

# Railway Farmhouse Fen Lane Scarning



Fig 1 General view from south west

## Architectural History

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## Railway Farmhouse, Scarning

### Introduction

Railway Farm was listed at grade II in 1985 during the Accelerated Re-Survey. This report comes as an invitation to take a closer look following the vacation of the house and to give a clear explanation of its special interest.

The farm was situated on Drayton Hall Lane before the building of the Dereham bypass along the route of the railway. The area has changed somewhat in recent years but the early 20<sup>th</sup>- century Ordnance survey map gives an idea of what the farm used to look like (Fig.2).

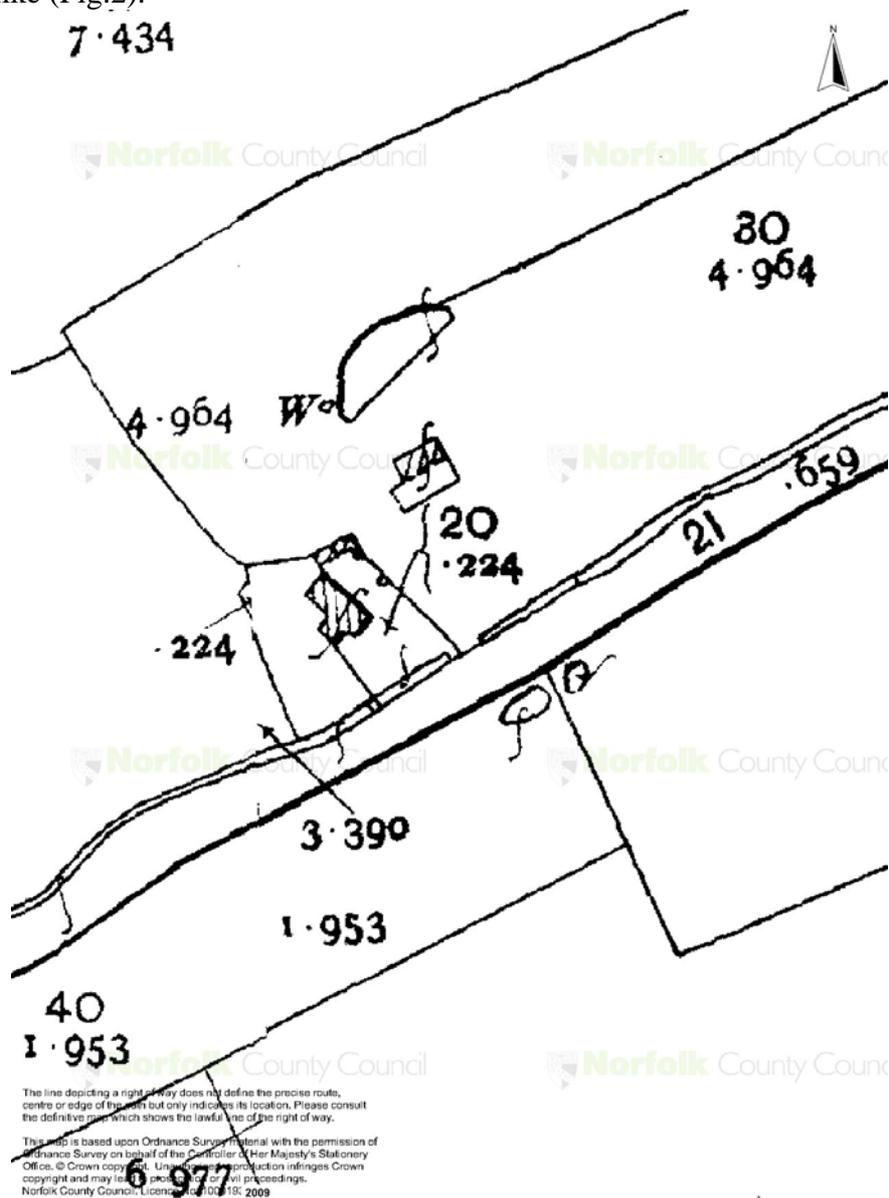


Fig. 2. Early 20<sup>th</sup>-century OS map

The map suggests that at that time the house was divided into two dwellings as shown by the boundary dividing the garden into two plots. The two staircases inside the house confirm this. However, the original house was a single dwelling with a winding stair to the south west side of the stack.

## The House

The building is a plastered timber frame with a thatched roof of long straw and flush ridge (fig.1). The plastered walls have been covered with modern roughcast. In plan the building is essentially two-cell with a central axial stack with stair and one-and-a-half stories. Various single storey additions have been made. The extension shown to the south west shown on the plan is now a conservatory possibly built on the foundations of the former extension. (If it was a conservatory the plan would show the extension cross hatched). The earliest extension is to the north-west and now has modern tile roof. Perhaps, this was built on the site of the original service rooms which would have occupied this position in the traditional farmhouse plan. A careful inspection of the surviving frame forming the north east wall would determine whether or not there was an original service bay. The original entrance, now blocked was into a lobby opposite the stack. This is a typical plan type of the later 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries.

The ceilings of both bays survive with spinal bridging joists each joining onto transverse beams against the stack. These are decorated with chamfers with ogee stops (fig. 3 and 4).



Fig 3 Ceiling of south-west cell with rebuilt hearth.



Fig 4. detail of chamfer stop

The frame is largely but a jowled principal post, tie and brace can be seen at the upper floor level disguised by wall paper (fig. 5).



Fig. 5. View showing principal post, wall plate, tie beam and brace.  
North-east stack bay at upper floor.

The roof structure is of particular interest because it is of queen post construction with surviving trusses at the centre and gable ends (figs 6, 7 & 8).



Figs 6 & 7. North east queen post and detail of collar, post, purlin joint.

Queen post trusses consist of a pair of vertical posts rising from the tie beam. The posts have wider or jowled tops in order to accommodate the purlin, which is triangular in section, and also the collar. This roof also has a ridge purlin also probably of triangular section (fig.9).



Fig. 8. South-west queen post with original purlin lost.



Fig. 9. Ridge purlin.

The type is very distinctive and is only found in north central Suffolk and south central Norfolk and thus is peculiar to this East Anglian region. Its use at Railway Farm makes it one of the northernmost examples recorded.

### **Summary**

Railway farmhouse was probably built during the later years of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. It is timber –framed and, although originally plastered, has a modern pebble dashed render. It has long straw thatch. The frame is probably complete but hardly visible. There is a central axial stack and a lobby entrance. Expected service rooms probably replaced with a modern kitchen. Most important is the surviving queen post roof.

Stephen Heywood FSA. July 2009. (Visited March 2009)