

# DEVON BUILDINGS GROUP

## NEWSLETTER NUMBER 2

OCTOBER 1986

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### SECRETARY'S REPORT

Firstly, developments in the major cases reported in the last newsletter, and some of the new casework to which they have led.

Members will recall that the DBG made strong representations to the National Trust about the future of Newlands Farm at Broadclyst, a remarkably intact farmstead of the early 1840s. The farm was visited by a national committee from the Trust in April, and our views, which were supported by the Trust's Historic Buildings Adviser, made known at their subsequent meeting. As a result the Trust has decided that Newlands should remain in agricultural use and, if possible, that the associated land should be farmed organically. The historical and architectural importance of the farmstead itself has been fully acknowledged and the buildings are to be conserved and maintained in future use. The Trust's decision is a very welcome one and sets a valuable precedent for the preservation of traditional farm buildings in the county. An article on Newlands is included in the present newsletter. The DBG has also had a number of other useful contacts with the Trust. We were consulted on future developments at New Hall Farm, also on the Killerton estate: the farmhouse at New Hall is a medieval building listed Grade II\* and is associated with an eighteenth-century cob barn at the centre of a fine early nineteenth-century group of buildings on a double courtyard plan, all of which are listed Grade II. The buildings are at present under-used, but the current tenant wishes to convert one range of the farmyard buildings to a packaging plant: this would have the advantage of ensuring continued maintenance and, with care, could be done without detriment to the farmstead's architectural character. The barn at New Hall needs repair, and we were able to offer some advice on how this could be done. It is possible that the work may be carried out by an MSC scheme set up by the Trust to learn techniques of cob repair. The DBG wrote in support of the proposals for this scheme early in the summer. Unfortunately the Trust has encountered opposition from the local building industry, but it is to be hoped that these difficulties can be overcome and that the scheme will go ahead. Expertise in cob repair is very rare and the opportunity to establish a team skilled in such work should not be allowed to slip.

The satisfactory conclusion to negotiations over the future of the seventeenth-century warehouse and dock on Exeter Quay was reported in the last newsletter. In June a further threat to historic buildings on the Quay emerged in the shape of an application from the Canal and Quay Trust for listed building consent to convert the north and south warehouses to an hotel. These impressive buildings were designed and built in the 1830s by the Exeter firm of Robert Cornish. The south warehouse is largely empty, though its ground floor has been converted into On The Waterfront; the north warehouse is currently occupied by the Maritime Museum and is open to the public. Both warehouses retain a great deal of their early nineteenth-century details and many original features, including loading bays, doors and fittings, and even remains of the original gearing to one of the main hoists. The proposed alterations would mean gutting the interiors and, necessarily, radically changing the present elevations. The scheme also envisages extensions onto the top of the cliff immediately behind the warehouses which would have a wholly detrimental affect upon the setting of Colleton Villa, itself a listed building. The DBG has objected to these proposals, as has the Victorian Society: we still await the outcome.

There have been several developments in the case of Charles Fowler's Exminster Hospital, but the situation as a whole is still far from being resolved. At the end of April Jo Cox and I, who have been handling the case on behalf of the Group, attended a conference at the Wellcome Institute for the History of Medicine on the future of nineteenth-century hospitals. Speakers from the NHS, including members of the national policy committee, gave some indication that the NHS was slowly recognising the importance of the historic buildings in its possession and that the problems relating to their future could not simply be ignored. At the same time it was apparent that central policies are still undecided, and that, in any case, the effect of such policies upon the planning strategies of the different Regional Health Authorities will be uncertain. In September we were invited to give a paper on Exminster to the annual casework conference of the Victorian Society, held in Leeds. One possibility discussed was that the national conservation bodies most immediately concerned should compile and publish a report on the crisis currently facing historic hospitals throughout the country. Meanwhile, at a local level, the DBG Committee has remained in contact with the area Health Authority, though there has been little substantial progress since the last newsletter. The most positive recent development has been the publication of a prospectus, *The Psychiatric Hospital as a New Community*, by the London architectural practice Burrell Foley Associates. The DBG has been in touch with John Burrell since our letter to *Architects' Journal* earlier this year and Jo Cox and I have visited Exminster with him. The prospectus, which concentrates on the re-use of Claybury Hospital in Essex, rejects piecemeal re-development and advocates an integrated approach that would encompass the whole of a hospital site in a phased re-development scheme incorporating existing buildings of architectural and historical significance. The ideas contained in the prospectus have already attracted considerable interest elsewhere in the country and we will be sending out copies to local planners and to officers of the Regional Health Authority.

There has been a number of new cases over the last six months. One of the most alarming has been that of Orleigh Court in Buckland Brewer, a splendid medieval house, still retaining its open hall with a fine open wooden roof, and listed Grade II\*. During work to divide the Court into separate dwellings - for which planning permission had been obtained - ten large animal carvings were removed from the hall roof and sent for auction to Sotheby's who, fortunately,

investigated their origin. Along with other conservation groups, the DBG wrote in May to Torridge District Council and to English Heritage urging that action be taken to ensure that the carvings are re-instated and that the building is further safeguarded against undesirable alteration. The carvings have now been returned and we understand that legal action has been taken against the owner; in addition Orleigh Court has been re-assessed by English Heritage and is now a Grade I listed building. The DBG has also written to East Devon District Council objecting to proposed alterations to Coxen in Budleigh Salterton. Coxen, an account of which is included in this newsletter, is one of the finest houses designed by the Arts and Crafts architect Ernest Gimson: repairs are now needed, but those that have been proposed, including double glazing and replacement of windows, are unsympathetic to the house and to the spirit of Arts and Crafts. We advised careful repair of the existing windows and suggested that the owner seek an English Heritage grant to help finance the work: we have yet to hear the outcome. On the other side of the county and at the other end of the architectural scale, we have been concerned with the future of Crown Hill Fort in Plymouth. Built as part of the Palmerstonian defences of Plymouth in the 1860s, Crown Hill was the key position and the largest fort in the north-eastern line around the city. Still in use by the army until a couple of years ago, it is remarkably intact. The army authorities have been keen to ensure a suitable future for the fort; working in conjunction with the Victorian Society we made a number of recommendations about its preservation and re-use. An excellent scheme has now been put forward by the Landmark Trust: the fortifications - including a complex system of tunnels and galleries - will be preserved, as will the buildings on the site; the garrison quarters will be converted to short-let accommodation; provision will be made for a museum and the fort as a whole will be open to the public. As well as preserving Crown Hill, it is to be hoped that the scheme will stimulate interest in the military architecture of Plymouth. With the exception of the defences of Portsmouth, the ring of post-medieval forts and batteries around Plymouth, dating from the sixteenth to the twentieth century, form the largest network of military defences in Britain, yet they have received little attention from architectural historians and are generally little known: an article on the planning behind the Victorian fortifications is included in the present newsletter. Other cases in which the Group has been involved may be mentioned more briefly. In July we wrote to North Devon District Council about the future of Honiton Barton, a Grade II\* E-plan manor house near South Molton. We have attempted to monitor what is happening to Hayne Manor at Stowford: this is a most impressive early nineteenth-century Gothic house, again listed Grade II\* but now in a very bad state of repair; it is currently for sale and there is a real danger that moves may be made to demolish it. Most recently we have been alerted to a large-scale building programme about to start at the Nutwell Lodge Hotel near Woodbury. The hotel has a medieval core but is essentially a late eighteenth-century house, retaining much of its original carpentry and fittings; planning permission has been given for extensions to the rear, and it will be important to ensure that the fabric and the interiors of the existing building are in no way damaged in the course of the work. Some of the cases with which we have dealt over the past few months have been brought to the Committee by members of the Group, but the bulk of the casework is still generated from inside the Committee: I can only repeat the plea that I made in the last newsletter for more cases originating from the wider DBG membership.

The Group has continued to make and maintain contacts with other conservation bodies. As will be clear from my account of our recent casework, we have worked on a number of occasions with both the Victorian Society and the

National Trust. The Ancient Monuments Society and the Devon Historic Buildings Trust have both taken out membership of the Group and we must continue to foster these and other connections. An important development in our relations with other organizations has resulted from contacts made with the Council for Christian Care. In July we attempted to discover who had carried out renovations at St Bartholomew's Cemetery in Exeter, where the work had included the destruction of several historic features and the cutting of two new paths through the site. Incredibly, it has proved impossible to find out who was responsible. In the attempt, however, we wrote to the Council for Christian Care, an MSC agency which carries out renovation and conservation work on churchyards throughout the county. Although it had nothing to do with the St Bartholomew's scheme, the Council was interested by our letter and invited me to talk to the management committee on behalf of the Group. At the meeting I stressed the need for MSC work on churchyards to be based on a proper historical understanding of the individual site and the monuments it contains, for schemes to be adequately supervised, and for a generally conservative approach to be adopted. As a result of the meeting, and at the request of the Council, we agreed in September to take part in a six month pilot scheme covering the north Devon area whereby the DBG will give the Council initial advice on churchyards where a scheme of work is proposed. We should be able to provide basic historical and architectural information, warn against any aspects of a programme that seem undesirable, and generally offer conservation guidance. The first meeting to discuss specific cases has now been set up: as the pilot scheme progresses the Committee propose to invite DBG members to participate on as wide a basis as possible. I would be very glad to hear from members of the Group who would like to take part: certainly, the Committee will be contacting members who might be able to advise on churchyards in their area.

The DBG's first conference, on Decorative Devon Plasterwork, was held in July; it was well attended and generally thought a success: a conference report is included in this newsletter. The subject and venue for the 1987 conference will need to be early items on the agenda of the new Committee after it has been constituted at the AGM. A draft constitution was agreed by the Committee in September and was distributed to all members of the Group in preparation for the AGM. Finally, the membership of the Committee has been depleted by the departure of Peter Child: many thanks to him for his work in helping to set up the Group and during its first year.

Chris Brooks

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#### NEWLANDS FARM

When Sir Richard Acland gave the Killerton Estate to the National Trust in 1944, one of the farms included was Newlands in Broadclyst parish about a mile east of the village. Research - which is continuing and, it is to be hoped, will add to the present information - has shown that the first mention of the name comes in a counterpart lease of 1637. Under this lease a twelfth part of the farm was purchased by John Moore from a daughter of Margaret Martin (deceased),



whose father had held it. This takes it two generations back into the late sixteenth century. The farm was held in twelve parts until 1835 and tracing the ownership is consequently difficult: the Earl of Ilchester held four twelfths in the eighteenth century and the Earl of Egremont six-twelfths in the early 1800s. The 1806 Ordnance Survey map shows Higher, Middle and Lower Newlands, but Middle Newlands is not shown on the 1842 Tithe Map, and, according to Mr H. Salter, the house and buildings of Lower Newlands had gone by the beginning of this century. In 1835 Higher Newlands was advertised for sale in *The Exeter Flying Post* and it seems likely that Sir Thomas Dyke Acland acquired it then, as his lands bordered the farm.

In 1841 a new house was built. Miss Salter, whose family farmed the property from 1853 to 1985, remembers the date engraved on the soft sandstone of the east chimney: this is now much water-worn and the date has been lost. The map evidence for this period is curious since two 1842 maps show the farm in different positions. The Tithe Map shows the present buildings while a second map shows house and buildings a little further to the north, away from the present road. An 1835 map produced for the sale confirms the earlier siting of the buildings and suggests that the second 1842 map is either a copy, made in 1842, from an earlier map, or that it was wrongly dated after it was drawn.

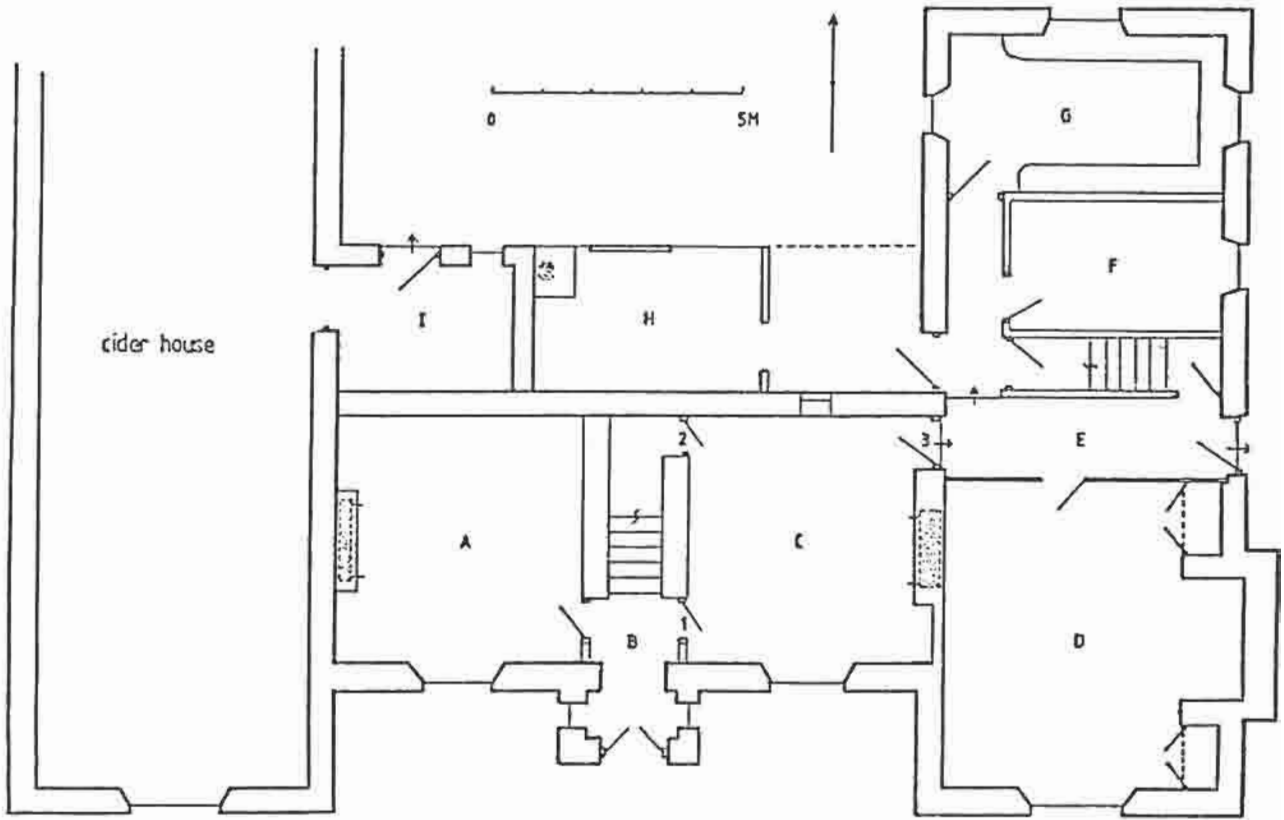
The 1841 house faces south across level farmland while behind it, just beyond the farm buildings, the ground dips to the River Clyst and then rises to Ashclyst Forest. The house forms the southern side of the enclosed farmyard, with a fine range of contemporary buildings around the other three sides. The farmstead is built of local stone and timber, except the front elevation and the lateral stack on the east side of the house. These are of ashlar masonry, volcanic Killerton stone, with flat arches to the regularly placed windows. The central porch added to the house around 1900 is built of the same stone and incorporates the original front doors. The single ridge roof is slated with gables at the south end of each cross-wing and a half-hip to the north. The side and rear walls are built on a plinth about 70cm. above ground level and the east wall has a large projecting stepped stack. This had a projecting bake-oven: matching stone infill marks its former position. Above ridge level the sandstone is badly water worn; the two similar axial stacks are in much better condition. To the rear of the house is the well and water pump, with catslide roofs over the wash-house and a stone rubble store shed.

The internal structure of the roof is nineteenth-century shouldered kingposts with raking braces, wooden pegged where the blades are mortised to the posts. The feet of the blades sit in the top of the wall. While the roof timbers are all neatly sawn, the ceiling joists are rough and much more irregular in shape.

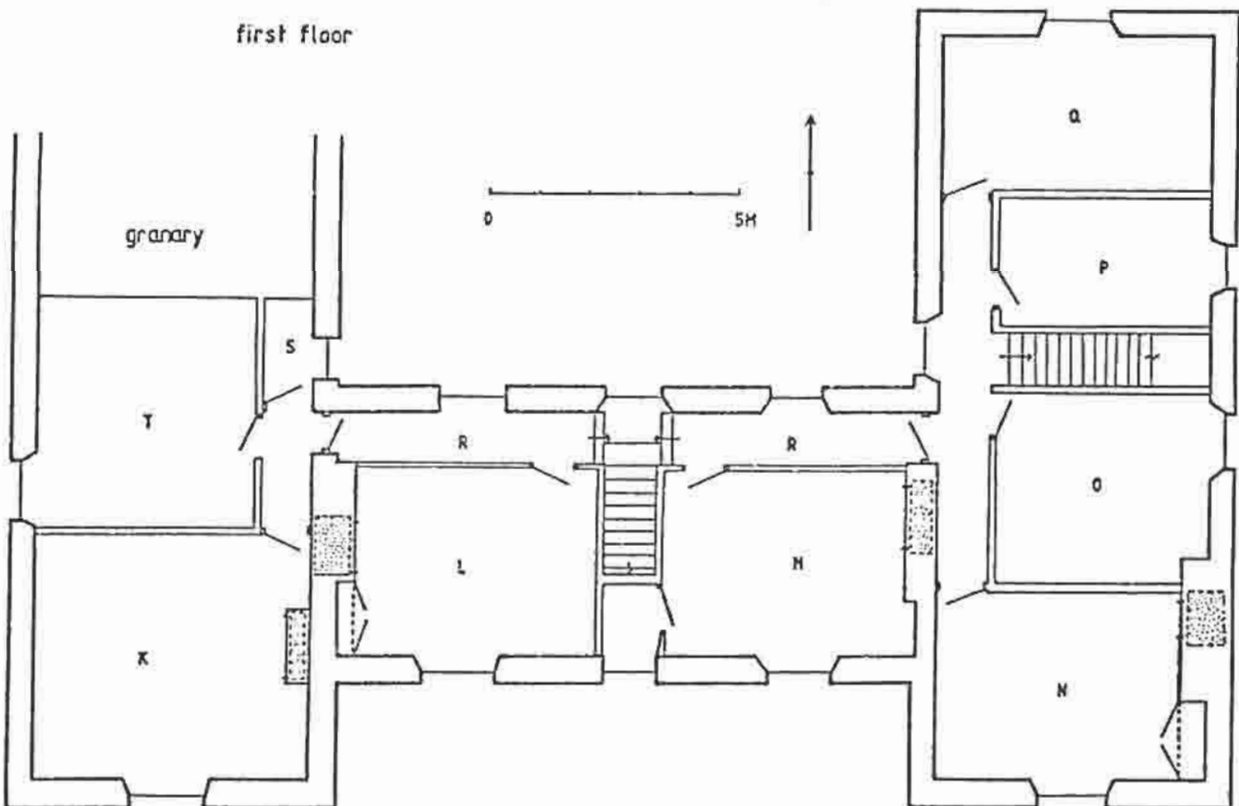
The ground floor plan shows the two 'polite' rooms A and C flanking the front door and stairs. These rooms have good Victorian iron grates with tiles each side and marble surrounds. The casement windows are original with shutters and, in room A, panelling below the framed window. Both rooms have a moulded cornice. The kitchen (D) is also virtually as built; the large open fireplace has a 1938 KB black range in the northern half of it, and in front of this is a Rayburn. Cupboards flank the fireplace, and the northern partition is of plain wood panelling glazed with small panes along the top. Nearly all the doors are four or six panelled with brass knobs on rimlocks. In the northern part of this wing of the house are the walk-in larder (F) and the dairy (G). Both these have

NEWLANDS

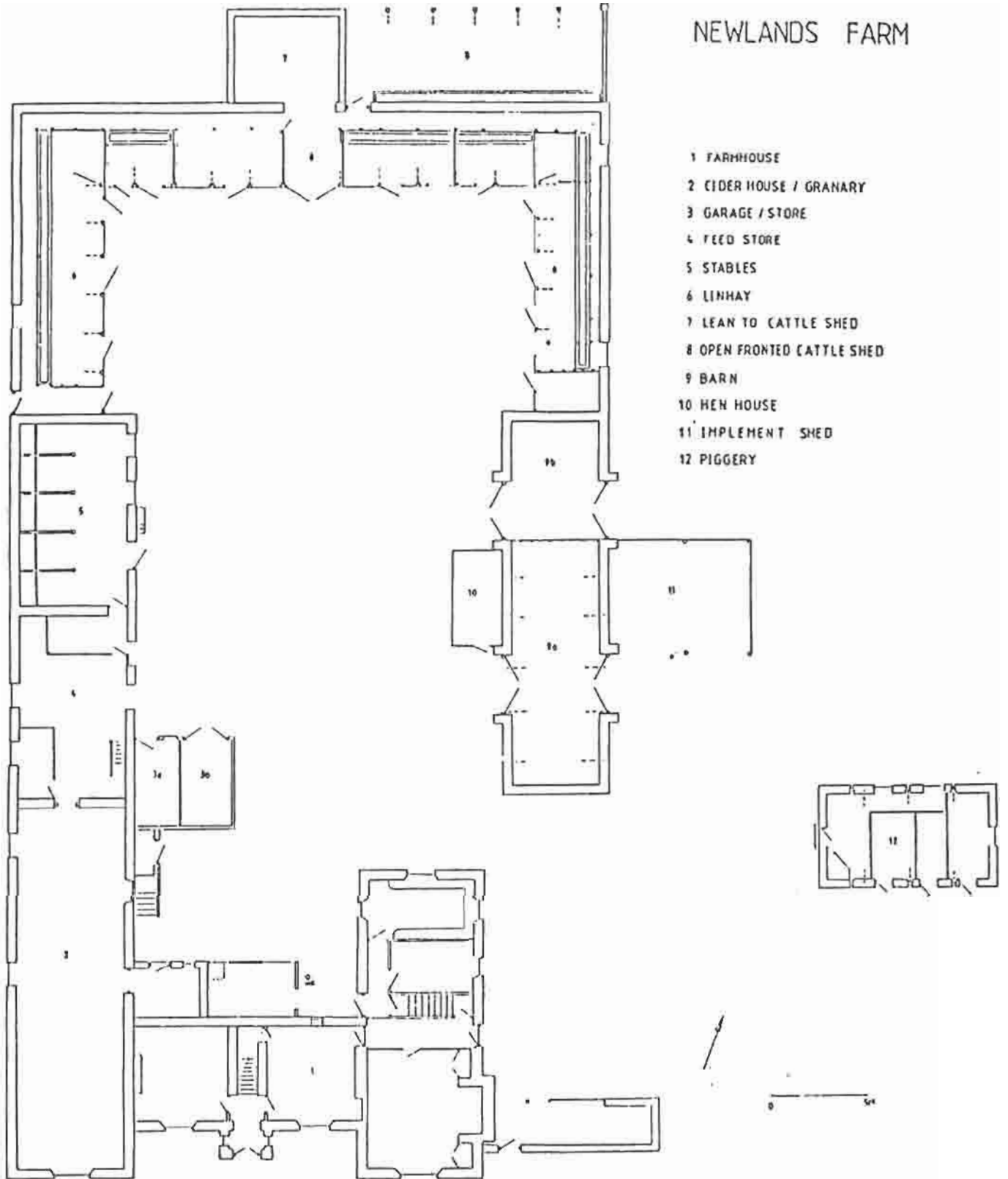
ground floor



first floor



# NEWLANDS FARM



mullioned windows, unglazed, with perforated zinc in the openings and wooden shutters to keep them cool. The larder has wooden shelves; the shelf in the dairy is of large blue slabs of slate round three sides supported by brick piers.

From the symmetrical front elevation the west wing appears to be part of the accomodation of the house. However, the facade is misleading and there is no access on the ground floor to this part of the building. This wing was the cider house, entered from the storeroom or the feed store with the granary above. On the first floor, part of the granary was incorporated into the house in the later nineteenth century, giving two more bedrooms and a small water closet. The bathroom (P) was not fitted out until after the First World War. The windows of the front and rear elevations match those of the ground floor - casements with original catches and latches. The windows of rooms O and P are, however, somewhat curious: they are late seventeenth or early eighteenth-century mullions with leaded lights and a peculiar exterior spring catch identical to one in an eighteenth-century late cross-passage house a mile further up the road. It seems likely that these windows (in rooms probably meant for servants) and those in the larder and dairy were reused from the old farmhouse marked on the 1835 map.

The house and buildings, from the evidence of their method of construction, seem to be very much of one build. This is confirmed by the map evidence, for the 1842 Tithe Map shows the enclosed farmyard complete, only the pigsties and lean-tos being added later in the century. The range extending north from the west wing of the house continues the single ridge roof line and includes the cider store with granary above, the food store and the stable. The cider store used to hold numerous hogsheads of cider; it was later used to hold sacks of corn and then became a workshop. Fifteen stone steps give access from the yard to the granary above; this once contained a primitive winnower which is now in Bicton Museum. The internal roof structure is similar to that of the house.

The food store is continuous with the granary, with access to both ground and first floors from the yard; the pulley shaft above the loft door is still in place. The interior is partitioned and had a Petter engine with the machinery it drove, such as a food chopper and a grain crusher. On the first floor were corn bins, the grain being shovelled down a chute to the hopper of the crusher below. The adjacent stable is an excellent example of purpose-built accommodation for farm stock. All the timbers of the stalls and mangers are rounded and the floor non-slip so that the valuable farm horses could not injure themselves. The mangers are constructed on arches beneath which the night's litter could be left ready, to be shaken out for the animals when the last visit of the day was paid to the stables. The first floor of this building was a hayloft with a pitching door over the stable entrance.

The north end of the farmyard is sheltered by a three-sided linhay range. The back wall of this is continuous with that of the stable, and on the east side it can be seen to be bonded into the threshing barn wall, indicating that the buildings are contemporary or very nearly so. The front of linhay is of wood, one and a half storeys in height. The roof is corrugated iron on slender A-frame trusses. The interior is broken up into pens with a feeding passage running right round the back, making access to the continuous manger easy. Double doors in the centre gave access to the loft storey for carts loaded with hay or straw; the back entrance is now blocked by a brick lean-to forming a further stock or store shed. A second lean-to, an open-fronted cattle shelter, was built against the eastern end of the linhay rear wall.



Most of the east side of the farmyard is occupied by the substantial stone threshing barn, which has two sets of cheeked threshing doors. Above these are wooden dovecots facing into the yard, about eight nesting boxes over each pair of doors. The barn roof is slate, half-hipped at each end. The internal roof structure is similar to that of the house and granary range, nineteenth-century shouldered kingpost. The walls are roughly coursed Killerton stone rubble with the quoins and cheeks to the threshing doors of dressed stone. The interior is divided into two by a weatherboard partition. Where the grain silo now stands is where the thresher used to be when it was worked by horses in the wheel linhay outside - unfortunately long destroyed. The front of the barn supports a lean-to shed used as a chicken house and, at the back, a ridge roofed machinery shed of corrugated iron and wood.

Separate from the main range of buildings, but only a few metres to the east of the house, is the small piggery. This is not marked on the 1842 Tithe Map but is shown on the 1879 Killerton Estate map, so must have been built not too long after the main range of buildings was finished. The roof is red single ridge pantiles, the east and west gables have barge boards and the chimney is brick. The walls are random rubble with substantial dressed quoins at the house end, dressed stone jambs and a semi-circular arch to the door. The internal roof structure is kingpost with a thin lapped collar. The pig pens are formed by large vertical slate slabs held by a horizontal top rail. In the south west corner is a brick set-pan copper which was used for boiling up pig-swill.

Finally, it is worth recording that the Salter family farmed this corn and stock holding for over a century, from 1853 to 1985, in the traditional manner.

Newlands Farm is as complete an example of an early Victorian farmstead as can be found in Devon. The decision of the National Trust to preserve the buildings and to seek to ensure the continuation of the farmstead in agricultural use is a very welcome one.

Isabel Richardson

My thanks to Sue Jarwood who did most of the documentary research in the Devon Record Office.

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#### THE VICTORIAN DEFENCES OF PLYMOUTH

The recent decision of the PSA to place Crown Hill Fort on the market has drawn attention to the very large number of post-mediaeval military buildings in Devon, and particularly in Plymouth, many of which have been ignored by architectural historians. Like hospitals, these form, by and large, a class of buildings whose survival in meaningful or accessible shape is placed at risk when they become superfluous to the needs and policies of their operators. The buildings fall into three main classes: the Devonport dockyard complex - the future use of large parts of which is uncertain; barracks - principally Stonehouse, and Wyvern Barracks, Exeter; and fortifications.

Dockyard buildings and barracks can relatively easily be related to the main channels of architectural history; not so eighteenth and nineteenth-century fortifications, which have been consistently ignored. Yet these buildings are of national importance in political, military, and architectural terms. Twice Plymouth was the subject of major schemes of fortification: that of 1785 was defeated in Parliament the following year, though leaving some fascinating vestiges behind; that of 1860 was largely executed. Merely considered as a mammoth civil engineering undertaking, dwarfing any comparable mediaeval building campaign, the forts which were built as a consequence of the 1860 Royal Commission Report are certain of 'a place in English architectural history. The neglect of these buildings has ensured that their architects have remained in oblivion; those Royal Engineers, like Francis Fowke, who ventured into civil architecture, have fared much better at the hands of posterity.

The intention of the 1785 proposals was to defend Plymouth by a sequence of independent forts. Essentially, all that was built was a group of redoubts on Maker Heights; these, with some of their associated buildings, still survive. At the beginning of the nineteenth century the concept of defence by means of detached forts began to be developed. The theory was now advanced that instead of a multiplicity of fortified places, there should be fewer, but more powerful ones, which could be capable of receiving an army which could take part in the defence. At the same time it was necessary that a moderate garrison would serve in the absence of large forces. The problem could be solved by a chain of detached forts, which would only require small garrisons, and would serve as pivots for the troops operating between them. The great examples of fortifications on this pattern are all continental. Detached works about  $\frac{1}{2}$  mile apart and  $\frac{1}{2}$  mile from the *enceinte* - the continuous fortification enclosing a position or town - were added by German engineers to Cologne, Coblenz and Verona, and by the French at Paris and Lyons. These were vast undertakings: the work at Paris cost £8 million, and at Lyons £1 million. These detached forts were all constructed to surround a complete *enceinte*, and the enormous defences of Antwerp, begun in 1857 by General Brialmont, combined the last great bastioned trace to surround a town, essentially a remnant of medieval practice, with a surrounding string of detached forts.

In the late 1850s, under the premiership of Lord Palmerston, there was mounting concern over the relatively undefended state of England's dockyards, concern heightened by the militarist ambitions of Napoleon III. The fortifications for the principal dockyards of England proposed by the Royal Commission of 1859 broke with contemporary continental practice. The rapid advance of military technology made this possible: the advent of the rifled field-piece with its greatly increased range and accuracy made the positioning of fortifications so as to keep the enemy some five miles away essential, and also enabled the forts to be placed further apart from each other. The ring of detached works provided the entire protection, the idea of an *enceinte* being abandoned. Major (later General) W.F.D. Jervois, the Assistant Inspector-General of Fortifications and the man responsible for this, the largest scheme of fortification ever undertaken in Britain (and effectively in charge of an enormous architectural concern), justified this departure in a paper of 1860.

When the extent of the positions necessary to be occupied, in order to protect the dockyards against long-range bombardment, is considered, it is evidently impossible to occupy them by continuous lines, which must be manned throughout their whole extent, and which fall if

pierced at any one point. It follows that the ground must be taken up by establishing upon the principal points of the position detached works, mutually supporting one another, and each secure in itself; subsequently arise the questions, which will be again referred to, whether those works should be connected by lines, and whether they should be supported by an enceinte or by other detached works in their rear.

The points to be occupied by detached works will of course depend very much on the ground, which may often necessitate their being placed nearer to each other than would be required in flat and open country. But supposing the country to be clear and nearly level, or such as can be readily commanded by the fire of the works to the front and flanks, it will suffice to place the forts at central intervals of about a mile from each other. The intervals between the works, which themselves occupy some portion of the space, are thus commanded by musketry and grape shot at a range of about 700 yards; and the front of each work is well commanded by the artillery fire of the forts adjacent to it.

Jervois never took up the point as to whether the forts should be supported in the rear, clearly believing that this would be unnecessary, but he did consider 'whether the detached works...should be connected by lines'.

To arrive at a decision upon this point it is necessary to bear in mind the circumstances of each position to which the works are applied. For the purpose of guarding against the bombardment of a place, or to prevent the works themselves being attacked by artillery in the rear, it would be unnecessary to connect them, for it cannot be supposed that an enemy would be able to pass between them, either by day or night, accompanied by the guns and supplies of ammunition necessary for effecting the operation. But if by a rush with infantry only between the works at night (for such a hazardous movement could not be effected by day), he might be enabled to turn the sea defences of a place, and so open a passage either for his fleet, or for the landing within the advanced lines of defences of a hostile force, accompanied by artillery and ammunition, in sufficient strength to effect a bombardment, it then becomes necessary that there should be obstacles between the works...With respect to the nature of the obstacle, it is conceived that a wall about 18 feet high, and well hidden in a ditch, is the best that can be adopted: there should be a parapet behind the ditch, which will afford a covered communication between the forts, but it is not intended that the connecting lines should be manned...

None of these connecting lines were ever built. It is clear that the more Jervois thought about the problem the more he became convinced that the forts would be capable of effective mutual support with the new weaponry, and that the proposed provision of some connecting lines was a sop to the opinions of some of the other members of the Royal Commission, which Jervois was to ignore in the execution. Certainly the 1860 Report of the Commission was definite in proposing that the forts be connected. With regard to Plymouth's north-eastern defences, the report stated, 'although, according to the principles usually adopted, and which we ourselves have in other cases recommended, it would be desirable to

provide an inner enceinte to support the outer line of detached works, circumstances render it necessary in this instance to adopt a different plan. We accordingly recommended that the outer line of works should be connected by lines of ditch and rampart.' At Antony, 'instead of connecting the works by lines thrown up at a time of expected attack, as was intended, a permanent ditch and rampart should be constructed between them.' Similar recommendations were made for the proposed Saltash position and at Staddon.

This abandonment of defence by continuous fortification, and the ignoring of the Commission's recommendations of modification to the proposed scheme, was not effected by Jervois without opposition. The Inspector-General of Fortifications, Sir John Fox Burgoyne, Jervois' superior, in a memorandum of 1855 on national defence, had not intended to rely upon detached forts. He considered that the dockyards needed 'such a line of works immediately round the great establishments, as may prevent the enemy from absolutely penetrating into them...This requires a complete enceinte round those establishments of a sufficiently respectable character to force the enemy to undertake siege operations of some detail and requiring some time and considerable means.' It would also be necessary to provide 'Fortified positions all round at such a distance from the place, that until some opening be effected in them, the establishments cannot be even cannonaded or bombarded with effect.' This was the type of enormously elaborate defence that had been provided for Paris. Consequently he recommended the completion of a bastioned line around Plymouth, with the Citadel at the right of the line. What eventually enabled Jervois to convince men such as Burgoyne of the viability of a belt of detached forts was the rapid and continuing increase in the power of artillery, which gave the heavily armed fort a much greater command of ground. However, the increase proved to be so great as to ensure the early obsolescence of his fortifications. It was also realised that the function of the detached forts was to act as strong points, behind and between which a defending army could manoeuvre. This reserve army, which was an essential component of the defence, replaced the fixed continuous internal defensive line. The acceptance of this flexible concept of defence in Britain was doubtless facilitated by the great success of the Torres Vedras lines in the Peninsula War. Sites for the forts were accordingly selected around Plymouth. The final dispositions were as follows:

#### *Western Defences*

Tregantle  
Scaesdon

#### *North-Eastern Position*

Ernesettle  
Agaton  
Knowles  
Woodlands  
Crown Hill  
Bowden  
Egg Buckland Keep  
Forder  
Austin  
Efford  
Laira



### *Staddon Position*

Staddon  
Stamford  
Brownhill

### *Outer Sea Defences*

Bovisand  
Picklecombe  
Polhawn  
Cawsand  
Breakwater

### *Inner Sea Defences*

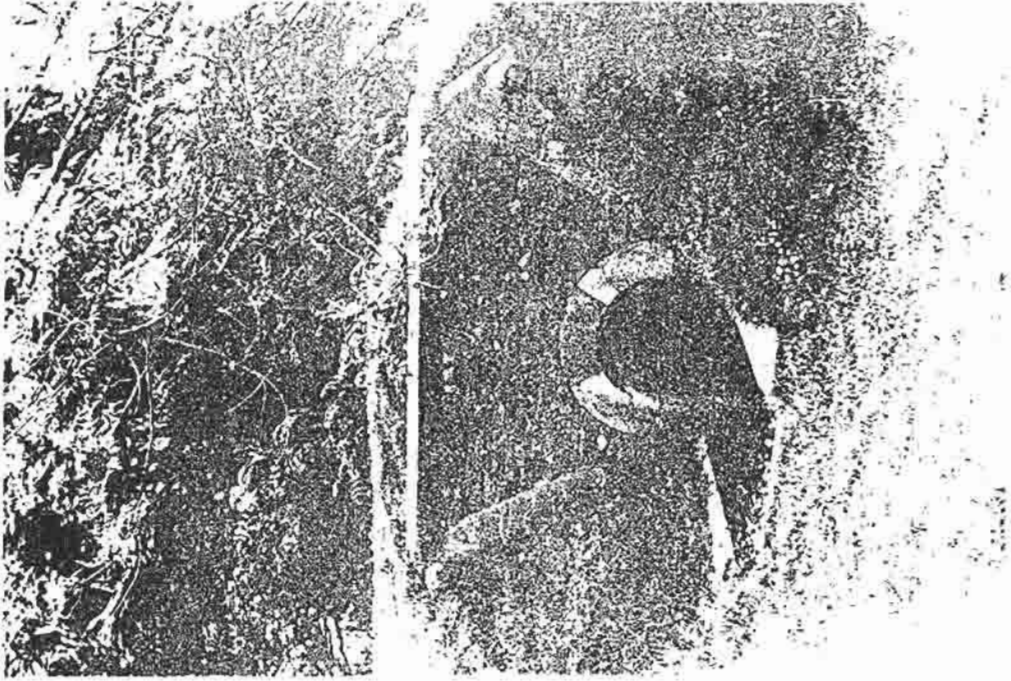
Drake's Island  
Mount Edgcumbe Garden  
East & West Kings Batteries

The chief designer of the Plymouth forts was Captain Du Cane : he was responsible for all the North-Eastern Position, of which Crown Hill forms the cornerstone. Du Cane was also responsible for Stamford, Staddon, Brownhill, Polhawn and (partly) Tregantle. The other designers, in what can only be described as a brilliant architectural collective, were: Captain Crossman - Scraesdon and (partly) Tregantle; Major Porter - Picklecombe, Bovisand, Drake's Island, and Mount Edgcumbe; Captain Siborne - Breakwater. Breakwater was a special case, being constructed out of iron to enable it to engage ships at close range. Because of this experience, Siborne was responsible for revising the construction of those forts in which it was decided to strengthen the casemates - the enclosed gun positions -with iron shields. Work had begun in 1861 but progressed slowly; the power of artillery was increasing yearly, making the forts already appear vulnerable. As a consequence of a series of trials in 1865 it was decided to instal iron shields in seaward-facing casemates.

With the completion of this ring Plymouth was furnished with some of the most theoretically advanced defences in the world, though this has been effectively obscured through the label 'Palmerston's Follies' - a description which a very slight amount of knowledge shows to be false. In the context of Plymouth, the sale of Crown Hill represents the last chance to preserve and display one of the component parts - and the most significant - of the north-east line of defence. The building is also important in a national context : most of the inland defensive ring around Portsmouth and Gosport has been preserved, and three of its forts put on display, and they represent two basic designs, neither of them similar to Crown Hill. Its long retention by the Army has ensured that no structural alterations have taken place to adapt it to commercial uses, while its inland situation has meant that no military advantages were to be gained from updating its armament, with consequent modifications. Even the internal arrangements of the buildings have been only slightly modified, and a few structures only of a semi-permanent nature added. Securing the long-term future of Crown Hill Fort should be a major conservation priority.

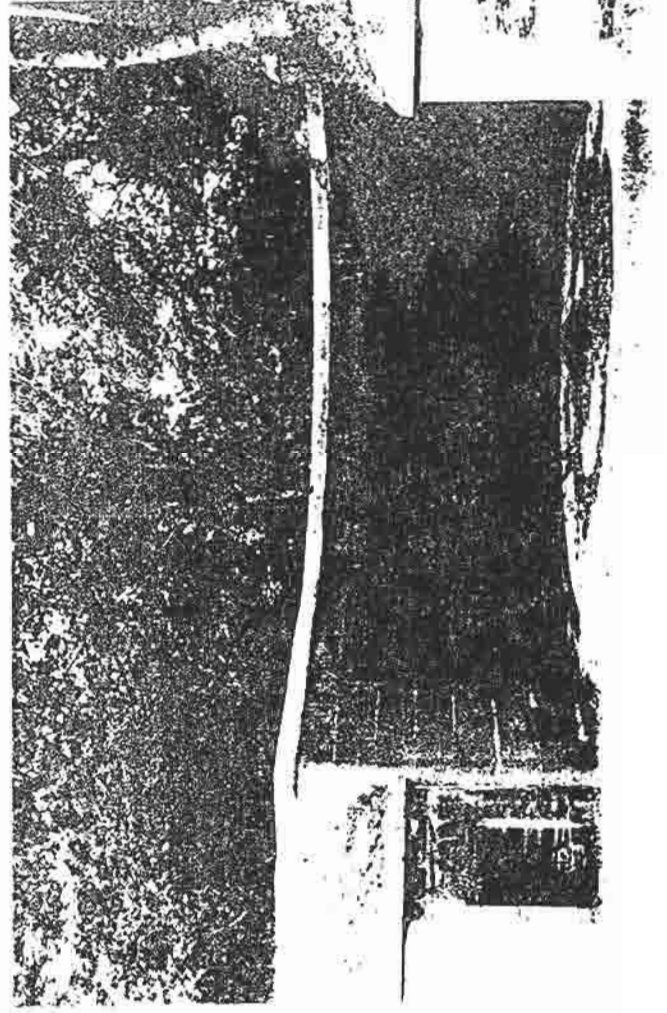
David Evans

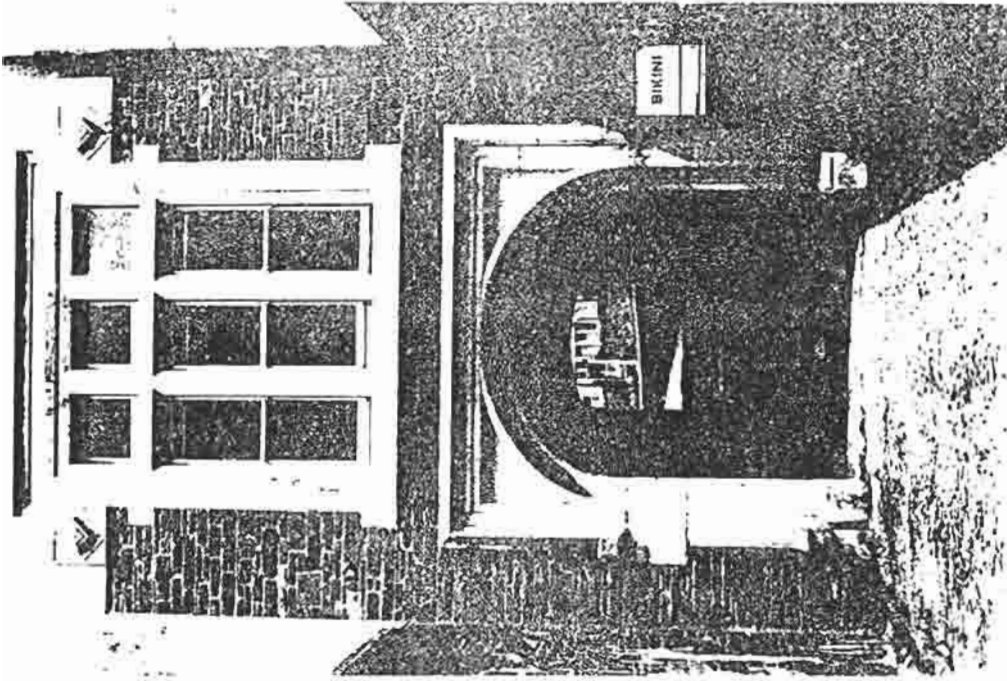




CROWN HILL FORT

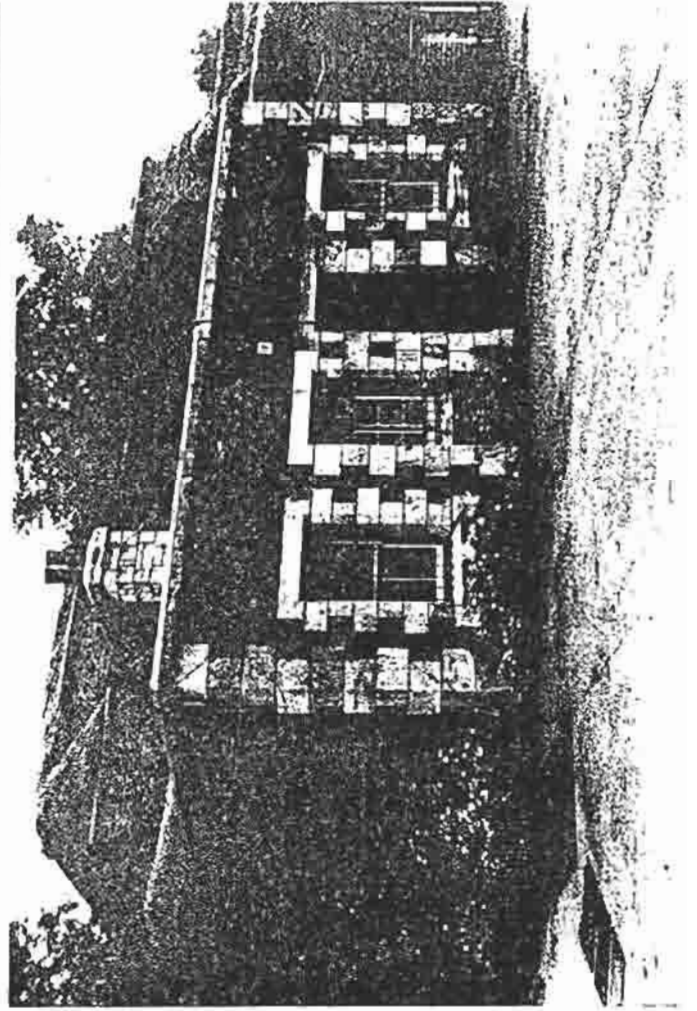
- above. Casemate entrance, north rampart.  
 1. upper. Haxo casemate, east rampart.  
 1. lower. Moncrieff mounting, north rampart.





CROWN HILL FORT

above. Entrance to Parade Ground.  
1. upper. Officers' Quarters.  
1. lower. Armourer's Shop.



## COXEN, BUDLEIGH SALTERTON

Coxen, at Budleigh Salterton, one of the most important Vernacular Revival houses in Devon, was designed in 1910 by Ernest Gimson. Gimson, influenced by Ruskin and William Morris, was articled in the office of the architect John Dando Sedding in 1886. A private income enabled Gimson to pursue his interest in the applied arts and traditional craftsmanship by a series of short apprenticeships with furniture-makers, plasterers and metalworkers. In 1892 he moved to the Cotswolds where he established a series of workshops devoted to the revival of traditional techniques of craftsmanship, but without the broader social and political vision of Morris or Ashbee. With such diverse interests it is hardly surprising that his architectural output was comparatively small but, in addition to work on churches for the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings, he designed a number of houses, mostly in rural areas, characterised by a painstaking attention to detail and exploiting knowledge of and enthusiasm for vernacular traditions.

G. Basil Young was one of Gimson's architectural assistants at his Sapperton workshop in 1910 and, in the spirit of the Vernacular Revival, this involved not only direct site supervision of architectural projects but also involvement in practical craftsmanship, particularly metalwork. Young married Eve Morant of Exmouth in 1910 (Hoare and Pyne) and Gimson designed Coxen for Young in the same year with Young as acting clerk of works.

Gimson chose to build the house in cob with a thatched roof, the traditional materials of East Devon. The use of cob is of especial interest and Gimson's account of the technique he employed has been much quoted but is worth repeating at a time when cob repair is so badly needed in Devon and the possibility of new building in cob is being debated. The mixture used was:

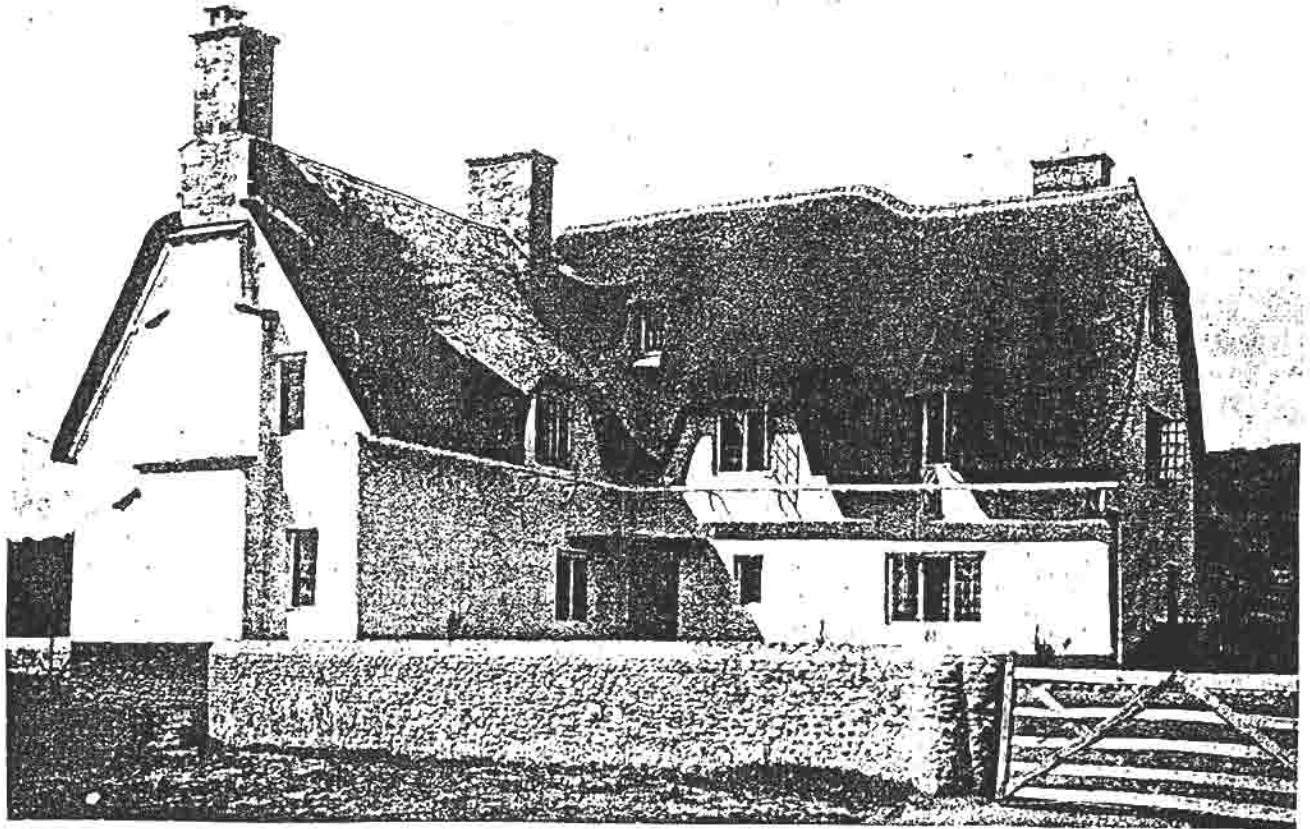
stiff sand found on the site; this was mixed with water and a great quantity of long wheat straw trodden into it. The walls were built 3 feet thick, pared down to 2ft 6ins., and were placed on a plinth standing 18ins. above the ground floor, and built of cobble stones found amongst the sand. The walls were given a coat of plaster and a coat of rough-cast, which was gently trowelled over to smooth the surface slightly.

I believe eight men were engaged in the cobwork, some preparing the material, and others treading it into the tops of the walls. It took them about three months to reach the wall plate, the cost was six shillings a cubic yard, exclusive of the plastering. No centering was used.

The joists rested on plates and above them the walls were reduced to 2ft.6ins. in thickness to leave the ends of the joists free. The beams also rested on wide plates and the ends were built round with stone, leaving space for ventilation. Tile or slate lintels were used over all the openings. the cost of the whole house was 6½d. a cubic foot.

Building with the cob is soon learnt - of the eight men only one had any previous experience, and I believe he had not built with it for 30 years.





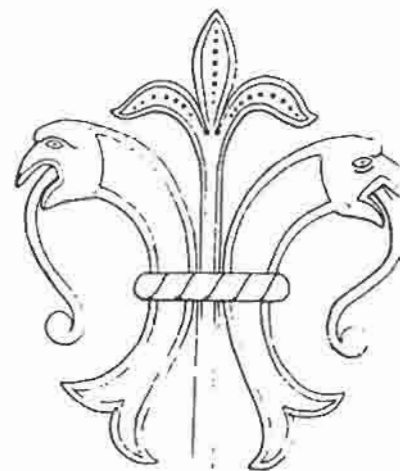
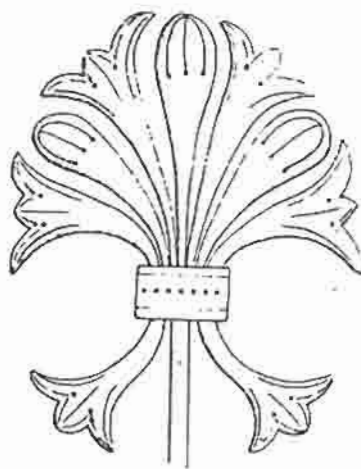
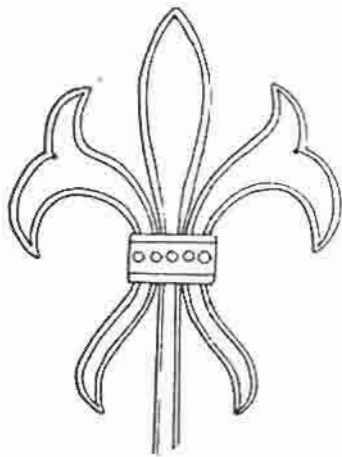
The interior of the house is equally indebted to tradition with exposed carpentry and a solid timber baulk stair. Until the 1950s the furniture, designed by Gimson, was still in the house. Young himself made metal work for the house including the hinges and window fittings (Hoare and Pyne), the casements have square leaded panes and sprung blacksmith's catches.

In spite of the use of local vernacular materials Coxen is no pale imitation of a traditional East Devon house. It is tall and steep rather than long and low and the thatch is south-eastern rather than south-western in character. It illustrates the fusion of different regional styles and details that was part of Gimson's quest for a national style.

In July the Devon Buildings Group objected to an application to change the windows, suggesting that, if repair were impossible, copies of the originals should be put in and grant-aid should be sought by the owner. Coxen is a house where it is essential to preserve the details.

*Hoare, G and Pyne, G, Prior's Barn and Gimson's Coxen (1978)*

Jo Cox



#### CONFERENCE REPORT

The first annual conference of the Devon Buildings Group, on the subject of Decorative Devon Plasterwork, took place at Forde House, Newton Abbot, and in Totnes on 7 June 1986. The lavish interior of the seventeenth-century house provided a splendid setting for the morning lectures, which were given in an upper room with an appropriately elaborate decorated plaster ceiling, complete with pendants.

Bridget Cherry made the first contribution, on the subject of 'Devonshire Plasterwork: The National Context'. She pointed to late fifteenth- and early sixteenth-century flat carved wooden ceilings as prototypes, and to the use of applied plaster figures by Italian craftsmen on external walls at Nonsuch Palace. Although there are references to earlier decorated ceilings, none from before the 1570s survive. Plasterwork with strapwork and figures lent itself to the general fashion for decoration in the Mannerist style of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, and such plasterwork schemes are relatively common in large houses throughout the country. Devon is notable, however, for the fact that such decoration occurs in houses of medium and even quite humble status - a phenomenon that seems to indicate a socially wider distribution of wealth within the county. Ceiling ribs became broader and surfaces more enriched from 1600 onwards. Not until the mid-seventeenth century, however, did classical 'aristocratic' plasterwork, with its heavy moulding and foliage, spread to the provinces. The late seventeenth-century decorative technique whereby fine high relief foliage is built up on wire is unique to Devon.

John Schofield's paper, 'Underneath the Plaster', next described the materials and techniques used in constructing plaster ceilings. Early decorated plaster is composed of a mix of hair, ash and gypsum on riven oak lathes. Later work may consist of a pure lime and hair mix on a backing of earth or lime plaster. The large later box ribs are hollow on a board or lath frame.

After a break for coffee, John Thorp talked on 'Devon Plasterwork: A County Outline'. The earliest dated work is in the 1570s and is characterised by simple ribs and motifs such as the fleur de lys. This decoration increased in richness with larger angle sprays, broader ribs and bosses. The recurrence of particular motifs in different decorative schemes makes it possible to identify individual workshops, and these need to be methodically investigated and recorded. Particularly rich collections of ceilings are to be found in Totnes, Dartmouth and Barnstaple.

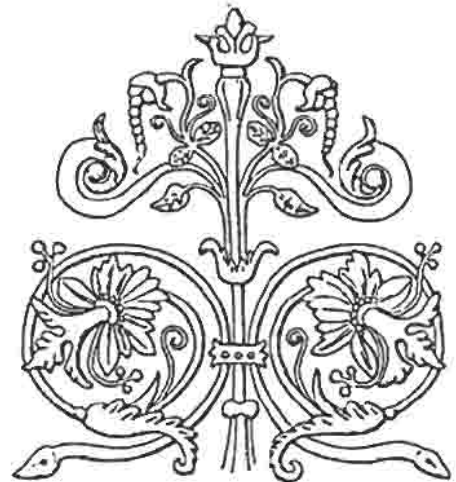
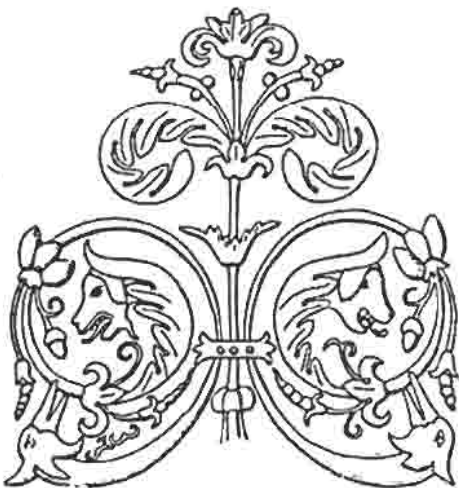


The papers were concluded by Jane Schofield on 'Repair and Conservation'. She emphasised that repair should be done in traditional materials and not in modern fibrous plaster. If a ceiling is failing it should not be pushed back or allowed to fall, but carefully propped, with any loose pieces retained in the right order. The cause of failure can be examined from above by lifting the floor boards: usually, it is the result either of the failure of the laths onto which the ceiling is fixed or of the lath-nails. As a substitute, stainless steel laths can be attached to the joists - which should be reinforced if necessary - and plaster of paris poured over it to bond it to the ceiling below. If the ceiling's condition is so bad that it has to be taken down, then this must be done with extreme care, first fully supporting it from below and then cutting it free before lowering it. After repair and conservation, the final question of finish arises. As a general rule, it seems likely that plaster was not originally painted or coloured; most was simply limewashed white to enhance the three-dimensional effect.

For the last half hour of the morning Forde House was opened to members. We were fortunate in having present Paul Fearn, the architect responsible for the restoration of the house, who very willingly answered questions and discussed details of his work and of the building.

After lunch the conference was taken by coach to Totnes, where access had been arranged to a selection of the fine sixteenth- and seventeenth-century plaster ceilings surviving in the town. The tour was organised by Michael Laithwaite, who guided the parties and provided notes on the buildings visited. These included 64 Fore Street, where the densely decorated ceiling included Prince of Wales feathers and the town arms in a broad rib surround, and 32 High Street, which has a single rib pattern in its back-block. 39 and 43 High Street, on the opposite side of the Butterwalk, were also inspected; both have single rib ceilings, the former probably of c.1570, the latter laid over moulded sixteenth century beams. We also visited The Priory, north of Fore Street, where the main room and the stair well retain fine early eighteenth-century plasterwork.

Peter Child



The head and tail pieces to the Report are plasterwork motifs of c1640 from 38 North Street, Exeter (demolished 1972); some can be seen in the Rougemont Museum. Motifs from the same mould as those on this page occur in Totnes and Dartmouth.

## WEST OGWELL CHURCH

CONSERVATION WORK IS BEING CARRIED OUT ON WEST OGWELL CHURCH FOR THE REDUNDANT CHURCHES FUND. JOHN SCHOFIELD, THE ARCHITECT IN CHARGE, HAS MADE A NUMBER OF IMPORTANT DISCOVERIES ABOUT THE BUILDING HISTORY OF THIS MEDIEVAL CHURCH. HE HAS KINDLY OFFERED TO SHOW INTERESTED MEMBERS OF THE DBG AROUND THE BUILDING ON SATURDAY 25 OCTOBER. WEST OGWELL IS 3 MILES SOUTH WEST OF NEWTON ABBOT.

MEET AT THE CHURCH AT 4.30

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CONTRIBUTIONS TO FUTURE NEWSLETTERS FROM MEMBERS OF THE GROUP WILL BE VERY WELCOME: THESE COULD TAKE THE FORM OF SHORT ARTICLES, ACCOUNTS OF INDIVIDUAL BUILDINGS, REQUESTS FOR ADVICE AND INFORMATION, OR ITEMS OF GENERAL INTEREST TO OTHER MEMBERS. THE COMMITTEE WOULD BE PARTICULARLY INTERESTED TO RECEIVE PIECES ON THE RE-USE OF FARM BUILDINGS.

CONTRIBUTIONS PLEASE TO CHRIS BROOKS

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