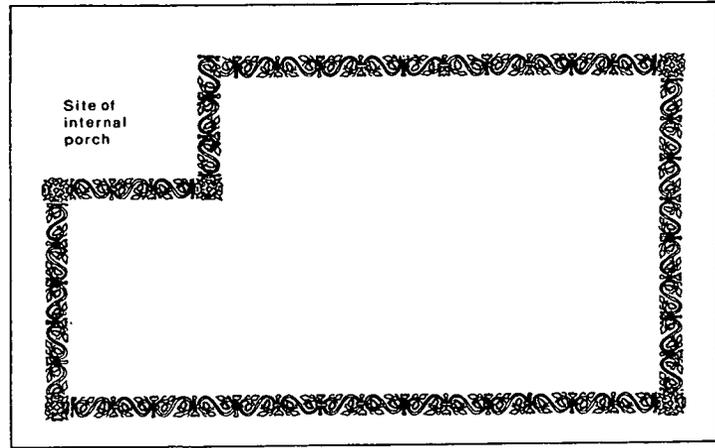


Axial beam

3 ft



Boundary Farm : Parlour Chamber



Axial beam

3 ft

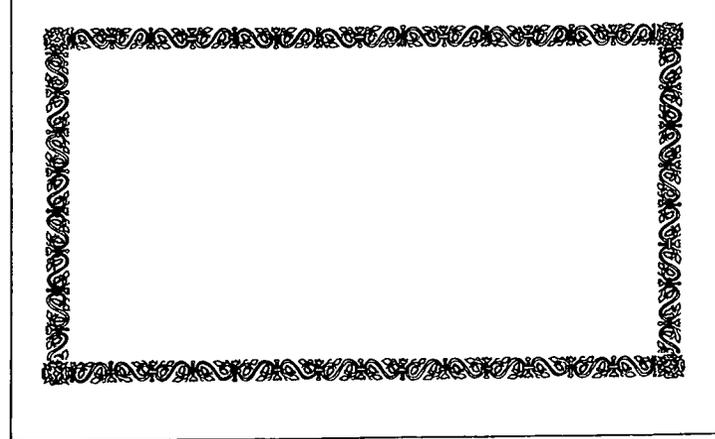


FIG. 11 – Boundary Farm: sketches of the early-17th-century plaster ceilings in the parlour and parlour chamber. North at the top.

areas of the compartments no longer survive; there is also no surviving evidence for an ornamental frieze along the top of the walls, though lath marks on the north wall plate show it was once plastered.

The general design of these ceilings, particularly the treatment of the centres of the compartments, is similar to a ceiling at Brick House Farm in Hitcham, where a date in the first quarter of the 17th century seems likely (Martin 1991). The Framsdén ceiling is perhaps slightly later, possibly dating from the 1630s or 1640s.

Around the middle of the 17th century the parlour at the east end was superseded by a new parlour added in a two-bay wing at the west end. This new wing has no decorative plasterwork, but there is carved ovolo-moulded decoration on the principal beams in the parlour (now the kitchen) and the chamber over it has an eight-light wooden oriel window supported on carved console brackets. Above this is a carved gable tie-beam with the initials I.W. and one of what was a pair of carved drop-finials. The opposite, south, gable now presents a plain plastered facade, but Farrer recorded an 'ornamented bead-course' at the base of the gable, consisting of 'a bold scroll-work design, having large bunches of grapes above and below, similar to the decoration on the ceilings in the house'.

The initials on the north gable stand for James Wythe, a name that was borne by the owners of this farm for at least three generations in succession (Table I). James Wythe I appears to have been married at Framsdén in 1560 and died there in 1611, describing himself as yeoman of Framsdén in his will (dated 1609, proved 1611 Norwich, 84 Stywarde). In this he mentions a new parlour in his house and a new parlour chamber in his son James's house – it is not clear whether the father or the son was living at Boundary Farm at the time, but either way it must indicate some new work at Boundary Farm about 1600. The date of James Wythe II's death is not known, but his eldest son, James Wythe III, was born before 1609 and died in 1669. This James was married by 1625 and was being styled 'gentleman' by 1639, describing himself as such in his will of 1668 (proved 1669 P.C.C.).

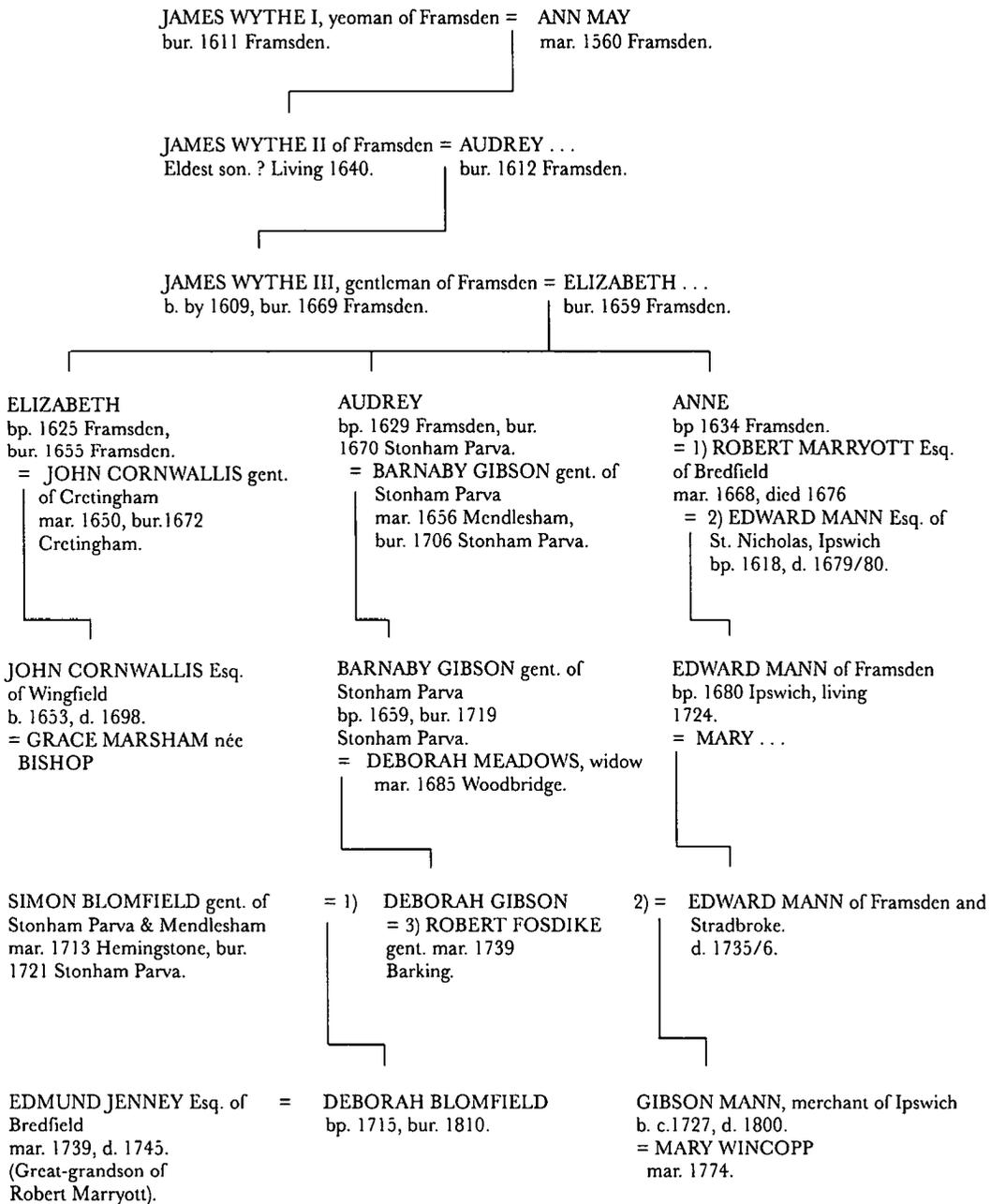
The house at Boundary Farm was originally built c. 1550–1575 as a standard three-unit timber-framed house (service-room, hall and parlour, with a narrow chimney bay between the hall and parlour), probably under an axial roof (Fig. 13, A). Although simple in plan, the house was provided with prestigious brick-nogging (now mostly covered over) on its side walls and most probably at the front, and given some ornamented and glazed windows (one moulded 16th-century mullion survives in a rebuilt 17th-century window). This work is roughly contemporary with James Wythe I's marriage and he is very likely to be the builder.

In the late 16th or early 17th century an extension was added to the north side at the parlour end, with a miniature wing in the angle between the old house and the new wing (Fig. 13, B). Similar arrangements exist at Fressingfield Hall (mid-17th-century) and Ufford Hall, Fressingfield (an earlier house extended in the 17th century) where a normal wing at the parlour end is flanked by a miniature one containing a staircase, each under a gabled roof. At these two houses the twin gables are replicated at the service end, but there the function of the smaller wing is not clear, though a garderobe or closet is a possibility. At Framsdén there was access at first floor level to the angle structure through a now-blocked doorway in the north wall of the chimney bay. The adjoining wing may have contained the new parlour mentioned in 1609: the only known item in this parlour was a long table, mentioned both in the will and in the imperfect inventory of Wythe's estate.

In a third phase (see Fig. 13, C), the access door to the new wing that had been made in the middle of the north wall of the original parlour chamber was blocked, and a new door was created at the west end of the same wall, where there had been a window in the first phase (Pl. Ib). This alteration was connected with the construction of an internal porch which would have allowed access to the wing chamber without disturbing the privacy of the occupant(s) of the parlour chamber. Although this porch has now disappeared, its former presence can be detected in the rectangular diversion of the plaster border on the ceiling in this area of the room (Fig. 11)

CONSPICUOUS DISPLAY

TABLE I: OUTLINE PEDIGREE OF THE WYTHE AND MANN FAMILIES OF BOUNDARY FARM



Boundary Farm : Service Chamber

Hall Chamber

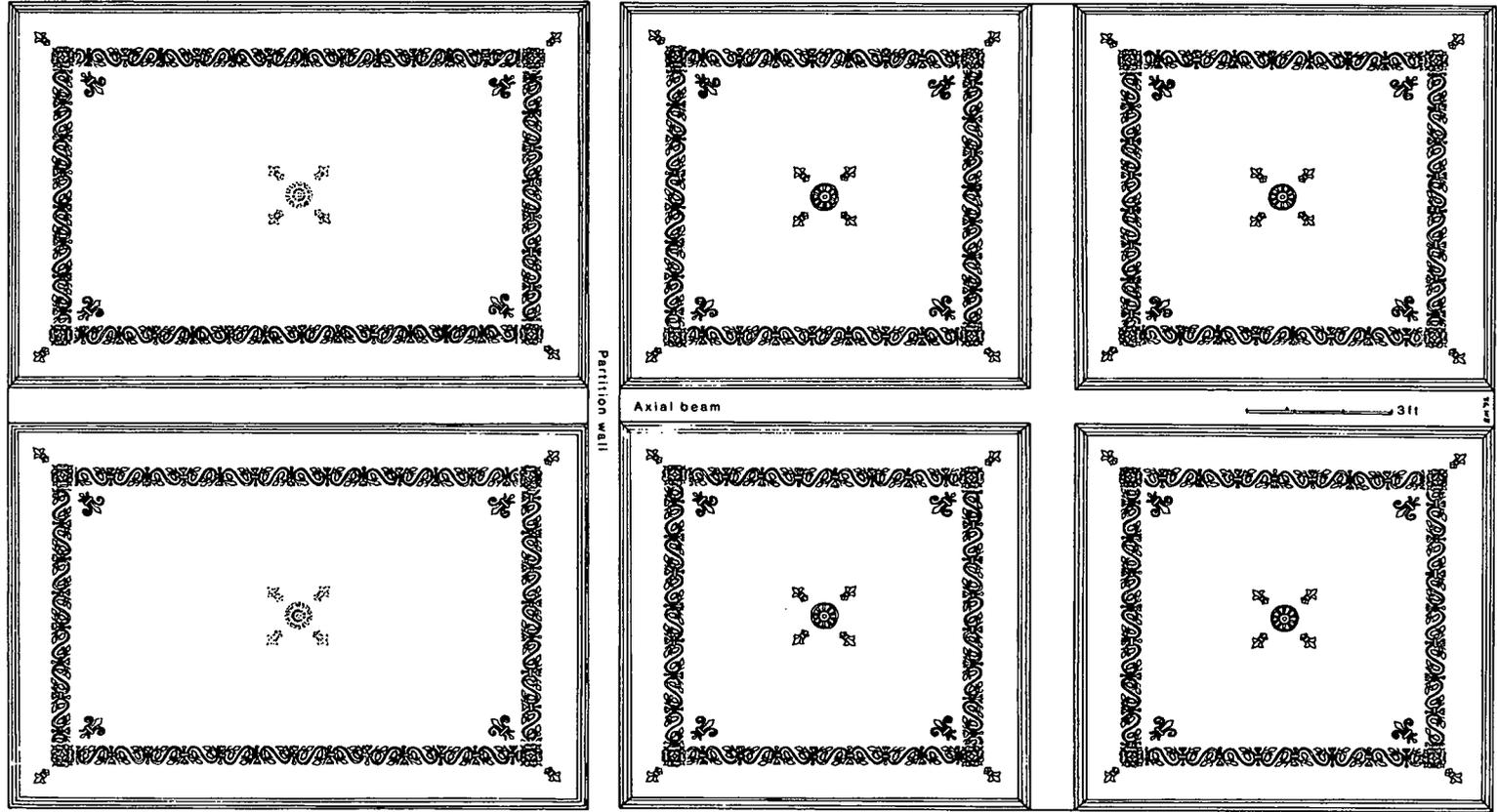


FIG. 12 – Boundary Farm: sketches of the early-17th-century plaster ceilings in the hall chamber and the adjoining service chamber. The hall chamber also has a plaster frieze along the top of the walls decorated with the same vine-scroll and roses. North at the top.

and in the way the room was painted. The wall studs in the parlour chamber were (and still are) painted grey, as a contrast to the natural off-white colour of the plaster walls, giving a striped effect that became common in East Suffolk during the 17th century (Easton 1986); the new door frame within the porch was, however, painted with yellow ochre. Yellow ochre is rarely used in houses of this date in the Debenham area (Easton 1986) and its use here may have been to lighten a space that would otherwise have been rather dark, depending as it did on borrowed light. A section of the internal oak panelling of the porch also survives on the inner wall of the parlour chamber.

A three-flue brick stack was also built in the main range, between the hall and the parlour, probably replacing an earlier timber-framed chimney. The decorated plaster ceilings were introduced after the stack had been built. Curiously, although the parlour chamber was equipped with a fireplace, which retains much of its original colour and decoration (see Easton 1986), the more elaborate hall chamber does not seem to have been given one, possibly suggesting that the brick stack existed before the upgrading of the hall chamber was conceived. The service chamber also seems to have been unheated at first, but later gained a hearth when another stack was added with the new parlour wing in the mid 17th century. Although apparently unheated, the hall and service chambers were clearly exceptional rooms. In addition to having the most elaborate plaster ceilings in the house, the two rooms were also provided with enlarged and matching oriel windows on the north side (Fig. 13, C), in addition to other more minor embellishments.¹ Surviving traces of paint on the woodwork suggest that the hall chamber had black painted studwork, like the parlour chamber. The service chamber, by contrast, seems to have been painted red,² a colour which, at this date in the Debenham area, is often associated with rooms of high status (Easton 1986). These changes may have been the work of the widowed James Wythe II, or, and more likely, the newly married James Wythe III.

The emphasis given to the large hall chamber suggests that it may have functioned as a 'great chamber'. Normally associated with houses of a higher social level, first-floor great chambers were usually the most lavishly decorated rooms in 17th-century great houses. The chief function of the great chamber was as an eating place, but it was also used for entertainment, prayers, etc. (Thorpe 1990, 134; Girouard 1978, 88, 90). The service chamber at Framdsen seems to have formed a suite with the 'great chamber' and may have been the principal bed chamber. The oriel windows of the two upper chambers at Framdsen overlook the front courtyard, which had the ornamental summerhouse at one corner. Though it cannot be directly proven, it is likely that this front courtyard contained a formal garden, the patterns of which would have been viewed to best advantage from an upper-floor window. That houses of this status could have formal gardens is shown by two early-17th-century Suffolk estate maps which depict small formal gardens beside houses not very different to the Framdsen one (Easton and Martin 1992). The contemporaneity of the Framdsen summerhouse and the plasterwork in the house reinforces the idea that the planning of the house and the garden may have been interrelated.

In a fourth phase (Fig. 13, D), about the middle of the 17th century, the new wing at the west end was built (as detailed above). This must also be the work of James Wythe III and it must be his initials that we see on the north gable. The expansion of the house and the increase in the amount of ornamentation reflects the growing status of the Wythe family, from yeomen at the end of the 16th century to gentlemen by the mid-17th century.

Returning to the brick stable that first caught Claude Morley's attention in 1916, this luckily still survives next to a pond in a slight dip to the south-west of the farmhouse. It is a double-storeyed structure with large decorative gables at either end (Figs. 14 and 15). The three-bay north front (Pl. II) has a large central doorway, now partly blocked, with a straight entablature above it. On either side of the door were windows (one now converted into a door; but the other retains its wooden frame) with pediments over them.

The mouldings on both the entablature and the pediments are made of a mixture of simple moulded convex or concave bricks, plain bricks and pieces of roofing tile (similar work, using

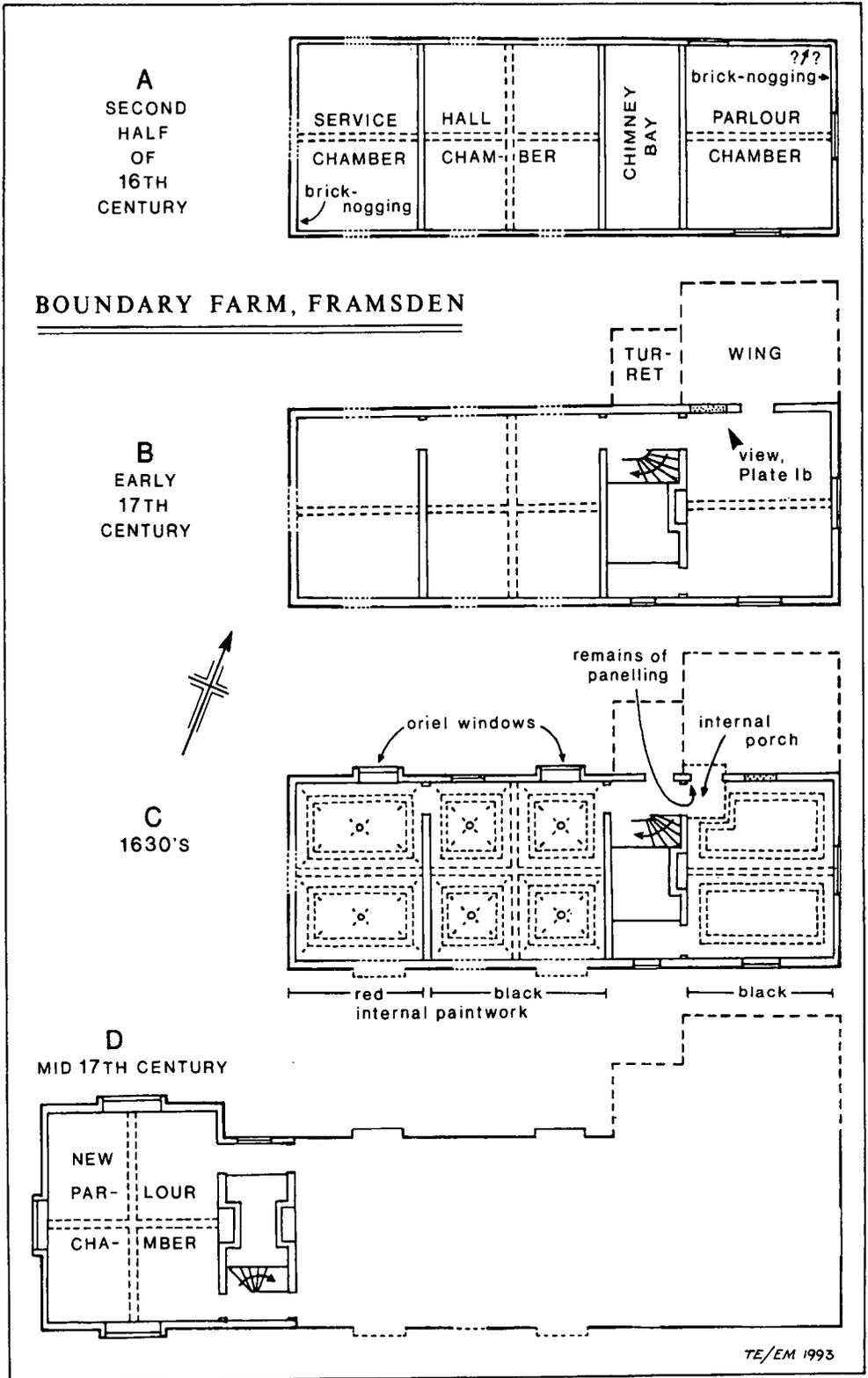


FIG. 13 – Boundary Farm: sketch plans showing the development of the house.

relatively simple shapes to create complex mouldings, can also be seen on the parlour fireplace at Bedfield Hall; Easton 1986, Fig. 15). In a first phase these compound mouldings were given a unity by being covered by a red wash (ruddle), with scored lines on the flush pointing. In a second phase, probably not long after the first, the mouldings of both the entablature and the pediments were rendered over in imitation of stone. On the entablature there are the weathered remains of a cast date plaque set in this render. Only the upper parts of the last two figures can now be seen: Farrer records that the last figure was a 7 and the penultimate one may have been the upper part of a 6 – the surviving traces are in agreement with his readings. The disposition of these figures on the plaque indicates that they must have flanked some central initials. Small square panels of the same cast material, again very eroded, are set in the middle of the pediments over the windows. The Listed Building notes state that these panels bore the weathered figures of 'gryffons'. Farrer thought that they each bore 'a unicorn passant, but in every case the animal is placed sideways, like the supporter to the Royal arms'. On this slender evidence it is perhaps likely that the panels bore griffins, beasts that figure in the Wythe coat-of-arms. Farrer also thought he could see the initials E.C. on one of these panels, however these cannot now be seen and they are difficult to explain in terms of the known history of the farm.

Separating the two storeys of the stable is a stringcourse with saw-tooth moulding. In the upper storey are two simple rectangular windows, only one of which retains its wooden mullions. Mid-way between the two windows is an inexplicable small hole just slightly larger than a brick, but clearly deliberately made. The south side of the stable was unfortunately rebuilt about 1960, using the original bricks on the outside and modern Flettons on the inner face, and is now largely obscured by the grainstore built at the same time. However, a photograph taken in 1914 (Pl. III) shows that there was a central door (Farrer describes this as being 'far above the level of the soil' and used for clearing manure out of the stable) flanked by two pedimented windows, with two simple rectangular windows at first-floor level, a replication of the fenestration of the north front. This level of attention to detail at the rear of the building may have been influenced by the fact that the stable would have been clearly visible from what is now the B1077 road across the valley.

The eastern gable end has a large opening with wooden double doors at first-floor level – Farrer describes this as being used for loading hay from a wagon into the upper storey, which functioned as a hayloft. Above this is a large decorative gable, of the type often termed 'Dutch', ornamented with a series of brick pinnacles (now in poor condition) along its upper edge. Eric Sandon has suggested a date of *c.* 1650 for this particular gable and has drawn attention to parallels in the Eastern Provinces of Holland (Sandon 1977, 103). An almost exact replica of this gable occurs on a farm building dated 1678 at Carleton St Peter in Norfolk (Oliver 1912, Pl. LXXIII) – this building is of a similar size and shape to the Framsdén one and may be another stable. Towards the top of both the Framsdén and the Carleton St Peter gables are small circular windows or vents that are often referred to as 'owl-holes' (Ebbage 1976, 44). At Framsdén there are panels of diaper-work executed in dark headers below the gable vents, each side having a different pattern. Attached to the west side of the stable is a contemporary, but lower and shorter range with a simpler rounded gable.

The interior of the stable has unfortunately been largely gutted and very little survives. However, some of the joists of the upper floor are still there and the central chamfered beam with a large acorn pendant gives a hint of what has been lost (Pl. IV). Luckily Farrer has left us with a description of the extraordinary sight that he saw in 1920:

Running the whole length of the east wall, is a hay rack for the horses, which, I think, may be considered unique in East Anglia. It so exactly resembles the early altar rails that one is inclined to jump to the conclusion that we have here an instance of ecclesiastical spoliation . . . but a further investigation reveals [that they] were made for this old stable. There is, of course, the usual series of rails through which the horses obtain the hay, but as ornamentation there are five oak pillars with capitals, one exactly in the centre, and

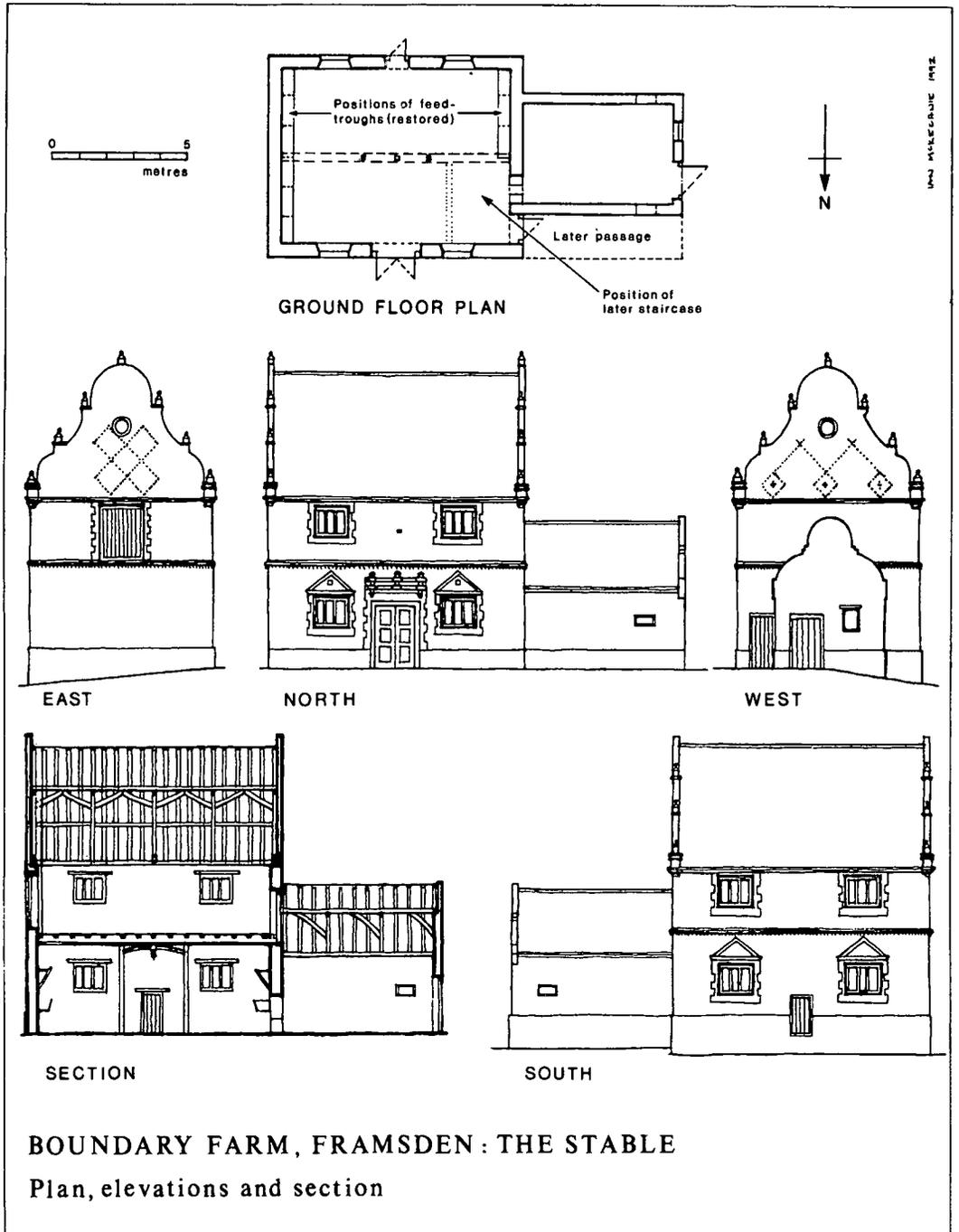


FIG. 14 - Boundary Farm: plan, elevations and section of the stable block. These show the original appearance, based on surviving evidence.

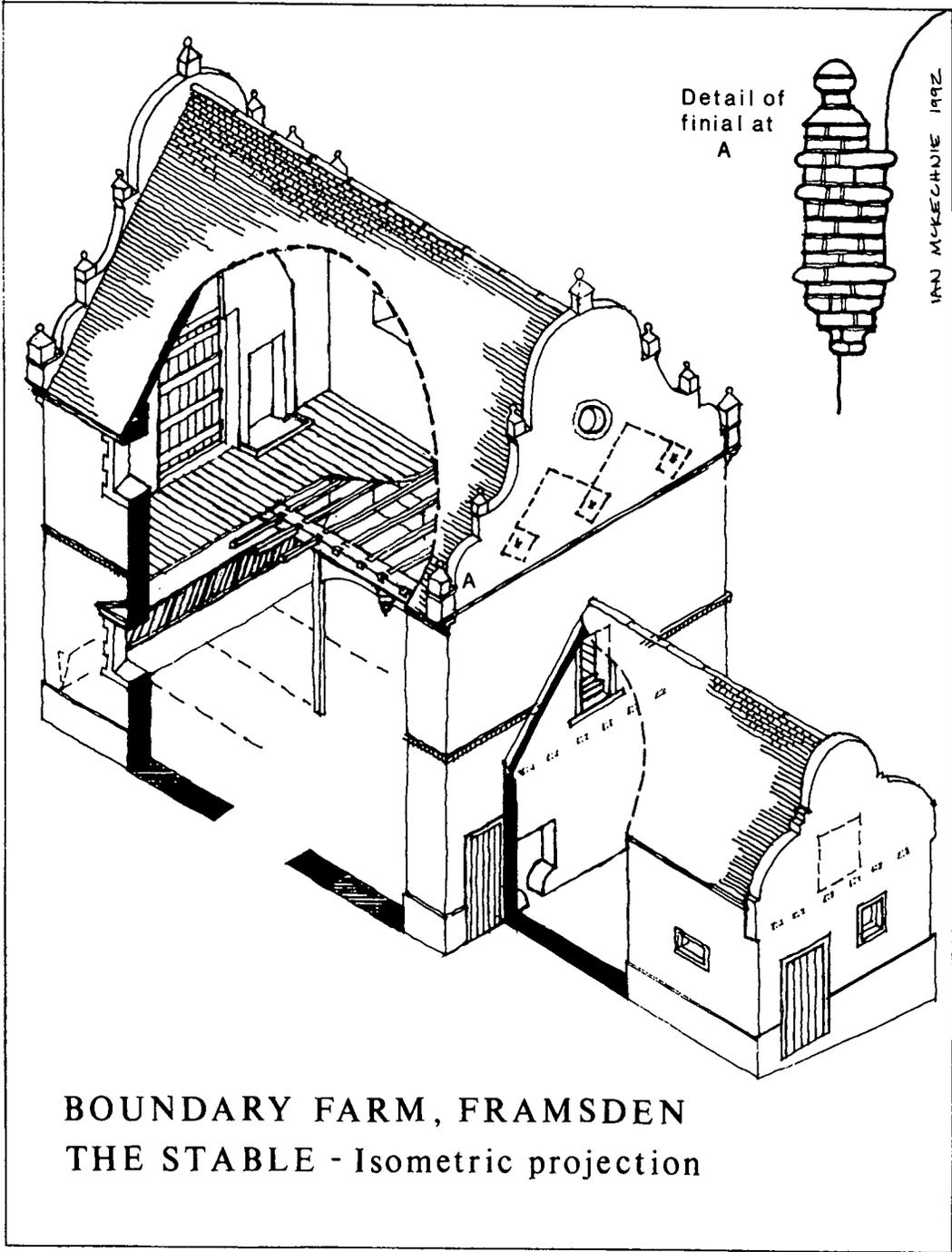


FIG. 15 – Boundary Farm: isometric drawing of the stable block, showing the original appearance, based on surviving evidence.

those at the sides being equi-distant from the walls; below the rails is a running Jacobean pattern, rather suggestive of the earlier years of the 17th century. There is a similar but smaller rack, reaching from the staircase to the south wall, and above the rails is a set pattern, about six inches wide, consisting of a series of oblongs, one above the other, and joined, the one to the other, by narrow bands. These racks are fed from above, space being left between the floor and the walls.

Reconstructing the racks from Farrer's description is not easy, but two small blocked recesses can be seen at the eastern ends of both the north and south walls of the stable, which seem to be for the housing of the upper and lower rails of the hayrack. In one of the recesses there is a section of the sawn-off lower rail. The positions of these four recesses appear to indicate that the racks were angled at 45 degrees, as is normal in most recent hayracks. However in some expensive examples the fronts of the racks are vertical (Peters 1981, 57), most notably in the ornate mid-17th-century stables at Peover in Cheshire and Whitmore in Staffordshire (both built for branches of the Mainwaring family; Nares 1957). Five blocked square sockets along the inside of the east gable wall, at a level with the lower rail, may have taken the bases of the columns seen by Farrer. His description makes no mention of stall divisions, which would conform to the known later practice in Suffolk where the horses were merely tethered to the feeding trough – this was also the case in Norfolk (Wade Martins 1991, 181).

The system of feeding the racks from above, described by Farrer and still evidenced by the pitchfork scars on the brickwork, appears to be a secondary feature, for the gap between the floor and the walls was created by the removal of floor joists. A similar secondary arrangement can be seen in the early 17th-century stable at Cranley Hall, Eye (Easton and Martin 1992).

According to Farrer, access to the hayloft above the stable was by an 'ancient and rather narrow oak staircase, with a handrail, and an arrangement of upright beams around the top [which] lands one in the loft, really a fine apartment with an old oak floor and open timber roof'. This stair has now gone, but its position can be seen in the north-west corner of the stable. Examination of the surviving timbers in this area reveals that several floor joists were removed (their mutilated mortises can still be seen) to accommodate the staircase, indicating that it too was a secondary feature. Some form of internal access between the stable and the hayloft is, however, likely to have existed from the beginning, possibly by way of a ladder and trap door (for which no actual evidence survives) or through the door in the west wall of the hayloft (see below).

On the east wall of the hayloft, to one side of the large double doors, is a fireplace with a rendered flue. This flue emerges behind the top of the gable, but does not at present project beyond the roof line as a chimney. The surviving brick pier of the fireplace is indented at the base to house the hearth and kerb in the normal 17th-century way. The absence of sooty deposits in the flue implies that it was never used; however, various precautions indicate that it was intended to be functional. For instance, the end of the wooden door head, where it projects into the flue, is covered by a roof tile and plaster to lessen the fire risk. In addition, the eastern tie beam, which joins together the top wall plates, is severed where it meets the flue – the two halves being joined by a non-combustible metal tie. The provision of a fireplace in a hayloft is somewhat surprising in view of the high fire risk and does raise questions as to whether this upper floor originally had some other use. Against this it can be argued that haylofts over stables were the norm before the late 18th century (Peters 1981, 56; Wade Martins 1991, 175) and in this particular stable the large double door at first floor level is undoubtedly original and intended for loading something into this upper floor. Perhaps the builder had in mind some double function which proved impractical and therefore the fireplace was never used. Farrer's evidence clearly indicates that this upper floor was being used as a hayloft in 1920.

On the other side of the hayloft Farrer noted that

At the west end, by the floor, is a small opening which has no appearance of ever having been touched since the building was erected, for the bricks are rounded and the oak

beams and posts still in existence. It looks like a fireplace, and the position of it would warrant such an assertion, but there is no chimney, and the owner of the place at once described to me its use, namely to pass through the fodder from the loft into the racks of another and a smaller stable on the west side, a most simple and convenient process, the invention of which is much appreciated today.

What Farrer actually saw is not clear, for what he is describing was on the opposite wall to the existing fireplace, where there is now a doorway, about 5ft high. The door itself is missing but iron fixings on the side indicate the former presence of one. Within the door opening there were two steps down towards the west – these are now missing but are clearly evidenced (see Fig. 15). The door opened out into the small and now largely roofless ancillary range on the side of the stable and must originally have been reached by means of a ladder. It is possible that this was the original access between the stable and the hayloft. At a later stage an upper floor was inserted into this range, slightly below the level of the door, but all that survives of this are the sockets for the joists, cut into the brickwork of the east and west walls (six at each end – see Fig. 15). At ground level access between the two ranges was provided via a curiously shaped opening that is wide at the top and narrow at the bottom. The edges of the constriction are very eroded and it is not now clear whether it was originally rounded or rectangular in shape. It is possible that this shape was designed to deter horses from using the opening. The door in the north-west corner of the stable now leads into an enclosed passageway on the side of the ancillary range, but the north wall of this is a later addition. The enclosing of the north wall of the range has preserved its original ruddle finish, painted over the U-shaped incised lines on the flush pointing.

The function of this ancillary range is not clear. When Farrer visited it in 1920 it was apparently being used as an additional stable, and the existence of a pair of opposed rectangular vents (now blocked) in the north and south walls might support the idea that it was designed for keeping animals. Another possibility is that this was a tack room – the later passageway certainly had this function for a pair of saddle brackets still survive in it. Separate tack rooms adjacent to stables certainly occur later on (Wade Martins 1991, 176).

The brickwork of the stable is laid in English bond, with bricks that measure 9 x 4¼ x 2⅞ – 2¼in. This, and the general style of the building with its mixture of ‘Dutch’ and Classical elements would tend to suggest a date in the early to mid 17th century. In view of this, the fragmentary date plaque over the front door should perhaps be read as ‘1667’. This of course would be the date of the second, rendered, phase of the stable frontage, however this is unlikely to be more than ten to twenty years after the initial building, if that. The originator of this work is thus likely to be James Wythe III, the builder of the new parlour wing on the farmhouse. Large pendant acorns do, of course, occur in the decoration of both the wing and the stable. It is curious, however, that Wythe should have chosen to add a traditional timber-framed wing to his house, yet built a wonderfully ornate and prestigious brick stable for his horses. A possible inspiration for the work may have been the long stable range that was built not far away at Bredfield House for Robert Marryott, a wealthy attorney, or his son, another Robert (who became Wythe’s son-in-law). This mid-17th-century³ brick building with large shaped gables has a stable at one end (the surviving interior is 18th- or 19th-century in date), with what was most recently a cowhouse/dairy at the other end, with a separate tack room between the two parts and haylofts above them. However, this building is not as ornate as Wythe’s stable and was but a subsidiary part of a grand rebuilding scheme that included the addition of an ornate new brick block onto an original timber-framed house.

A possible explanation of Wythe’s apparently eccentric behaviour may be found in his personal circumstances. His two sons (both called James) had died as infants and by the time he made his will in 1668 he was a widower with no son to succeed him – the heir to his freehold lands in Framsdon was his grandson John Cornwallis, then a boy of about fourteen. Without the

obligation to provide for a direct male heir, Wythe may have felt at liberty to indulge his own tastes and enthusiasms.

Stately stables, as they have been termed, make their first appearance at the end of the 16th century, but the earliest to survive date from about the mid 17th century (Powell 1991, 11). Two of these, the stable at Peover Hall in Cheshire, dating from 1654 (Lambton 1985, 32–33), and the closely related one at Whitmore Hall in Staffordshire (Nares 1957) both have finely ornamented interiors which invite comparison with the one described by Farrer at Framsdén. Most of these ‘stately stables’ were built by men very much at the upper end of the social scale (even the Marryotts of Bredfield were esquires and justices of the peace): what makes Framsdén so remarkable is that it was built in the vanguard of the fashion by a man at the bottom end of the gentry class, only a short step above the level of a yeoman – a title that his grandfather had been content to claim not many years before.

The wonders of Boundary Farm do not, however, stop at the stable, for a fourth curiosity, unseen or unrecognised by both Morley and Farrer, lies to the south-east of the farmhouse. This is an unusually long and straight pond 177ft (54m) long and 20ft (6m) wide (Pl. V). When this was being desilted in the autumn of 1990, a quantity of bricks was exposed at the west end. Clearest was a brick-built culvert on one side with the remains of a wooden water pipe in it. The horizontal part of this pipe has a wooden bung at its end, which would have deflected the flow upwards into a vertical extension of the pipe (Fig. 16). Only the bottom part of this vertical wooden pipe has survived, the upper part has rotted away and it is no longer possible to see what happened next. Rodding along the horizontal part of the pipe indicated that it continued in a north-westerly direction for at least 40 to 50ft (12 to 15m). The lie of the land indicates that this must have been an inlet for water, not an outlet; a shallow outlet channel is in fact provided at the eastern end of the pond.

A brief excavation by the first two authors in November 1990 showed that this culvert was built across the northern end of a flight of shallow brick steps that occupied the whole of the eastern side of the pond (Pl. VI). The steps were in poor condition, but enough survived to show that they had been built in two equal parts, with a narrow brick pier dividing them in the centre. The bricks, measuring $8\frac{1}{16} - 9 \times 4\frac{1}{2} \times 2$ in, were laid thinly on a layer of sand, which overlay the natural clay. Traces of mortar adhering to the faces of one or two bricks at a low level might indicate that the stairs were once rendered over in imitation of stone. The steps seem to have been cut through by the culvert, which is built of more regular bricks, measuring $9 \times 4 - 4\frac{1}{4} \times 2\frac{1}{2}$ in, which are likely to be 18th- or 19th-century in date. The base of a plinth, at the top of the central pier of the steps, has similar bricks to the culvert and may be contemporary with it. It may not be too fanciful to suggest that the wooden apparatus in the culvert was designed to serve a fountain, possibly on the central plinth, or perhaps a cascade down the steps.

The provision of these ornamental features at the end of the pond indicates that it was not just an ordinary farm pond, but was in fact a garden feature whose closest parallels lay with the Anglo-Dutch canal gardens of the late 17th and early 18th centuries (Hunt and de Jong 1988), a good example of which has only recently been restored by The National Trust at Westbury Court in Gloucestershire. With this in mind, it could be seen that the pond or canal at Framsdén had been built across the slope of the land and that a broad terrace had been formed, flanking the whole southern side of the canal, which had fine views into the valley below. The north side of the canal is bounded by an old orchard, a circumstance that can be paralleled by a painting of the garden at Ladymead House in Bath, c. 1710, where again the canal is flanked on one side by an orchard (Hunt and de Jong 1988, 227). An orchard at this period was an important and integral part of the garden, not a mere adjunct.

The dating of this style of canal gardening means that it almost certainly post-dates the death of James Wythe III in 1669. Therefore, to discover its originator we must consider the succession to the farm (Table I). As noted above, Wythe’s named heir was his grandson John Cornwallis. Cornwallis was born in 1653, the eldest son of John Cornwallis gent. of Creetingham (a cousin of

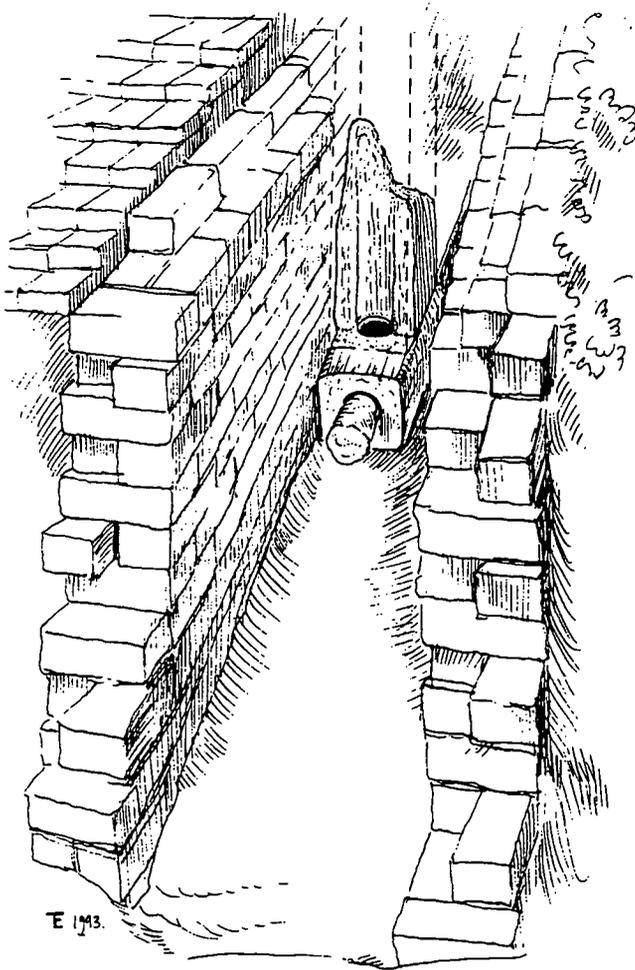


FIG. 16 – Boundary Farm: sketch of the wooden water pipe (?elm) in the brick culvert at the west end of the canal.

the Cornwallises of Brome). Whether he ever lived at Framsdon is unclear, but he is probably the Mr Cornwallis who was taxed on 12 hearths in Wingfield in 1674, for at the time of his death in 1698 he was living at Wingfield College, which he leased from the Bishop of Norwich (will 1698, Suffolk). However, another of Wythe's grandsons, born after the old man's death, certainly did live at Framsdon, for branded onto one of the fireplaces in the farmhouse is the name 'E MANN'. Edward Mann was born in 1680, the only son of Edward Mann Esq. of St Nicholas, Ipswich, by his second wife Anne Wythe. Edward senior died in the year that his son was born and so, presumably, Edward junior was brought up by his mother, possibly at her father's house at Framsdon. Edward is recorded as a freeholder in Framsdon in 1727.

Interestingly there are the remains of another canal garden not far away at Westwood Hall in Stonham Parva. In the late 17th century this was the home of Barnaby Gibson gent., who had married Edward Mann's aunt, Audrey Wythe. This Barnaby Gibson was also the first cousin of Edward Sheppard Esq. of Ashe High House, Campsea Ashe (now called Campsey Ashe House). Sheppard's son John (1675–1747) made a prestigious marriage to the Dowager Countess of Leicester, served twice as Sheriff of Suffolk, and is noted as having made 'great additions to the seat at Ash and considerably improved it' (*Gentleman's Magazine* 1830, 398, 513, signed J.F.). Amongst

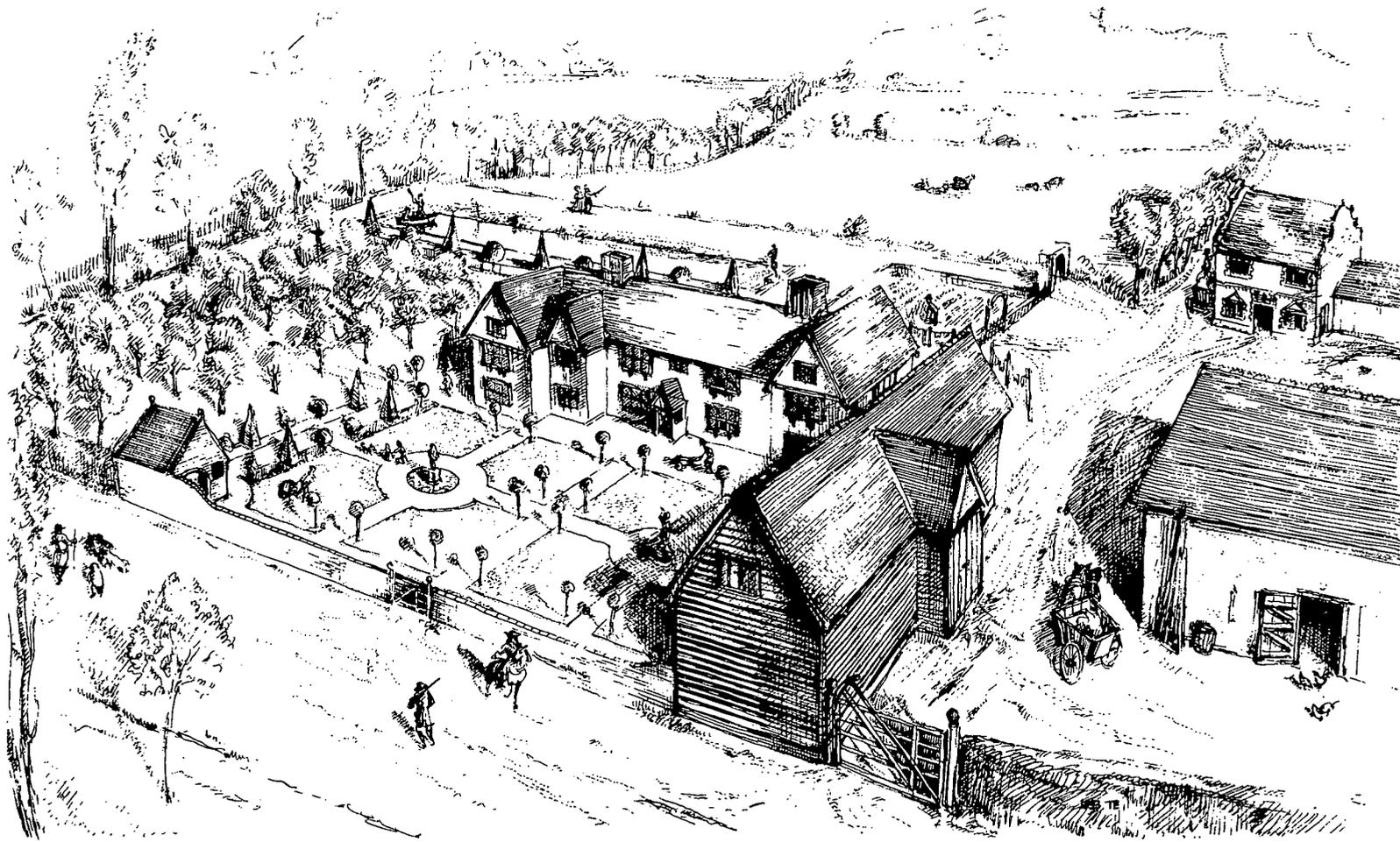


FIG. 17 – Boundary Farm: bird's eye view of the farmstead, as it may have been in the early 18th century, from the north-west.

these improvements was the construction of a spectacular canal garden, consisting of a main brick-lined canal some 600ft (183m) long and 30ft (10m) wide, flanked by a terrace and yew hedge, and a shorter canal 400ft (122m) long and 25ft (7.6m) wide, now broken into two lengths by a causeway in the middle (Springett 1974 and 1975). It is very likely that it was the example of this grand garden that inspired John Sheppard's kinsmen to create canals in their own gardens at Stonham and Framdsen. The inspiration also seems to have spread to another closely related family, the Jenneys of Bredfield House (descended from Anne Wythe's first husband, Robert Marryott), for another canal exists there, associated with a walkway and an early-18th-century summerhouse.

The canals were not of course the only things in these gardens, but were an accompaniment to formal arrangements of flower beds, hedges, statues and urns, as can be seen in contemporary depictions of such gardens. The essential formality of these gardens ran contrary to the taste of the later 18th century, and most were swept away when gardens were redesigned in the picturesque or natural style. The extent of the loss can be seen in Gloucestershire where some twenty out of fifty-eight gardens depicted by Johannes Kip in Sir Robert Atkyns's *Ancient and Present state of Gloucestershire* (1712) have formal water gardens, yet only one of these still survives – that at Westbury Court. Not surprisingly the Westbury garden has been described as 'one of the rarest types of garden to have survived in this country' (Jackson-Stops 1988). At least fourteen canal gardens are now known in Suffolk, most of them dating from the early 18th century and most still surviving in some form.⁴ This suggests that canal gardens were as popular in Suffolk as they undoubtedly were in Gloucestershire. The Suffolk evidence is also important in that it shows that gardens of this type were built not only by the great landowners – the sort of people whose houses and gardens were illustrated in Kip's splendid bird's-eye views – but also by people further down the social scale, in fact right down to the bottom level of the gentry. The minor gentry seldom had the money to change their gardens completely and there is a very good chance that further canals are lurking unrecognised in farmyards, disguised as farm ponds. Boundary Farm may, however, still stand out as an extraordinary example of a property where the ornate garden and ancillary buildings seem to be very much out of proportion to the main house (Fig. 17); a circumstance made even more extraordinary by the fact that this was not the work of one eccentric individual, but was the cumulative effort of several generations of one family.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like to thank Mr and Mrs C. Bacon for very generously giving us access to their buildings and garden for this study, and Mrs V. Norrington for help regarding Bredfield House.

NOTES

- 1 The ceilings in these two chambers have oak clamps fixed to the wall-plates (for the common-joists to be lodged on) and unusually these are moulded and match the section of the ovolo mullions in the two oriel windows. In addition the bay-posts in the hall chamber had their jowls cut back and the structural braces were removed to open up the room space; the posts were then covered with oak cover boards with moulded edges. Similar moulded boards, also of oak, were added to the sides of the oriel windows, showing that all this work was contemporary. The surviving colour was also probably introduced at this time.
- 2 The principal rafters and purlins of the attic room over the service chamber were also painted red and the room was provided with a fireplace (red-painted too) and dormer windows. The level of comfort and decoration provided suggests that this was not a servant's room, but must have provided accommodation for a family member. Similarly equipped attic rooms are known in a number of nearby houses.
- 3 The building work at Bredfield House is often dated to 1665, as in Pevsner 1974, 114, but Matthew Candler in 1655 mentions that Robert Marryott 'hath built a commodious house' (quoted by D.E. Davy, *Suffolk Collections*, B.L. Add. MS 19082) which suggests an earlier date.
- 4 A further paper on the canal gardens of Suffolk is being prepared.

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