

The Old Vicarage

This old vicarage is **the oldest existing building in Erle**. It was **erected** in **1790**, after an earlier parish house had become dilapidated and had to be demolished. **Until 1978** this house was the home of a succession of **seven priests** of the Roman Catholic parish of Erle.

Into the twenties of the last century the building had **two** clearly distinguishable **halves**, the north section was the **residence of the priests**, the south section was an **operating farm**.

The external appearance at present is the result of structural alternations, mainly an extension to the south in 1892. Much later in 1978, after the priest had moved into the new vicarage at the Ekornsloh, this old building underwent several reconstruction measures. From then until the year 2015 it served as a **parish centre** of the parish of **St. Silvester`s** in Erle. Today it is privately owned.

The „Wedemhof“ Farmstead

In the 13th century, when Erle after its disjunction from Raesfeld became the independent parish of St. Silvester`s, the **patron of this church**, a **Herr von Erler**, installed a **church farm** near the `Vehmic Court Oak`. This farm was called **„Wedemhof“** (Middle Low German *wedem* here: `estate to provide the subsistence of church officials`). Originally, the church farm was moated, it combined the **residence of the priest and the operating farm under one roof**.

South of it lay the meadows belonging to this farm with a number of outbuildings, all of this was called the **„Wehme“** (Low German/Netherlands for *wedem*, see above). In an agricultural society a parish priest received his **income from such a farmstead and of course other benefice**.

The **„Wedemhof“** comprised ploughland and meadows, both were cultivated and managed directly as part of the farm or farmed out. The **peasants of Erle** were obliged to be available for **work and carriage services** on this farmstead twice a year as required, and had to **pay the tithe** to the parish in the form of the **Mass corn** or **Mass chicken**. In addition to that both parish priest and parish drew parts of their income through contributions that **eight church farms** had to make.

The History of this Vicarage

In 1790, for the new building well-preserved stones of the pre-existing house could be used, and 80.000 new bricks were baked on the **„Wehme“**, the above described farm premises. Then unfortunately, when in 1797 the parishioners were celebrating the priest`s name-day at the vicarage, the **thatched roof caught fire** because some young men were shooting around wildly with their rifles and parts of the **building burned down**. Some years later a **storm** blew away the thatched roof. It was replaced by a pantile roof in 1819.

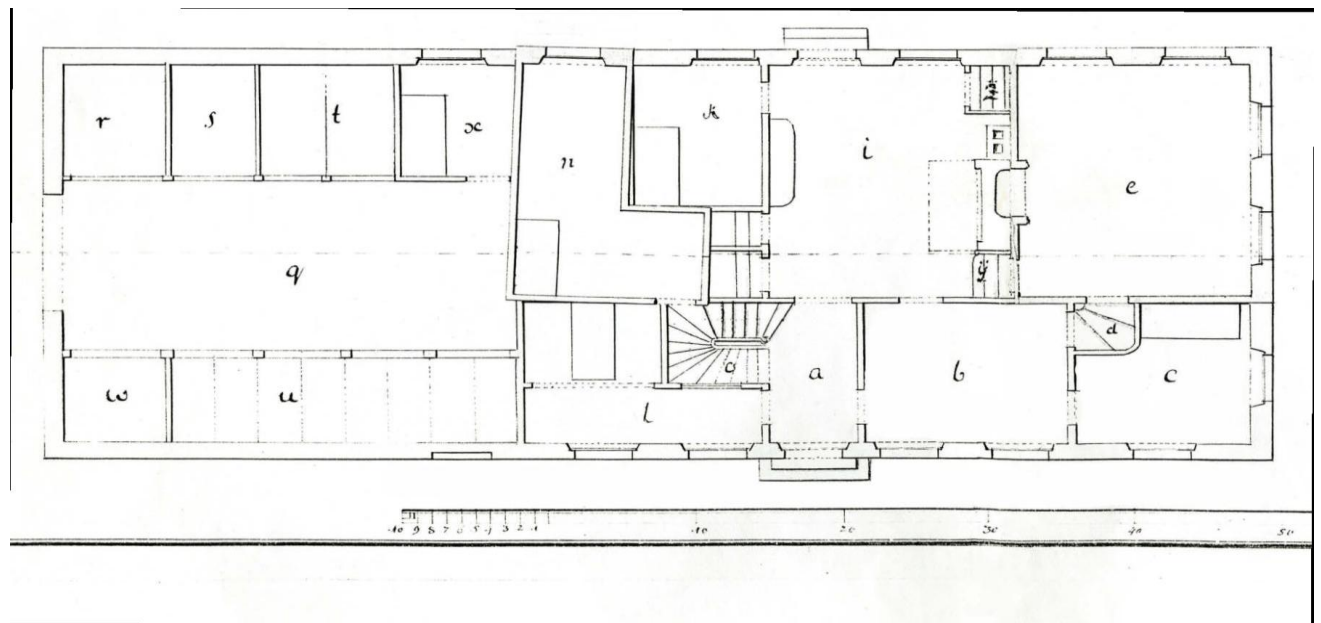
But over the following years many priests kept complaining about shortcomings and deficiencies both inside the building and on its outside. Often makeshift repair work was done because the inhabitants of Erle had to pay for it. Later in 1892 the **house became extended**, some time after that the moat was filled up. When active farming had been given up, that half of the building was restructured to serve **various parish purposes**.

So lessons in religious education were provided here during the Nazi period, as priest were not allowed to teach at schools. After the destruction of the church in 1945 the house saw **church services and religious ceremonies** until a temporary church could be erected. In 1959 the south section was altered anew into a **youth centre** which it remained until after a certain time the **parish library** moved in. Finally, when the priest had moved out in 1978, the old vicarage as a whole underwent one more alternation and parishioners used it as their **parish centre**.

Then in 2011 the parish counsel decided to erect a new parish centre right next to the church so they had to find a new use for the old house. That`s why in 2015 it was sold to a family. They adapted it inside to human accommodation and have inhabited it since.

The preservation of this historical building is immensely important for Erle.

Floor Plan of the Building in 1847



The plan of the ground floor shows the inner layout of the house at that time. A large door in the south gable wall offered access to the **farming section**. The **threshing floor** (q) formed the large and high middle aisle of it, it essentially constituted the working part of the house. It was accompanied by **two lateral aisles** that were different in width. The slightly wider left hand aisle served as **stables for two horses** (t), even **pigs** were kept there (r), between both there was a **space for firewood** (s). Next to the horses it had a chamber, where **the male farm hands** (x) slept.

The right hand aisle, comparatively narrow, had **cattle stalls for eight cows** (u) and one **storage room for peat and brushwood** (w). The loft space above the stalls was used for storing fodder and threshed straw. All this may illustrate the economic importance of an estate as a typical **middle sized pastoral farm** from West Münsterland.

The **living quarters** were separated off completely from the farm half. Their entrance was situated under the eaves in the side wall facing the garden. This section of the building comprised **rooms for the priest** (c), **his housekeeper** (k), **the maids** (n). It further had a **kitchen** (i) and a **dining room** (b), a **guest chamber** (l) as well as a **large drawing room** (e) above the low storage cellar.

As mentioned above around 1892 the whole building became fundamentally restructured and renovated. That meant **the farming section was added to the living quarters**, at the south side **the vicarage was extended by new, smaller farming rooms**.

The entrance to a traverse threshing floor then was where the entrance door to the house is at present, that is directly opposite the Vehmic Court Oak.

The Photograph of about 1890

It shows the Vehmic Court Oak and part of the old vicarage before the extension of the building. At the south gable **the large door to the threshing floor** is still recognizable, but for the east part of the farming section structural altering has already begun. There is a **stretch of the moat** within the fences between the building and the Vehmic Court Oak.

