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**SOME MEDIEVAL POTTERY FROM NORTH COVE***by Paul Durbidge***SUMMARY**

A small excavation including some fieldwalking was carried out by the writer and A. Pye on ploughland at North Cove. It produced evidence of medieval pottery from the 13th century and also a small amount of building material and pottery of 15th century character.

**INTRODUCTION**

The area investigated lies a short distance to the west of a large circular moated site known as Wade Hall where fragments of medieval pottery were found in moat upcast some years ago.

Apart from this, comparatively little fieldwork has been undertaken in the vicinity. The soils vary in texture, involving both heavy and light areas, all of which are well drained and would certainly have been suitable for occupation by early settlers.

**FIELDWORK**

The first of the pottery at North Cove was observed by A. Pye during the summer of 1979 when part of a medieval pot was found lying at the bottom of a perimeter drainage ditch where it had fallen from the side of the bank after a prolonged spell of dry weather.

From the situation it appeared that the vessel must have come from some kind of feature and this was later confirmed as being the remains of a pit. Later on, fieldwalking on the adjacent ploughland produced more pottery, again of medieval type, and also some fragments of brick, pin tiles, and lava stone. More concentrated searching of the field surface showed that the pottery involved an area approximately 30 feet square, outside these limits surface finds were limited to a couple of secondary flakes and a few bits of 20th century material. By far the majority of the pottery belonged to cooking pots, being either rim body sherds or base angles, while the remainder consisted of semi-glazed forms. The cooking pot fabric was mostly a hard grey to grey buff material, extremely gritty in texture with frequent inclusions of large flints in the clay which were revealed in many of the fractures. Glazed sherds, although in a minority, were principally either in a light pitted green or a very rich dark green glaze. Also, on a few sherds a very cheesy yellowish glaze was visible.

Fragments of handles found on the field surface suggest they were mostly from jugs or pitchers, some being unglazed, others partially glazed. The presence of strong thumb impressed handles were also in evidence.

The side of the bank from where the pot had fallen was tested and this showed that at least half of the feature had been cut through when the modern ditch had been formed. In scraping away the section still in the side of the bank it revealed an infill of material six feet across and almost four feet in depth, the content consisting of a varied mixture of soils, including clay, amongst which were remains of animal bones, shells and pottery.

The upper fill contained much mixed clay and both dark and light topsoil and during the removal of this level, animal bones, including jaw bones and teeth were encountered, the majority of which had been stained a light brown as a result of soil colouring. Removal of this fill revealed a very dark top soil which was extremely wet and from amongst this came small oyster shells and the first of the pottery. Once again it was principally cooking pot remains and later it was possible to partially reconstruct some of the vessels which gave some idea of both size and shape. Base angles of pots showed sagging profiles which were heavily soot encrusted and, another thing worth mentioning, was the general thinness of the pottery, both in wall sherds as well as base remains. The presence of the

flints in the clay obviously caused a high fracture rate to vessels subjected to the heat of a fire as several base remains show exposed flints where the pot has broken.

Pottery continued to be found amongst the black infill with several more fragments of rim and wall sherds lying with whelk shells on the floor of the pit. Also, amongst these remains was the neck of a Couvre Feu, which was particularly interesting as up to the time of writing it is the only one found in the locality. It was made from the same gritty fabric as the cooking pots and the inside showed considerable soot staining. Decoration consisted of four vertical strips of clay giving a brief but pleasant form of decoration.

As to the date of the material encountered at North Cove, it would appear that the majority can be attributed to the 13th century, with perhaps three of the simple rim forms belonging to the late 12th century. The pancheon type rims, along with some of the hollowed rims, compare with 15th century types and while some of the very light green glazed sherds are earlier, the richer dark green material compares favourably with sherds recovered at Covehithe during 1979-80, which have been safely tied down to the 15th century.

### THE POTTERY

The types shown are a cross section of pottery recovered from the pit feature and also the ploughland.

Illustrated in Fig 1 (pieces 1 to 13) and Fig. 2 (pieces 14 to 34)

1. Part rim and neck of pitcher in hard buff ware, with water worn quartz grits. Shallow grooves running around neck, black stained internally. *From field surface.*
2. Sherd from rim and top of handle of pitcher in red fabric containing fine grits and small flints, slight trace of green glaze. *From field surface.*
3. Part rim and shoulder of cooking pot in hard buff fabric containing water worn grits and small flints. Hollowed top to rim and soot stained externally. *From the pit.*
4. Greater part of small cooking pot with buff inner surfaces and grey buff external. Hard gritty fabric containing mica, soot blackened base. *From the pit.*
5. Cooking pot in hard gritty buff fabric containing small flints and mica. Sagging base partially soot stained with traces of burnt food. *From the pit.*
6. Part rim and shoulder of cooking pot, rim slightly hollowed and small in section compared to size of vessel. Fabric hard buff with water worn grit, soot blackened externally. *From the pit.*
7. Rim from cooking pot in whitish buff externally and buff internally. A hard texture containing small white grits and also quartz grits, slightly rounded top of rim. *From field surface.*
8. Rim from small cooking pot in hard grey buff fabric containing much fine grit, soot stained externally. *From the pit.*
9. Sherd from rim of small cooking pot with pale grey core and orange external surface, mixed grits including large and small, soot blackened externally. *From field surface.*
10. Rim sherd from cooking pot with hollowed top, hard grey fabric with grey core, fine grits and containing mica. *From the pit.*
11. Rim from cooking pot with water worn grits and occasional small flints. Grey buff fabric with hollowed rim and decorated with zig zag pattern on shoulder. *From the pit.*
12. Rim with hollowed top in dark grey buff, hard fabric with much small water worn grits and mica, soot blackened. *From the pit.*
13. Part rim and side of cooking pot in hard buff ware with much water worn grit, thickened rim form with thickened top. *From the pit.*
14. Grey buff cooking pot fabric containing small grits including ironstone. *From field surface.*
15. Rim sherd from cooking pot in hard red fabric containing small mixed grits. *From field surface.*
16. Rim in grey buff containing small grits and mica. *From field surface.*
17. Vessel in hard sandy buff fabric. *From field surface.*
18. Rim sherd in hard light grey material with hollowed rim. *From field surface.*
19. Sandy buff fabric with much water worn grit. *From the pit.*
20. Rim from cooking pot in light buff fabric with very fine grits and hollowed top. *From field surface.*
21. A hard grey fabric with light grey core. *From field surface.*

North Cove

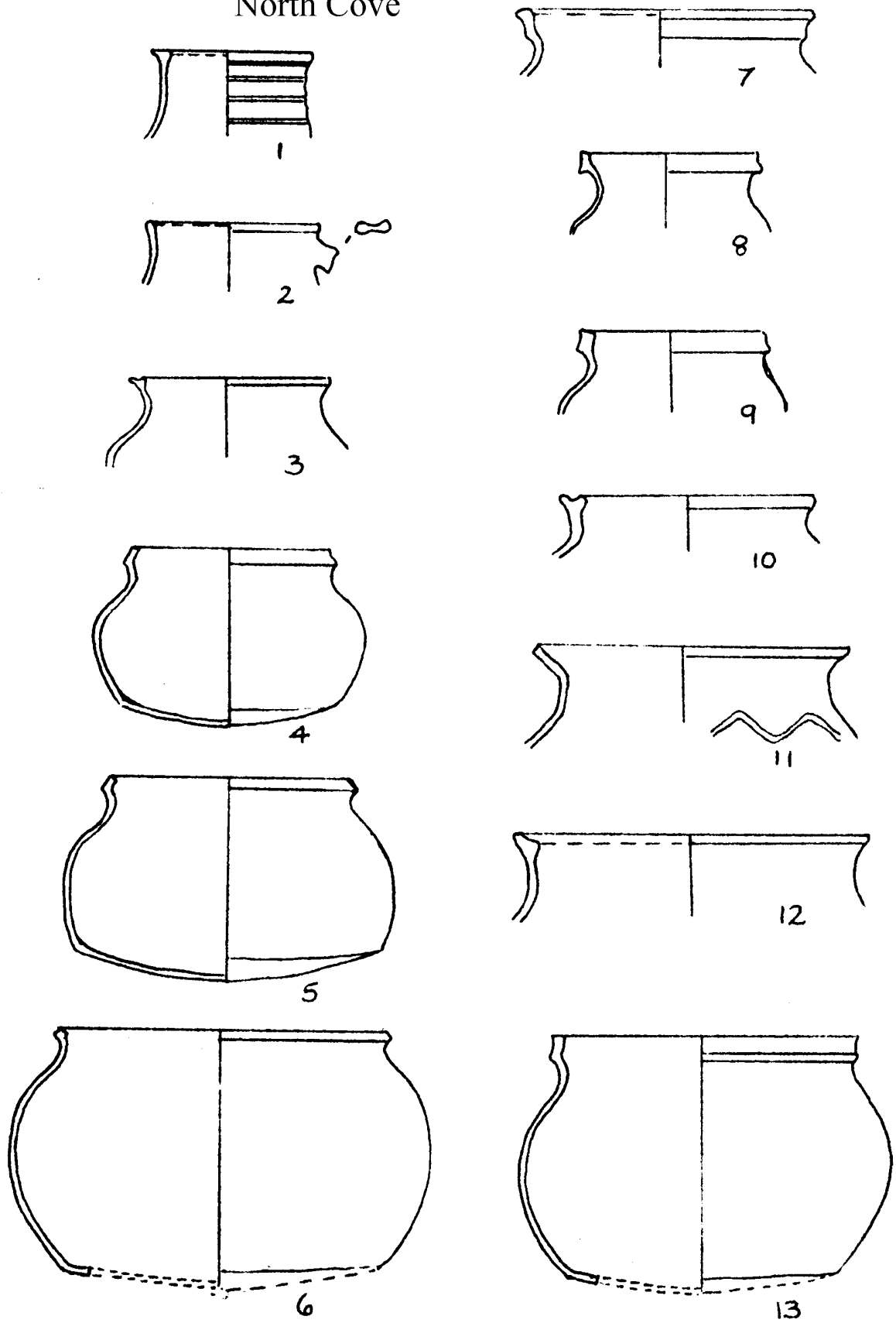


Fig. 1 Medieval Pottery Scale 1:4

### North Cove

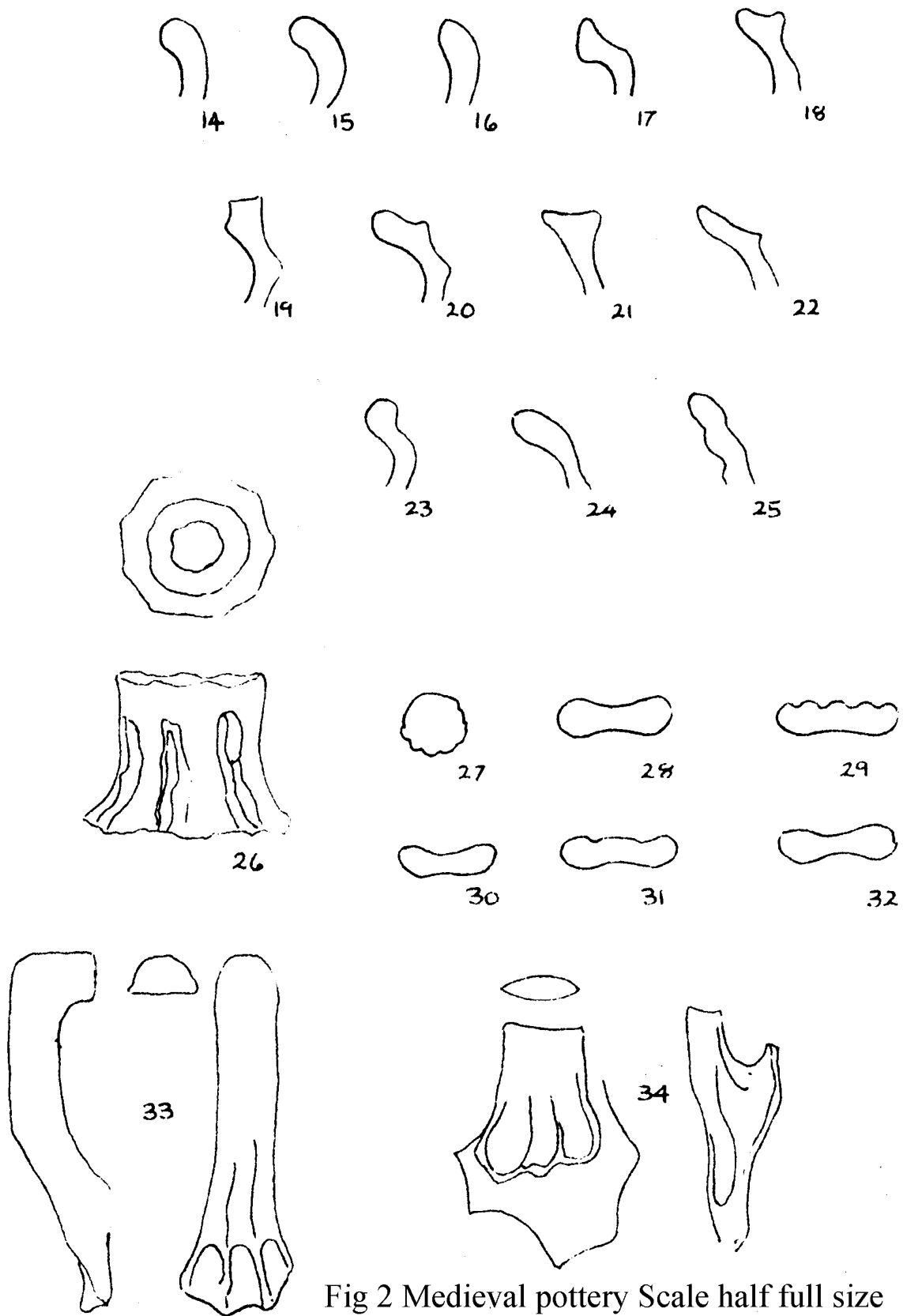


Fig 2 Medieval pottery Scale half full size

22. Extremely gritty light grey fabric, red externally. *From field surface.*
23. Grey buff externally and black internally, fabric containing mica and water worn quartz grits. *From field surface.*
24. Rim in buff fabric with small quartz grits and mica. *From field surface.*
25. Light grey material containing mica, soft appearance, compares with material from Jay's Farm, South Cove. *From field surface.*
26. Neck of Couvre Feu or fire cover in hard gritty grey buff, remains of four vertical applied strips form the decoration, soot stained internally. *From the pit.*
27. Fragment of rod handle with flutes, reddish brown fabric with grey core.
28. Fragment of strap handle in gritty brownish buff with grey core, sparse light green glaze.
29. Fragment of fluted handle in grey buff fabric containing small grits and also flint.
30. Strap handle in gritty red ware with grey core, traces of light green glaze.
31. Water worn fragment of strap handle with stabbed centre ridge, hard red fabric with dark grey core.
32. Strap handle in red fabric with light grey core and glazed in light green glaze.
33. Handle in red fabric with light grey core, lower part with strong thumb prints and glazed with light green glaze.
34. Lower part of handle in red fabric with light grey core, cheesy green glaze.

Numbers 27-34 recovered from field surface.

Some 533 sherds of extremely gritty buff-grey buff fabric were recovered, including many with sizeable flint inclusions. Occasionally light grey soft textured fabric containing mica was found, but in a minority.

The remaining groups are as follows:-

- 34 pieces of Red wares, including one part base with grey core, light orange to red.
- 36 pieces of Base angles, the majority of these were soot encrusted and food traces were visible on one fragment.
- 4 pieces of Base types were pinch nipped and diameters of base remains are approximately 5" – 6½" – 7" – 10" – 13".

#### Rim Forms

11 in red fabric.

4 partially glazed in pitted light green

96 buff-grey buff

17 glazed body sherds in dark green, pitted light green, rich light green, olive green with allied vertical strip.

#### Animal Bone and Shell

3 sheep's jaw bones	}
9 rib bones	}
2 leg bones	}
9 boar's tusks	} Pit content
5 horse teeth	}
8 small oyster shells	}
4 whelks	}

#### Lava Millstone

1 piece 4" long by 1" thick.	One pecked surface.	From pit.
1 piece 5" long by 1½" thick.	One fluted surface.	}
1 piece 7" long by 1¼" thick.	One pecked surface.	} Field surface.
1 piece of millstone grit.		}

Brick Remains

3¾" x 1½" gritty orange fabric with grey core with small flints.

4½" x 1⅛" water worn yellow buff.

## CONCLUSION

Interpretation of the situation in which the material has been found is somewhat difficult as there are no visual contours or discolorations in the field surface that may have indicated a possible moated site. However, the concentration of pottery is relatively small and does suggest the possibility of a small homestead of some sort with the building material probably having some later connection. The roadway adjacent to the ditch prevents further examination close to the pit feature and, up to the time of writing, visual observation on the edge of the field on the opposite side of the road has so far been non-productive as far as an overlap of pottery is concerned.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to conclude by thanking the landowner, Mr. B. Blowers, for allowing the fieldwork and small excavation to take place.

Also, I would like to thank Mr. A. Pye for his contribution in the project.

The pottery has now been placed in the Lowestoft Museum through the generosity of Mr. B. Blowers.

Paul Durbidge March 1982

**CLAY LUMP - A BUILDING AT MUTFORD**

*by Mike Reeder*

Credit for discovering this interesting little building is due to Dr. N.B, Eastwood, a vice-president of the Society, who in the late spring of 1981 told the Secretary and Chairman of the Society about the building, and obtained a clay block from it.

This building stands abutting the verge on the south side of Chapel Road as it leaves Mutford village, heading east towards Rushmere church. The site, O.S. ref. TM494 882, and the present house is known as 'Byways', and the owner and occupier is Mr. E. Hartley who gave every assistance with the recording. The survey was carried out during late May and early June 1981. A partial collapse of the north-east corner of the building had revealed the clay lump construction. This collapse was caused primarily by weathering. March that year was the wettest since 1947, and was followed by the wettest April since records began! <sup>(1)</sup> Through lack of maintenance, which is an ever increasing work load as this type of building ages, and is less likely to be carried out as the status of the building declines, rain had been allowed to penetrate the structure, probably through porous or damaged wall covering. Also, a build-up of soil and vegetation against the base of the walls on the road side had allowed dampness to penetrate into the walls. Inevitably several bonding blocks on the corner weakened and disintegrated.

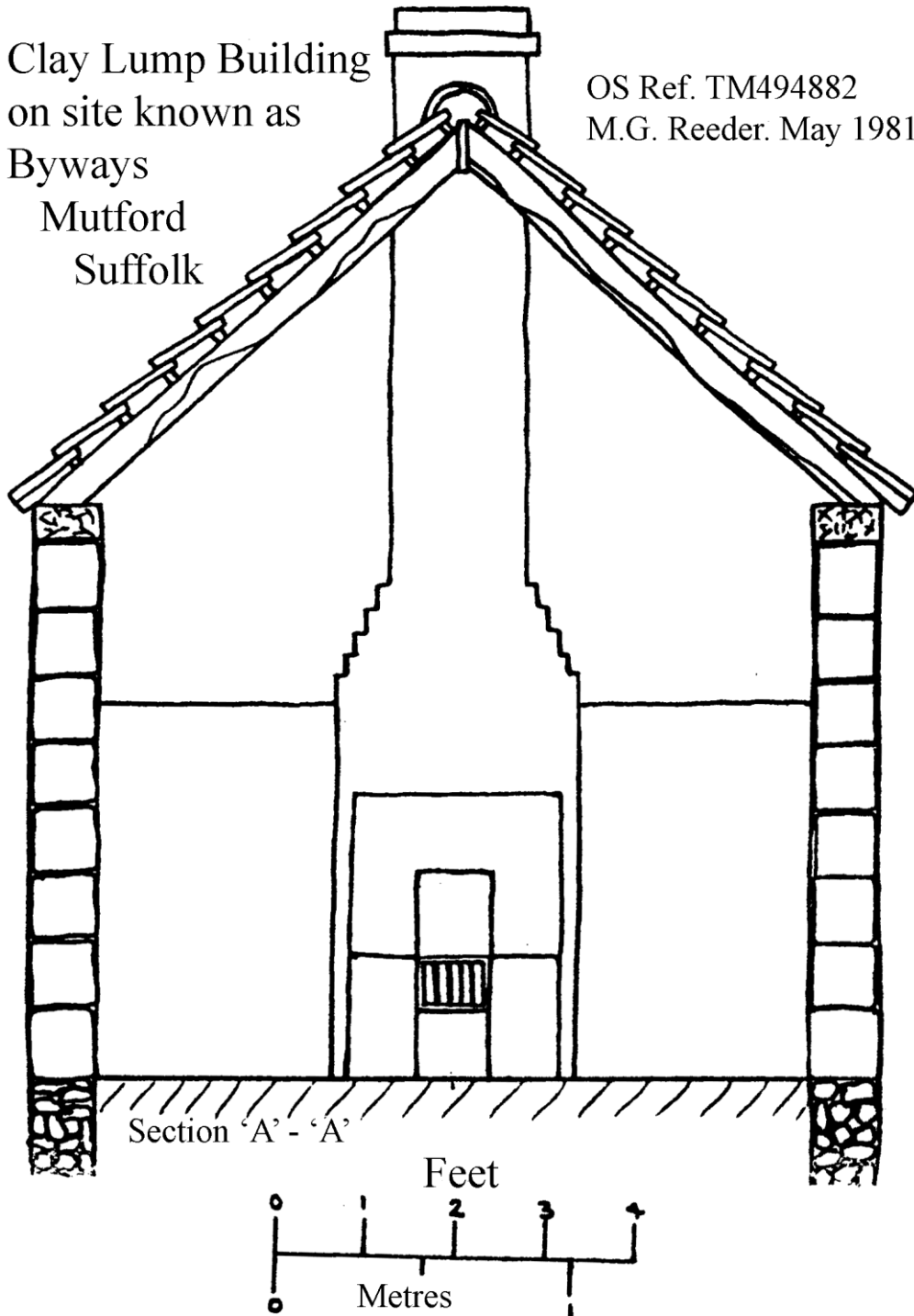
As so many have pointed out before, all types of earth walls require a good pair of shoes and a good hat in order to last. The hat in this case is red clay pantiles and seems to have been successful, the shoes are a 13" course of flints laid in lime mortar and, having become bridged, are now the weak point. Internally a fairly recent concrete floor has been laid at the level of the joint between clay and flint, while externally the soil level is now several inches above the joint. External weatherproofing is provided by a thick coating of tar applied directly to the clay lump, and continued to the base of the flint foundation. All the interior has been whitewashed many times, and then wall papered, this latter has now mostly fallen off.

Brick patching is visible in places, and the chimney and hearth are brick. The chimney wall seems to be clay and is very thick (about 22") at the base, and appears solid. A simple roof of roughly cut, wavy edged rafters, approximately 3½" x 3", spaced at 18" centres, with a 5" x 1" ridge board, rests on wall plates approximately 3" x 4". Two tie-beams 3½" x 9" rest flat across the wall plates, the centre one is finished square, the other one is very wavy edged and has been boxed in to tidy it up. No tie beam exists at the chimney end, presumably the very stout gable wall was considered a sufficient tie, or a beam has been removed. A steel tie rod has been added fairly recently through this gable wall at approximately four feet from the ground, though there is no obvious evidence of movement having occurred. All the timber is soft wood, with simple nailed lap or butt joints, and white washed. Lime mortar torching has been applied to the underside of the pantile joints. Some attempt has been made

to line the under-side of the rafters with various odd pieces of board, this is probably very recent to overcome deterioration of the torching.

Clay Lump Building  
on site known as  
Byways  
Mutford  
Suffolk

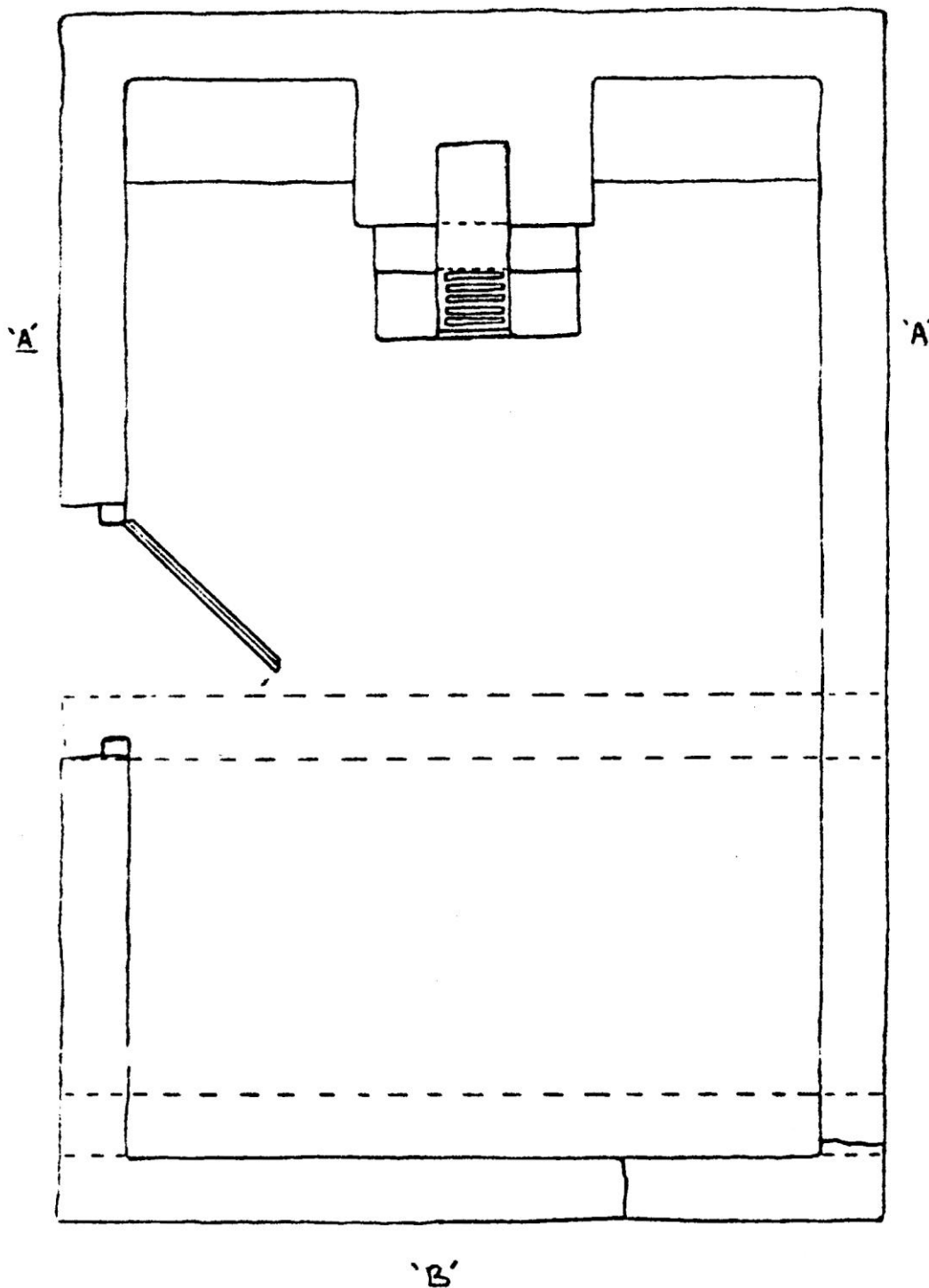
OS Ref. TM494882  
M.G. Reeder. May 1981



The clay lumps are approximately 19" x 9" x 9" and consist of a sandy loam with small stones up to approximately 1" diameter, with wheat straw as a reinforcement. A smooth loam seems to have been used as mortar, and to level up the internal and external surfaces.

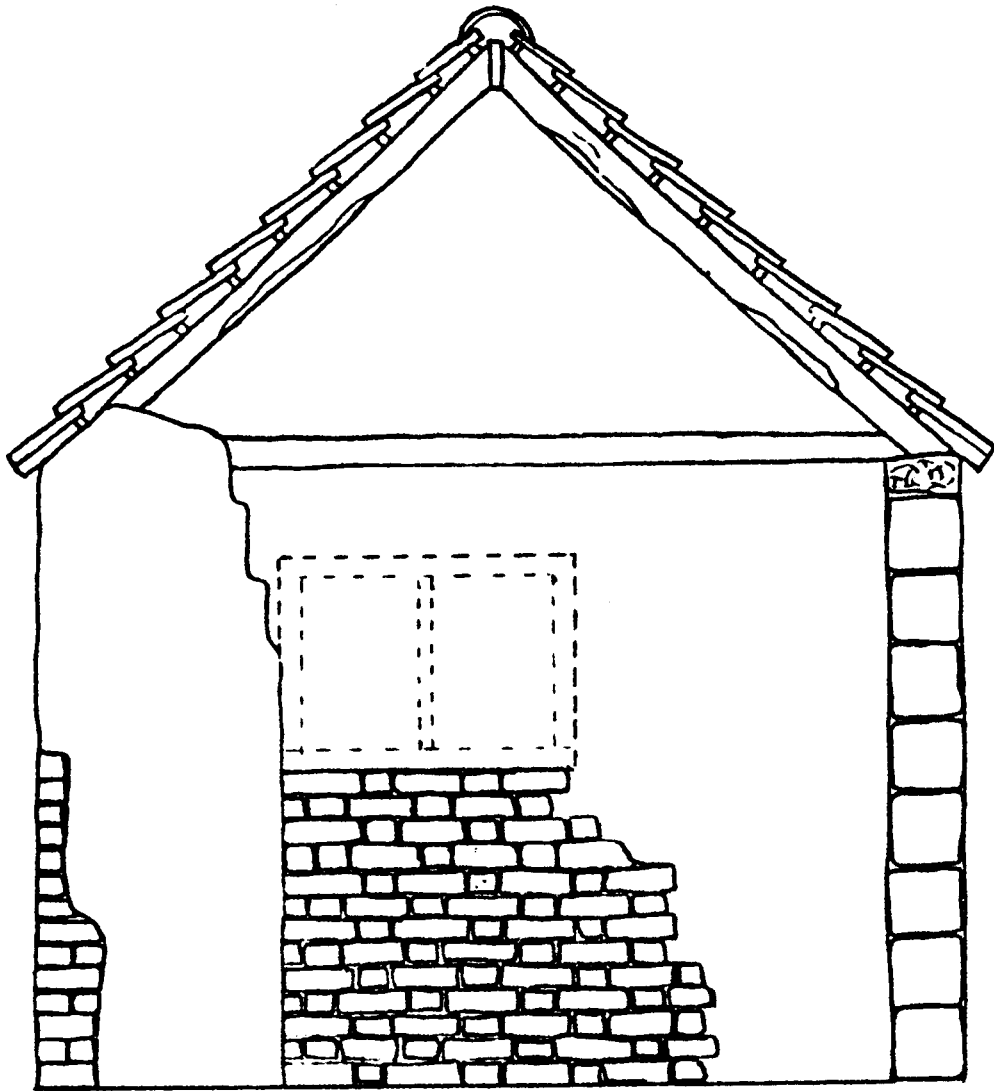
This building is outside the present generally recognised clay lump area, and would appear to be a survivor of a once universal earth wall tradition. Local rumour has it that a group of similar buildings occupied this site, and that this lone survivor was occupied until sometime during World War II. Although the present house was built on this site in 1936, it is told that the eldest male member of the family occupying the site then refused to move into the new house and remained in this building. Certainly a group of buildings are shown on early editions of O.S. maps. On the earliest 1" map, surveyed 1835-6, although no detail is visible in such a small scale, this site is shown as occupied by buildings. In 1883 the first edition of the 25" map for this area was surveyed, and a total of seven buildings are shown on this site, all of them small (Fig. 1). Two are approximately 120 sq. ft.; three, one of them our survivor, are approximately 130 sq. ft.; and two are approximately 260 sq. ft. total

ground area. By the second edition in 1904, four of these buildings have gone, and a new one has been attached to our existing building (Fig. 2). This plan is unchanged in the revised 1926-8 map to then become the layout of 1936 when the present house was built (Fig. 3). At sometime since then the building attached to our clay lump one has shrunk and become a corrugated iron shed (Fig. 4).



Since the war, when the present owner bought the site, this clay lump building has been used as a shed, the overall tar coating, ivy covering on the west chimney gable, together with timber and corrugated iron lean-tos on two sides, providing a disguise. What this building and others on this site were originally built for, or when, is probably unrecorded. Possibly they were some kind of workshops, though if they were all of similar construction to the survivor, lighting would have been very poor. Were some of them constructed as dwellings, possibly having a temporary or seasonal use? As to dating, something obviously existed on this site around 1830, probably this building was there then, but it does not appear to me to be substantial enough to be more than two hundred years old.





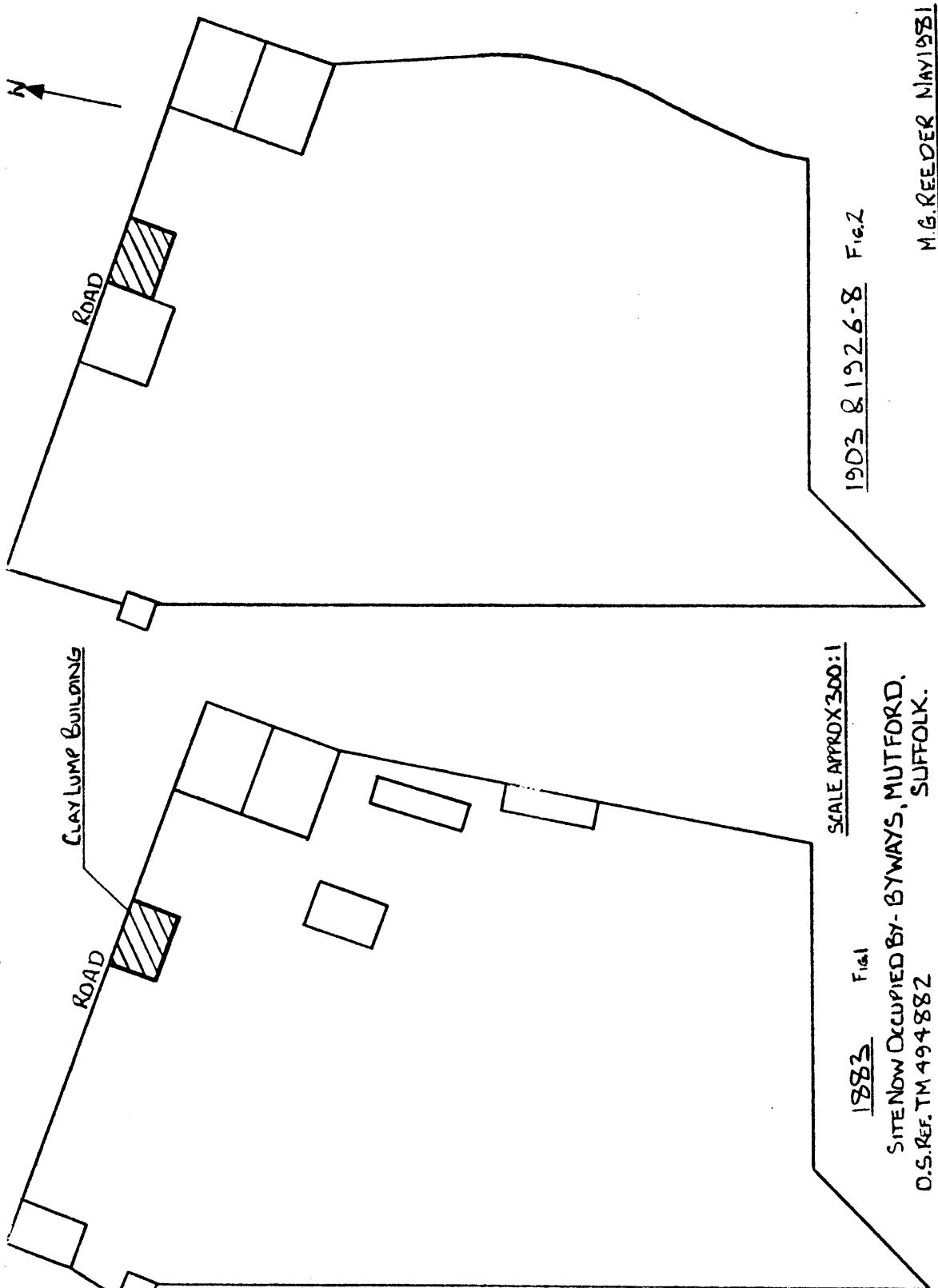
VIEW ON GABLE END 'B' SHOWING COLLAPSED SECTION

Therefore a date anywhere from 1780 to 1880 (the first positive record) seems possible. Around 1800 would be my guess.

For those unfamiliar with clay lump construction, a brief description may be helpful. The term clay lump is a loose, inaccurate description for unburnt bricks. They certainly cannot be made from what we now normally describe as clay, neither are they lumps, but fairly precisely made blocks.

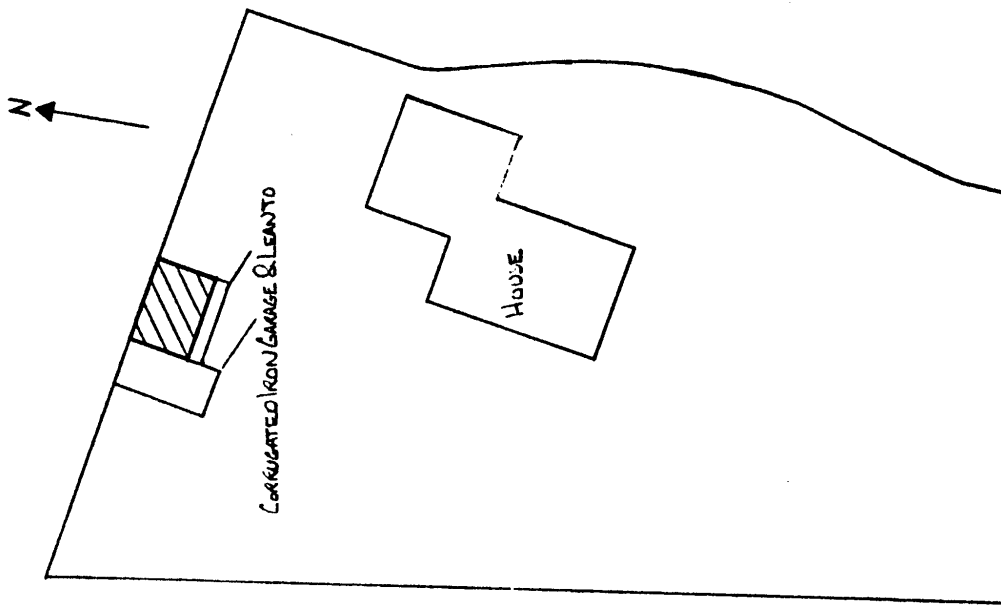
Clay, unless fired to approximately 800°C, is a very unstable material, expanding and contracting appreciably, and unevenly, with changes in moisture content. Unless carefully forced into thin, fairly constant sections, clay will generate internal stresses during drying sufficient to cause severe distortion and fracturing. The raw material used for clay lumps in the past must have included almost everything, the less satisfactory mixtures just had a short life. The blocks found still existing today are of course all the successful mixtures.

Suitable raw material can consist of from about 5% up to approximately 40% clay, the limits are very elastic depending very much upon the other constituents and also on the methods of analysis and definition<sup>(2)</sup>. From a local study<sup>(3)</sup> of old blocks from three villages the clay content varied from 5% up to 17%, intermediates from 4-20%, sand from 4-53%, pebbles 0-10%, and chalk 0-87%. This shows a surprisingly large variation for successful blocks, from almost pure chalk to very sandy loam. The other essential ingredient is a reinforcing material, normally this consists of straw cut into lengths approximately 4" - 6" long and mixed well in. This mixture is rammed into a mould box, then turned out to dry. Block sizes vary from site to site, normally ranging from 17" x 5" x 6" to 20" x 9" x 9"; those at Mutford are 19" x 9" x 9". They can be used as normal bricks and lime mortared together or a clay slurry used.



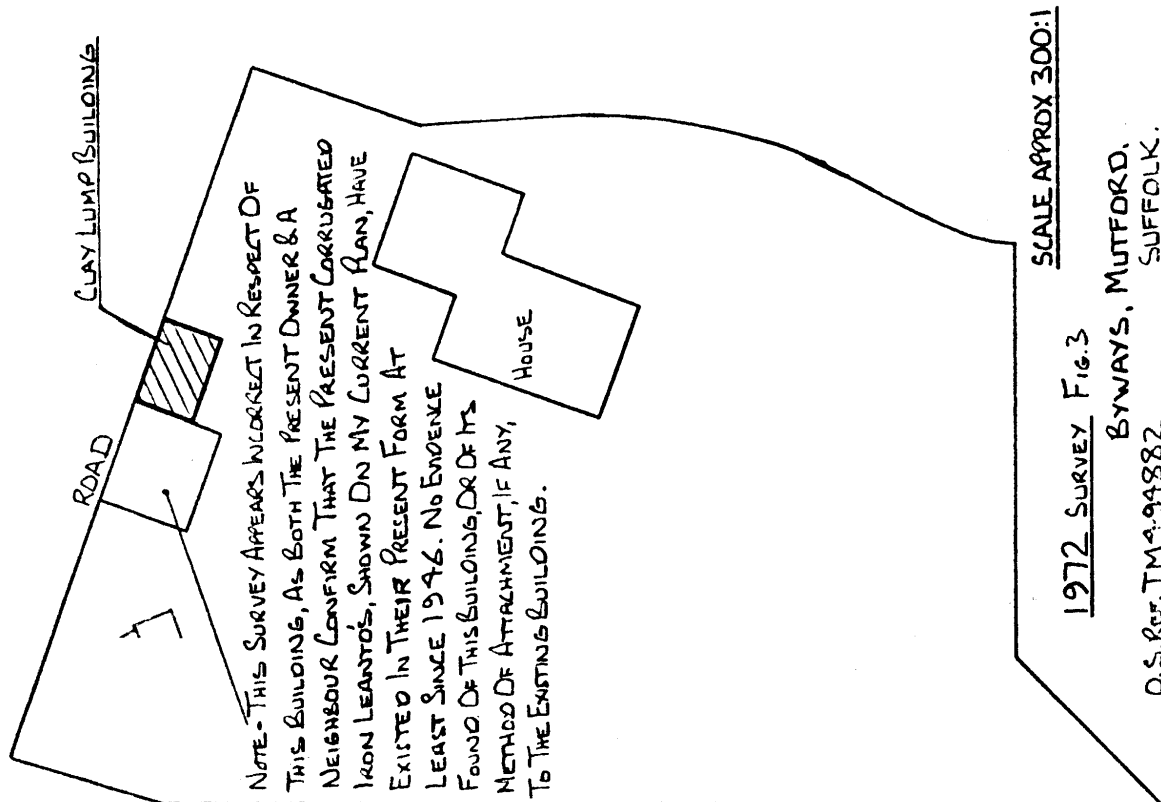
Clay lump is basically an earth wall, and is a permanent material providing it is kept dry. The walls when completed are similar to the West Country Cob and European Pise, which are built up directly, in situ, in solid layers either free form or between shuttering. Why in this area the indirect two stage method of block making, then wall building was favoured could be an interesting avenue of investigation. It seems closely related to the middle eastern adobe mud bricks, is there a link? Is the labour requirement a reason? The direct method requires a large labour force for a short period. Whereas clay lump can be built by two men, possibly even one working over a long period. Could

weather conditions be the reason? It may well be that the direct methods were used here, but no buildings survive or have been found.



1981 APPROX. SITE PLAN FIG. 4

M. GARDNER MAR 1981



1972 SURVEY FIG. 3

BYWAYS, MUTFORD, SUFFOLK.  
O.S. Ref. TM 994882

Most authorities on old building seem to agree that earth walling was once the normal common method of building in most areas. Yet it is not an obsolete primitive construction method, for it is still used in Australia and probably in other 'advanced' countries, and of course in many African and Eastern countries. Nearer to home I found a reference to two council house schemes built in the 1920-30's using clay lump in southern Norfolk. Does anyone know the exact location?

The problem comes in discovering earthed walled buildings. Because of the need to weatherproof the walls, they are usually rendered and colour washed, or at least disguised by tar or paint. Some may have had a brick outer skin added. Detective work while buildings are being renovated or modified will be needed to find them.

Several distribution maps of known clay lump and earth walled buildings have been published, none that I have seen include this area. The line generally runs from Wymondham east to reach a point near Reedham, then south-west to Harleston, and down to Halesworth. This leaves approximately twenty miles of the Waveney valley, from Lowestoft inland to Halesworth totally devoid of recorded earth walled building. If we could find a few more of these buildings around Lowestoft, future maps would reflect this. The little building at Mutford has been recorded, and details sent to the National Buildings Record.

Mike Reeder March 1982

#### References;

<sup>(1)</sup> Norfolk Agricultural Station records for 1981

<sup>(2)</sup> For current earth building and testing see:-

‘Local Material’ by Jeff Kahane - Publications Distribution Co-Operative 1978

‘Build Your House From Earth’ by G.F. Middleton - Angus and Robertson 1953

<sup>(3)</sup> ‘East Anglian Cottages’ by J.M. Porter - Providence Press 1979

### SOME OF THE TOOLS OF THE COMPOSITOR

Among the new items on display at the Museum are some Composing Sticks and brass Setting Rules as used by Compositors in the Printing Trade. The job of the Compositor was and is, basically, the setting-up of type, although there are many more allied skills that must be learned and practised. With the advent of mechanical composition, these basic skills survived and are still practised in a more limited way today. However, with the coming of newer and more sophisticated processes, some of the tools are now rapidly becoming obsolete and museum pieces, although some of them, such as these sticks and rules, are still in use, mostly in small Jobbing Printers – and some are probably still used in this area. In these circumstances, these tools could hardly be classed as unique, except that four of the sticks and the rules are very old, possibly dating back to the last century, and the acquisition of them is perhaps interesting. To elaborate...

The story in London printing circles in general and in the Fleet Street area in particular, is that many years ago the King was returning from a long and tedious journey and he stopped at a tavern in the City of London for refreshment for himself and his retinue. When the time came for payment, the Keeper of the Royal Purse found he had not enough money left to fully pay the bill, so the King proffered a ring as a pledge but the Tavernier said he could not accept it as he had no Charter to take pledges. The King thereupon granted him a Charter on the spot and the Tavern thus became the equivalent of a pawnshop. The Tavern was known as ‘The Red Cow’ and, since it was situated beside Smithfield Meat Market, it was allowed to be open during the small hours, as were Taverns in the other markets, for the refreshment of the porters.

As the years passed, printers returning home from the night shift on the newspapers and others on their way to day work or shift work in the area pledged one of their tools to buy a rum punch or some other form of refreshment and borrowed a similar one from a colleague if it became necessary on the next visit to the workplace. As the owners retired, left for other jobs or, in most cases, died, the Tavernier became the possessor of many unredeemed pledges.

At the turn of the century and between the wars, the printing trade was a well-paid and much sought after profession and sons generally followed father into it. So it was with the writer, who, in 1918, was taken by his father to ‘The Red Cow’, where the tools, four of which are displayed, were bought for him for his forthcoming apprenticeship. The two which are pitted are as bought at that time and the apprentices in those days were given the sticks to clean over the weekend with the traditional paraffin and worn emery cloth, for which service they were rewarded with a penny (or sometimes even twopence!). In later years, this practice died out as the sticks were electro- or nickel-plated to save the drudgery (and perhaps the pennies!). Later lighter and better-to-handle sticks came into use, one of which is displayed. This was bought just after the last war. Except for the pitted ones, these

tools have been used on the National Press, Radio Times, T.V. Times and many other popular and contemporary journals, but were retired, with the writer, in 1969.

As far as the writer is aware, 'The Red Cow' is still in existence – it certainly was until the beginning of the last war, as the writer used to go there about 5.30 a.m. on occasions. Up to that time, the Charter was still viable although it is doubtful if it is so much used as in earlier times. So that is the history of these old tools and many similar will in the future follow them as the highly-skilled craft disappears into the limbo of the lost.

### LIFE BEFORE THE SECOND WORLD WAR

*by Alison Griffin*

Life before the Second World War was very grim. The average wage for a married man was about £2 a week in this area. Although food and clothes were plentiful in the shops, relatively few people could afford to purchase such items in any quantity. The majority of the people had very few clothes and a poor diet. None of the luxuries of today. Jelly, custard and cakes were the highlight of a Sunday teatime, the remainder of the week people had only a basic diet. Typical prices for food were 2<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub>d. for a large loaf, 3d, for a pint of milk and 2<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub>d for a pound of sugar. Ice creams which were sold from an ice-cream barrow or three wheeler bikes cost ½d., 1d., or 2d. – chocolate ones cost 3d. Therefore, a penny a week pocket money never went very far.

When boots or shoes went to the cobblers most children had to stay at home until they were mended as this cost 3s. to be soled and heeled. Most people left school at the age of 14. Unemployment was higher than today. Many either had to work for long hours on a farm or go into the flourishing fish industry. A Skipper on a herring drifter received £2 18s. a week (£2.90). A cook earned approximately 10s. (50p). A new house cost around £350/400 and council house rents were approximately 10s. a week.

There was an abundance of cinemas in most towns (7 in Lowestoft alone). You could go to any cinema on a Saturday afternoon for 2d, and if you went to the Grand you would receive some nuts and oranges on the way out. The first talking pictures prices were 5d. to 2s. This was the principal form of entertainment other than the radio as there were no televisions or tape recorders.

The trams, some without roofs, ran in the town and you could go from the Sparrows Nest to Pakefield for 3d. There were very few cars about. The only time you saw one outside your house was if a doctor was needed or if they wanted you to vote at an election, and our parents insisted that their children went too as that was the only time they got a car ride.

Alison Griffin Aged 10  
88 Aldwyck Way,  
Long Road,  
Lowestoft

The above essay was handed into the Museum last season with the mistaken idea that there was a Museum competition. However, Alison has done her homework and as it gives an interesting idea of what life for her counterpart was like 45-50 years ago we felt it worthy of a place in this Report. Editor.