

Portway Farm, Twyford

HISTORIC BUILDING REPORT / April 2011

Including HS2 high-speed rail line Impact Assessment

**Buckinghamshire
Archaeological
Society**



**SURVEY AND
REPORT:**
Sue Fox and
John Brushe

Report number
BAS/2011-03

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Compiled by Sue Fox and John Brushe from their field survey made on April 2nd 2011.
This is report number BAS/ 2011-03.

1. SITE LOCATION

Portway Farm is located south-east of the village of Twyford in North Buckinghamshire. The full address of the site is given as Portway Farm, Twyford, Buckinghamshire, MK18 4EA. The national grid reference is SP 67399 25907.

2. SURVEY RECORD

A survey to the English Heritage Level 1 standard¹ was carried out on Portway Farm on April 2nd 2010 by John Brushe, Sue Fox and Julia Wise, with the aim of gathering basic information about the farmhouse and associated buildings, as part of a wider survey of the village of Twyford. This wider survey was carried out by members of the Buckinghamshire Archaeological Society's Historic Buildings' Group, in advance of a proposal to construct a high speed railway (HS2), which will run close to the farm and the village.

3. SUMMARY

The survey was able to establish at least three phases of construction for the main farmhouse, the earliest dating to the mid 17th century. A number of significant out-buildings were identified, including one remarkable threshing barn which dates from around 1800 and which should be considered for listing. It was considered likely that the whole complex represents a model farm of the period.

4. DESCRIPTION OF BUILDINGS

4.1 The Farmhouse



Figure 1:
The front
elevation of
Portway
farmhouse

The farmhouse probably dates from around 1800 but incorporates the kitchen hall of a mid 17th century building. To this belong the substantial timber-framed partition between the entrance passage and the kitchen hall, and the open fireplace with its gently cambered,

chamfered bressumer, keyed for plaster and largely blocked up when made into the fireplace for the new kitchen. It has been quite well unblocked and opened out as a feature.

The presence of older fabric is betrayed outside by the front door not being in the middle of the new front, suggesting that the house may have been rebuilt on the old foundations. The 17th century farmhouse was probably one room deep like the present front block. The top storey was probably added at the time of the rebuilding.

The red brick wing to the rear - built, surprisingly, in English bond - was probably added around 1830, with a dairy in a semi-basement. One of the original horizontal sliding sash windows which lit the dairy on the inner side survives, now internal, showing that the passage on that side was a later addition, possibly mid to late 19th century.

The stair looks early Victorian, 1830 -1850. The stair of the rebuilt house of c.1800 was probably in a similar position, in a stair projection, before the building of the rear passage hall. The house has an early 19th century ironwork porch.



Figure 2: The rear elevation of Portway farmhouse.



Figure 3: One of the flanking dovecotes

The rebuilt farmhouse would look rather gaunt and charmless, with its big tripartite ground and first floor windows, now glazed in late 19th century style with plate glass sashes, were it not for the dovecotes, joined to the house by walls hiding the big farmyard behind, and forming a symmetrical composition with the house.

4.2 The Threshing Barn

The large, brick-built threshing barn behind the farmhouse is a remarkable farm building, probably dating from the time of the rebuilding of the house. Its mixture of English bond inside and Flemish bond outside, and the big panels of openwork brick to the upper portion is extraordinary. It is a four-bay barn, so that the big full-height front porch is not central, but to left of centre.

It has a granary loft in its hipped roof upper storey above the tall cart entrance.

The rear cart entrance has no porch. It is in line with the porch giving the trough draught for threshing. The barn is now attached to single storey range to the right which is probably mid

19th century, and the further single story range at a right angle to it is probably late 19th century, with interesting octagonal roof lights.



Figure 4: Portway Farm's unusual threshing barn

4.3 Other Out-buildings

The other lesser barns are probably early to mid 19th century with re-used timber trusses. To one side of the rear right wing of the farmhouse is a circle of flagstones with the remains of a vertical spindle in the centre. This was an open air horse or donkey gin, used to power machinery in the dairy, which was probably sited in the basement. This is likely to date from the mid 19th century.



Figure 5: Cobbles indicate the location of a horse gin at Portway Farm

5. DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE

It is known that Portway Farm was owned by Oxford University's Lincoln College, being sold to the London Brick Company in 1885.

The current owner's family were tenant farmers for generations before they purchased the farm in 1968.

The name "Portway" suggests possible medieval origins for the site.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

This is an intriguing farm complex which would repay further study. The big brick threshing barn with the porch should be considered for listing, which should include the other outbuildings, for group value.

The site would also benefit from detailed study of existing documentary evidence.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

All photographs were taken by Julia Wise.

REFERENCES

- 1 **Understanding Historic Buildings: a guide to good recording practice** (English Heritage, Swindon 2006) page 14.