

**LAND AT QUEEN COURT FARM,  
OSPRINGE, KENT**

**Statement of Heritage Significance and Impact**

**2022**

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Historic Buildings, Landscape Archaeology

# **LAND AT QUEEN COURT FARM, OSPRINGE, KENT**

## **Statement of Heritage Significance**

### **1 Background and introduction**

1.1 This statement of heritage significance and impact has been commissioned by Shepherd Neame Ltd and has been drawn up to assess the impact of a proposed residential development on the heritage assets at Queen Court Farm, Water Lane, Ospringe, Kent (NGR TR00169 60493). Under the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), published by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, the historic buildings are considered heritage assets, and therefore the impact of the proposed development on those assets will be considered by the local planning authority or Historic England when assessing the proposal. The purpose of the statement is therefore to provide more information about the site, its context and significance, followed by an assessment of the potential impact of the proposed development on that significance.

1.2 The author is an historic buildings consultant who has worked for over twenty years in the south-east and has a doctorate in landscape archaeology. He was previously involved in the historic building assessment of the Grade II\* and Grade II barns which are integral with the site. He is historic buildings curator at Historic Royal Palaces; the charitable trust charged with the care of the Tower of London, Hampton Court Palace, Kensington Palace State Apartments, Kew Palace with its associated buildings, the Banqueting House in Whitehall and Hillsborough Castle in Belfast. He is a Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries of London. He has sat on the committees of the Society of Landscape Studies, the Society of Architectural Historians of Great Britain and is currently a committee member of the Vernacular Architecture Group. He is President of the Essex Historic Buildings Group. He is a published author on a number of subjects related to historic buildings, history, decorative arts, conservation and local history.

### **2 Methodology**

2.1 Historic England (HE) recommends that a systematic and staged approach be adopted with regard to the assessment of impact of a development on a heritage asset. These are outlined in 'Statements of Significance: Analysing significance in heritage assets' (HE Advice Note 12, 2019). Their recommended approaches include:

1. Understanding the form, materials and history of the affected heritage asset(s), and/or the nature and extent of archaeological deposits;
2. Understanding the significance of the asset(s);
3. Understanding the impact of the proposal on that significance;
4. Avoiding, minimising and mitigating negative impact, in a way that meets the objectives of the NPPF;
5. Looking for opportunities to better reveal or enhance significance.

2.2 The assessment was drawn up by reference to published and unpublished sources at Kent Centre for Local Studies to better inform the state of knowledge about the area. Other archival resources included the 'red boxes' of pictorial sources at the Historic England archive. Earlier assessment of the barns drew on other sources such as the local authority Historic Environment Record. This information has been incorporated below.

2.3 A site visit was made in early December 2020 for the purposes of gaining a clearer understanding of local conditions and to assess the existing character of the area. Photographs illustrating the context are included as part of the discussion below. Conditions were considered to be optimum during the visit, which was made during bright, clear conditions with minimal leaf-cover.

### **3 Location, description and designations**

3.1 Ospringe lies a few miles to the south of Faversham. It was formerly a distinctive settlement, but suburban expansion of the town has now partly absorbed it. The historic core of the settlement extends along the ancient A2 Canterbury road with linear development extending along Water Lane to the south, where density of development falls and the area around Queen Court Farm marks a visual limit of settlement and open countryside (Figure 1).

3.2 Queen Court Farm forms a notable local landmark, standing at the corner of Water Lane with Vicarage Lane, which rises gently to the east towards a spur of land to the south-east, where it joins Mutton Lane, a narrow thoroughfare extending along the eastern side of the property. This extends north and westward, to complete a roughly loop which encloses the former farmland of Queen Court in a neat, rectangular plot. The farmstead lies in the south-western corner of this plot, close to the 15 metre contour AOD. The buildings stand just above the valley floor of the Nailbourne Brook, a non-perennial stream and tributary of Faversham Creek, which has now vanished, but was once a prominent feature in the local landscape. The

land rises gently on either side, giving good views of the farm, particularly from the west.

3.3 The complex was a working farm until the recent past, which has left a legacy of modern hard-standing yards, Dutch barns, silos, ephemeral storage buildings and other structures to the north and north-west. These incorporate a few remnants of a Victorian farm yard complex which formerly stood on the site. Most of the modern buildings are of ephemeral character, currently disused and in a state of neglect and decay.

#### **4 Statutory Designations and Description of the Heritage Assets**

4.1 The farmstead comprises a Grade II\* listed late 15<sup>th</sup> or early 16<sup>th</sup> century Wealden house, of a kind which is often said to represent the house of a rich Kentish yeoman farmer (Appendix one). From the road, the fine close-studding of the timber-framing is prominent, with its projecting cross-wings (Plate 1). The building originally had an open hall which was probably floored in the 16<sup>th</sup> or 17<sup>th</sup> century, when a further bay was constructed to the south in brick. A large kitchen range was added to the eastern, rear elevation in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. It now has a private garden to the east, which is partly enclosed by a high wall from Vicarage Lane.

4.2 Immediately to the north, two large barns and an attached granary are also listed (Plate 2). The principal building is an impressive Kentish barn, aisled and once thatched, which is most probably contemporary with the house, but was extended to the east, perhaps at the time the house was enlarged, and now terminates at a fine brick gable at the eastern end. The second barn is of probable 16<sup>th</sup> century date and extends along Water Lane, with a 19<sup>th</sup> century partial conversion to a stable in its southern bay. The principal barn was upgraded from Grade II to Grade II\* following an earlier historic building assessment (Collins, Wilson et al 2019). The barns and an associated granary have been granted permission for conversion to residential accommodation (Swale Borough Council: 19/505888 FULL and 19/505890/LBC).

4.3 Much of the historic centre of Ospringe, including the land under assessment, lies within the Faversham-Ospringe Conservation Area, incorporating the street front properties along the A2 and extending southwards to take in much of the west side of Water Lane, the entire former farm-site, a large open paddock immediately to the south, the parish church and vicarage. Areas of modern development, particularly to the north of the site are left out of the designation.

#### **5 Historical Development**

5.1 The historical development of the area has been extensively covered in the associated historic building survey of the barns (Collins, Wilson et al, 2019). This should be referred to for a more systematic and detailed assessment of those

buildings. The farm house has not been studied formally, but the author has examined the house on several occasions. Relevant points are reiterated here for context.

5.2 Relatively few archaeological discoveries around Ospringe reflect a lack of research, urban development and active investigation in the area, but a few scatters of prehistoric material attest to activity in the Bronze Age and Iron Age. The main Canterbury road (A2) follows the route of the Roman Watling Street, and it has been suggested that a minor settlement existed close to Judd's Hill, on higher land approximately 1 km to the west.

5.3 The village of Ospringe has Anglo-Saxon origins, with its place-name possibly derived from several springs which rise in the vicinity of the church (Glover 1976). Such springs were often given supernatural attributes and may have determined the location of the church. A spring-head survives just to the south at the roadside. The parish church now stands in some isolation, possibly reflecting an earlier dispersed settlement pattern of farms and smaller settlements. It retains some Norman, 12<sup>th</sup> century elements in its architecture. At the time of the Domesday survey of 1086, the manor of Ospringe was held by Bishop Odo of Bayeux and consisted of arable and pastoral meadow, woodland for 80 swine, a fishery, salthouse and church.

5.4 The focus of the settlement is likely to have been drawn to the main road when the A2 became a major pilgrim thoroughfare following the establishment of the shrine of St Thomas Becket at Canterbury in the later 12<sup>th</sup> century. A stone chapel once existed on the road and a hospital, in its medieval sense of a house of hospitality, was established nearby. The timber-framed Maison Dieu is a surviving element of this complex and remains an important local landmark at the corner of Water Lane, now in the care of English Heritage (Fig. 5).

5.5 Throughout the area, a number of historic buildings survive from the medieval period, particularly at the northern end of Water Lane. The church was much rebuilt in the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> centuries, while the vicarage has 15<sup>th</sup> century origins. This makes Queen Court one of a small handful of surviving late medieval or early modern buildings in the area.

## **6 The history of Queen Court Farm**

6.1 Queen Court Farm has a fairly rich documentary record, though the house itself has only been subject to brief physical investigation, and its dating is based on the typological sequence established for other Wealden houses in Kent by scholars such as Sarah Pearson. Most known documents survive in the Centre of Kentish Studies in Maidstone.

6.2 Queen Court is the historic manorial centre of Ospringe, and though it is likely to have great longevity, no trace of earlier buildings has been found. By the reign of King John in 1214, the manor of Ospringe had passed to the Crown, and was granted in 1225 to Hubert de Burgh, Earl of Kent, but was subsequently passed to the trustees of King Henry III's intended queen Eleanor as part of her endowment. This may be when it acquired its royal name. This is attested in the historic record by at least 1299, when it was assigned to Margaret, second wife of King Edward I. Soon after the death of Queen Margaret in 1317, the manor appears to have been separated into two distinct entities, with the existing site granted to Sir John Pulteney. In the subsequent years it was tenanted to a number of families including the Lovaine, St Clere, Hungate and Cheney families, but the first mention of a 'mansion' or farm on the site is in 1550, when it was held by Sir Thomas Cheney (Hasted 1798). The second manor may never have had an established manor house, being associated with an endowment to St Stephen's Chapel, Westminster. This was reunited with Queen Court under Sir Thomas Cheney by a grant from the Crown following the chapel's dissolution.

6.3 In 1572, Sir Henry Cheney sold the whole manor 'of Ospringe, alias Queen-court' to Richard Thornhill. The manor was then sold by the heirs of Richard Thornhill to Henry Mellish and was in the possession of his son-in-law Sir John Stonehouse from 1717, before passing a few years later to Sir Robert Furnese and Catherine, Countess of Rockingham. In the late 18<sup>th</sup> century the manor was owned by the countess's grandson George-Augustus, Earl of Guildford. This sequence of aristocratic owners suggests that the former manor house gradually declined in status to a farmstead with a series of tenants, which helps to explain its survival and subsequent lack of alteration. In the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries the house was owned by more local residents; James Stedman is listed in 1891, and by 1934 Queen Court was occupied by Lewis H. Finn, described as a farmer, hop grower and one of the two principal landowners in Ospringe. The property was latterly owned by the Shepherd Neame Brewery and tenanted.

## 7 The landscape context

7.1 Queen Court lies in the valley of the Nailbourne Brook. Historic maps, particularly the tithe and early Ordnance Survey maps show how the stream emerged from at least two springs near the church, before passing to the east of the farm buildings (Figs 2 & 3). Once within the farm property, the stream widened considerably, neatly bisecting the enclosure formed by the four lanes into two halves, with the farm complex tucked into the higher land in the south-western corner, and a second smaller farm or property to the north-east. The paddocks on both sides were known as 'Little Brooks' on the tithe survey. Historic images from the early 20<sup>th</sup> century show that this was fairly wide and formerly lined with pollarded willows or limes of some age (Fig 4). Once the stream had crossed Mutton Lane to the north, the watercourse widened further into a mill pond, serving a madder mill (later a corn

mill), before overflowing in Water Lane and joining Faversham Creek further north. This area of the landscape has now been completely built over. Historic photographs depict vehicles drawn through the shallow water, which was something of a local curiosity (Fig 5). The wider watercourse flowing through the property may, like the mill pond, have been an artificially widened body of water which was designed to slow or capture some of the water from the Nailbourne, particularly if the flow of the stream was unreliable.

7.2 By the later 20<sup>th</sup> century, the stream had begun to disappear, possibly through water abstraction. An aerial photograph of 1940 shows the line of the watercourse still lined with trees, though little other physical trace survived (Fig 6). The mill pond disappeared completely after the 1950s with the construction of houses on the site, and the watercourse through Queen Court is likely to have been filled in in order to expand the operations of the farm. All except a single example of the pre-existing Victorian farm buildings were demolished and replaced with the existing modern structures.

## **8 Understanding the significance of Queen Court Farm**

8.1 Under HE guidance, we can determine the significance of Queen Court and its associated barns objectively by examining the buildings under the following recommended criteria:

- Archaeological interest;
- Architectural and artistic interest;
- Historic interest.

### **8.2 Archaeological interest**

The investigation of past human activity is reflected in the technical understanding of the standing buildings, the landscape morphology and in buried remains which may be worth exploring. Analysis of the barns and house show them to be well preserved examples of their type, typifying the agricultural evolution of wealth in Kent in the later Middle Ages and representing good examples of Kentish barns and Wealden houses, both subjects which have attracted much scholarly interest. Detailed technical analysis has been undertaken for the barns, and good future potential exists to understand the house better. Buried archaeological potential across the site remains unquantified, but the location of the proposed development near the valley bottom and at some distance from the historic buildings presupposes less chance of encountering substantial evidence of human habitation, than in the immediate vicinity of the farmhouse, which was clearly sited in an area not prone to flooding in the past. The buildings of Queen Court Farm have a moderate to high significance for their further potential to illustrate the past.

### **8.3 Architectural and Artistic interest**

8.3.1 The aesthetic qualities and specific architectural interest of the farmhouse and barns have been recognised in architectural studies and in their statutory listing, further reinforced by the recent upgrading of the larger barn to Grade II\* status, which recognises exceptional quality and rarity. Queen Court is an important survivor of a late medieval Wealden house, a class of building which denotes a particular element of the landed class of the period, and the prosperity of Kent during the later Middle Ages. The building is both attractive and a good representative example of its type. It once had an open hall and two flanking wings, which are connected across the hall range by typical flying wall-plate and braces. The hall was probably floored over in the 16<sup>th</sup> or 17<sup>th</sup> century and ceilings installed when the southern wing was added in brick. Today, the new fabric which replaced the original tall hall window has applied paintwork in imitation of timber, which partly disguises its origins. To the rear, the house has a large attached range, latterly used as a kitchen, which can be dated on visual evidence and internal inspection to the later 17<sup>th</sup> or early 18<sup>th</sup> century.

8.3.2 The two large barns to the north are of equal importance, both in their own right, but also because they are broadly contemporary with the phasing of the house, and so together form an important and rare surviving farm group of the period. The larger barn is an impressive aisled Kentish barn with typical characteristic features of the 15<sup>th</sup> century, suggesting it was contemporary with the house. This appears to have been extended to the east in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, distinguishable by internal changes to the structure and the survival of a fine gable end and side walls in high status brick, itself an outward and ostentatious gesture of display. To the west, a second, lateral barn which extends its long elevation along Water Lane is likely to be of 16<sup>th</sup> century date, and survives with modifications at the southern end, where a stable block was created from one of its bays in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century.

8.3.3 Architecturally and artistically, Queen Court has a high significance for its position in the surviving stock of Kent's historic building heritage and for its picturesque and aesthetic qualities.

### **8.4 Historic Interest**

As the manorial former manorial centre of Ospringe, Queen Court, together with the church are both immediately identifiable buildings in the vicinity. The historic associations with medieval royalty, prominent aristocratic families and later owners who were important in the life of the local area, lend the buildings a rich heritage which has yet to be fully explored. Today, the buildings also form prominent landmarks which have been recognised as contributing to the essential character of the Conservation Area. They hold meaning both for the historical identity of Ospringe, but also for residents as part of the collective identity of their local area.

## **9 The setting of the heritage asset**

9.1 NPPF requires the setting of the heritage assets to be assessed, reflecting the fact that the way in which the historic buildings are experienced forms an important component of significance, and reiterating that heritage assets cannot be seen in isolation, but form key components of a wider historic landscape.

### **9.2 Defining setting**

9.2.1 Defining the setting of the historic assets is an exercise which determines how the historic buildings are experienced in their landscape. It is subjective and unlike historic buildings, less easily quantified. Queen Court sits within an inner landscape, of farmyards with associated buildings in close proximity, but can also be experienced in an outer landscape of open, agricultural land, retaining patterns of historic field boundaries and views of the farm from the near and far distance.

9.2.2 Historically, surveys such as Hasted's plan of 1798 and the tithe survey of 1840 are useful in showing the extent of historic woodland, field boundaries and the pattern of settlement, which offers a good comparison with the prevailing conditions today and may provide guidance to enhance significance or restore lost elements of the historic landscape. These historic maps show that Ospringe had much woodland on the higher ground to the west and a more rural aspect before the development of bungalows to the north. Other important features included the presence of the tree-lined Nailbourne through the property, and the mill pond to the north, already noted above.

9.2.3 The view from Mutton Lane provided Victorian and Edwardian photographers with a picturesque view of Ospringe which was replicated on a number of historic postcards. It shows Queen Court Farm with the rising bulk of the church in the distance (Figs 4 and Plate 7) and extensive tree cover. Taken from the north-east, they show the massing of the farm complex, with the great barn still partially thatched, and several buildings clustered to the east of the farmstead, partly obscured by the trees.

9.2.4 The modern landscape has evolved considerably—partly due to changing agricultural practices, the fragmentation of land-ownership and growth of urbanisation but also the disappearance of water, which was clearly once an important component of the area. In 2004 the landscape of the Faversham-Ospringe Conservation Area was characterised in an appraisal by Swale Borough Council. This highlights both positive attributes and also detractors from the attractiveness and significance of the historic landscape. Ospringe is shown to have retained a distinctive identity, but it was also recognised that 'when the Nailbourne stopped flowing a part of the specialness of Ospringe vanished forever'. Water Lane

however, was noted as informally structured and marking the transition from urban to rural, and this has remained essentially unchanged in the last twenty years. The eastern side of the lane, which is not included within the boundary of the Conservation Area, is a notable detractor, with undistinguished bungalows which do not respond to the form and character of the area.

9.2.5 The most notable change since 2004 has been the ending of farming at Queen Court, so that the characterisation now needs to be updated and considered further in closer proximity to the farm buildings.

9.2.6 The historic buildings form a close-knit group. To the north and north-east, however, large modern agricultural structures have been built *ad-hoc*, including a storage silo against the barn, an open sided Dutch barn and other ephemeral and over-sized structures, which have introduced jarring and detracting elements to an appreciation of the architectural merits of the historic buildings (Plates 3 & 4) both by their size and unsympathetic materials and also their unplanned, sprawling layout. Concrete slab hard-standing has spread to every area where modern buildings have been erected, to the exclusion of trees or other planting. The dereliction of these areas has exacerbated the effect and pushed the boundary of the open landscape further from the buildings.

9.2.7 The topographical prominence of the historic buildings and the local relief means that the wider landscape views to the farm remain favourable despite the existence of the modern structures. The lanes which define the farm enclosure remain fairly thickly hedged, though the Water Lane facade is marred both by the poor current condition of the weatherboarding on the west barn and by corrugated sheeting used to infill the hedge and provide rudimentary gates. From closer proximity, the bulk and massing of the buildings obscure most views of the modern farm buildings and the approach from Water Lane is mostly screened (Plate 5). This is also true of views from Vicarage Lane and the south paddock beyond, where the land falls slightly and with the hedging, prevents any views to the modern farm buildings beyond (Plate 6). Not until the junction with Mutton Lane do the modern buildings come into sight, but here, the former Oast House on the corner has recently been refurbished and converted to domestic use and is developing its own newly planted hedges and screening.

9.2.8 The view westwards from Mutton Lane offers an interesting comparison with the historic views – with little obvious change except for the loss of the Victorian buildings to the north-east of the farm, and the intrusion of the modern farm buildings on this side (Plate 7 & 8). There are no clear views to the property from the northern arm of Mutton Lane – these being obscured by a modern industrial unit, with fencing and high stacks of timber pallets.

9.2.9 From further afield, more limited views show that, from the ridge of land to the west, the extent of surviving woodland is notable, and apart from the houses in Mount View, many of the unsightly farm buildings become recessive in the landscape (Plate 9) even with the added benefit of winter conditions.

## 10 Summary of Significance

10.1 The historic buildings have been accorded high significance for their rarity, architectural and historic merit and for the reason that they are no doubt cherished by the local community as interesting and attractive buildings, perceived as integral with the historic identity of Ospringe.

10.2 The landscape to the north now suffers from many detracting characteristics in the form of visual intrusions from insensitive and overly prominent residential development, and quasi-industrial activity. The general decline of the remaining open areas to the north and east, extending to Mutton Lane is manifest by a lack of active management since the ending of farming. This is characterised by the thinning of hedges and boundaries and decline in species diversity, but also exacerbated by the encroachment of vegetation into the yard surfaces. Though mostly viewed from private land with no current public accessibility, views of the modern farm buildings mar the immediate context and help to promote a sense of neglect and dereliction, though the historic buildings are sound and maintained. The paddock to the north is no longer actively managed and water has been completely lost from the historic landscape.

## 11 THE PROPOSAL

11.1 In response to the findings of the historic appraisal, an area of proposed development has been identified to the east of the historic farm buildings and a proposal drawn up. These are outlined in the drawings accompanying the application and take the form of a group of seven, single and two-storey dwellings with garages arranged in a courtyard cluster. These have been designed to reflect the nature, scale and form of Victorian farm buildings of the type which once stood immediately to the east of the larger barn, by using congruous materials but avoiding stylistic pastiche. The proposed area has been chosen as it lies on a slight rise to the east of the former course of the Nailbourne Brook where future threats of flooding can be minimised. Though replacing the modern farm buildings, they are positioned within the existing agricultural built landscape of the farm and so continue that tradition and character.

## 11.2 Avoiding, minimising and mitigating negative impact

11.2.1 In line with Historic England guidance, and given the negative detractors identified above, several recommendations arising from the historic assessment

have been employed to minimise negative impacts through careful consideration of design, layout, materials and the enhancement of the wider landscape around the farm.

### **11.3 Visual position - scale and massing**

11.3.1 The position of the proposed development has been selected to be least prominent from most viewpoints beyond the confines of the farm property, which can be demonstrated by reference to the accompanying photographic views. The position of the new buildings would both lie at a sufficient physical distance from the historic buildings so as not to compete with them, but also remain screened from the most commonly appreciated views; i.e. from the south-west. The fall in relief in the adjoining paddock to the south, as well as the hedging in Vicarage Lane would also retain the distinct separation of the farm buildings. From the higher ground to the west, the proposal would be fairly recessive in the landscape, and replace, in smaller volume and massing, the existing farm buildings without spreading into new, unbuilt areas. The same is true of views from Mutton Lane. By the same token, greater public access to the area to the north would be introduced by the re-establishment of paths, allowing for greater appreciation of the historic farm buildings from the north and east.

11.3.2 The massing of the proposal comprises both single and two-storey structures, introducing modulation as we might expect in a 19<sup>th</sup> century farm group of cart sheds, barns and livestock houses. They are designed in such a way to ensure the containment of cars within garages, and other measures to prevent the accumulation of visual markers of domestic life, including the design of the courtyard surfaces and the enclosing perimeters.

### **11.4 Materials**

The historic materials of Queen Court include red and buff-brown brick, weatherboarding over timber-framing, old peg-tiles and slate. This repertoire of materials is similarly proposed for the new build, with weatherboarding over brick plinths on slated single storey structures, and brick with tiled roofs for the larger structures.

## **13 Opportunities for Enhancement**

The removal of negative detractors to the significance of the building such as the demolition of unsightly, redundant agricultural buildings of no historic merit which are currently prey to vandalism offers the greatest opportunity for enhancement of the site. Revival of active management in the immediate surrounding landscape also offers the opportunity to improve the aesthetic appearance of the farm, reinforced most emphatically with the reinstatement of a body of water on the historic course of

the Nailbourne Brook, together with attendant tree and hedge planting to enrich the immediate landscape. The return to active management also introduces new area for public access, giving wider public appreciation of the historic core of the farmstead.

## 14 Conclusion

14.1 Any proposal has the potential to have impact on heritage assets, here defined as the listed farmhouse and associated barns which we have seen are of considerable significance. However, as outlined in NPPF (para 194a and 196), where a development proposal will lead to 'less than substantial harm' to the significance of a designated heritage asset, 'this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal, including, where appropriate, securing its optimum viable use'.

14.2 The ending of active farming at Queen Court is now an accepted fact. The historic barns, having outlived their utility for modern farming have been granted permission for residential conversion. Further revitalisation and enhancement of the site has the potential to rescue them from vulnerability in their current condition, introduce greater public benefit and restore active management in the immediate landscape by removing all the detracting elements and reintroducing lost landscape features in the form of the water feature and associated tree planting. The impact of the proposed new build, considered with scale and materials to accord with the general characteristics of the historic farm and of high quality, would have a low or even neutral impact on the significance of the heritage assets, with instead, opportunities for considerable enhancement and environmental enrichment for the local area.

## Bibliography

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## APPENDIX ONE – LIST DESCRIPTION

WATER LANE, OSPRINGE 1. 1103 (South-East Side)

Queen Court Farmhouse & outbuildings TR 0060 11/184 29.7.50. II\* GV

2. Fine C15 timber-framed house. The original portion is all studded. 2 storeys. 3 windows. Consists of a centre portion and 2 wings which project on the 1st floor on the protruding ends of the floor joists and brackets. Curved braces support the eaves of the centre portion. The 1st floor windows are original casement windows with small square leaded panes, 2 of them being oriel windows with a cove beneath them. Other windows modern casement windows. Tiled roof. At the south end of the front one window bay has been added, probably in the C17. This is fronted with red brick now painted white, but the ends of the floor joists project over the ground floor window. Original casement window with small square panes on the 1st floor. Behind the house to the east is a T-Wing in red brick, also added in the C17, to which a range of timber-framed outbuildings with brick infilling is attached.

Queen Court Farmhouse and Outbuildings form a group with the Barns  
Listing NGR: TR0019060509

Statutory Address:

Water Lane, Ospringe, Kent, ME13 8UA

The building or site itself may lie within the boundary of more than one authority.

County:

Kent

District:

Swale (District Authority)

Parish:

Faversham

National Grid Reference:

TR 00172 60493

## Summary

Barn, thought to date from the C15, with two bays thought to date from the late C17 or early C18; there is an attached granary, probably also of late-C17 or early-C18 date. The entire site is listed at Grade II\* as being of more than special interest; however, the principal focus of more than special interest is on the C15 part of the building, whilst the link block between the barn and the granary is of lesser interest.

## Reasons for Designation

The barn to the north of Queen Court Farmhouse is listed at Grade II\* for the following principal reasons:

Architectural interest:

as a C15 Kentish barn, characteristic of its type and date; despite the later replacement of the east end, the majority of the structure is remarkably regular and intact, and illustrative of contemporary construction; though of somewhat lesser interest, the attached late-C17/early-C18 timber-framed granary contributes to understanding of the development of the agricultural site

Historic interest:

the barn represents an important element of a rare and illustrative early farm complex.

Group value:

\* with the adjacent C16 barn, listed at Grade II, and with the Grade II\*-listed C15 farmhouse, as well as with the farm's Grade II-listed C18 carthouse.

## History

According to Hasted's 'The History and Topographical Survey of the County of Kent' (1798), the site of the current Queen Court Farm formed part of the possessions of Odo, Bishop of Bayeux at the time of the Domesday survey, but by 1214 the manor of Ospringe had passed to the Crown. Having been granted by Henry III to Hubert de Burgh, Earl of Kent, and his wife Margaret for their lifetime, the manor was granted to the trustees of Henry's intended queen Eleanor as a dower. The manor continued in the possession of the queens of England, becoming known as 'Queen Court' by at least 1299. However, soon after 1317, the manor of 'Queencourt' appears to have been divided into two distinct manors, granted separately, becoming a single manor again, granted to Sir Thomas Cheney, in 1550. In that year there is a reference to a 'mansion of Queen-Court', presumably referring to the extant farmhouse. In 1572 the whole 'manor of Ospringe, alias Queen-court' was sold to a Richard Thornhill, and a number of different owners are recorded through the C17 and C18.

The historic farmstead of Queen Court lies to the south of Ospringe, on the east side of Water Lane, with the Church of St Peter and St Paul to the south-west. The farmhouse is a Wealden house thought to date from the C15, or possibly early C16; the surviving historic agricultural buildings arranged in a loose courtyard to the north consist of two barns, the larger thought to date from the C15, known as the 'Great Barn' (or Building 2) and the smaller from the C16 (Building 1). On the west side of Water Lane is a cart house, thought to date from the C18.

The 'Great Barn' appears to have lost one or more of its original bays, probably in the late C17 or early C18; this may be the result of rebuilding due to subsidence, the

ground dropping considerably to the east. The east end of the barn, now comprising two bays, has been rebuilt in brick. Attached to the south elevation of the barn is a granary, which is not shown on the Tithe map of 1840, though stylistic evidence suggests a late-C17 or early-C18 date; the building may therefore incorporate re-used fabric, or may have been relocated from elsewhere.

The site contains a number of later agricultural buildings, mainly located to the north and east of the historic group.

## Details

Barn, thought to date from the C15, with two bays thought to date from the late C17 or early C18; there is an attached granary, probably also of late-C17 or early-C18 date. The entire building is listed at Grade II\* as being of more than special interest; however, the principal focus of more than special interest is on the C15 part of the building, whilst the link block between the barn and the granary is of lesser interest.

**MATERIALS:** the original part of the barn is timber-framed, on a brick plinth of very varying heights. The walls are weather-boarded, the majority of the boards appearing to be modern softwood, with a few oak or elm boards surviving in places. The eastern part of the barn is also timber-framed, on a taller brick wall accommodating the fall in ground level, with the eastern end being entirely of red brick, laid in English bond. The roof is hipped to the west and half-hipped to the east, the thatch now replaced by corrugated metal. The floors are covered with concrete.

**PLAN:** the rectangular barn stands on an east/west alignment, and measures approximately 33m by 11m. It has been suggested that the barn was originally of five bays, aisled on both sides; in its current form, the building comprises six bays of approximately equal length, with the western bay representing the terminal outshot, and two later bays to the east. The granary stands to the south on a north/south alignment, and is joined to the barn externally by a link block projecting from the centre of the barn's south elevation.

**EXTERIOR:** there is a wide wagon opening in the south elevation to the second bay, with a replacement gabled porch thought to date from the C17 or C18; the doors are later. There is a smaller pedestrian entrance adjacent to the east. In the westernmost bay is a modern entrance, with double doors. The third bay is obscured by the projecting granary extension. At the eastern end of the barn, the brick plinth to the original fourth bay appears to have been at least partially rebuilt. The fifth bay and sixth bays represent the later section of the barn, with a tall opening to the fifth bay, containing modern doors. The eastern end of the barn is entirely of brickwork, having a late-C17 or early-C18 character, the walls being generously provided with ventilation slits in two rows to north and south and three rows to the gable end, the majority now bricked up internally. There is an offset plinth. On the north elevation there is another C20 lean-to against the east end, though the brickwork remains visible within, the lower part being painted. To the west, the tall brick plinth reflects the fall of the ground to the north, the brickwork apparently having been reconstructed in the C19. Beneath the eaves towards the west end of the barn is an opening, possibly originally a pitching door or reduced winnowing opening.

INTERIOR: the original part of the aisled barn is of four bays, the westernmost comprising a cantilevered half bay and terminal outshot. The frame is regular in form, with bay divisions marked by slightly jowled arcade posts, having curved braces to the tie beam and arcade plate, and with aisle ties to the aisle plate. Downward aisle shores are trenched over the aisle ties and descend to the transverse post plates on brick sill walls. At the west end an axial post, with aisle shore, supports a terminal tie beam, carried on the ends of the arcade plates. The roof is supported by crown posts, each having downward braces to the tie beam and upward braces to the collar purlin. There are ten common collar-rafter couples to each bay. Additional strength is given to the frame by shores at the centres of the bays, thought to be a later insertion, possibly contemporary with the eastern rebuilding; straighter than the aisle shores, these are tied into the aisle plate with short spur ties but apparently only bird-mouthed into the arcade plate, with metal plates added in this position. The intermediate shores support a slender purlin, absent in places, which is also supported by the aisle shores, with an added short tie; the purlin possibly intended to provide extra support to the rafters over the aisles. There is no intermediate shore in the third bay, on the south side of the barn. The scarfing of the arcade plates is placed directly over the posts, the joints being side-halved and bridled. The wall framing consists of regularly spaced studs between jowled wall posts. The vast majority of the timber frame survives, though there has been some replacement in softwood. In addition, there have been a number of interventions, with metal reinforcement, braces nailed to the underside of common rafters, and some reinforcement to the sill beam. In the entrance bay, the braces from the arcade posts to the arcade plate appear to have been selected for their particularly cranked profile, allowing greater room for wagons. The later gabled porch has been tied into the main structure, with a re-used collar.

The division between the original part of the barn and the lower, late-C17/early-C18 section to the east is marked by the fourth truss. The crown post of this truss has been compromised, with later straight downward braces and a new upward brace to the west. The barn's fifth truss has raking struts in place of the crown post; the braces from the posts are straight, and there are downward braces to the aisle plate rather than shores. The aisle plate, or wall plate, continues round the gable wall, resting on an offset on the brickwork. The timbers in this part of the barn are more slender than in the earlier part, and are nailed rather than pegged, whilst there has been considerable adjustment and reinforcement to the structure. The tall portal to the south has an integral slot on each side designed for planking to retain the grain during threshing.

## GRANARY

The attached granary to the south is timber-framed, on a flint wall, accommodating the drop in level to the east. The framing is clad in weatherboarding. There is a central doorway to the western elevation. To the east, the building may originally have been open-fronted, the frame being supported on timber posts at ground-floor level; these are now in-filled with cement blockwork, with two door openings. The roof is covered with asphalt. The building has two cells at ground-floor level, within which the jowled posts, roughly chamfered transverse beams with run-out stops, and joists are exposed. The first floor was not inspected, but it is understood that the timber frame is visible, with shaped jowled posts, and tie-beams supporting a collar

rafter roof with a single purlin, and with no ridge board. Evidence of internal grain bins remains, some retaining elm boards.

The link block between the barn and the granary has a brick wall to the west, irregularly bonded; the flint to the lower part is visible from within the building to the east. The wall is probably C19. The eastern wall, which appears to be C20, is weatherboarded, and there is a C20 mono-pitched roof.

**Statutory Address:**

Water Lane, Ospringe, Kent, ME13 8UA

The building or site itself may lie within the boundary of more than one authority.

**County:**

Kent

**District:**

Swale (District Authority)

**Parish:**

Faversham

**National Grid Reference:**

TR 00146 60498

## **Summary**

Barn, thought to date from the C16, and possibly extended in the C17, with a stable installed in the C19.

## **Reasons for Designation**

The barn to the north-west of Queen Court Farmhouse is listed at Grade II for the following principal reasons:

**Architectural interest:**

\* as a C16 Kentish barn, the intact timber frame of the northern section demonstrating characteristics of its type and date; \* the southernmost section contains well-preserved C19 stable fittings.

**Group value:**

\* with the adjacent C15 barn, listed at Grade II\*, and with the C15 farmhouse, also Grade II\*, as well as with the farm's Grade II-listed C18 carthouse.

## **History**

According to Hasted's 'The History and Topographical Survey of the County of Kent' (1798), the site of the current Queen Court Farm formed part of the possessions of Odo, Bishop of Bayeux at the time of the Domesday survey, but by 1214 the manor of Ospringe had passed to the Crown. Having been granted by Henry III to Hubert de

Burgh, Earl of Kent, and his wife Margaret for their lifetime, the manor was granted to the trustees of Henry's intended queen Eleanor as a dower. The manor continued in the possession of the queens of England, becoming known as 'Queen Court' by at least 1299. However, soon after 1317, the manor of 'Queencourt' appears to have been divided into two distinct manors, granted separately, becoming a single manor again, granted to Sir Thomas Cheney, in 1550. In that year there is a reference to a 'mansion of Queen-Court', presumably referring to the extant farmhouse. In 1572 the whole 'manor of Ospringe, alias Queen-court' was sold to a Richard Thornhill, and a number of different owners are recorded through the C17 and C18.

The historic farmstead of Queen Court lies to the south of Ospringe, on the east side of Water Lane, with the Church of St Peter and St Paul to the south-west. The farmhouse is a Wealden house thought to date from the C15, or possibly early C16; the surviving historic agricultural buildings arranged in a loose courtyard to the north consist of two barns, the larger thought to date from the C15, known as the 'Great Barn' (or Building 2), and the smaller from the C16 (Building 1). On the west side of Water Lane is a cart house, thought to date from the C18.

It has been suggested that Building 1 was extended by two bays in the C17, rather than forming part of the original structure, with alteration. These southern bays were clad in brick in the C18 or early C19, with the southernmost bay fitted out as a stable during the C19.

The site contains a number of later agricultural buildings, mainly located to the north and east of the historic group.

## Details

Barn, thought to date from the C16, the southern section possibly an extension of the C17, with some rebuilding in brick, and with a stable installed in the C19.

**MATERIALS:** the timber frame is clad with weatherboarding to the northern three bays, the majority being modern, with some older boards surviving. The southern bays have been clad in red brick, laid in English bond. The roof – half-hipped to the north end – is covered with clay tiles, with asbestos sheeting to the eastern side of the northernmost bay; there are modern lights cut into the roof. The barn's doors are replacements, of varying ages. Except in the southernmost stable bay, the floors are covered with concrete.

**PLAN:** the rectangular barn stands on a north/south alignment, with Water Lane running alongside to the west, and the yard to the east. The building is currently of six bays. It is thought that the four northern bays represent the original C16 barn, with the two southern bays probably having been added in the C17, and the stable installed in the southernmost bay in the C19. The building is now partitioned into three sections, besides the stable to the south, the fourth and fifth bays were converted to workshop use in the C20.

**EXTERIOR:** the building has opposing openings in the third bay to the north, with a tall porch to the west; the roof structure of the porch has mortices for lost brackets. The lower opening to the east appears originally to have contained a narrower

winnowing door in place of the current double doors. In the eastern elevation the fourth bay also has an opening with double doors, immediately to the north of the brick section. The half-hipped north end of the barn has a later pitching window. The southern end has a narrow central doorway, with a window to either side and a door to the hayloft above; all openings have segmental-arched heads. In the eastern wall there is a horizontal window below the eaves, lighting the stable.

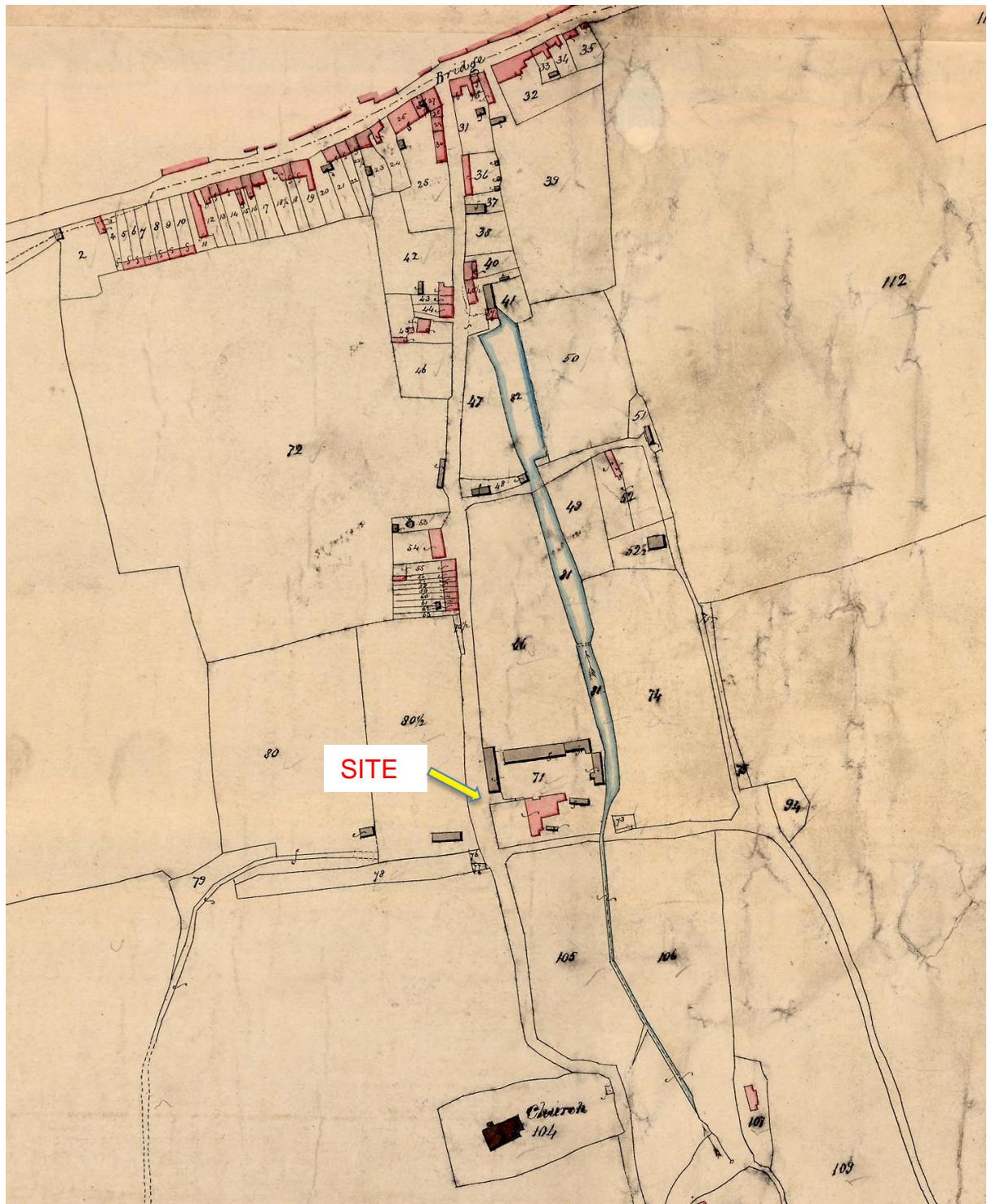
INTERIOR: the three intact bays to the north demonstrate the original aisled form of the barn, with bay divisions marked by slightly jowled arcade posts, having curved braces to the tie beam and arcade plate (those to the arcade plate being slightly straighter), and with aisle ties to the aisle plate. The arcade plates have side-halved and bridled scarf joints above the posts. The tie beams are stop-chamfered. Downward aisle shores are trenched over the aisle ties and descend to the transverse post plates, which now sit at floor level, owing to the floor having been raised. Above the tie beam queen struts rise to a collar clasping the purlins, with short windbraces between the purlins and principal rafters; there are intermediate collars between the trusses. There has been considerable replacement of common rafters below the arcade plate. The wall framing consists of regularly placed studs between jowled wall posts; the majority of the original studs survive. The aisles are divided by timber partitions to the lower part of the trusses, residual in places. The truss at the northern gable end has a mid-rail between the posts, and curved downward braces trenched across the mid-rail. In the third bay, the wall-plates of the porch structure are pegged to the arcade plate. On the other side, the aisle plate above the opening has empty mortices suggesting that the opening has been reduced. A boarded partition with double doors separates the northern three bays from the area immediately to the south, the truss form remaining intact.

Bays four and five are currently fitted out as a workshop; the roof could not be inspected above arcade plate/tie-beam level due to an inserted ceiling. The truss between the bays appears formerly to have been closed, and may have been the end of the original barn, or otherwise have formed a partition: the posts have mortices for a mid-rail, and the aisle ties have mortices for studs, whilst there is no evidence of downward shores; however, there are upward braces between post and tie beam, rather than downward braces as at the north end of the barn. There is a plain side-halved scarf joint over the western post. The framing to the south of this point continues in essentially the same form, without downward shores. There is some secondary bracing to this area.

Bay six, the southernmost bay, contains the C19 stabling, with two stalls, a loose box, and harness room. The boarded partitions and posts are intact, with a door with metal bars to the loose box, and there are surviving fitted mangers along the north wall of the stalls, and in the corner of the loose box, with timber hay racks above. The north wall is formed by the boarded partition. The floor is of brick. A fixed ladder to the south gives access to the hayloft. The pegged roof structure over the hayloft takes much the same form as that over the first three bays, without windbracing; strengthening timbers having been added to the backs of the rafters, together with a ridge piece.



**Figure 1** Site location. Reproduced from the Ordnance Survey plan



**Figure 2**, Extract from the Ospringe tithe map, 1840 (P4463).



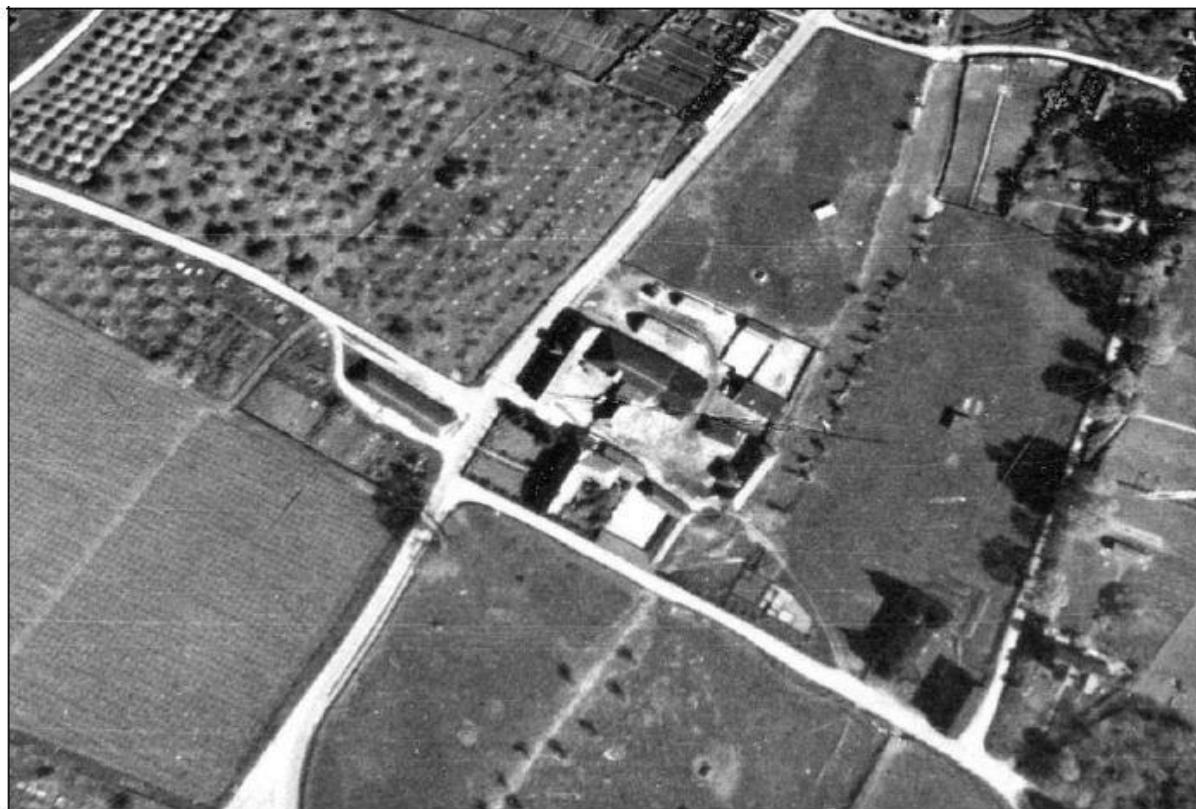
**Figure 3**, First Edition Ordnance Survey, 1881 (25 inch scale).



**Figure 4**, Early 20<sup>th</sup> century image from a rise off Mutton Lane looking south-west.



**Figure 5**, Early 20<sup>th</sup> century image of Water Lane and the Maison Dieu with the Nailbourne flowing through. Image: Historic England archive.



**Figure 6**, Air photograph from 1940. The line of trees denotes the former watercourse, with the wider Nailbourne marked as a slight depression.



**Plate 1**, View of the house from Water Lane. The 17<sup>th</sup> century extension lies to the right.



**Plate 2.** Water Lane view of the west barn from the south-west, showing the gable-end stable.



**Plate 3.** Modern Dutch barn and hardstanding to the north of the Grade II\* barn. Water Lane lies beyond the corrugated sheet metal gates to the left.



**Plate 4** View from the south-west of the disused farm buildings. The gable-end to the right is probably part of the demolished 19<sup>th</sup> century farm buildings, not present in 1840, but shown on the 1881 map.



**Plate 5.** View from the south, south-west of the intersection between Water Lane and Vicarage Lane.



**Plate 6.** View from the south-east, showing hedges along Vicarage Lane and Queen Court Farm to the left.



**Plate 7.** Early 20<sup>th</sup> century view from the rise above Mutton Lane showing the partly corrugated barn, line of pollarded trees along the wider Nailbourne and geese in the paddock.



**Plate 8.** Approximate comparative view of the same scene as Plate 7 today.



**Plate 9.** View from the higher land to the west. The long, corrugated roof of the large barn is visible to the left, but the view obscures the modern farm buildings.