

DEVON BUILDINGS GROUP

NEWSLETTER NUMBER 28



Summer 2010

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Torre Abbey AGM 2009



Introduction

The publication date of the Newsletter has varied over the last ten years between autumn and summer. There are various reasons for this pattern, but this year's issue has reverted to the earlier date in the ambitious expectation that next year's will be a bumper issue to coincide with the planned celebration of the DBG's 25th anniversary. A special plea is hereby issued to all members with reminiscences, photographs, memorabilia of any sort: please let us know so that we can incorporate your material in the issue. We promise to return everything promptly and without damage.

Our first AGM was held on 18th October 1986. Various planning and organisational meetings were held before but 1986 seems a logical year to claim as our beginnings. In order to take advantage of the longer days and possibly better weather, some form of celebration is planned for either June or July 2011. Details will be circulated as soon as they are finalised.

This issue of the Newsletter, being mid-term so to speak, therefore lacks the Secretary's Report which is customarily delivered to the AGM. You will recall that in last year's Newsletter No 27, Ann Adams gave a valediction. Ill health has meant that she can no longer serve as Editor. It certainly hasn't stopped her writing: her family history, *The Budds of North Tawton. A 19th Century Devon Medical Family* was recently published.

Her absence gives the opportunity, knowing that she would not be able to blue pencil the praise and lessen the expressions of gratitude, to say what an extraordinary contribution she has made to the DBG in many ways. She served as Secretary for ten years, Newsletter Editor for twelve, author of some nine "Reviews of the Year" and author or co-author of eight scholarly articles over a period spanning eighteen years. The depth and breadth of her knowledge is extremely impressive. Her enthusiasm and warmth of welcome is infectious. We all, but especially those who are trying to fill her editorial shoes, send many thanks and very best wishes to her.

Peter O Marlow

Treasurer/Membership Secretary's Report 2009

I thank Dawn Honeysett, once again, for her continuing support and help. The Committee is very pleased to welcome the twenty-three new members who have joined Devon Buildings Group since last October. It is inevitable that we lose members, but membership has still increased from 166 to 188. Thirty-four members attended last year's AGM and seventy-three, including eight guests, attended the Summer Conference at Beer Quarry.

However, although membership has increased, our savings have not. DBG has gone into its savings to pay for a revised website and the accounts show new monies spent on subscriptions and insurance. This is because the Committee finally faced up to the fact that we live in litigious times and need to be insured for meetings and visiting listed buildings. DBG is now affiliated to the Council for British Archaeology so that it can be insured, through them, by Towergate Insurance. Please note that the payment to Towergate has been partially subsidised by a committee member, so it will cost more next year.

The accounts show that we are in a 'loss situation' of £809.57. This is only the second time since 1998 that DBG has **not** had an excess of income over expenditure. The last time was two years ago when the Research Papers were published at a cost of about £1,650. The excess of expenditure

over income does not include this month's costs of printing the Newsletter (around £500) and the book token for the accountant. Please note that this is the first time that DBG has paid for printing the Newsletter for years. Two of our members have been carrying this cost, and that of printing Conference notes.

The Reconciliation shows that the savings account earned only £4.03. We had applied to Lloyds TSB for a higher interest account but were told that we would have to close our existing current account and open a new one first. Since this would incur the expense and inconvenience of changing all of our banker's orders, we decided to open a Community current account with the Co-op for our savings first. A frustrating time was spent trying to get forms filled in and signed by committee members and then the credit crunch happened. The whole issue needs to be reappraised. I propose that subscriptions need to be increased and all banking changes made simultaneously.

There are five main reasons why subscriptions need to be raised:

Firstly, DBG cannot continue taking for granted the many individuals who have, and continue to substantially subsidise its activities. As mentioned above, DBG did not pay all the insurance premium and printing costs have been hugely subsidised for years. DBG's accounts have been done for years on a voluntary basis. DBG was not charged for the design, setting up and maintenance of its first website. There are a significant number of contributions made by individuals, including printing of Newsletters and Conference notes and expenses relating to AGMs and outings.

Secondly, recent years have seen increased rises in the costs of postage and new costs, such as insurance and a server for the website.

DBG also needs to build up its savings again ready for future publications and Registers. The Group could also consider hiring a coach when visiting properties with limited parking, as for the 2007 Conference. DBG still has savings, but if nothing is done, these will continue to decline. The Group would be in real trouble if all of those who subsidise it were no longer able to do so and it had to pay its own way completely.

Members also need to consider the differential between subs for single and joint membership. There are currently 29 members who pay £2 each as they are the 'other half', so to speak, of joint members. It has been argued that this is fair because DBG saves costs in printing and postage because couples only receive one Newsletter and Register, and notification of meetings. However, there are many other monies spent which pertain to all members. For instance, apart from the costs of insurance, the website and accountancy, there are those for room hire, tea and coffee (cakes are provided free by committee members), speakers and Conference notes.

A snap shot of DBG accounts for the July committee meeting showed, amongst other things, that single members provided three times more towards savings than those in joint memberships. All monies spent on behalf of members between August 2008 and July 2009 were totalled and then divided by the total membership in July. This showed that DBG had spent £4.95 on behalf of each member. And please remember that these costs would have been considerably more if members had not subsidised the Group. The costs of items posted to members was calculated. DBG saved £3.05 from each member paying the £8 single sub (£8-£4.95), but only £1.79 from the subscription of two people paying the £10 joint membership (£4.95x2=£9.90 less £1.69 saved on items posted =£8.21 £10-£8.21=£1.79). In other words, single members provided over three pounds each towards savings, and joint members provided 90 pence each. This clearly needs addressing.

Finally, subscriptions have never been increased since the formation of Devon Buildings Group in

1985. If inflation has only trebled in twenty-four years the original subs would now be the equivalent of £24 for single members and £30 for joint members. A jump from £8 to £24 for a single member would be extreme. A fairer differential between the cost of joint and single membership is needed. A reduction of £5 seems appropriate. It is therefore proposed that subscriptions be raised to £15 for single membership and corporate members, and to £25 for joint membership (two people at the same address).

[NB. This proposal was passed unanimously by the AGM.]

Lyn Auty

Devon Medieval Windmill Icons

In Jo Cox's article on Whimble church in the last *DBG Newsletter* (Autumn 2009, 11) John Hayward's record of a sixteenth century wall painting of St Christopher was reproduced (Plate 1). As well as maritime details and the curious figure of a man with what looks like a golf club, above the saint's left shoulder is one of a very few medieval depictions of a windmill known from Devon. The painting shows a short, squat cylindrical tower mill, with a conical cap and parts of two sails, at right angles to each other. It is interesting to note that a tower mill is shown, as evidence for the more common medieval form of windmill, the post mill, is relatively scarce in Devon (for a general discussion of medieval tower mills, see Langdon and Watts 2005). A tower mill of similar form appears on a surviving wall painting in the parish church at Cottered, Hertfordshire. Windmills and, more rarely, watermills are sometimes found in wall paintings of St Christopher. The significance of windmills as prominent landmarks and the location of watermills at points where streams could be bridged or forded presumably made them potent symbols for the patron saint of travellers.



Plate 1. Detail.

Outside of the windmill on the Whimble wall painting is a figure with a hat, and a donkey, mule or horse with a sack slung across its back. Apart from the curious shape of the hat (is this perhaps the earliest recorded example of a bowler-hatted McDougall's flour grader?), the association of a miller with a laden pack animal is one that appears quite frequently in late medieval illustrations of mills. It is generally considered to illustrate a medieval joke, which runs as follows: a miller is returning to his mill with a sack of grain slung across the back of his donkey or horse. It's been a long journey and, seeing the poor beast is tiring, the miller thoughtfully shoulders the sack himself, but then mounts the animal and rides it back to the mill! This is one of the Gotham type folk stories, used to illustrate the foolishness of men and, in this case, the stupidity of millers in particular. Medieval millers generally suffered a bad press: they were frequently accused of theft, taking excess toll, that is, more than the allotted share they were allowed to take from each customer's grain for the service of grinding. Much has been written about the compulsory suit of mill that existed in the Middle Ages, although recent research has shown that it

was generally only the unfree tenants on the manors who were obliged to follow this custom (Holt 1988).

With regard to the character of medieval millers, Chaucer drew lively caricatures of Robyn, who was one of his Canterbury pilgrims, and Symkyn, who was the subject of the Reeve's Tale. He portrayed the miller as someone who was a cut above those whose grain he milled, someone in a good position to acquire wealth and rise above his station, but also someone who needed to be put in his place as he was really a rather stupid and dishonest person (Jones 1955). As well as being described as a lecher and a buffoon, Chaucer says of the miller that he had a thumb of gold and was good at stealing corn and taking three times his due in toll. There was undoubtedly some fire behind this smoke.

In a study of society and homicide in thirteenth century England, James Given found that millers were both perpetrators and victims of murder, being seen as 'a real and vexatious manifestation of seigneurial power' who were targets of crime because they accumulated a great deal of wealth from the peasants whose grain they ground (Given 1977, 87). While bakers were often seen in the same light, it is doubtful that millers and bakers were in league. In the early thirteenth century one William the miller, of Dartmouth, killed William the baker, fled and was outlawed (Summerson 1985, 111). The motive for the crime is not recorded, but it is well known that bakers always blame millers if the bread does not rise properly! It is perhaps of interest to note that in Summerson's transcription of the Devon Eyre of 1238, 776 cases were presented and only 41 (5.3 per cent) involved millers as perpetrators of crime and, more often, as victims of crime and casualties of their mills. One Richard Sulke, for example, was crushed to death by a mill wheel outside the western gate of Exeter (presumably either City Mill or Cricklepit Mill) as he tried to oil the cogs. Henry Croppe the miller, who was with him in the mill, fled to the Church of the Blessed Mary and 'out of fear stayed there' until the bailiffs made him abjure the realm (ibid. 122).

This accident brings us rather neatly to two other late medieval illustrations of windmills to be found in Devon churches, at Holy Trinity, Torbryan and St Mary the Virgin, Wolborough (Plates 2 & 3). Both images are on painted panels which form part of fine rood screens, and both are similar in their content. They depict St Victor of Marseilles, an officer in the Roman army who was martyred in about 290 by order of the Emperor Maximian. According to tradition, Victor was martyred by being crushed between millstones. In both paintings he is holding a windmill: that at Wolborough appears to have been rather heavily restored, but that at Torbryan is a delightful representation of a small post mill. It appears that the Torbryan screen may date from about 1440, while that at Wolborough is thought to be of fifteenth or early sixteenth century date (Bond 1995, 32-4).

The significance of these images in historical terms with regard to Devon windmills is difficult to assess. Post mills were undoubtedly built in Devon, although the later windmill building tradition is for stone tower mills. There is now evidence for nearly 100 windmills having worked in the county over a period of 600 years or so, the earliest known documentary reference being to a windmill on the manor of Woodbury in 1289 (Minchinton 1977, 7). While remains of nine stone tower mills still stand, none retains any machinery and, in most cases, their individual biographies as important historic buildings remain to be researched and written. While the majority date from the late eighteenth or early nineteenth century, the tower at Yaddon Down, Torquay, was in existence before the end of the seventeenth century and the base of the small tower mill close to the church at Instow may well be of late medieval origin, perhaps once similar in appearance to that recorded, albeit ambiguously, on the Whimple wall painting.

Martin Watts

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Plate 2 & 3. St Victor of Marseilles holding a small post windmill, from the fifteenth century painted screen in Holy Trinity church, Torbryan.



Plate 4 & 5. St Victor of Marseilles holding a small post windmill, from St Mary the Virgin, Wolborough

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Another Post-War Listing

Following the controversial 2007 listing of Plymouth's Civic Centre and that of Parkham Wood House at Brixham of 1960 last year [see Newsletter 27], DCMS on the advice of English Heritage have now listed at Grade 2 the Royal Bank of Scotland premises of 1953-8 which stand at the head of Armada Way and with which any visitor to Plymouth will be familiar. Its triple-height Portland Stone portico and its curved copper roof topped by a clock tower dominate this end of the city centre. It might have been thought that a building of this prominence and quality would have been listed before, but post-war buildings have to be considered of particular merit and have usually to be by notable architects before they will be given this protection. Sufficient time has now elapsed from the construction of this bank for its high architectural quality to become apparent; will our successors think the same about the Princesshay buildings in 60 years?

The building was originally constructed for the National Provincial Bank and was designed by the latter's own architects department who were clearly extremely able; their Canterbury bank is also listed. The extensive and interesting new list description is to be found on the Images of England website [[lbonline.english-heritage.org.uk](http://online.english-heritage.org.uk)] and is recommended reading, as it not only describes the building in detail but also puts its construction into context in the rebuilding of Plymouth after the Blitz viz:

.... 'A Plan for Plymouth' in 1943, envisaged a grand new city planned on Beaux-Arts lines and completed with good contemporary architecture. The site of the former National Provincial Bank was in the zone originally identified for banks. St. Andrew's Cross was unquestionably the most prominent and desirable of the bank sites and, at the head of the new Royal Parade, confers an almost civic function on the building.

The list also describes the stylistic origins of this striking building as follows: '...a compelling synthesis of recent Scandinavian Modernism, the Festival of Britain style, and traditional classicism. This subtly original interpretation of classicism is based on the work of the Italian Rationalists and also draws on the local context for its effect.'

Unlike many commercial buildings the bank is designed in the round so that its rear and side elevations are also of high quality. False ceilings have been inserted into the high banking hall but these could presumably be readily removed. It is interestingly detailed with mosaic decoration and roundels in the principal doors based upon coins.

The list description draws heavily on the work carried out by Jeremy Gould on the architecture and development of post-war Plymouth on which he is the author of a forthcoming publication by English Heritage.

Peter Child



Royal Bank of Scotland, Plymouth. Clockwise from top left. Front elevation; side elevation; door with roundels; three details; rear elevation. See also cover illustration.

The Rise & Fall of Okehampton Workhouse

In the attractively wooded and steep-sided valley of the West Okemont, to the south of Okehampton and on the very edge of Dartmoor, is the new, state-of-the-art, Castle Ham Lodge extra care scheme of sheltered accommodation. In contrast, at the entrance to the site is a rather elegantly proportioned and recently restored late-Georgian range facing the river. This is now all that remains of Okehampton's Workhouse, opened under the auspices of the New Poor Law in 1838; the rest was demolished in 2008 after applications to get the buildings listed had been turned down by English Heritage.



Plate 1. The frontage range of Okehampton Workhouse, prior to restoration.

This section was the entrance block and thus the public side of the workhouse, typically designed and detailed in a polite manner, unlike the much plainer courtyard ranges housing the inmates behind it. By the time the site was redeveloped Okehampton had, like many workhouses, become a hospital and there had been many changes and additions made. Nevertheless, the basic core of the original workhouse buildings survived reasonably intact despite the later accretions and it was one of the better remaining examples of the smaller rural workhouse built following the Poor Law Act of 1834.

The Historical Background

Poor relief in Devon had been fairly typical of rural England prior to then, largely based from the medieval period on the ancient duty of care of the parish, a handful of private benefactors, and occasional government legislation. As in most rural areas, poor relief in Devon was mainly of the 'outdoor' type in which the poor remained in their homes and were given 'dole', usually, but not always, in return for unpaid work.

There was a great deal of scope for corruption and it was expensive and did little to encourage the poor to find or stay in work. The Rev. Thomas Malthus went as far to say that all poor relief should be stopped, because it encouraged the lower orders to breed without increasing the amount of food production to feed them.¹ Even for less extreme thinkers, the system seemed to be too lax and failing. The view of another cleric, the Rev. J T Becher, that 'Tenderness, forbearance, and concession, had, from benevolent motives, been extended to the Poor, until the Relievers became in many instances more entitled to commiseration than the Relieved' was by no means uncommon.²

These twin themes led to the erratic development of forms of 'internal' relief, which required the use of poor houses to contain the poor. Such establishments had existed in one form or another for centuries, but only on a small scale. Rural poverty increased dramatically, especially in southern England, in the late-18th century and other types of poor relief were tried, including the infamous Speenhamland system of 'outdoor' relief begun in 1795 which simply encouraged farmers to pay wages below the poverty line knowing the deficit would be made up by the parish.

In contrast, the development of the utilitarian philosophy of radical reform by men such as Jeremy Bentham argued for a much more centralised system of ‘indoor’ relief that treated the poor little better than prisoners in buildings little better than prisons. Many parishes began to concentrate on ‘indoor’ relief and the concept of the larger workhouse was developed, often built by unions of parishes.

Becher was involved in one of the most influential of these new types of workhouses, opened in 1824 at Thurgarton, Nottinghamshire.³ He wrote a book outlining the virtues of his ‘Anti-Pauper System’, which was ‘governed upon a principle of Inspection, Classification, and Seclusion’.⁴ He must be seen in the context of his times. He recognised, for example, the crucial fault of the Speenhamland System and wrote that ‘The Labourer is worthy of his Hire. Never pauperize him by reducing his Wages below their just Amount, or by making up the deficiency out of the Poor Rate. This extinguishes the incitement to industry and economy’.⁵ He considered the main advantage of building a workhouse was ‘not from keeping the Poor in the House, but from keeping them out of it...’.⁶

Following the report of a Royal Commission into poor relief, the Poor Law Amendment Act was passed on the 14th August 1834.⁷ Influenced by the writing and experience of Becher and others, the Act outlined that relief for the poor would only be given to those who would accept the strict conditions within the workhouse, deliberately made worse than those endured by the poorest worker outside, a principle of ‘less eligibility’.

The financing of the new workhouses was from the Poor Rate but the costs of the large buildings needed meant that unions of parishes were to be formed under government control. Boards of Guardians were appointed by each union to control the rates required to build and run the workhouses, as the expense was generally far greater than a single parish could have afforded.

The new Poor Law Commissioners employed the otherwise little-known architect Sampson Kempthorpe (1809-1873) to produce specimen workhouse designs for them; these were first published in 1835 and provided the basis for most of the many new buildings needed.⁸ These were

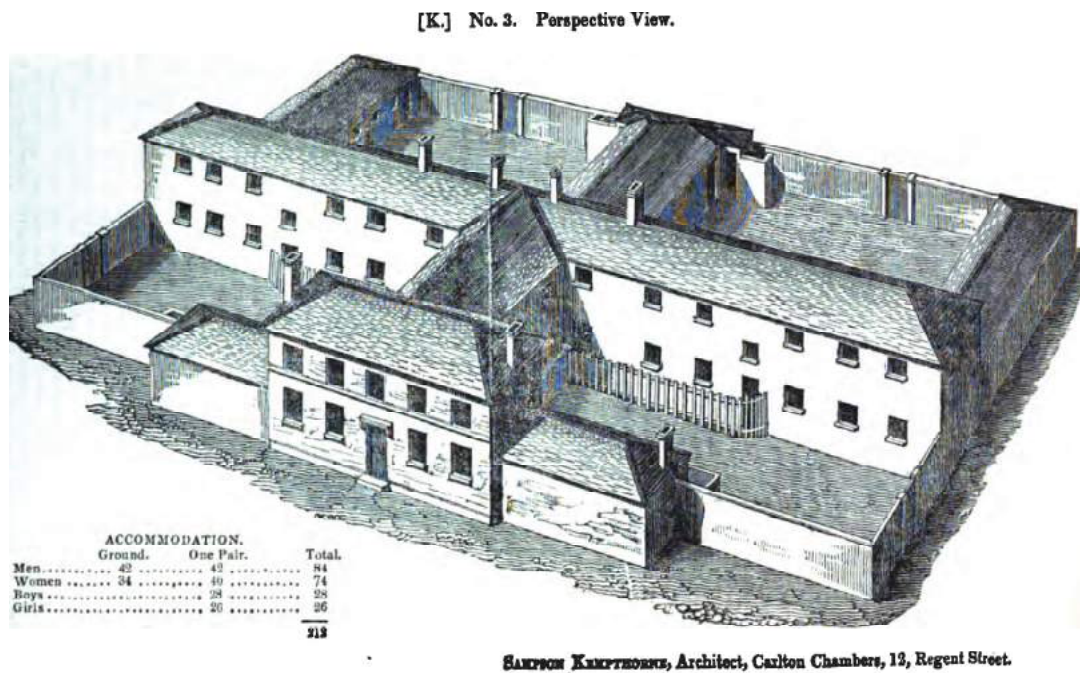


Fig. 1. Kempthorpe’s isometric drawing of a workhouse for ‘200 Paupers Adopted for the less pauperised districts’, one of several model designs issued by the Poor Law Commissioners and the basic blueprint for Okehampton.

intentionally designed to be grim and overpowering, in line with the whole philosophy of the workhouses, little less than the industrialisation of poor relief.

Within their walls unfortunate inmates were to be treated as numbers rather than individuals, divided into categories and by gender with married couples divided and children separated from their families. As with all aspects of history, this apparently inhuman treatment has to be placed into the context of the time.

Despite the massive expense incurred in the building of hundreds of the new workhouses, the system never really worked in the way it was intended to. Boards of Guardians could have been severe and conditions poor, but so were the conditions of the working poor outside the walls. In addition, Guardians would have been wary of oppressing the poor too much, given their memories of the 'Swing Riots' of the 1830s, rick burnings, and so forth; as a result of this and a degree of pragmatism, much of poor relief continued to be of the 'outdoor' variety.⁹

Notwithstanding this, the workhouses were universally loathed by the poor that needed to use them and became symbols of heartless cruelty and social ills. In 1843 the controversial writer Thomas Carlyle called them 'Poor-law Prisons' where 'hope of deliverance...[was]...small' and whose inhabitants eventually became stuck 'in a kind of horrid enchantment; glad to be imprisoned and enchanted, that they may not perish starved'.¹⁰

The workhouses also became an integral part of society and were, despite all their very many faults, often the only means of support for the poor and, especially, the elderly and infirm poor no longer capable of work. Being so ingrained into working class culture the workhouses could occasionally be the subject of grim humour. For example, in Thomas Hardy's poem 'The Curate's Kindness', an elderly married man finally doomed to the workhouse 'After honest work all the week, and Communion/O' Zundays, these fifty years' looked forward to his new life, thinking:

Life there will be better than t' other,
For peace is assured.
The men in one wing and their wives in another
Is strictly the rule of the Board.

Unfortunately for him, the earnest eponymous curate persuaded the Guardians to allow the old man and his wife to be together in the same wing in their old age so that he was not, after all, to 'Get free of this forty years' chain'.¹¹

The Okehampton Workhouse

After many discussions following the passing of the Poor Law Amendment Act, the Okehampton Poor Law Union was set up in 1836, made up of 28 mainly rural parishes, varying in size and with populations from less than a hundred (Honey Church) to over 2,000 (Okehampton). Each parish was represented by one or two elected Guardians on a new Board of Guardians which was responsible for the implementation of the new Poor Law Act and the construction and running of the new workhouse.

The site eventually chosen for the new workhouse was the Castle Ham to the south of the town centre, a few hundred yards to the north of the Norman castle and on the bank of the West Okemont river. This was a very pleasant setting for a workhouse but chosen because it was on the edge of the town, the land was available, and relatively cheap.

The Board then chose, as their architect, Sampson Kempthorne, the architectural advisor to the Poor Law Commissioners. Kempthorne (1809-1873) had only just set up in practice in London when his father's friendship with one of the three new Poor Law Commissioners, Captain Nicholls, helped

get his appointment as their architectural advisor, despite his youth and inexperience.¹² He produced several different standard designs for workhouses, all quite simply detailed in a fairly plain, and cheap, late-Georgian style. On the back of these he obtained around 40 commissions included seven in Devon: Okehampton, Axminster, Barnstaple, Crediton, Exeter, South Molton and Torrington.

Usually he simply adapted one of his standard types and for Okehampton used one for the smaller rural unions, the '200-pauper' plan, similar to his larger square plans but without a polygonal supervisory hub. Despite the workhouse commissions, Kempthorne was not very successful and soon emigrated to New Zealand, where he remained.¹³

The new workhouse at Okehampton cost £3,600, not an inconsiderable sum for the time, and could officially house around 230 paupers; the workhouse opened officially in February 1838.¹⁴ Despite that maximum capacity, official returns and census details show that there were generally only around 120 inmates at the workhouse in the 19th century, mainly unskilled labourers and their families but also including skilled tradesmen fallen on hard times, such as carpenters, tailors and weavers.

For the Guardians and their utilitarian beliefs, the new workhouse certainly fulfilled one of its main purposes, to save money. In the three years prior to the formation of the Poor Law Union average annual expenditure on poor relief had been £9157; in 1838 it was just £6201 but gradually rising thereafter.¹⁵

Overall control of the site was through the Union's Clerk and Superintendent Registrar but in day-to-day charge of the workhouse was the resident Master, originally paid £35 per annum with board, supported by the Matron, paid just £15 per annum with board.¹⁶ These were generally, but not always, a husband and wife team, for example in 1841 the Master was Henry Matthews and the Matron, Heroine Matthews, his wife, and they lived at the workhouse with their two young children.¹⁷

Incidentally, in 1911 the new Master and Matron were the parents of a three-year old boy, Fred Bawden, who grew up to become an eminent virologist, plant pathologist and one-time Treasurer of the Royal Society; his life-long concern for the poor was probably due to his upbringing, and his interest in plant life probably stemmed from time spent in the large vegetable garden at the workhouse, which mainly concentrated on potatoes.¹⁸

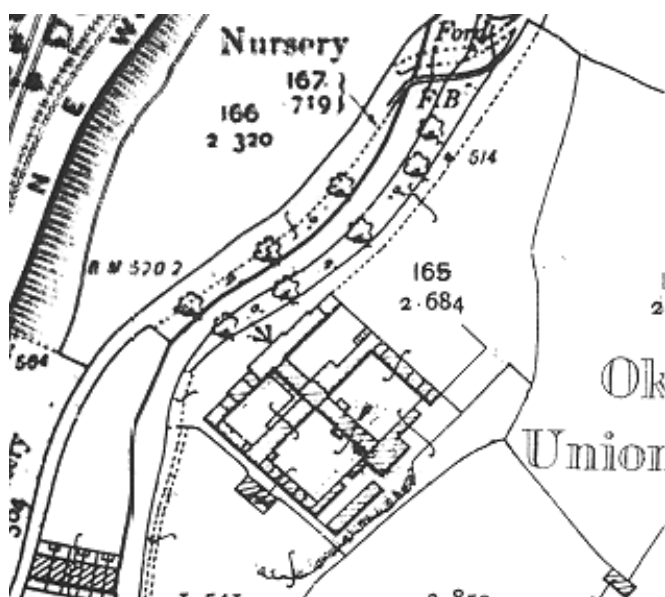


Fig. 2. The workhouse, shown on a late-19th century Ordnance Survey map (not to scale).

The other permanent members of staff living on site were usually a Schoolmistress, a Nurse, and a Porter. These would have been, in social terms, only slightly above the level of their charges and were, indeed, often recruited from their ranks. The necessary mundane day-to-day work required within the workhouse would have been carried out by the inmates who were also put to work at other tasks as well to earn their keep.

Despite the quality of the new buildings at Okehampton, the initial quality of care within the workhouse was evidently poor and the regime strict. This led to tragedy in 1848 when no less than sixteen of the children in the workhouse died, largely from neglect. In 1868 a 'violent idiot'

was left in charge of the workhouse infirmary and it emerged that buckets used for night soil were also used for fresh water.¹⁹ Indeed, the local Poor Law authorities in Okehampton continued to be subject to criticism by the Poor Law Commissioners until the 1890s and as late as 1910 there were further complaints about the treatment of ‘pauper lunatics’ in the workhouse.²⁰

The Buildings of 1838

The main surviving buildings were grouped around the four original courtyards of the complex formed by Kempthorne’s original ‘cross-in-square’ layout. The basic core of the hospital was that of 1838 to which there had been several additions and some radical remodelling but surprisingly little demolition.

For descriptive purposes the whole complex is awkwardly aligned south-west to north-east. Therefore, for convenience, within this article the river West Okemont is deemed to be flowing northwards and the main frontage block of the workhouse complex that faces it is deemed to face westwards. All of the other directions within the following descriptions are accordingly turned roughly 45° anticlockwise from their true positions.

The surviving fabric showed that the original workhouse was a typical Kempthorne design and a variant on the smaller workhouses for 200 paupers which he supplied for the Poor Law Commissioners in the mid-1830s. Comparing the later detailed plans of Okehampton Workhouse drawn up in the early-1930s with Kempthorne’s standard designs, it appears that for this project he combined the basics of two such designs, the ‘Workhouse for 200 Paupers Adopted for the less pauperised districts’ and the ‘Workhouse to Contain 200 Paupers’, there being subtle differences between the two.

The Okehampton Workhouse seems mainly to have been adapted from the smaller workhouse design for ‘less pauperised districts’ but, perhaps because of the wishes and aspirations of the Guardians, Kempthorne utilised the slightly more expensive neo-classical frontage block of the other. The workhouse as built was otherwise quite utilitarian with a minimum of decoration, inside or out. The design was also utilitarian, a direct response to the processing of the inmates unfortunate enough to enter its portals, often with little real hope of leaving.

Construction

The original buildings were constructed of locally derived granite, presumably much of it coming from the quarry immediately to the rear of the site on the steep slope of Dartmoor and from elsewhere in the vicinity.

The stone was mainly used as fairly irregular coarse rubble, with worked stone quoins to the corners and for the lintels and sills of openings. On the principal west elevation of the Frontage Block the detailing is of higher quality, with more regular quoins, ashlar window surrounds and decorative plinths and band courses.

Original internal partitions were a mixture of load-bearing granite, brick, and studwork; the roofs were shallow pitched and quite poorly designed, in modern terms. They had, however, survived. They were, and probably always were, covered in slate. Evidence on some slopes suggested that the slates had been ‘turned’ at least once and so could be original; the ridges were of concrete and clearly were not.

Later additions made within the workhouse period tended to also be constructed of granite rubble construction, but generally with brick quoins and brick heads to the windows. The later-20th century additions were mainly of breeze block and steel construction and of uniformly mediocre architectural quality, adversely impacting on the overall aesthetic of the rest of the site to such a degree that its true character was difficult to assess to the rear of the main facade.

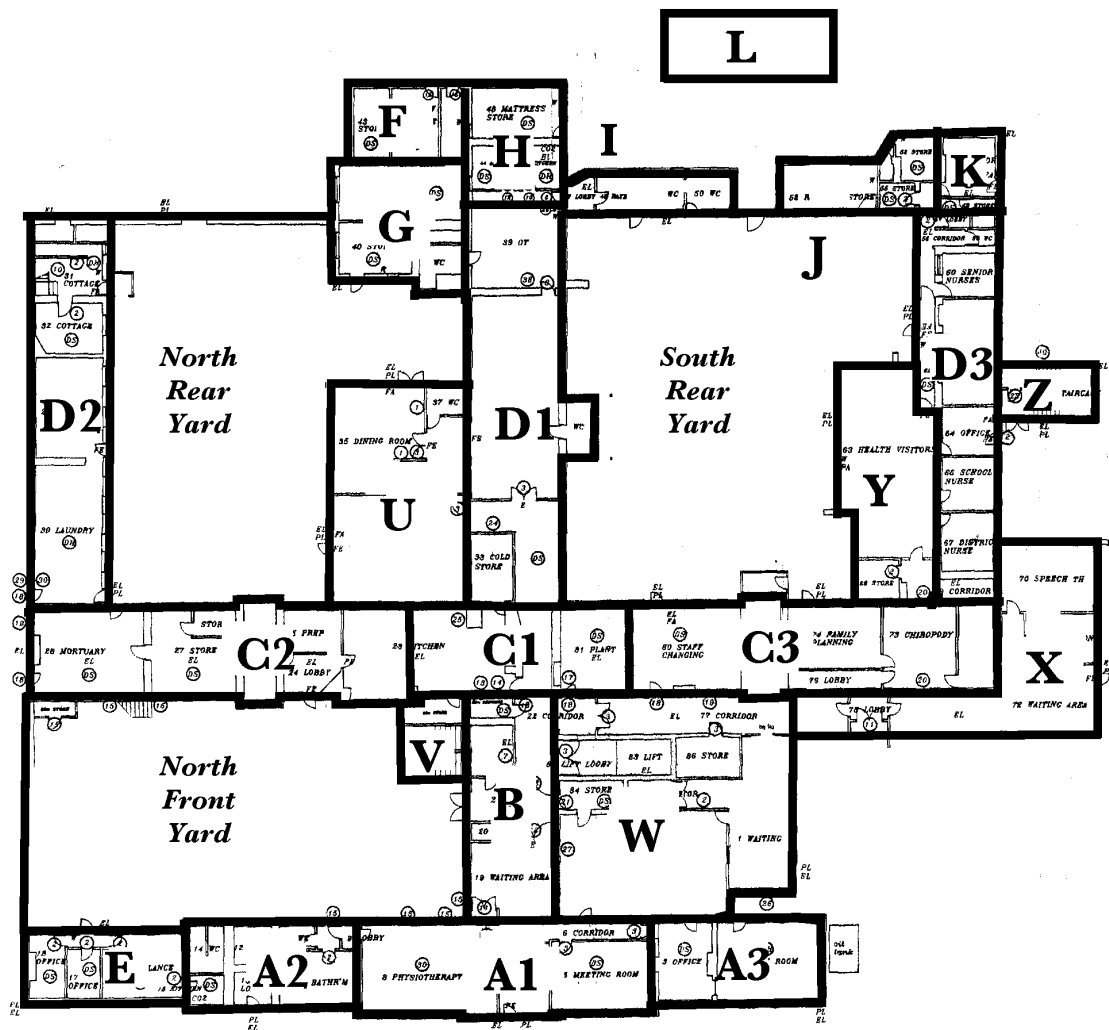


Fig. 3. Ground-floor plan showing the identification of buildings used for this article, based on much reduced plan of 1995. Ranges pre-fixed A-D are of the 1838 build, E to L late-19th to early-20th century additions, and V-Z late-20th century buildings.

The Original Layout

Everything within the workhouse was strictly segregated, based around the four yard areas created by the rigid plan form of the complex. The female side of the complex was to the north, the male side to the south. Children occupied the smaller front, or western yards, girls obviously to the north and boys to the south. Adults occupied the larger rear yards.

The main entrance was through the Entrance Block (A1), into an entrance hall. To the left, or north, of that was the grandest room in the whole complex, the board room where the Guardians met. To the south was a store or office, or perhaps a waiting room area for new inmates.

The North Wing (A2) of the Frontage Range contained a smaller office, probably that of the Clerk. To the north was a small lobby off a secondary entrance into the complex, and a stone-walled strong room. The South wing (A3) also contained an office or another waiting room as well as stores. It may even have contained the bakehouse.

There appears to have been a small stair in the south-west corner of the Central Link Block (B) leading up to the first-floor of the Entrance Block; at that level there was a central landing area flanked by rooms to either side, probably the children's bedrooms.



Plate 2. The main entrance to the hotel by the end of the 20th century was at the south-western side of the complex; original workhouse buildings can be seen behind.



Plate 3. The south-eastern rear yard of Okehampton Workhouse, looking west shortly before it was demolished. The taller block was the Hub, or Master's House.



Plate 4. Typical internal view, showing surviving roof construction.



Plate 5. Much altered former kitchen fireplace in the North Range (C2).

The ground floor of the Central Link Block was, by the early-20th century, the Chapel and may well have been so from the start. At the eastern end was a narrow section in which was the private stairs of the Master, leading up to his apartments on the upper floors. These seem to have included a sitting room (certainly by the early-20th century) at the east end of the Link Block; to the west of this was the Nurse's Room.

Typically the whole of the central section of such a 'cross-in-square' type of design would have been the Masters' House, but the need to segregate and control the inmates made such simplicity impossible. In this case the Master did have an office in the southern third of the ground floor of Master's House Block (C1) but the rest was occupied by the kitchens, with a scullery space added in the angle between it and the Central Link Block.

The first floor of the Master's House could have been more logically arranged than it later became, perhaps with two bedrooms and a passage between to allow access to the workhouse portions to west and east as well as north and south. The second floor contained two bed chambers and a storage space in between, accessed by a continuation in a narrow out-shot of the private stairs on the south side.

Running north and south of the Master's House Block were the main wings containing, respectively, the female and male inmates (C2 and C3). In each there was a central stair accessed from the yards to either side. As indicated above, most of the southern section of the ground floor in the women's wing was given over to the kitchen and probably a store; the rest would have been day rooms of different sizes to either side of the stairs.

The male wing to the south (C3) also seems to have had a section nearest to the Master's House Block taken out of it for the use of the Master as an office. The rest of the ground floor was taken up by the two day rooms in similar fashion to those of the north wing.

On the upper floor of both there were probably the bedrooms furthest away from the 'hub' with sick rooms nearest to it, though the Master's quarters included a bedroom in the nearest part of the men's wing.



Plate 6. Surviving sash window to light the stairs in the Central Rear Wing (D1).

The Central Rear Range (D1) contained the communal Hall on the ground floor, used by the inmates for meals and the limited social and educational opportunities the workhouse may, or may not, have possessed. At the west end was a well stair providing access to the large space on the first floor, probably used either as another day room for the women or as an infirmary or both.

The other two rear wings were, typically, working areas and were probably both single storey when originally built. As usual in these grim designs, neither had windows looking out to the world outside the workhouse, all the existing openings being later insertions.

The northern rear wing (D2) contained the laundry and the wash-house; it is unclear at what date a cottage was created at the eastern end. The southern rear wing (D3) contained the workshops for the men's generally menial work, designed to discourage admittance rather than to help fund the running of the workhouse.

Within the yards there would have been limited privy accommodation and possibly pent-roofed corridors along the sides of some of the ranges, particularly perhaps on both sides of the chapel in the Central Link Block (B).

The Later-19th Century Buildings

Several additions were made to the workhouse in the late-19th century period, indicating a degree of improvement of the facilities rather than an increase in the numbers of the inhabitants. One probable change was the raising to two storeys of the Rear North Range (D2), though until the 1930s the facilities to the south of the cottage at the north end appear to have been open to the roof and the first-floor only inserted at a later date.

Small ranges were added at either end of the main frontage block, of which only the northern one (Building H) survived until closure. The southern one, clearly shown on mid-20th century plans, was later demolished and the former yard was considerably altered.

Apart from minor additions and internal changes, such as the creation of more covered corridors along the outside of buildings, a bathroom (Building I) and bedroom (Building J) added against the east wall of the South Rear Yard, the main additions were an extension of the Central Rear Range (Building E) and the addition of two buildings to the north of it.

The extension (Building E) was built first, probably as early as the third quarter of the 19th century. The next range to be built was the Rear North-East Range (Building F), built out from it, probably at the end of the century. The ground floor was later used as a wood store but it is unclear if it was built for storage. The upper floor seems to have been built as an extension of the infirmary facilities.

Shortly afterwards, probably at the turn of the century, the Cottage Range (Building G) was built. With its oriel first-floor windows, this was the only building on the site to hint at a more homely style, compared with the stark institutionalised design of the rest of the site.

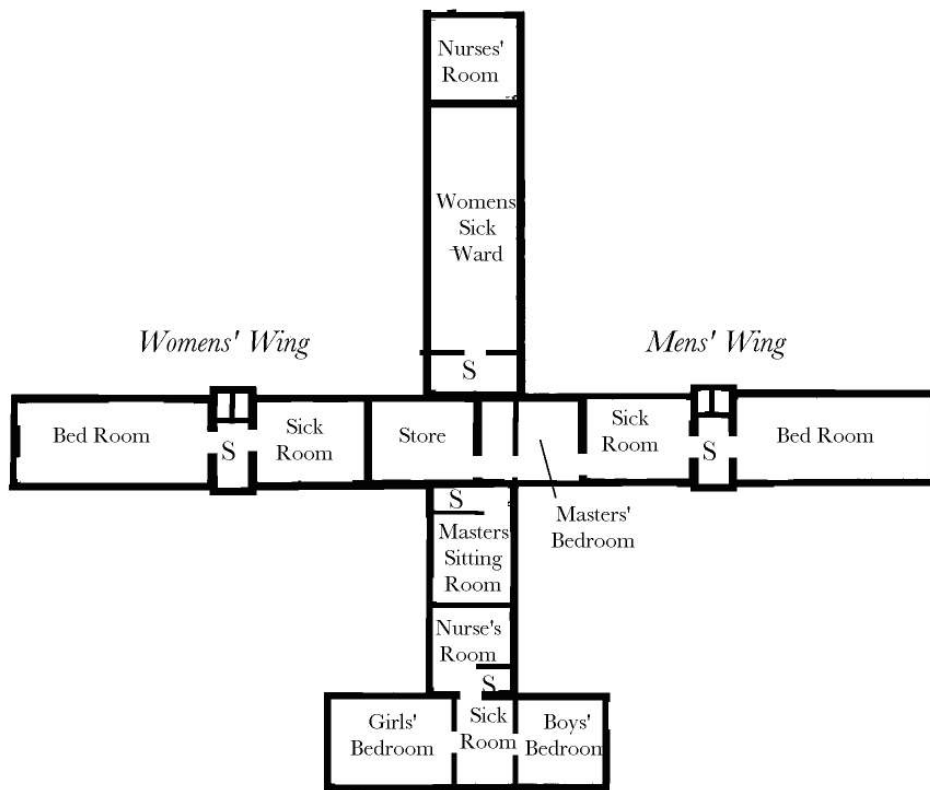


Fig. 4. Possible reconstruction of the original first-floor layout of Okehampton Workhouse as completed in 1838.

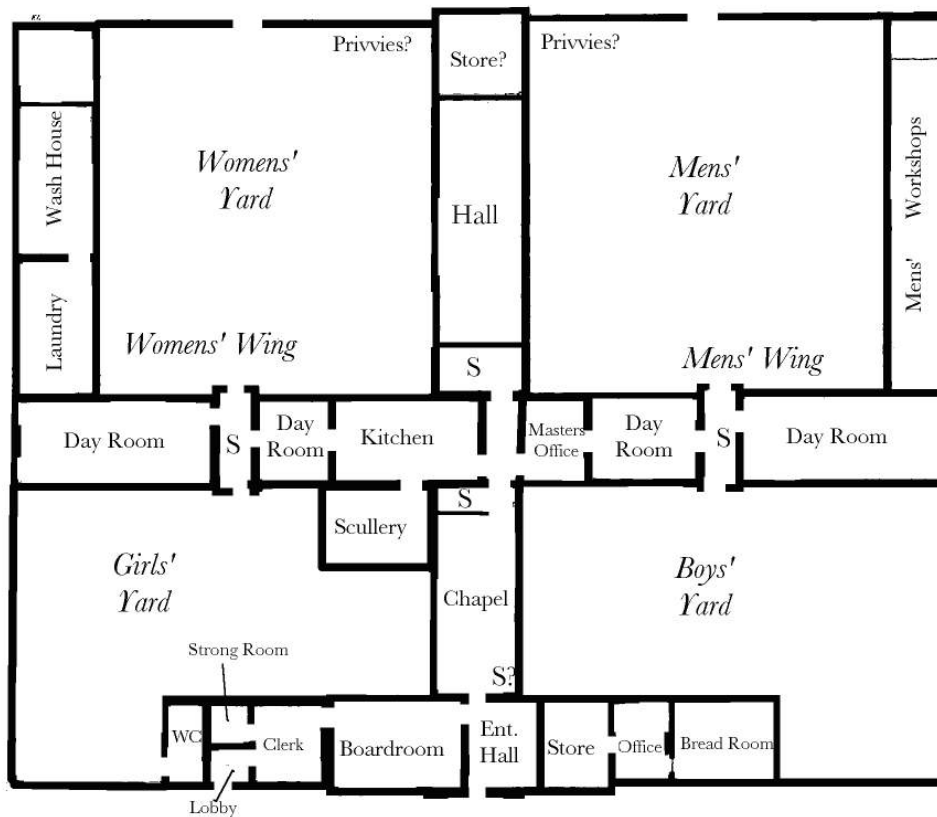


Fig. 5. Possible reconstruction of the original ground-floor layout of Okehampton Workhouse as completed in 1838.

The ground floor was taken up by more storage, and a WC for those working in the adjacent yard, but the first-floor had two small but well-lit and heated bedrooms used as a maternity ward and nursery, again associated with the infirmary occupying the first-floor of the adjacent Central Rear Wing.

The Early-20th Century Additions

The 1931 plans show how the uses of the various elements of the complex had evolved by the end of the workhouse period. The basic layout of a century before had survived but there had clearly been some new building such as the extensions at either end of the main frontage block and the Cottage to the rear of the site.

The four yards were still used separately by male and females, children in the front yards and the adults to the rear, females in the northern yards, males in the southern ones. There was clearly more emphasis on nursing by this time, and most of the workshops in the South Rear Range (D3) had been converted into cells for 'occasionals' or tramps.

The Later-20th Century Ranges

The evolution of the workhouse into an hospital that mainly occurred after the creation of the National Health Service in 1948 initially involved internal reorganisation and improvements and major external additions and extensions did not take place until late in the century. Whilst these new buildings clearly improved the facilities and the lives of the patients, which is the major role of any hospital, they did not take any note of the existing historic buildings on the site and, indeed, seem to have been deliberately designed not to do so.

The new build only led to partial loss of earlier fabric, other than internal fittings and fixtures and a few partitions, but did lead to the break up of the admittedly grim cohesiveness of the original design. The main visual loss was the western front yard which became the site of the new main reception block, and the inevitable large areas of surface car-parking that covered any green areas and gardens the site once had.

The hospital closed at the start of the 21st century, although an ambulance remained stationed on the site for a while. Demolition began in 2008 and the new 'extra care' development was built to the rear of the entrance block, which was retained.

Conclusions

Despite later accretions, and especially those of the late-20th century, the original components that made up the Okehampton Workhouse survived surprisingly intact until most of the complex was demolished in 2008, leaving only the frontage block as a tangible, if rather fragmentary, reminder of its history.

Architecturally it was a fairly well-preserved example of a typical workhouse design of Sampson Kempthorne, one of the key architects involved in the architectural aspects of the New Poor Law. Whilst an architect of limited originality and skill, his designs influenced those of many workhouses throughout the country simply because of the influential position he briefly held with the relevant authorities.

Historically the former workhouse played an important, if sometimes unwanted, part of the lives of the people of Okehampton and this part of Devon. Workhouses became a symbol of the uncaring side of the utilitarian ideal and were loathed by most of those who were unfortunate enough, usually through no fault of their own other than poverty or old age, to become inmates. The stigma of the workhouse survived well after the Second World War, even after those that survived had mainly

become hospitals or institutions. By the end of the 20th century, the memories had faded.

The architectural merits of the surviving well-proportioned Frontage Range (Building A) and the redeveloped site's lovely tree-lined setting by the waters of the West Okemont will clearly benefit those using the new and up-to-date facilities developed on the site. There is little or no surviving reflection of its grimmer history.

This article is based on a more in-depth historic building analysis undertaken by the author as a sub-contractor to Cotswold Archaeology, the archaeological consultants for the redevelopment of the site employed by the Guinness Partnership.

Richard K Morriss

Notes

¹ In Malthus, T R, 1803, *Essay on the Principals of Population*

² Becher, J T, 1828, *The Anti-Pauper System*, 2

³ Morriss, R K, 1997, *Thurgarton Workhouse, Nottinghamshire (Mercian Heritage Series No.47)*, 7; Thurgaton Workhouse has recently been sensitively restored by the National Trust.

⁴ Its full title is *The Antipauper System; Exemplifying the Positive and Practical Good, Realized by the Relievers and the Relieved under the Frugal, Beneficial, and Lawful Administration of the Laws Prevailing at Southwell and in the Neighbouring District*, etc.

⁵ *op. cit.*, 21

⁶ *op. cit.*, 20

⁷ 4 & 5 Will. 4 c.76

⁸ *op. cit.*, 46

⁹ Mingay, G E, 1998, *Rural Life in Victorian England*, 100-1; in the official *Return of Paupers for England & Wales, at Ladyday, 1842*, 221,687 were in workhouses and 1,207,402 without.

¹⁰ From Carlyle's *Past and Present*, quoted in Jennings, H (ed.), 1985, *Pandaemonium*, 217

¹¹ 'The Curate's Kindness: A Workhouse Irony' in *Times Laughingstocks* published in 1909

¹² Colvin, H, 1995, *A Biographical Dictionary of British Architects 1600-1840*, 577

¹³ see Mace, A, 1998, *Architecture in Manuscript, 1601-1996: Guide to the British Architectural Library Manuscripts and Archives Collection*, 233; Colvin, *op. cit.*, 577

¹⁴ White, 1850, *Directory of Devonshire*, 799

¹⁵ *ibid.*

¹⁶ White, *op. cit.*, 799

¹⁷ HO 107/233/9

¹⁸ Pirie, N W, 2004, 'Sir Fred Bawden (1908-1972)', in Matthew, H C G, & Harrison, B (eds.), *The Oxford Dictionary of National Biography Vol. 4*, 397

¹⁹ *op. cit.*, 31

²⁰ *ibid.*

The Walronds, Part I

The Cullompton Walronds Preservation Trust is in the process of applying for grant-aid for the repair and re-use of the Walronds. The following summary of the history of the building is the first of a series of articles in the DBG Newsletter. We hope that the series will cover not only the progress of the project, but will also summarise some of the discoveries made by specialists commissioned to look at aspects of the building: plasterwork; historic colour; panelling; glass and masonry. The specialist studies were produced with the objective of informing the repairs but also make a broader contribution to the understanding of Devon buildings.

The Walronds is a remarkably well-preserved high status town house of c.1605, set at the front of a burgage plot in the centre of Cullompton (Plate 1, Fig.1). The town has Saxon or perhaps Roman origins and the plot could be as early as Saxon, but might be medieval. The house was erected for John Peter of Compton in Marldon parish, south Devon and includes armorial bearings and initials identified as his, those of his wife, Emmeline Paris and her father and grandfather, who were both wealthy Cullompton merchants (Plate 2). Emmeline died before the house was built and it seems highly likely that John Peter erected it after a serious fire in Cullompton in 1602, which destroyed his wife's family home on the same site. The style of the house corresponds more closely to gentry and aristocratic town houses of the period than to merchants' houses and contrasts with the Manor House, next door but one to north, and the Merchant's House next door to south, both of the same date as the Walronds and probably also rebuilt after fire damage, but with showy timber-framed fronts. The 1605 plan and features: panelling in the hall and particularly the decorated plasterwork ceilings and overmantels, are remarkably intact (Plate 3), although repaired, amended and, in places, compromised by 20th-century finishes. Fine 17th-century finishes (marquetry and grained panelling) have been obscured by 19th-century varnish.

After construction John Peter did not live permanently in the house, which was sold out of the family, probably by the late 17th century. It was owned by the Portmans of Dorset and let out on a long lease to younger sons of the Walrond family of Bradfield House, Uffculme. It is not certain that any of the Walronds lived in the house, although its name in the 18th century 'Edmund Walrond's House', amendments to the panelling and a high status rebuild of the main staircase in c.1718, suggest they probably did.

To date, no occupiers of the house have been identified before 1739. By this date, and certainly just before, the house was divided and occupied by a serge-maker and yeoman renting from Edmund Walrond. In the 1780s it was sold by the Portmans to Robert Baker, who appears to have lived in it for a short time before renting it to a relation by marriage, the Reverend John Sydenham. Sydenham purchased the house (its two halves assumed to be re-united) from Baker's son in c.1824. Three generations of the Sydenham family lived at the house making modest, rather than radical changes to it. Some alterations were made to the plot of land behind the house which was let out separately in the late 18th and early 19th centuries.

In 1891, as a result of a mortgage foreclosure on the estate of John George Sydenham, the Walronds was acquired by a Cullompton solicitor, Frederic Burrow. Burrow appreciated the antiquity of the building and spent nearly £1,000 restoring the Walronds. He unblocked and renewed windows, repaired the roof, made some alterations to the plan and erected a brick office at the rear of the building. Burrow also made some changes to the plot of land behind the house. He and his family lived only briefly in the house and it was left largely empty from about 1892-1907. In 1910 it passed, via his widow, to his son Alfred Burrow, who let it out to a series of tenants. These included a Roman Catholic couple, the Plumptions, who converted Burrow's office to a chapel and who later played a part in establishing a Roman Catholic church in the town. The house was later rented by a teaching order of Roman Catholic nuns who kept a school in Cullompton.

After Alfred Burrow's death, the house was sold to Mrs Neatby, whose husband was an antique



Plate 1. The east front of the house, to Fore Street.

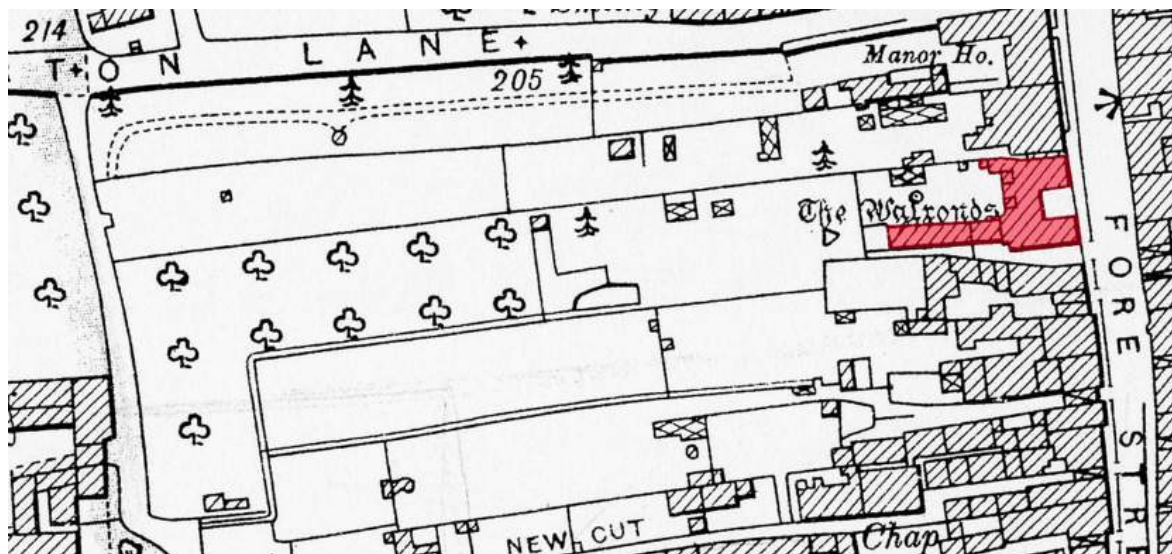


Fig. 1. The Walronds shown on the 1903 Ordnance Survey map.

dealer. She sold off some of the rear land and divided the house into two before selling it on. In 1954 Miss I V Yeoman bought the north half of the house, acquiring the south portion in 1962. She died in 1969 and her niece, June Severn, who had lived at the house with her aunt, inherited it. June Severn raised capital for repairs by selling, from 1969, three plots of land to the rear and dividing the house, eventually selling the south portion to friends, twin sisters Beatrice and Daphne Reeves.

Well-meaning and necessary repairs and refurbishment during the Yeoman/Severn period included removing the ivy that covered much of the house and stripping and re-painting the 1605 overmantel



Plate 2. The hall overmantel includes armorial bearings and the initials of John and Emmeline Peter and her father and grandfather, Humphrey and Henry Paris.



Plate 3. The parlour. The panelling has a complex history of renewal and repair. It includes a frieze of delicate marquetry work partly disguised by later varnish.



Plate 4. Some of the windows on the front elevation are in very poor condition.



Plate 5. Temporary repairs have been undertaken to secure the fabric in advance of much needed capital works.



Plate 6. Propping as a temporary solution to problems with the west wall of the hall.

in the hall: this was done without professional advice. Repairs from 1954-1997 made use of modern materials including concrete lintels, cement mortars, some asbestos slates, modern rainwater goods and modern paint finishes.

June Severn welcomed visitors to the house, which was used for local events. Anxious to secure the future of the building, she asked Councillor Mrs Jane Campbell to take on the task. Mrs Campbell raised a group and established the Cullompton Walronds Preservation Trust, which was registered under her chairmanship as a private limited company and registered charity in Spring, 1997. June Severn died in 2004 and the Trust acquired both halves of the house and what survives of the burgage plot, now a large town garden, with rear access from Shortlands Lane. The fabric of the house is in urgent need of repair (Plates 4-6) and the Walronds, listed Grade I, is on the Heritage at Risk Register. In spite of its condition, the building is well-used and highly-valued by a wide range of local groups and people.

The plan to rescue the Walronds consists of grant-aided capital works to put the building back into good repair and undertake some re-planning. The architects are Benjamin and Beauchamp. Holiday lets on the first floor (with opportunities for public access), managed by the Vivat Trust in partnership with the Cullompton Walronds Preservation Trust, will provide the income for the future maintenance of the whole building. The existing community use of the ground floor will be developed, along with heritage education. The rear plot will be used in conjunction with the house and will offer both a garden for the paying guests on the upper floor and a larger community garden. This will provide valuable green public space in the centre of the town with opportunities for outdoor events. The Walronds is a project that should have a major positive impact on the character and quality of central Cullompton. There is wide and enthusiastic local, regional and national support for a thoughtful and sensitive project which has already received grant-aid from Cullompton Town Council, Mid Devon District Council, Devon County Council, English Heritage and the Heritage Lottery Fund. If the Heritage Lottery Fund application for the capital works is successful, the Trust still needs to raise match-funding. Any donations, however small, would be welcome. Cheques should be made out to the Cullompton Walronds Preservation Trust and sent to the Colonel Michael Woodcock, Company Secretary, The Cullompton Walronds Preservation Trust, Blue Gentians, St George's Well Avenue, Cullompton, Devon, EX15 1AR.

Jo Cox

March 2010

Corrugated Iron in Dorset (and a Taster of Devon)

If you, like me, are lucky enough not to share the 'ghastly good taste' of planners, you should be passionate about the individuality of Corrugated Iron (CI) buildings. What was once common, cheap and ordinary, is now rare and special. To many people Corrugated Iron conjures up an image of featureless agricultural sheds, but on further inspection you might see that they are much more than this.

Humble buildings are interesting. They may not meet the rules of 'great architecture', but they do tell us about the aspirations, needs and lifestyles of ordinary people. Most have rich associations in local communities. People will talk for hours on their fond recollections of a dance night at the village hall, playing billiards with the local lads, cream teas at the end of a long walk.

In 2000 I was given a grant, through the Dorset Buildings Group from the Millennium Fund, to do a survey of Corrugated Iron buildings in Dorset.



Plate 1. The only 2-storey house in the Dorset survey was Devan Haye in Sherbourne. The proud owner took some time to show me round the premises. He particularly enjoyed the fact that the partitions between the rooms could be relatively easily moved, thereby extending or contracting the room space. This building was brought to its present position initially by rail to the nearest station, and thereafter by horse and cart.

History of Corrugated Iron

CI was developed in the mid-19th century, and towards the end of the 19th century the use of CI became widespread. It was used both as a convenient cladding, and perhaps more spectacularly, as part of kit-formed buildings. Corrugated Iron buildings were timber framed, with timber windows, clad in Corrugated Iron and lined with tongue and groove boarding. Many were elaborately decorated with stencilling on the interior and highly distinctive features on the outside, such as barge boards, finials, door frames and bell cupolas. Catalogues selling these buildings were easily available offering many different styles, such as churches, bungalows, mission halls, hospitals, railway buildings and shepherd's huts.

With the expansion of the Empire, Corrugated Iron in kit form also met the Victorian need for buildings that could be easily transported and quickly erected. Consequently the far outposts of the Empire have a wealth of such buildings. CI is still much valued in places like Australia and India, where they are kept in good repair.

This is not so in the British Isles. The Dorset survey yielded disappointing results. It anticipated finding many more than the 40 that were recorded, and a substantial number of these were destroyed before the survey was finished. Dwindling stock was not due to issues with the buildings themselves, but to redevelopment pressures. Parish Halls that had happily survived a hundred years were being replaced because they were perceived as 'temporary structures'. Where the owners of Corrugated Iron buildings still love them, this love is intense and often very personal. Most tin buildings depend wholly on the unaided efforts of their owners to care for them.

Recycling: movability, adaptability and sustainability

In today's environment recycling is a key issue, and sustainability is at the top of the agenda. Any building which can be adapted and can be moved easily is attractive environmentally. Most modern building materials yield little more than rubble when they are dismantled.

Tin buildings are very versatile. It is not uncommon to discover ones that have been moved.



Plate 2. The Adeline Dance hall in Boscombe was erected as a church, St. George in the Wood, at a time when Boscombe was a rapidly expanding town. The building was then expanded by attaching a tin church transported from Notting Hill onto one end of it. St. George in the Wood later became a Masonic Lodge with all the decorative features that this entailed, and later into the Adeline Dance Hall. The building was last viewed just before Christmas, a dazzling array of glass panelled walls and bright Christmas lights. Sadly we were unable to get the building listed, and due to redevelopment pressure, it was demolished to make way for a block of flats.



Plate 3. Purbeck Mineral & Mining Museum. Travelling shed.



Plate 4. Purbeck Mineral & Mining Museum. Finished shed being loaded.



Plate 5. The Shooting Lodge at Morden, now in use as a house and much loved by its owners, was moved across from the woodland area over the road. Recently the building was re-roofed and the old tin was recycled to make a shed for the goat.

The Way forward

The two main aims of my research were to record Corrugated Iron buildings, and to reveal their attractiveness. As yet, they are only applauded by specialists and eccentrics. A major achievement of the 2000 Dorset survey was to attract mass media coverage. The media fed on the idea of my being the 'Shed lady of Dorset', and consequently Corrugated Iron buildings appeared in many major newspapers and on radio and television. Just as importantly an exhibition of large black and white photographs was displayed around museums and galleries in Dorset. The Common Ground project put many of the photos on their website, as did the Corrugated Iron club. This interest has saved at least three buildings: the village hall at Litton Cheyney, the extension to the Museum Inn at Farnham and East Holme chapel. The National Trust can also be commended for retaining the old Tuberculosis Isolation Hospital buildings near Corfe, now used for holiday accommodation.

At the moment the future for corrugated iron building is poor. The public's perception of them is, at the best, 'something you find at the bottom of your garden' and at worst 'something dangerous that needs demolition'.

There is an urgent need to record all Corrugated Iron buildings, mostly because of the threat of demolition. Better still to remove the threat by elevating their status in people's minds. My aim is to start recording tin buildings in Devon and also in the Far North of Scotland, where such buildings survive in substantial numbers.



Plate 6. Litton Cheney, with church tower behind



Plate 7. Museum Inn, Farnham



Plate 8. East Holme Chapel



Plate 9. Tuberculosis Isolation Hospital, Corfe



Plate 10. Christ Church, Torquay Road, Paignton. Temporary church erected before the stone church and then re-used as church hall.

I would be grateful for any information on the Corrugated Iron Buildings of Devon :
induni@tesco.net

Lizzie Induni
April 2010

Further information and reading :

Websites:

Common ground: <http://www.commonground.org.uk/>

Corrugated Iron Club: <http://www.corrugated-iron-club.info/>

Reading:

Historic Scotland, Information for Historic Building Owners, 'Care and Maintenance of Corrugated Iron'. Available from Historic Scotland.

Walker, Bruce (2004) *Technical Advice Notes (TAN) 29 'Corrugated Iron and Other Ferrous Cladding'*. Edinburgh: Historic Scotland.

Smith, Ian (2004) *'Tin Tabernacles. Corrugated Iron Mission Halls, Churches and Chapels of Britain'*. Camrose Organisation

The Bathing House at Elbury Cove, Churston Ferrers

Elbury Cove is an isolated cove, situated in Torbay between Brixham and Broadsands, OS reference SX 903569. It is approached either by sea or walking across the golf course from Churston Ferrers or the coastal footpath. The last private owner of the cove was Lord Churston, who lived at Lupton House. Elbury Cove was bought in 1946 by the local authority and now belongs to Torbay Council. The contemporary spelling is Elberry Cove.



Plate 1. The Bathing House, Elbury Cove

This water colour was given to me by my husband's nephew. He had bought a job lot of pictures in Wellington, Somerset. It was among others he was going to throw out. Mark said I could have any I wanted. I immediately recognised this as the ruined building at Elbury Cove. I researched the history of the building as a member of the Recorders of the Building Section of the Devonshire Association. This was published in The Devonshire Association Report and Transactions 2000, pages 326 - 33.



Plate 2. The Bathing House in 2010

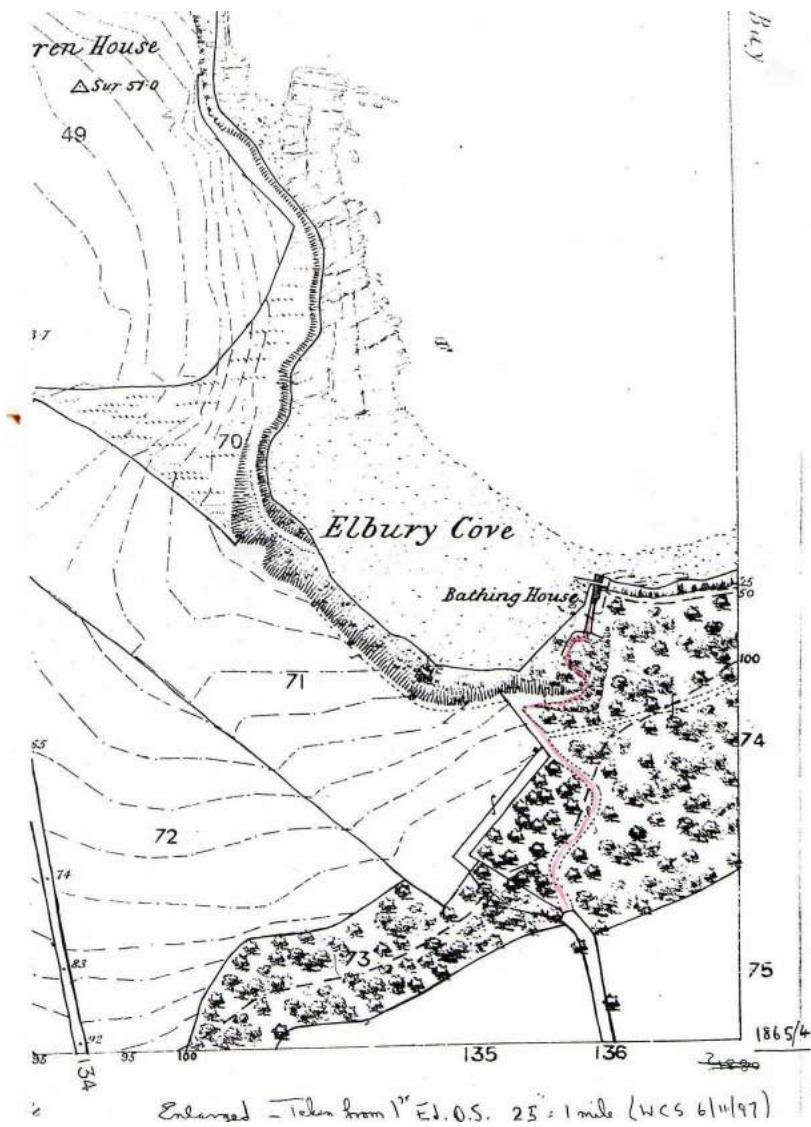


Figure 1. Extract from OS Map 1865. The first time I heard of a bathing house was when I saw the ruin at Elbury Cove marked as a bathing house.



Plate 3. The jetty at low tide.

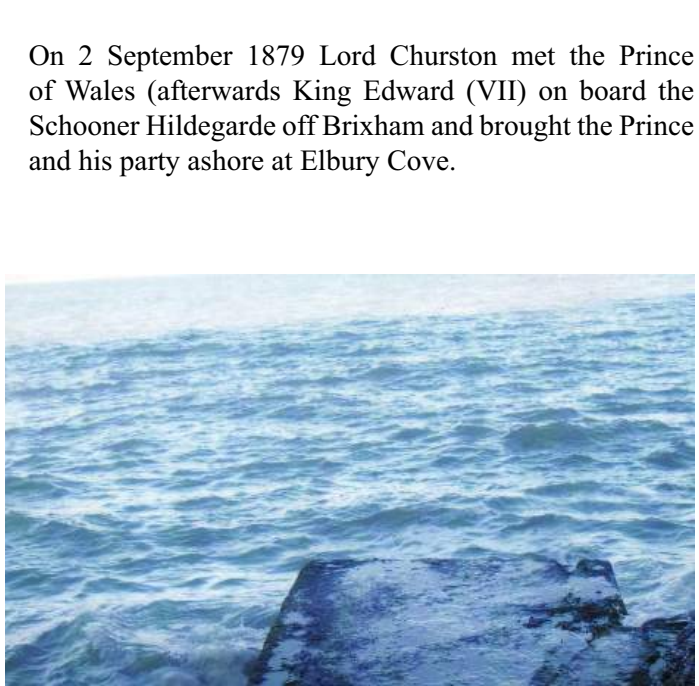


Plate 4. The jetty looking out to sea.

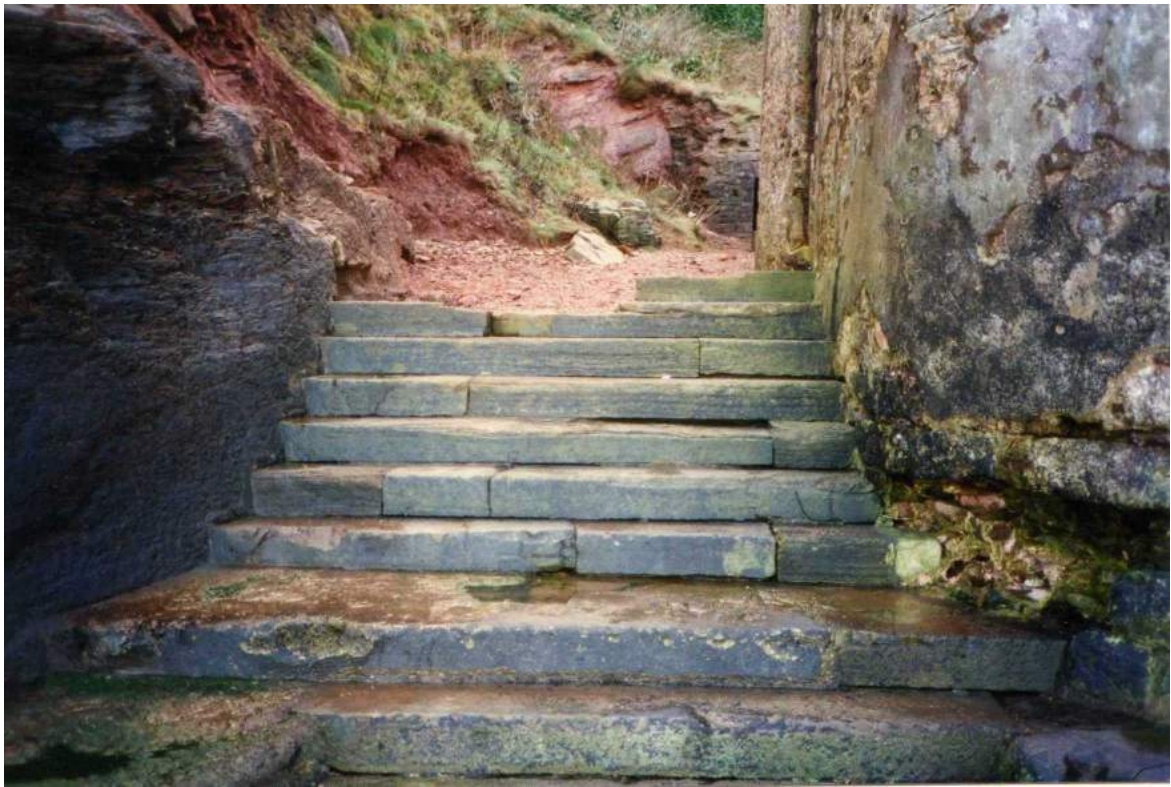


Plate 5. The steps lead from the jetty to the lower floor entrance of the bathing house.

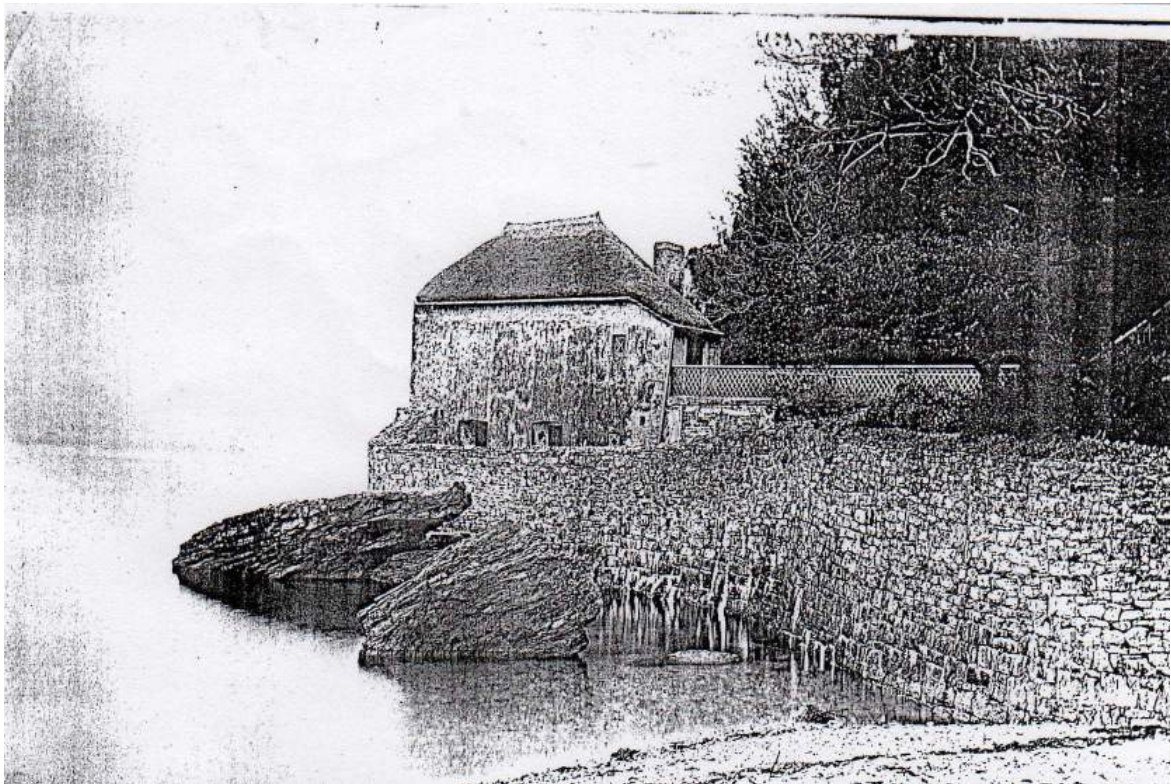


Plate 6. The Walkway to the Bathing House in 1865.



Plates 7 & 8. The walkway and entrance to the bathing house 2010.

The Bath.



Plate 9. Steps leading down to the brick lined bath.



Plate 10. The fire place on the wall opposite the bath. A fire place was part of a bath house so the bather could warm up after a dip and then enjoy the “pleasure” room above.



Plates 11, 12 & 13. The bath was filled with sea water at high tide. There was a copper cauldron which heated water. Lady Churston's butler was responsible for lighting the fire and adding the heated sea water to the bath.

Bath houses were constructed mostly in the 18th century, but the vogue continued into the 19th century.

I am very fortunate to have a wonderful letter written to me by Lord Churston's aunt the late Lydia, Duchess of Bedford, describing the bathing house when she was a child in the early 1920s. Lydia was the daughter of the third Lord Churston and was born in 1917.

It was the loveliest little dream place where we went for our picnics in the summer. We parked somewhere at the top of the woods by the golf course. There is a little lane (or was), and there was this small prickly path down through the woods - very narrow. We could only walk in single file and going back up with all our bits and pieces was agony! The room above was where we had our wonderful luncheons and teas. I don't think we parked any yachts there, only dinghies. Most of all I remember the wonderful feeling of happiness when we opened the door and went in. My father had a very high class sort of telescope up in the window, and watched boats through this. My sister thinks we had a shower downstairs and possibly a loo. I can't remember that. We always wanted to stay there.... But we weren't! As children we could not get down there quick enough. It was like a little magic place, all white washed walls and plain pretty things. Smelling of the sea and totally unforgettable.

In 1999 I had another letter from the Duchess of Bedford, after she had seen a photograph of the ruined bathing house. She wrote, "I would have thought this was as solid as a rock! One's memory of it is so secure in one's head. A little stone house there for eternity."



Plate 14. This photograph shows the interior and the window where Lord Churston watched the yachts through his telescope. There was another fireplace in this room, on the right side.

This article is an epitaph to a ruin with a noble past - The Bathing House at Elbury Cove

Peggie Upham

[I am extremely grateful to Katie Adams for her photographic and computer skills]

REFERENCE TO UNPUBLISHED SOURCES

1. Ordnance Survey Map of 1865, West Country Studies Library, Exeter.
2. Bathing House 1865, Torquay Natural History Museum.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Brierley, G.H. and Grandison, H.J., n.d., *Torbay Royal Regatta Centenary Souvenir, [1813-1913]*.

The DBG website: a report on Latest News and Topical Issues

As described in last year's Newsletter (No 27), the DBG website was re-launched in October 2009. It has proven an increasingly effective way of spreading information about ourselves and, more importantly, about concerns regarding historic preservation.

As the article indicated, Latest News is used to highlight timely issues that have arisen. Many have come to our attention through the newspapers but a number have been sent in by members. Please continue to do so.

Topical Issues provides the chance to raise broader issues, often planning policy, matters that may have been around for some time and need a longer term resolution.

In much the same way that the early DBG Newsletters included descriptions of Case Studies, the Committee decided that annually the contents of Latest News and Topical Issues should be included in the Newsletter to form a published record of the concerns which we have tried to address. Items are added, modified, and deleted throughout the year but anything that has been published on the website will also be published in the Newsletter. This will also help spread the word and the work of the DBG to an even wider readership.

The items are roughly grouped by subject matter rather than chronologically. At least for the first few years, modest introductions are included to provide context.

LATEST NEWS

Two of the items most recently uploaded represent potentially serious threats to the built heritage and to its study. The window scrappage scheme first came to our attention as an advertisement; as you can read it might well become government policy which could have hugely harmful results. The possible relocation of the Plymouth archives would deprive those doing research on which restorations might be based and local historians of a valuable resource.

Window Scrappage Scheme

The DBG has been aware of what appeared to be misleading commercial advertisements regarding “grants” for replacing traditional windows with uPVC units. The suggestion was that the homeowner would get a reduction in the fee. We have just learned of a much more serious development which might indeed result in government encouragement to change to uPVC windows on the grounds of heating efficiency. Please go to http://www.ihbc.org.uk/news_update.htm#IHBC%20and%20SPAB%20160310 for full details. We will give more information as soon as possible. Stay tuned! (Posted 17 March 2010)

Plymouth Archives at Risk?

A well known monthly magazine, famous for uncovering awkward developments in government funding, has recently published an article on financial short falls in Plymouth. It ends with “Last but not least, a...pledge that Plymouth’s historic archives, dating back to 1090, would be found a new home so that they are not forcibly removed by the National Archives has come to nothing. To the chagrin of local historians, the Tories have decided not to fork out the £1.5m needed to find them a safe home after all. Instead they are to be removed by the National Archives and stored...in a disused salt mine in Cheshire.” For the full article, see Private Eye No 1257, 5 March-18 March 2010. See also the website of the Friends of Devon’s Archives: www.foda.org.uk (Posted 13 March 2010)

Two main planning matters are the major PPS Consultation process and a sensible and sensitive decision not to allow inappropriate development to a modest listed terrace house in Exeter. However, since the former was up loaded it has come to our attention that the new version of the policy paper might be rushed through parliament prior to the election without any consultation. If so, the idea of having due vigilance and careful consideration may be a lost cause by the time of publication of this Newsletter.

PPS Consultation

News, July 2009

Both the government and English Heritage have published consultation documents for revising PPS 15: Planning for the Historic Environment. Though perhaps not light holiday reading, they are important and can be accessed at www.communities.gov.uk/publications/planningandbuilding/consultationhistoricpps and www.english-heritage.org.uk/server/show/nav.21135

December Update

The consultation period for the proposed PPS 15, essentially an amalgamation of PPGs 15 and 16, has expired. The DBG's submission included, in considerably greater detail, the following main points: it is anomalous to base the document on legislature which has not been, and is unlikely to be, passed; the government's commitment to protecting the built heritage seems much weaker; there is a suggestion that architectural conservation might be construed as an obstruction to development; equally the stress on sustainability might compromise historic building conservation; there is concern that too much reliance is put on inadequate sources of information in the future decision-making process; the definitions of criteria are variable and subjective; certain omissions are worrying: a presumption against demolition of listed buildings, ecclesiastical exemption, enforcement, and repairs notices.

HURRAH !!!

The DBG was only one of many organisations to make strenuous objections to the proposals. The Royal Institute of British Architects and the Royal Town Planning Institute also did. Such phrases as "fundamentally flawed", "unfit for purpose" and "a charter for people who want to knock buildings down" were included. Such was the reaction that the planning minister, John Healey, has announced that the entire policy document will be redrafted. Obviously the next effort will need careful scrutiny but the announcement is a welcome acknowledgement that it was poorly conceived and needed to be rethought.

For more information go to www.ihbc.org.uk (Posted 9 December 2010)

Latest News March 2010

As anticipated, the new PPS has indeed been issued without further consultation. Having gotten it so badly wrong on the first attempt, it seems somewhat presumptuous that this should be the case. The website link must be the longest in history but is worth following. It is:

<http://www.communities.gov.uk/planningandbuilding/planning/planningpolicyguidance/planningpolicystatements> (Posted 30 March 2010)

Planning Decision: 2 Elm Grove Road, Exeter

On 5 November 2009 three Appeals Decisions were published relating to a Listed Grade II property at 2 Elm Grove Road, Exeter, a terrace house of c. 1840 within a Conservation Area.

The first related to a notice that was issued on 15 June 2009, to wit that unauthorised works had taken place to said building without Listed Building Consent. The litany of such works is extensive but worth mentioning: removal of lime plaster from all internal masonry walls; removal of all timber lath and lime plaster partitions; removal of all lime plaster ceilings; removal of all decorative plaster cornicing throughout the building; removal of balusters and handrails and newels to internal stairs; removal of floorboards throughout, on all storeys; removal of internal joinery, including doors, architraves, picture rails, skirting boards, corner beads and dado rails throughout the building; removal of fireplaces and surrounds throughout the building; and, use throughout the building of cementitious plaster, plasterboard, metal beading and xtratherm insulation boards.

In layman's terms, the house was gutted.

The appellant's justification for undertaking this work was deemed spurious by the inspector and the requirements of the notice are to remove the new work and reinstate throughout the building with all works matching the original. An additional six months, giving a year in all, has been allowed to complete the work.

The second and third appeals relate to the demolition of three existing lean-to rear extensions and replacing them with a large flat-roofed "living kitchen" finished predominately in glass with a glass reinforced plastic roof. The inspector felt that this would not be acceptable because of its unsuitable architectural character in relation to that of the existing house and its excessive scale and mass which would have masked the back of the house. He considered that it would detract from the historic

architecture and the simple geometry and form of the listed buildings, and from the character of the conservation area in which they stand.

The DBG applauds the strong stance that the Planning Inspector has taken in enforcing existing planning and listed building legislation and hopes that it serves to deter other developers from flouting the law. (Posted 20 November 2009)

Reports on the previous year's DBG Summer Conference and AGM appear in the Newsletter. But putting them on the website as well gives advance notice of the current year's gatherings and widens the coverage.

2009 Annual Summer Conference

The annual Conference was held on the 13th June at Beer Quarry Caves and thereafter at the village of Colyton. More than 70 members and guests met at the Caves for an extraordinary underground tour led by John Scott, the manager of the site whose perspective on the social history was fascinating and supplemented by DBG committee member Peter Dare, a retired quarry man whose practical knowledge of "how it's done" was hugely impressive. Lunch at the pub in Colyton was followed by illustrated talks by Peter Dare, Stuart Blaylock on historic building stone in Devon and by John Allan on Beer and Salcombe stone particularly. Stuart led a group visit to St Andrew's church where Beer stone is used extensively and whose east window, having been dismantled years ago, was re-erected in the Beer Quarry Caves by a group of mason's apprentices supervised by Peter Dare in the 1980s. (Posted 20 July 2009)

2009 AGM Report

Thirty-nine members and guests gathered at Torre Abbey on a gloriously sunny day for the 2009 AGM. Cakes, coffee and tea greeted everyone on arrival in the undercroft. Thanks to Dawn Honeysett, the 2009 Newsletter was available for distribution. The business was conducted briskly with the current committee members and officers being re-elected. Michael Rhodes, Head of Torbay Museum Services, and Paul Richold of Architecton, architects for the superb new facilities, gave talks about the history of the Abbey and the renovation project, as well as guided tours after lunch. The DBG is very grateful to both for giving up their Saturday.

MEMBERSHIP AND SUBSCRIPTIONS

The Treasurer reported that membership now stands at 188, an increase of 23. The AGM accepted the proposal that subscription rates should be raised to £15 for a single and £25 for joint membership effective January 2011. Among the discussion points were: due to various personal subsidies by committee members, the actual annual expenditures are greater than shown; the DBG should not depend on these. At present the DBG subscriptions no longer cover costs, so we have to dip in to savings. We need to build up our reserves in anticipation of significant one-off expenditures, such as research Papers 3. The present membership rates have remained unchanged since the DBG was founded, namely 24 years ago. After discussion, including whether the proposed increase was enough and comparisons with like-minded organisations, the increase was agreed.

NEWSLETTER

The 2009 Newsletter Number 27 contains a number of fascinating articles. In addition to Peter Child's Secretary's Report and Ann Adams's Newsletter Editor's Report, the issue contains:

Jo Cox, *Whimpe Church: the Value of Documentary Research to Support Understanding an 1845 Restoration*;

Peter Child, *Parkham Wood House, Brixham*;

David Evans, *Precursors of the Military Training Simulator at Stonehouse Barracks*;

Caroline Garrett and Peter Marlow, *The Rebirth of the DBG Website*;

Jo Cox, *Some Early Photographs of Bradfield Manor from the National Monuments Record*;

Peter Child, *Book Review of West Country Farms. House and Estate Surveys 1598-1764* by Nat Alcock and Cary Carson, Oxbow Books 2007 ISBN 978-1-84217-5 priced £35.00

Copies of the Newsletter may be purchased for £5 including packing and postage in the UK by contacting the Treasurer. (Posted 17 November 2009)

2010 Annual Summer Conference

The DBG Summer Conference will take place in Plymouth on Saturday June 5th.

Full details about location and programme will be circulated soon.

KEEP THE DAY FREE! (Posted 12 March 2010)

Two simple matters of report were also posted, one regarding newly listed or amended statutory lists in Devon, the other the fact that the Newsletters from 1986 to 2005 have now been up loaded. It was incredibly impressive to read through all of these Newsletters prior to their publication on the website. What an extraordinary amount of work went into the research, writing, editing and publication of them!! What a marvellous resource to have easily accessible for future scholars!! It is a great tribute to the DBG that it has commanded such dedication from such an impressive group of people. Long may it continue!!

New or Amended Statutory Listings

In September 2009 the Secretary of State designated or amended seven new statutory listings, all Grade II, in Devon. These included The Royal Bank of Scotland (originally built as the National Provincial Bank), St Andrew's Cross, Plymouth, ca. 1956-58; Appledore Barton, Bursescombe, a two storey farmhouse with 17th century origins; Bush Cottage and Bargains Cottage, Spreyton; The Retreat, one of the 18th century back-court townhouses off Gold Street in Tiverton; two K6 design telephone kiosks in Dawlish and Kenton; and the East Worlington War Memorial, Boundy's Cross, erected in the late 1940s. Full information can be accessed via <http://lbonline.english-heritage.org.uk/Login.aspx> (Posted 12 March 2010)

DBG Newsletters

The back issues of the Newsletters from April 1986 (no 1) through to Autumn 2005 (no 23) have recently been up loaded. Click here for full access and information regarding future plans. The DBG is grateful to Dawn Honeysett and Caroline Garrett for accomplishing this task. (Posted 12 March 2010)

TOPICAL ISSUES

The items covered in the Topical Issues tend to be of a much broader nature than those in Latest News. They are more policy than news and probably require much more sustained pressure to achieve change. The question of VAT, for instance, has been around a long time and, supposedly, would require international agreements to alter. Satellite dishes seem to be proliferating without control. The example illustrated on the website is more than matched by five (count 'em!) on the front façade of a listed building not half a mile distant. School refurbishment could well be a "good news" story over time. Let's hope so. Finally, the question of retaining historic cobbling is not restricted to church yards though the example illustrated in Crediton and the Black Torrington church are two examples which have been brought to our attention. A fine and considered resolution is needed to balance the needs of the less mobile and those of the built heritage.

VAT on works to historic buildings: For a number of years organisations concerned about historic building conservation and restoration have criticised the inequity of the VAT regulations which mean that VAT has to be paid on repairs to listed residential buildings, but strangely not on works to alter or extend them. As the former would conserve their character and the latter would probably not, this is clearly illogical, but the Treasury has resisted any change to date. Given that owning a listed building can be a financial imposition, zero-rating repairs would appear to be a minimal concession. (Posted September 2009)

Satellite dishes: prompted by the change-over from analogue to digital television signals an extraordinary number of satellite dishes are appearing on houses. Like mushrooms they seem to pop up, usually in prominent places on chimneys and gables, often in full sight from the road. We can only hope that technology will soon provide a less unsightly option. (Posted September 2009)



School refurbishment: CABI, the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment, has recently published “New from old: transforming secondary schools through refurbishment”. This points out what conservation organisations have long been promoting, namely that it is often much better to restore than replace. To find out more, go to <http://tinurl.com/c2rsje>. Richard Parker’s article “School Buildings in Exeter 1800-1939” in the DBG’s Newsletter, number 22, dated October 2004 is but one manifestation of our concern about such buildings across the county.

The matter of restoring or converting existing school buildings is very much of the moment, with roughly £20 billion expenditure on school buildings from various sources anticipated in the next few years. English Heritage has posted a fascinating paper on its website (www.english-heritage.org.uk/server/show/nav.21443) and as recently as 10 February included a second paper on its Newsletter (see newsletter@english-heritage.org.uk) A most comprehensive site on the subject is www.helm.org.uk/server/show/nav.19652. We recommend them. (Posted September 2009; updated February 2010)

Cobbling: we all sympathise with and support the needs of less able visitors to historic sites, especially churches. However, the DBG is increasingly concerned that ancient footpaths with historic and attractive cobbling are being replaced with modern and unsightly surfaces. Original fabric is being lost unnecessarily. In a number of cases recently we have urged that alternative routes be used or, if that is not practical, that a removable protective covering be laid down thereby retaining the old while providing sure footing for visitors. (Posted September 2009)

