

The Aisled Barn

The Aisled barn was built in the 1630's and is one of the finest examples of its kind in Lancashire.

Uses for the barn have been varied over time - sheltering cattle, storing crops and latterly, a coach house used in conjunction with the Hall.

The barn is listed as being of historic and architectural interest (Grade 2) and - following renovations by Lancashire County Council - has been developed as a Visitor Centre, which is open most weekends throughout the year.



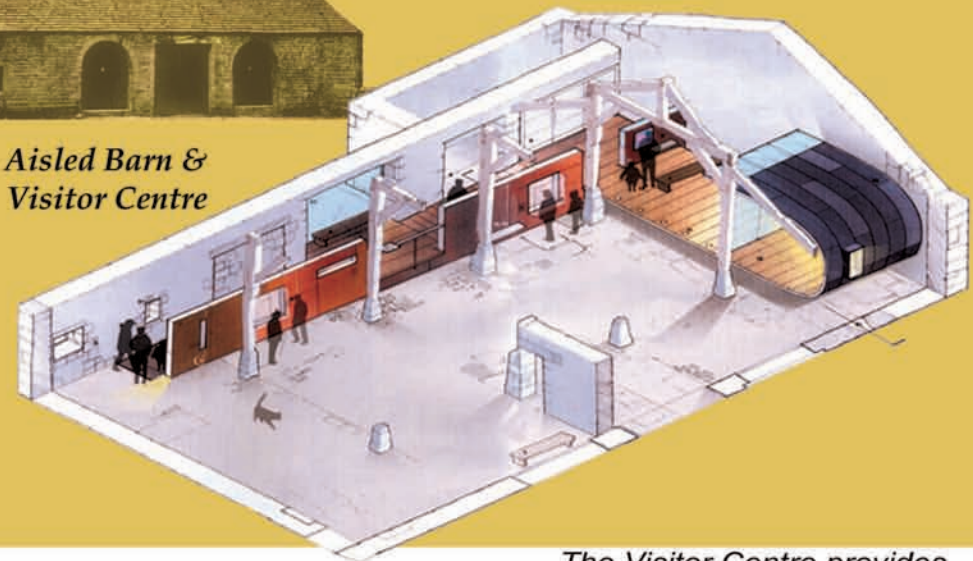
It is said that the Aisled Barn was built around 1630 on the site of an earlier Cruck barn that dates back to around 1533. Most of the beams from the original barn were used in the construction of the barn you see today. To achieve this, the old Cruck barn must have been dismantled piece by piece and numbered like a giant jig-saw puzzle. Not all the timbers came from its cruck-framed predecessor, interestingly, the strangely shaped eastern posts of trusses I and V appear to be a pair of cambered tie-beams from a timber framed post and truss structure.

All the timber structures were pre-made and all the joints cut while the frames were laid out on the ground, with the carpenter marking all the positions for when it was erected.

The original plan of the barn seems to have consisted of a single storage bay at the northern end, a threshing floor in bay I/II and then three storage bays at the southern end. The difference in function is reflected in the width of the bays. Wycoller's Aisled Barn has been constantly changing, with the walls, floor and timbers showing evidence of each change: changing from corn barn and cattle store to coach house and finally a Visitor Centre. The barn itself tells the story, you just need to know where to look.



Aisled Barn & Visitor Centre



The Visitor Centre provides a range of spaces and possibilities for exhibitions, dance, theatre and art. This echoes the barn's original function, but instead of being used for agricultural purposes, it is now being used for recreation and information.

The Threshing Floor

The Aisled barn at Wycoller is a five-bay, double-aisled barn and represents one of the later examples of a large group of aisled barns built on both sides of the Pennines. Pennine aisled barns were designed to encompass a whole range of agricultural activities under one large roof. Much of the evidence for this is preserved within the structure of the barn.

Aisled Barns were wider and much more adaptable; each bay could be used for a different purpose. Floors or lofts could be added for storage, as was to case with this barn. If you look at the walls you will see evidence of where they once were by finding the bricked up doors and windows and the holes where the floor supports were attached.

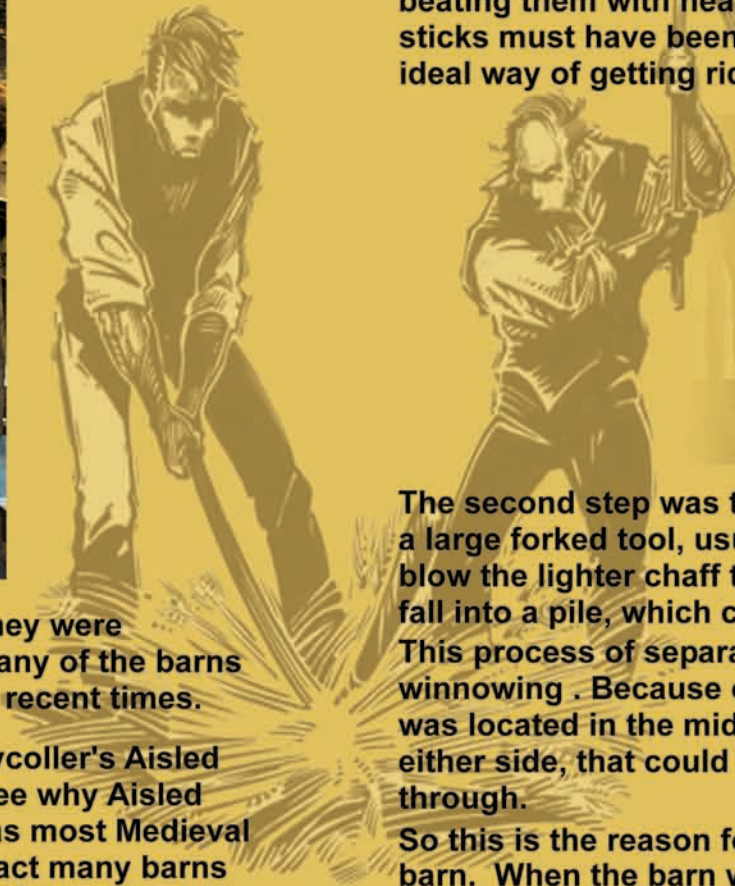
The threshing floor was used to collect the corn after it had been threshed. Threshing is the term used when the grain was separated from the chaff. This was usually a two step process.

First, the cut stalks of grain were spread on the threshing floor and a threshing sledge was pulled over the stalks by oxen or horses. The sledge was a simple wooden sled or heavy board with stone or metal spikes on the bottom that would break the heads of grain from the stalks. The same thing could be accomplished by having the animals walk over the stalks or by beating them with heavy sticks. Beating the stalks with heavy sticks must have been exhausting for the farmers, but also an ideal way of getting rid of any pent-up aggression.



Much like a modern New York loft apartment they were extremely adaptable or modular; this is why many of the barns have been converted to residential dwelling in recent times.

Thankfully; there are still barns around like Wycoller's Aisled Barn in their original format. It is not hard to see why Aisled Barns are also referred to a Cathedral Barns, as most Medieval churches also had the same construction. In fact many barns were also used as places of worship and as gathering places where celebrations, dances and meetings were held.



The second step was to toss the broken stalks into the air with a large forked tool, usually made out of wood. The wind would blow the lighter chaff to one side, while the heavier grain would fall into a pile, which could then be gathered off the floor.

This process of separating grain from chaff by wind is called winnowing. Because of the need for wind, the threshing floor was located in the middle of the barn with two large doors either side, that could be opened to allow the wind to flow through.

So this is the reason for the two large doors either side of the barn. When the barn was being built a lot of attention would be paid to the direction of the wind at threshing time so that the maximum use of the wind could also be harvested.