DEVON BUILDINGS GROUP

NEWSLETTER NUMBER 29

Summer 2011

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Front cover: Corndonford, Widecombe © *the late Elizabeth Gawne*

Secretary's Report 2009-2010

The year began with the 24th AGM held at Torre Abbey on 17th October 2009. It was attended by 39 members. All the existing committee members had either one or two years to run so no elections to the committee were necessary given that there were no new members proposed. The situation was the same for both the secretary and the treasurer. Lyn Auty, the treasurer, then presented an overview of the Group's finances, pointing out that the subscription had never been raised from its original £8.00 set 24 years ago and that this was no longer a viable rate, particularly in the light of new expenses such as running a website and having insurance. We had also been subsidised heavily by the Honeysetts in producing programmes for the meetings. She proposed that it should be raised to £15.00 for single members and £25.00 for joint members. After some discussion there was overwhelming approval for this new rate which will come into force from January 2011. Caroline Garrett then gave an introduction to the new website which she and Peter Marlow had developed for the Group.

After the close of the business meeting, Michael Rhodes, Head of Torbay Museum Services, outlined the history of the Abbey, the richest Premonstratensian foundation in the country, founded in 1196 and dissolved in 1539. The Abbey occupied a site four times the size of its existing one. After dissolution, the Abbey was eventually acquired by the Ridgeway family who converted it to a house by joining the south range and the Abbot's range with a stair turret. Subsequently the house was acquired by the Cary family who were Roman Catholics and constructed a secret chapel which became public in 1176 and survived until 1854. Despite two bankruptcies the Carys lasted at Torre Abbey until 1930 when the site was acquired by Torquay Council for a museum. By the late 1980s when Michael Rhodes arrived the buildings were in a very poor state and he has since then strived both to repair them sustainably, open them up to larger audiences and to reveal their archaeology. The architects Architecton have been employed for this purpose and next, Paul Richold of that firm, gave us a presentation on their work at the Abbey which included not just the sensitive repair of the buildings but also the provision of a proper public entrance through the undercrofts under the west tower into the cloister, which was partly rebuilt in a modern idiom and from which access to the main stair was made possible by cutting a slot through the rear wall of the south range. After lunch, Michael and Paul guided us round the Abbey to see what had been achieved through their most impressive efforts.

The Summer Meeting was held in Plymouth Guildhall on the theme of 'Aspects of Plymouth's History' on 5th June. We had three speakers, David Evans, Jo Cox and Jeremy Gould, Head of the School of Architecture and Design at Plymouth University. David developed the theme of 'the history of a building is quite different from its architecture' with examples from military architecture over the centuries, finally focussing on Plymouth Citadel. Jo presented the life and works of John Foulston, the well-known but much under-researched architect who moved to Plymouth in 1813 following his winning a competition for a theatre and assembly room complex, which she described as a 'monster leisure centre'. It included the first modern hotel in England and the theatre could seat 2000. He subsequently carried out much major work in the three parts of Plymouth town all of which enjoyed a boom in the early 19th century. This work included the monumental buildings of Devonport in their catholic mix of styles including the Mount Zion Chapel in an oriental idiom alongside the famous Egyptian house. Jo regarded his ability to use such a variety of styles as not so much comic as innovative, and felt that he should be appreciated for his sense of public space as much as for his architecture. Finally Jeremy Gould talked to us on the post-war redevelopment and architecture of Plymouth, a neglected period on which he is the leading authority. Plymouth in terms of area was the most bomb damaged city in England and this facilitated a radical new plan by Abercrombie for its reconstruction. This plan was based on four zones [shopping, civic, park, and historic] and was laid out on an axis from the station to the Hoe crossed by Royal Parade. The style of architecture employed for its buildings had its origins in pre-war Scandinavia via Norwich Town Hall. Consistency in material was ensured by the use of brick and Portland Stone and the buildings were characterised by symmetrical elevations over

high ground floors. There was much use of applied art. At the head of Royal Parade stood the National Provincial Bank in an eclectic but eye-catching style. The Guildhall was rebuilt with one of the best interiors of the period outside London. The Civic Centre was not originally envisaged by Abercrombie but was an afterthought and one which Jeremy considered to have produced a great building. He concluded by expressing his dismay at the current neglect of the buildings, the poor control over changes to them and the clutter of local authority tat in the public realm. In contrast to the golden post-war period, since the 1960s there had been much terrible architecture in Plymouth.

After lunch Jeremy led us round the centre to see many of the buildings which he had described, after which we visited the Elizabethan House in Looe Street. This is a remarkably well preserved 17th century timber-framed town house well fitted out with period furniture. We then walked up to the Citadel where after some tricky negotiation as the MoD seemed initially to have lost all record of our arranged visit we were eventually allowed in. John Thorp described the buildings within the fortification and we were able to visit the chapel and afterwards to enjoy the stupendous view out over Plymouth Sound. To complete a strenuous afternoon Jo Cox then took us along the Hoe with its astonishing array of war memorials and monuments.

The committee have met six times in the last year. A great deal of time has been spent on discussing the organisation of the two annual meetings as well as the production of the Newsletter

and the website. We have had a reallocation of some responsibilities among the committee members in order to reduce the burden on the secretary in organising the two annual meetings. Peter Marlow has agreed to become principal organiser for these, while Jo Cox has agreed to take over primary responsibility for the production of the newsletter, assisted as appropriate by others. We have a very loose committee structure with only two formal posts, the secretary and the treasurer, so that all our organisation is done on a partly cooperative basis and these changes are made in that spirit. We do need more committee members as Robert Waterhouse has left for Jersey and Ann Adams is not well enough to continue, so we would be happy to consider anyone who would like to join the committee.

During the year we made representations on the draft of PPS 5 *Planning for the Historic Environment* which was subsequently considerably changed, as we were not alone in considering that in its initial form it would have much weakened the protection offered to historic buildings. The revised version which is now in force and supersedes PPG 15, although with some deficiencies especially in regard to the lack of detailed advice, is in fact in some respects stronger than its predecessor.

Peter Marlow, Lyn Auty and Richard Parker represented the Group at a local history day at the Westcountry Studies Library in January which was useful in raising the profile of the Group. Stuart Blaylock and I went to a meeting called by English Heritage and DCC to examine the way forward for a study of Devon building stones with the objective of sourcing these if possible for future building repairs. While the objective was a worthy one, we did not think that the project was one to which the Group could usefully contribute. I understand that it is now likely to be carried out by geologists rather than architectural historians. We supported the Cullompton Walronds Trust in their successful application for HLF grant aid. Casework has been almost non-existent this year. The issue of the covering-up of the cobbled path leading up to Great Torrington church on which we made representations last year has eventually been decided by the Chancellor of the Diocese. His compromise solution was to allow its covering but in a reversible manner which is not wholly satisfactory, but it is better than the permanent loss of these fine cobbles. Otherwise nothing controversial has been brought to our attention, which either means that the historic buildings of Devon are being fully protected or that we are not hearing about things that are going on. Do let us know if there are building matters that concern you, as one of the constitutional objects of the Group is “to take an active part in the preservation of historic buildings in Devon, especially through casework”. I do not feel that we are currently contributing enough in this area.

Peter Child

Treasurer/Membership Secretary’s Report 2009-2010

Nineteen new members have joined the Devon Buildings Group since the last AGM. Membership continues to rise each year. A brief foray into the box file shows a sudden jump in numbers joining in the last two years. Twenty-five years ago, DBG started out with 57 members. We had 166 members two years ago; we have 195 today. The new Register contains 38 new entries, compared to 23 added to the old one. Hardly any members have resigned as a direct result of the impending increase in subscriptions... so far.

I don’t want to bamboozle you with facts and figures but I can’t avoid inflicting more on you! Last year’s AGM at Torre Abbey was attended by 39 people, including 2 guests, and 46 attended the Plymouth Conference, including 4 guests and 5 new members. I have resisted the temptation to work out how many members have been unable to attend any meetings at all over the last few years, but there must be quite a number. Hopefully, these members will still feel that they

are getting good value, when the subs go up, in the form of quality Newsletters, the opportunity for networking and finding specialists via the Register and the fact the website aims to fulfil even more of DBG's objectives as stated in the Constitution. Members can have the satisfaction that their money has also contributed to the promotion of the study, wider understanding and appreciation of the historic buildings of Devon, because eight institutions, such as the Ancient Monuments Society in London and the Devon and Exeter Institution, have maintained membership since 1989 and make their copy of our Newsletters available for public consultation.

Moving on to the accounts, the most critical figure is our current monies of £2,363.91. Two years ago DBG had nearly £4000. We still need to pay out a total of about £600 more this year [2010] for the printing and posting of the Register, the fee for hosting our website, a gift for the accountant and all of today's expenses. We had an excess of expenditure over income - for the second year running. The increase in subscriptions, the bulk of which come in in January, should result in a healthier financial situation - rather than an ebbing away of members

Looking now at DBG's income, I note that the full amount paid by members for tours of Torre Abbey is not shown separately. The accountant included this with the subscriptions. So moving to our expenditure, the actual cost of the Torbay meeting to DBG was about £180, after deducting our payment for tours. The Summer Conference cost nearly £340; DBG absorbed the cost of the tours to the Elizabethan House. On top of this, the full cost of insuring our meetings is about £150; DBG has to be a member of the Council for British Archaeology in order to be able to insure meetings with Tower Gate Insurance. We need cover in case anyone puts a foot through an historic plaster ceiling!

Postage, stationery and printing costs have increased substantially in recent years. The year to October 2010 included the costs of producing two Newsletters. We paid for Newsletter 27 after the accounts were drawn up for last October, and Newsletter 28 was produced in time for the Summer Conference. The former cost about £580, including postage etc., and the latter £730.

Finally, may I remind those of you who pay by banker's order, to instruct your bank to increase your payment to DBG. From 1st January 2011, subscriptions will be £15 for single membership, and £25 for joint membership.

Lyn Auty

Ann

We are very sad to report that Ann Adams died on 28th November 2010. She had been ill with cancer for nearly two years and although she returned to her home at Zeal Monachorum for the summer, she had gone back to stay with her daughter Athene and son-in-law David in Surrey this autumn. Ann was a key figure in the DBG which she joined in 1991 becoming Membership Secretary and Treasurer in 1993, then Acting Secretary in 1996 and full Secretary in 1997; this post she held for eight and a half years. She also nobly doubled up as Newsletter editor and carried on in this role until last year. It is hard to see how the Group would have functioned without her indefatigable work on its behalf over this time.

Ann was born in Stanmore, Herts on 2nd June 1927 eldest daughter of Leslie and Catherine Hubble. She had one brother who has survived her and who lives in New Zealand. Ann was largely educated at home by her mother who was a talented pianist and music teacher. Ann's parents sadly separated in her teens. She attended art college at what was then called Regent's Street Polytechnic London where she met her husband Ron (Ronald John Adams). They both studied sculpture, Ann

winning the British Institute Prize in 1948. Immediately after the war was not an easy time to launch an art career and they found the price of studios expensive, so made the decision to move from Bushey Heath to Hayling Island, Hampshire in 1954, with their first child (John) who was then three. They continued to have a passion for art and sculpture but sadly had to earn money from other endeavours. Ann and Ron bought their first Afghan hound in the mid 1950s and spent much of their spare time over the next 30 years breeding and exhibiting their Afghans which grew in number over the years up to 12 adults. They were also active committee members of the Afghan Hound Association, Ann being Secretary for eight years.

While Ann did not have very much disposable income she would often cycle the few miles to the only antique shop on the Island to seek out little gems. Not learning to drive until she was around 40, Ann would have to transport her purchases on the back of her bicycle. Her memorable collection of ceramics and of excavated sherds adorned her home at Hayne. Architecture became a part of everyday life during the decade or so when she was part of the family business (a partnership of Ann, Ron and John Adams) which produced technical journals for the Brick Development Association and other building/architectural bodies. She was able to put her literary skills to work and also became a good photographer.

Ann was keen on family history having been inspired by her great-grandmother. She enjoyed trips to Devon throughout her early years on family holidays and then more frequently before she moved to Devon permanently. Hayne was the house she had to own. The house had strong family connections and offered her the wonderful opportunity to create a beautiful home and garden. Moving to it also enabled her to study Local and Regional History at Exeter University starting her studies after she was 60. (Age was not something that Ann considered should confine your activities and to see her strutting up the drive with a large sack of dog food or compost over her shoulder, even into her 70s, was always a sight to behold.)

Ann was completely committed to the study of the past and enjoyed archaeology and local history as much as architecture. She was the author or co-author of eight scholarly articles to the Group's publications over a period spanning 18 years. The most recent of these was a ground- breaking piece on Devon's decorated fireplaces which she subsequently developed into a larger article, shortly to be published in *Post-Medieval Archaeology*. Among her many other achievements, in 2002 she published a history of Zeal Monachorum in which her beloved and wonderful house, Hayne, lies, and last year, despite her illness, completed another substantial book, this time on a branch of her ancestors, the Budd family of North Tawton. Ann had a forceful personality, ideally suited to ensure that the Group was shepherded in the right direction, but she was above all a lively and kind person with a great sense of humour expressed in a memorable laugh. We shall all miss her very much.

Peter Child

Reconstruction Drawings

I began drawing reconstructions of buildings in 1996 when I was working for Exeter Archaeology. I sketched some thumbnails of the building in Cathedral Close, then called Tinleys, now Pizza Express, to help me understand how it, and its setting, had changed. Chris Henderson, who was then the Director of Exeter Archaeology, saw them and asked me to work them up into a more detailed series.

Reconstruction drawings are a valuable method of showing people how a building has changed or how it works as a building. I have discovered that you can write pages and pages of text about the development of a building and still the owner (and sometimes the architect) may not understand it. Coloured phased plans are better than text, but not everyone is good at reading plans, or converting them mentally into 3D. Good reconstruction drawings can instantly explain to a wide range of people, how a building has developed.

The sources for reconstruction drawings are usually a mixture: old engravings, when they exist, archaeological sections and elevations and as thorough an acquaintance with the building as possible. Sometimes you have to allow yourself some leeway beyond surviving evidence. A room may obviously have had a window at one period, but the evidence for that particular window may have gone. Rather than leaving the wall blank, you need to maintain the illusion of the house as it was at the time by introducing a window of the right style.

The first nightmare in a reconstruction drawing is choosing the best angle for showing the parts of the building you know and understand, and hiding the parts you do not understand. If you are showing parts of the interior, the angle also needs to allow you to cut sections of the exterior away while keeping the drawing legible. Having selected an angle, you then need to make that angle work as a drawing. This can involve numerous failed attempts to lay it out. You may discover, for example, that the perspective you have chosen includes a part of the building that obscures the crucial elements you want to show, or does not allow you to reveal how different parts of the building really relate to each other. If you have a really good perspective planned a drawing can still all go wrong at the last minute.

Few archaeological contractors nowadays, and certainly very few private clients, are in the habit of commissioning reconstruction drawings, perhaps because of the time constraints and financial restrictions under which we are all now forced to operate. The great majority of the drawings I have produced over the last 15 years were commissioned in happier times, when Local Authority staff and archaeologists were able to commit time and money to the presentation of archaeological sites and buildings for the public benefit. A magnificent series of drawings by Piran Bishop, of buildings all over Devon, was made under the direction of Chris Henderson and at his own instigation; these deserve to be much better known. Many of my drawings were commissioned by City Council staff working for the Museums Service, for ‘Leisure and Tourism’ or as part of the City Council’s own archaeological team. It is perhaps unlikely that representatives of the ‘Big Society’ or cash-strapped Local Authorities frantically trying to cut costs, will have either the imagination or the finance to commission such drawings, but we shall see. If I feel they are helpful, I include them in historic buildings assessments and am still occasionally asked to produce them as a way of interpreting a building to the public.

The drawings below are reproduced with the kind permission of Exeter Archaeology.

The Catacombs, Exeter

This was commissioned from Exeter Archaeology by Exeter City Council for inclusion in an interpretation panel to be displayed at the Catacombs. It is a fully worked up drawing. It shows how the Catacombs were built, butting up against the City Wall. It shows how a burial worked in

the 19th century, taking place on top of the catacombs with a system of lowering coffins into the vault where they would be moved, by bier, into position on a shelf. The drawing also shows why catacombs were built, by contrasting the overcrowded, insanitary and chaotic burials of Exeter, shown on the left, with what was envisaged as a well-regulated and attractive burial ground. The latter is shown on the right as an urban park in which respectable people might wish to walk. So this is a graphic account of Victorian progress in the matter of burials in Exeter.

I took the liberty of shifting some 'real' elements in the drawing about, to better explain the site for the contemporary visitor. The archaeological cross section on the left, adjacent to the City Wall is a real section, recorded by Exeter Archaeology, but transposed here from its actual location in Coombe Street. The pier shown at the end of the railings, just left of the group of mourners, has been reversed into its position in the drawing from its actual location. This is slightly forward of the section shown, but it gives people reading the interpretation panel a marker for locating themselves in relation to my reconstruction of what went on above and below ground.

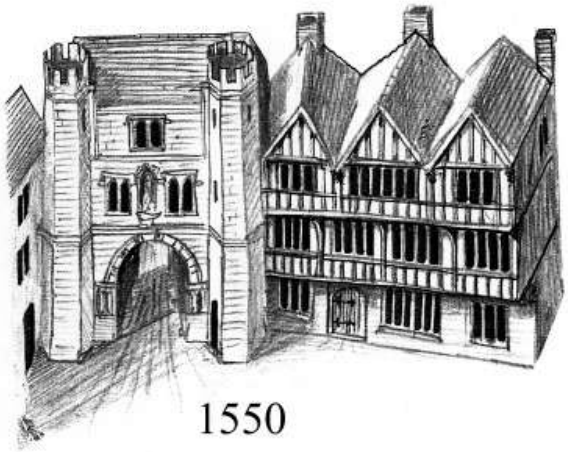
I have introduced some graphic commentary and a story here, in the various groups of people shown. This is in a Victorian narrative spirit and enlivens the drawing for anyone who cares to look hard enough. The family of the dead man is indifferent to his death: one of his sons yawns. The only grieving figure is the housekeeper, standing apart from the family. The labourers waiting to shift the coffin into place and seal it in with a lettered stone are bored. Two couples walk by, without noticing the funeral. The date of the drawing, 2000 and my name is on the base of the obelisk, in the right hand corner.

Tinleys, Cathedral Close

This drawing is the original drawing produced for Chris Henderson in 1996; a copy now hangs on the wall in the Pizza Express restaurant in Cathedral Yard.

I wanted this sequence of drawings to emphasise the peculiar trapezoidal shape of the three-gabled medieval town house, with its roofs fanning out towards the High Street. I hope it does not look like an error in perspective. I also wanted to show the relationship of the house as it developed to the gateway into Cathedral Close. In fact it seems that this house originally had a side entrance from within the gateway. There is a limit to the number of phases you can show while still making each drawing interesting. You need enough to have changed to make it worth another in the series and four or five is usually enough. For the gateway into the Close, which was demolished between 1800 and 1825 I made use of historic images, dating the elements in those drawings and omitting any that were obviously added after the dates I chose to show.

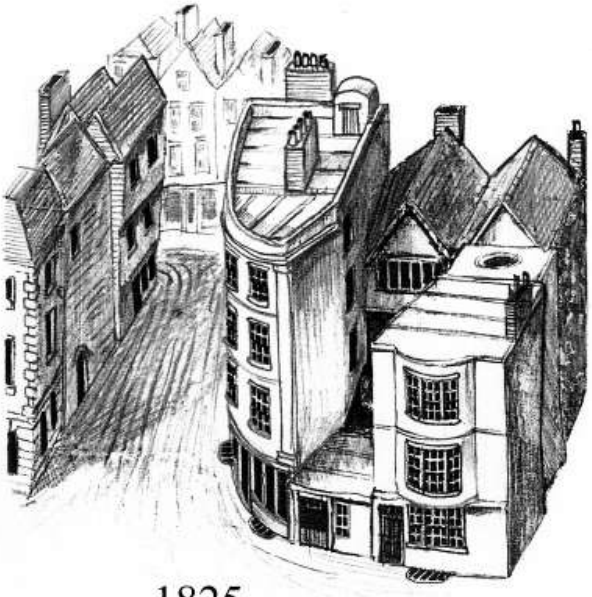
Aspects of the gateway are odd. There is only one historic image of its High Street face and that clearly shows that all its architectural splendour and apparently 'defensive' elements, in the form of the turrets, faced into the Close, rather than being where you would expect them, on the High Street side. The gateway projects from the Dean and Chapter owned land into the City. In fact the gabled medieval house is built on City, not Cathedral land and its elaborate jettied façade shows us that the boundary of the Close was not, at that time, the high defensive 'close wall' so often imagined by antiquarians. The additions to the house on the Close side were tenements that were developed after the Civil War when the Dean and Chapter were squeezing as much rent as possible out of the development of properties on the edge of their churchyard. The routeway on the Cathedral Close side may have run directly in front of the three-gabled building and must have been moved forward, encroaching into the churchyard, to make room for these developments.



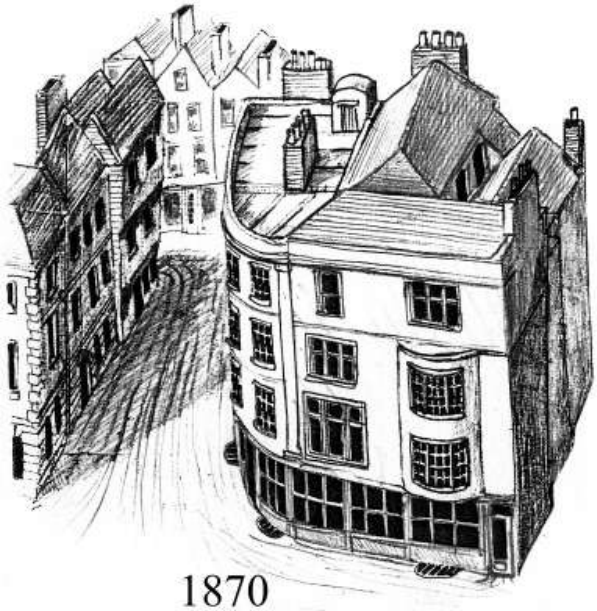
1550

1700

1800

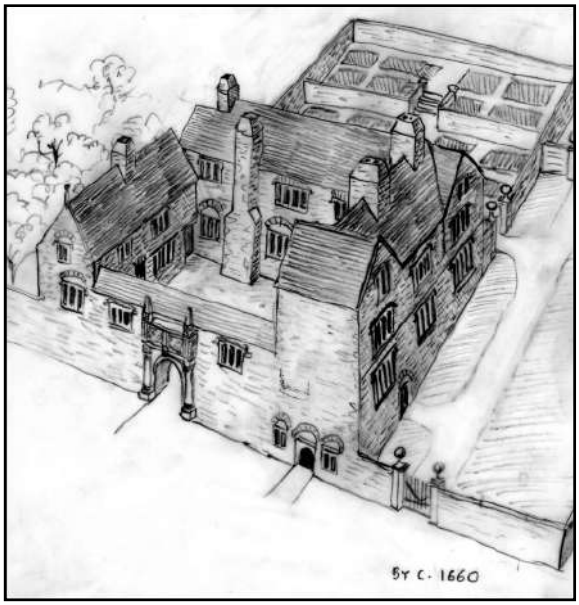


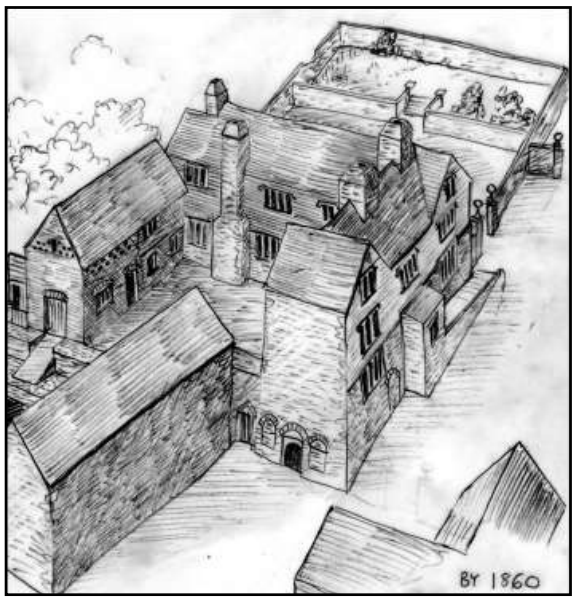
1825



1870

Pridhamsleigh near Buckfastleigh



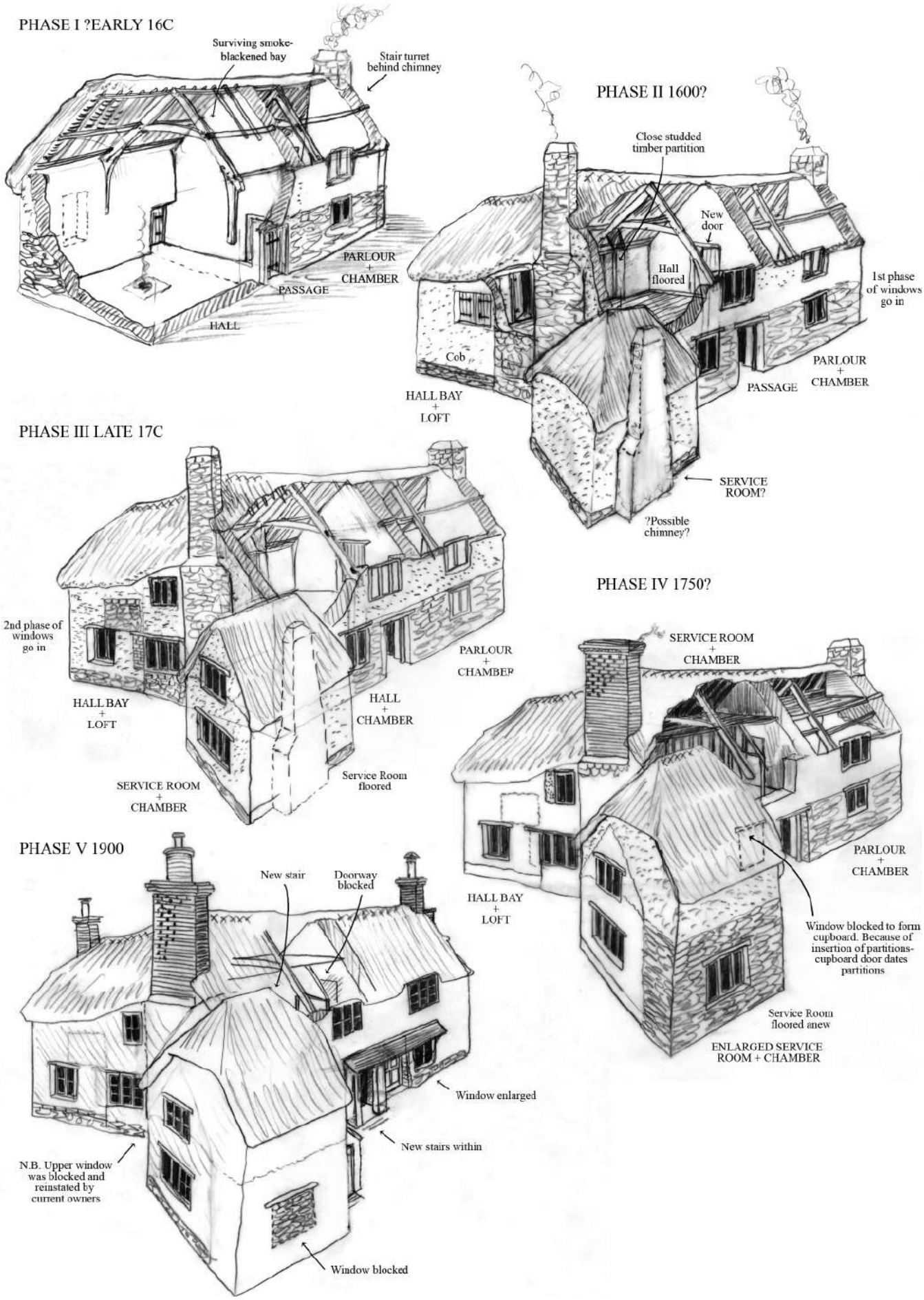


These drawings were made at the suggestion of John Allan of Exeter Archaeology during a phase of recording at this fine gentry house on behalf of new owners. The house had the misfortune to be on the Baring-Gould estate when Baring-Gould was robbing the best architectural features from his tenants' buildings to create his own magpie house in Lew Trenchard. This is what happened to the ornamental gateway shown in the first two drawings. I wanted the drawings to show the relative status of different ranges at different times and, particularly, the relationship of the original frontage of the house with the later agricultural buildings. The range parallel to the gateway was the hall range by 1627. The angle selected for the reconstruction did not allow me to show the stair block attached to it. By c.1660 the range on the right had become more important, with a second gable, very large mullioned windows and the masonry slate-hung, suggesting that this was now a principal elevation. The range on the left, shown with pigeon holes in the 'by 1860' drawing, declined to an agricultural building and was downgraded from its earlier function as part of the house. By 1860 the grand original gateway had been moved and the original entrance obscured as the site of the yard of farm buildings.

Pendennis House, Bradninch

This drawing was commissioned from Exeter Archaeology by the new owners of the house. This vernacular cob and masonry house was in a very fragile state and the drawings were undertaken during works, making use of archaeological record drawings. This sequence ended up explaining how the house had changed using information that came to light during repairs as well as before. The drawings are sketches and not fully worked-up in the fashion of the Catacombs drawing.

DBG members who have heard about and seen open halls on many DBG occasions may think that they are easily understood. Here at Pendennis House the owners did understand the concept. It helped that the house retained smoke-blackened roof timbers and sooted thatch over the hall. However, it can be difficult to re-imagine your house without all its familiar flooring in place. There are many occasions


PHASE I ?EARLY 16C
Surviving smoke-blackened bay
Stair turret behind chimney
PARLOUR + CHAMBER
PASSAGE
HALL
PHASE II 1600?
Close studded timber partition
New door
Hall floored
1st phase of windows go in
Cob
HALL BAY + LOFT
PARLOUR + CHAMBER
PASSAGE
SERVICE ROOM?
?Possible chimney?
PHASE III LATE 17C
2nd phase of windows go in
PARLOUR + CHAMBER
HALL BAY + LOFT
HALL + CHAMBER
Service Room floored
SERVICE ROOM + CHAMBER
PHASE IV 1750?
SERVICE ROOM + CHAMBER
PARLOUR + CHAMBER
HALL BAY + LOFT
Window blocked to form cupboard. Because of insertion of partitions- cupboard door dates partitions
Service Room floored anew
ENLARGED SERVICE ROOM + CHAMBER
PHASE V 1900
New stair
Doorway blocked
Window enlarged
New stairs within
N.B. Upper window was blocked and reinstated by current owners
Window blocked

when a graphic account of an existing house in an earlier phase and partly open from floor to roof is simply the best way of explaining the idea of the open hall house.

In the first drawing I assumed there had been a medieval hall window, although any evidence of this had been removed by an extension, so I have shown one dotted in. By c.1600 a rather oddly-sited service room, probably a semi-detached kitchen, or perhaps a brewhouse, had been added at the front corner of the hall. This had been substantially enlarged by c.1750. The drawings have been annotated to cover elements that cannot be shown graphically, for example the twice-floored service room. The last drawing showing the mullioned windows re-glazed is a good illustration of the layers of disguise which commonly conceal the early origins of so many vernacular Devon houses.

Richard Parker

Down And Out,

Some Lost and Forgotten Devon Country Houses

I first became interested in the uncertain future of country houses in the 1970s when, as architectural advisor to the Victorian Society, I was the Society's ineffective representative at two planning inquiries. Both were convened to determine applications to demolish listed country houses and both ended badly, not surprisingly perhaps when the rate of country house demolitions was only just recovering from decades of destruction. Between the end of World War II and the 1968 *Town and Country Planning Act*, annual losses were reaching double figures[1] and it was estimated 250 houses in England had been destroyed during those 24 years.[2]

The first of my inquiries concerned Finedon Hall, Northamptonshire, a mid 19th century 'Gothic-cum-Tudor fantasy'[3] where the impoverished owner lived in a caravan next to a heap of empty baked bean cans while the house crumbled around him. He wanted to demolish and redevelop the stable block and part demolish the house prior to conversion into multi-occupancy but on day two of the inquiry he committed suicide. In due course the stables were indeed redeveloped and the house is divided into apartments, a favourite solution that usually involves new partitions and breaking up the garden into unrelated plots.

The other case involved Baynards in Surrey, a Tudor house remodelled by Thomas Rickman[4] in the 1830s and recently acquired by a formidable tycoon who supplied helicopter transport to a burgeoning North Sea oil industry. He applied to replace Baynards with a neo-Georgian house but his request was refused. Undaunted he allowed the house to fall into disrepair and in 1978 mysterious arsonists destroyed most of what was left.

Figure 1. Finedon, Northants, 1978. (Hugh Meller).

Figure 2. Baynards, Surrey, c.1960. (Hugh Meller).

The two cases illustrated are at opposite ends of the demolition spectrum – one concerned an owner with too little money, the other, too much. Meanwhile the plight of houses like these was given belated publicity in the celebrated 1974 V & A exhibition, 'The Destruction of the Country House' and for the first time a list was published of 1200 houses that had been destroyed in the previous 100 years. Each county was catalogued and the number in the Devon list was estimated as a modest 16[5] compared to 45 in Kent and 55 in Lancashire. However the exhibition curators readily admitted the lists were probably not exhaustive and it has since been estimated that at least another 500 houses could have been added[6] although no definition of 'destruction' was given. So, for example, the Devon list included Castle Hill, Clovelly and Eggesford, all of which have been at least partially rebuilt.

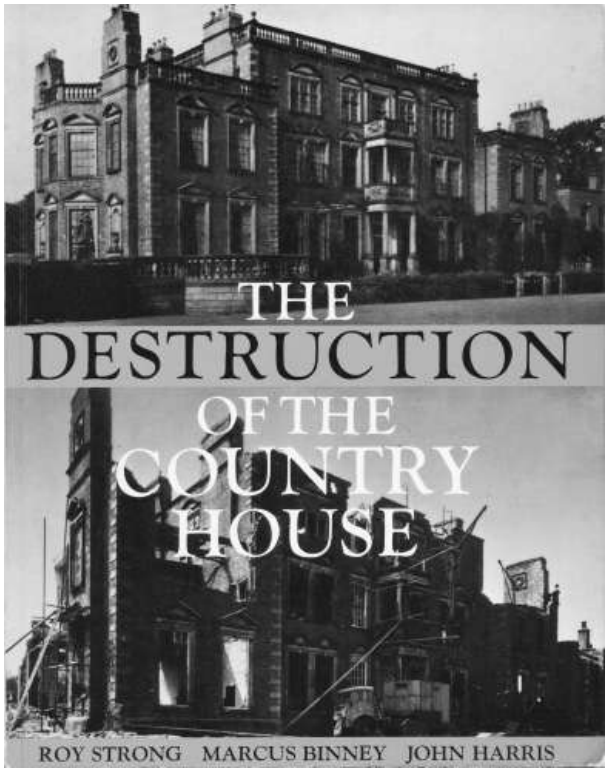


Figure 3. Cover of the catalogue for the 1974 V & A Exhibition. Photo copyright Victoria & Albert Museum, London.

In 1981 (revised 2005) and 1997 two books on 'Vanished Houses' of north and south Devon respectively, by Rosemary Lauder, were published drawing attention to 17 notable houses and referring to a handful of others, all now lost, but even then the lists were incomplete. What follows is a gazetteer of 13 unlucky Devon houses that have not only entirely disappeared since 1900 but also seem largely forgotten. They are separated into three groups, determined by the three fundamental causes of their destruction.

Figure 4. Lindridge, c.1950.Image from Snell, J F, *Devonshire* in Mate's County Series, 1907

The first group associates those that were victims of fire, never a respecter of antiquity or DCMS listing. Two of Devon's finest country houses, Dunsland and Lindridge, were lost to fire in the 1960s and among the 13, three were burned. Whitleigh to the north-west of Plymouth was the first to go, in 1941, perhaps pre-empting its inevitable extinction in the wake of the city's post war expansion. The house had been commissioned in the 1840s by Edmund Bastard Henn-Gennys who had married the heiress Miss Gennys, from a family of Plymouth merchants. George Wightwick was his architect, a former clerk to Sir John Soane and partner with John Foulston.[7] At Whitleigh he remodelled an uninspiring 18th century house and designed a magnificent conservatory and fernery.[8] Surrounding the house was a garden noted for its ponds, shrubberies, terraces, orchards and kitchen garden. It was a tempting prospect for developers and after the fire the city's planners replaced Whitleigh with 2000 houses[9] – one of the largest housing projects in post-war Britain.

The second house to burn was Ingsdon at a remote site near Ilsington on the southern edge of Dartmoor. It had been a large, 11-bay, not very distinguished, Georgian house in a setting inhabited since pre-Conquest times.[10] In 1872 it was rebuilt by Charles Munro, a Highlander whose ancestor had been given it by a friend he had met 'while sheltering from the rain of Hampstead Heath'.[11] It proved something of a white elephant to succeeding Monros who eventually sold it to an order

Figure 5. Whitleigh, 1907. Image from Snell, J F, *Devonshire* in Mate's County Series, 1907.

Figure 6. Ingsdon, 1817. Image supplied by West Country Studies Library, Devon Libraries.

Figure 7. Redhayes, 1907. Snell, J F, *Devonshire* in Mate's County Series, 1907.

of nuns who converted it into a school, another popular new use for country houses. It was later adapted into an 'approved school' which closed after the fire in 1977.[12] The old granite gate piers are all that remain of Ingsdon which has been replaced by four detached brick houses.

The last of this unfortunate trio was Redhayes, a once familiar sight on the eastern fringe of Exeter. It was a brick mansion decorated with terracotta panels in a neo-Tudor style typical of its 1891 date. The builder was Arthur Walrond, a member of the Walrond family at Bradfield (another house that, not unusually, has been subjected to school use, fire damage and multi-occupancy). Redhayes' architect may have been Edward Harbottle of Exeter, better known for his numerous church restorations throughout the county. In 1905 the house was bought by Colonel Francis Hext, from an old Cornish family, but as the century progressed, so did Exeter's transport system. The Colonel's heir, Major David Hext, died in despair as his home was enveloped by the M5, the A30 and Exeter's airport. His widow sold up in 1987 and ambitious plans were mooted for converting the house and surrounding 90 acres into a tourist attraction but in 2005 fire totally destroyed the building. A science park is now proposed for the site. Ironically, Redhayes' staircase was allegedly acquired from Silverton Park, Lord Egremont's extraordinary neo-classical house at Silverton that was dismantled in the 1890s before being dynamited in 1901.

The sprawl of 20th century development has ended the life of many country houses overcome by the tide of suburbia. Those on the borders of Plymouth have suffered more than most and three in this second group are briefly described below.

Swilly, a Georgian house, half a mile east of Devonport, was built on Tudor foundations and was the home of the Furneaux family from the 17th century if not earlier. Captain Tobias Furneaux, a colleague of Captain James Cook, was a courageous explorer in his own right but now largely forgotten. The Rev. John Swete, a friend of the family, illustrated Swilly for his journal in 1797.[13] Fifty acres of park and garden still surrounded the house in the 1920s but the demands of the 1919 Housing Act requiring 'homes fit for heroes' proved its downfall. Swilly was sold to Plymouth Corporation in 1926 and, unfortunately, its name degenerated into a byword for sub-standard new housing.

In 1937 Radford became another casualty of the inter-war housing boom. The house had been built for the Harris's, an eminent Plymouth family,[14] friends of Drake, Hawkins and Raleigh, who in 1773 became partners in the Plymouth Naval Bank. By the early 19th century the Bulteel's of Flete

Figure 8. Swilly, 1797. By kind permission of Todd Gray, ed. *Travels in Georgian Devon, Vol. 3*, 1999.

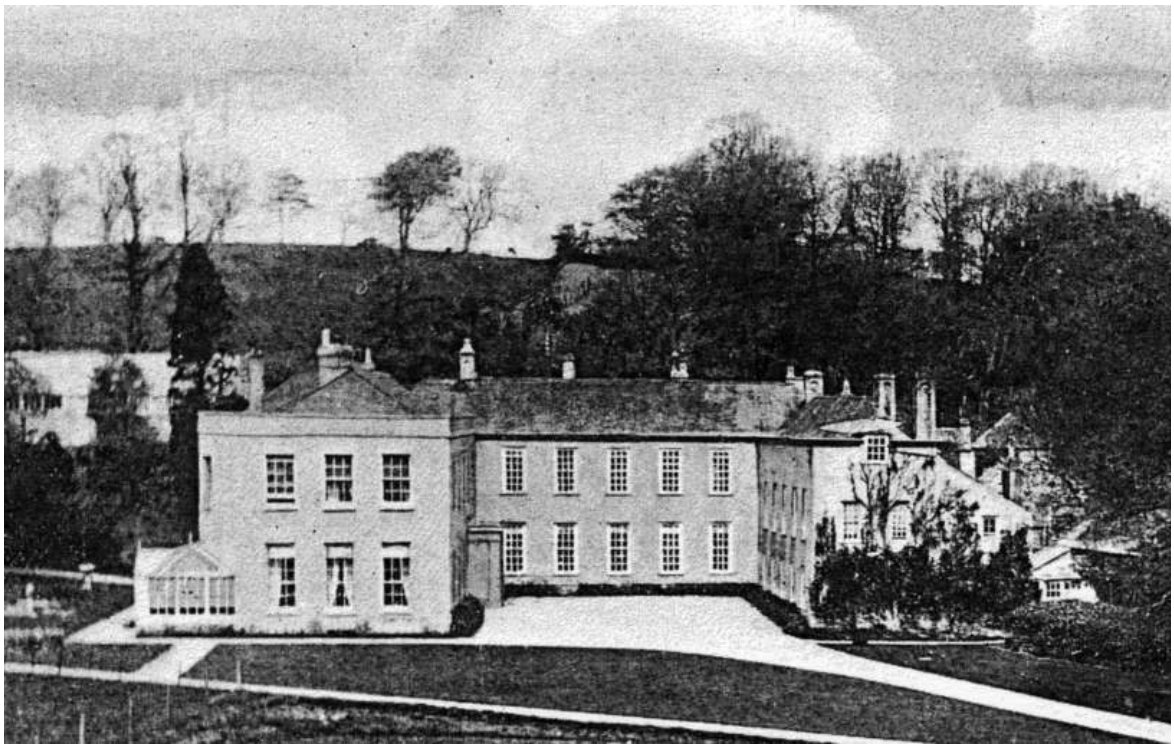


Figure 9. Radford House, south front, c.1920. Brian Steele, *The History of Radford*, 1990.

Figure 10. Widey, 1828. Image supplied by West Country Studies Library, Devon Libraries.

had married into the family and it was Frederick Bulteel who was forced to sell the house when he was bankrupted and imprisoned for fraud in 1914. Radford was then neglected by an absentee owner and eventually demolished in 1937. Part of the estate was built on but the Council retained the picturesque lake, its embattled gatehouse and other buildings to form an attractive public park.

Lastly there is a Widey Court at Eggbuckland, replaced by a housing estate in 1954. It had belonged to the prolific Hele family[15] and played a gallant role during the Civil War when Charles I was entertained here. At the end of the 17th century it had passed to the Morsheads who sold the estate for development in 1921. The house was eventually acquired by Plymouth Corporation to be demolished, by which time it had been 'wantonly smashed to pieces'.[16] A primary school now occupies the site.

Torquay's reputation for maintaining its architectural heritage is not unblemished either and one house that caught Bridget Cherry's attention in 1989 when revising Pevsner was Barcombe Hall, 'a substantial villa in an asymmetrical picturesque Grecian-Gothic-Italianate' which 'scandalously' was unlisted (!) and demolished soon afterwards.[17] It had been designed by Edward Davis of Bath, a pupil of Soane, in 1838[18] and was surrounded by a subtropical garden entered through an avenue of palms. No trace of either house or garden has survived the subsequent onslaught of bungalows.

Moving east, one of the most remarkable houses designed by the unconventional gentleman architect Philip Stowey was Kenbury at Kenn which he built for himself.[19] Stowey had learned his trade in the East Indies and is better known as the designer of the Sessions House in Exeter but to appreciate Kenbury one should visit bow-fronted Ashley House near Tiverton. Kenbury's main south elevation was also bow fronted punctuated by arched windows alternating with niches. Disastrously the estate was bisected by the A38 in 1974 and the site of the house became a cactus nursery.

Unsurprisingly a number of houses were defeated by their size and, perhaps, the remoteness of their location and these form the third group. A classic example was Upottery five miles north of Honiton. It was the seat of the Addington family who achieved fame in 1801 when Henry Addington became Prime Minister followed by elevation to a peerage in 1805. The old manor

Figure 11. Barcombe, 1907. Snell, J F, *Devonshire* in Mate's County Series, 1907.

Figure 12. Kenbury, c.1975. Reproduced by permission of English Heritage/NMR.

Figure 13. Upottery, 1846. Image supplied by West Country Studies Library, Devon Libraries.

house was rebuilt by his son William, the 2nd Viscount Sidmouth, in 1846. Samuel Greig, Exeter's city surveyor was his architect who designed 'a noble pile in the Elizabethan style'.[20] Greig died before it was completed and was succeeded by another Exeter architect, Edward Ashworth, who drew two elevations of the house whilst it was under construction. Upottery was sold by the 6th Viscount in 1953. Plans to turn it into an hotel, another favourite option for large but redundant country houses, came to naught and it was demolished in 1962. Only the Tudor style lodge and stables survive.

Figure 14. Dulford, 1907. Snell, J F, *Devonshire* in Mate's County Series, 1907.

Seven miles west of Upottery was the late 18th century Dulford House built by the eccentric 7th Earl of Montrath who lived there as a recluse surrounded by high walls.[21] In the late 19th century it was bought by Albert Abid, a Hyderabad merchant who remodelled it into a luxuriously appointed mansion. It was sold by his son in 1929 and the fittings were auctioned before demolition.[22] The three-day sale listed 334 lots including plenty of mahogany and marble items. A small new house has replaced Dulford within Montrath's walled perimeter.

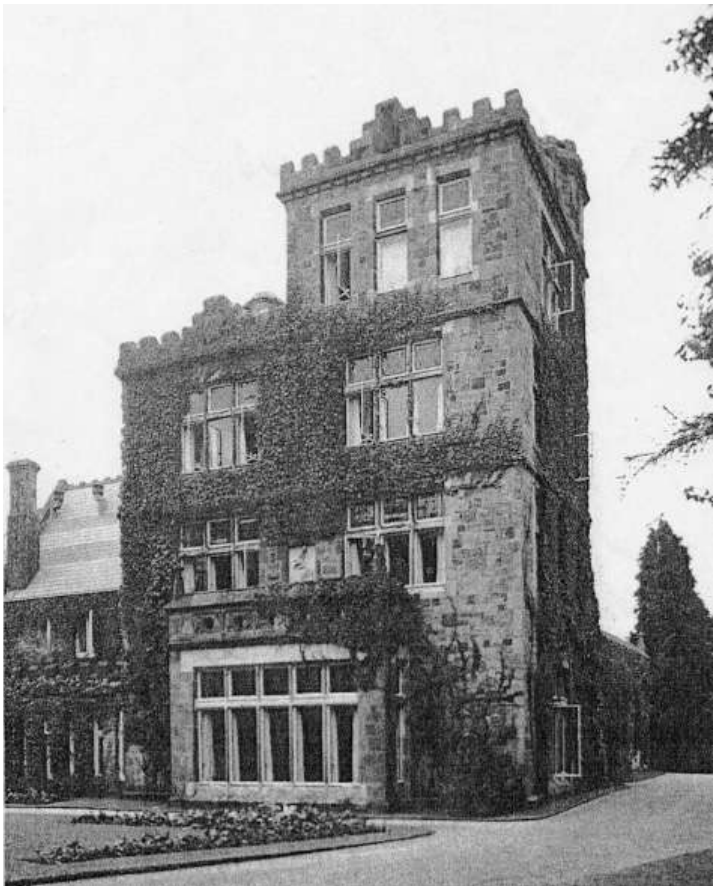


Figure 15. Winsford, c1900. Unknown source.

More remote than either of the above was Winsford, 1 mile north of Halwill. It was built with City money by George Webb-Medley in the late 19th century at the centre of a 700 acre estate. The house was large and stone built, designed by an unknown architect who included a four-storey tower at one end. It was requisitioned for the American army during World War II having been vacant for some years and finally came to grief in the 1950s when the fortunes of Victorian buildings were at their lowest ebb. A messy rural suburbia now covers the site apart from the walled garden which has been enthusiastically restored.

Bigadon just south of Buckfastleigh occupied a medieval site 600 feet above the Dart valley. The house had been rebuilt more than once, notably in the early 19th century before being bought by John Fleming of the Scottish banking family in 1862. 100 years later it was demolished in unusual circumstances when his grandson moved back to Scotland having directed no one else should live there. The house was stripped of its furnishings and replaced by a bungalow.

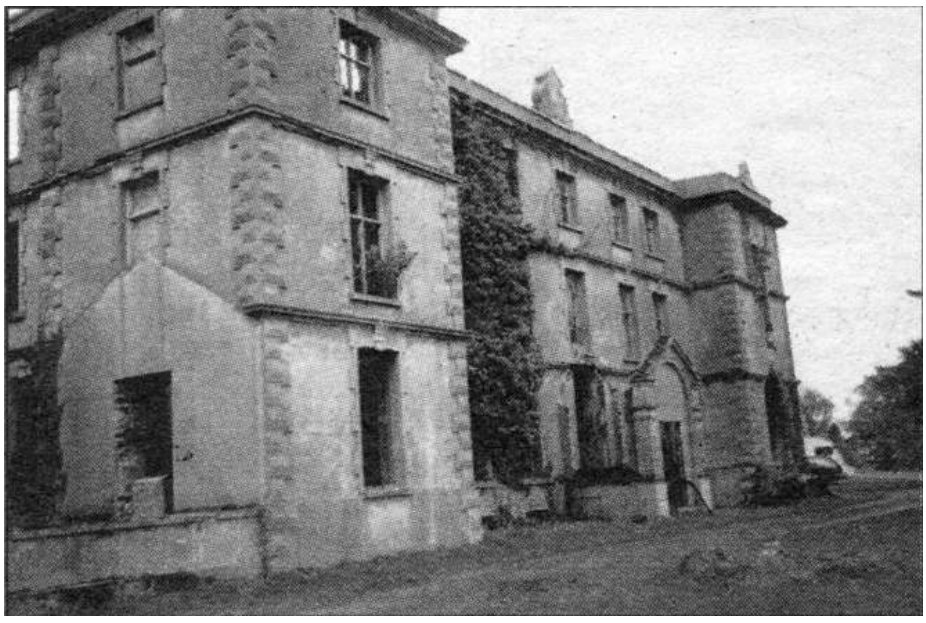


Figure 16. Bigadon, c.1958. Unknown source.

Figure 17. Tracey, 1907. Snell, J F, *Devonshire* in Mate's County Series, 1907.

Finally there is Tracey, north of Honiton, a classical style house built on a medieval site in the 1760s by a descendant of the Chards, relations by marriage to the Tracys.[23] It was imperfectly enlarged in the 1830s and given a flat roof which probably stimulated an outbreak of dry rot in the 1960s. By 2003 the house was derelict and is now no more. Its fate is a reminder that houses of that quality are still vulnerable to neglect as well as inappropriate conversions although the capricious threat of fire remains, as always, the principal danger.

Figure 18. Tracey 2003. (Hugh Meller).

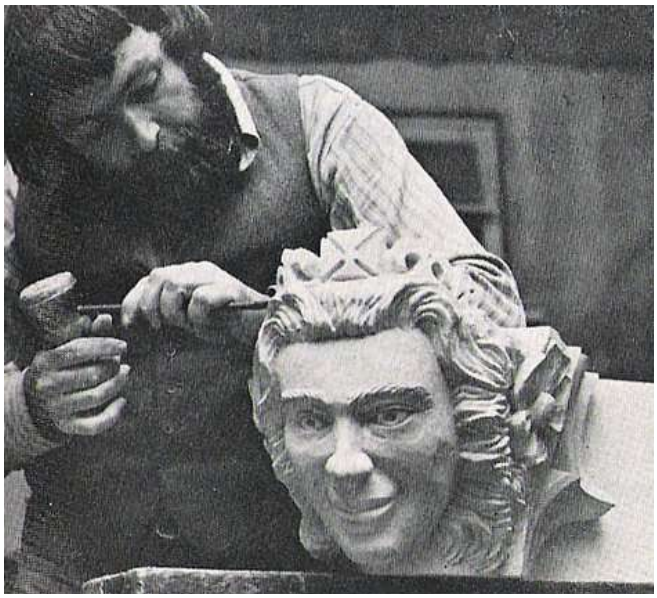
Every few years another fine house is wrecked by flames although restoration now seems to be the preferred solution to these disasters. In 2000 it was Raddon Court, a Regency house at Thorverton, torched by an arsonist. The following year it was Coombe Hill at Coombe Raleigh, built in 1798 for Admiral Thomas Graves and burned down while the house was being renovated. In 2007, 18th century Kittery Court at Kingswear was set on fire accidentally during conversion work and in 2009 Stonelands, a Nash house at Dawlish, was burned in similar circumstances. Several lessons might be learned from this sorry catalogue but paramount is the fact that these houses, indeed all historic buildings, are a finite resource that should be cherished.

Hugh Meller

Notes

1 Roy Strong et.al., *The Destruction of the Country House* (1974), 8.
2 Giles Worsley, *England's Lost Houses* (2002), 22.
3 Pevsner, *The Buildings of England: Northamptonshire* (1973 edn.), 218.
4 H. M. Colvin, *A Biographical Dictionary of British Architects, 1600-1840* (2008 edn.), 863-868. Rickman is best known as the author in 1817 of *An Attempt to Discriminate the Styles of English Architecture from the Conquest to the Reformation*.
5 Roy Strong, op.cit., 188.
6 Worsley, op.cit., 23.
7 Colvin, op.cit., 1118.
8 R.I.B.A. Drawings Collection, Wightwick, Vol.4, ff.19-21.
9 W.D.R.O. 949/20-23.
10 Somers Cox, *Devon Topographical Prints* (1977), No. 1348.
11 Charles Worthy, *Ashburton and its Neighbourhood* (1875), 94-95.
12 Dick Wills, *The Book of Ilsington* (2000), 135.
13 D.R.O. 564M/F12.
14 John Prince, *Worthies of Devon* (1701), 470.
15 Prince, op.cit., 484-490.
16 G. W. Copeland, *Transactions of the Devonshire Association*, Vol. 87 (1955), 236.
17 B. Cherry & N. Pevsner, *The Buildings of England: Devon* (1989), 843.
18 H. M. Colvin, op.cit., 302-303.
19 Colvin, op.cit., 992.
20 William White, *History of Devonshire* (1850), 376.
21 Rev. Edwin Chalk, *Transactions of the Devonshire Association*, Vol.42 (1910), 344.
22 D.R.O. 547B/P2934.
23 Thomas Chard had been the last abbot of Forde Abbey in the 16th century. Sir William de Tracy was one of the four knights who murdered Thomas à Becket. Prince, op.cit., 195.

Restoration of Exeter Cathedral 1970 - 1978



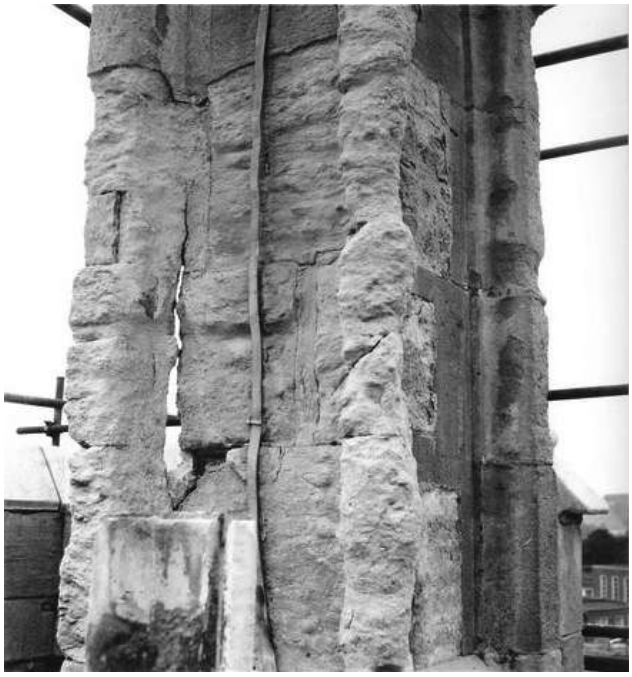
My early memory of working at Exeter Cathedral in the late 1960s, was that of a young mason who had just worked in Oxford on stone cleaning and restoration leaving a city of gleaming spires, to arrive back at this wonderful medieval cathedral that was black with carbon and tar from the city fires of 700 years and in need of a lot of attention.

Small changes on various parts of the Cathedral have taken place since the start of construction. Major restoration at Exeter had been active at the end of the 19th century and also in early 20th century such as replacing corbels on the Cathedral north and south elevations at nave parapet level and other areas of the building. The craft practice usually adopted at this time when replacing stone was to colour the new stone to match the existing, in the case of Exeter lamp black worked very well to tone down any new stone replacement.

The early 1970s brought a huge change, the city was now in a smoke free area, and a programme of work was put into place to clean the whole of the north side and west front of the Cathedral and restore some of the most damaged stone areas. This programme was to include some of the parapet walls and corbels on the north elevation quire and nave aisles, and the high level pinnacle on the south west corner of the west front.

The Architect for the project was Mr Peter Gundry Surveyor to the Dean and Chapter. I was the Master mason at this period and also had the privilege of undertaking the carving of the corbels and pinnacle, which was in a very poor condition (Figure 1). The parapets that were seen to be in a dangerous condition were taken down and rebuilt. The corbels in most cases were so worn that their iconography was lost but the only corbels replaced were supporting a parapet that had to be taken down and rebuilt. The new carvings were not intended to be a mock medieval carving, but carved to be in keeping with the spirit of their predecessors. Throughout the whole construction of Exeter Cathedral there were numerous changes to the styles of decorated carvings. With this in mind the corbel designs were left to me but agreed by the surveyor.

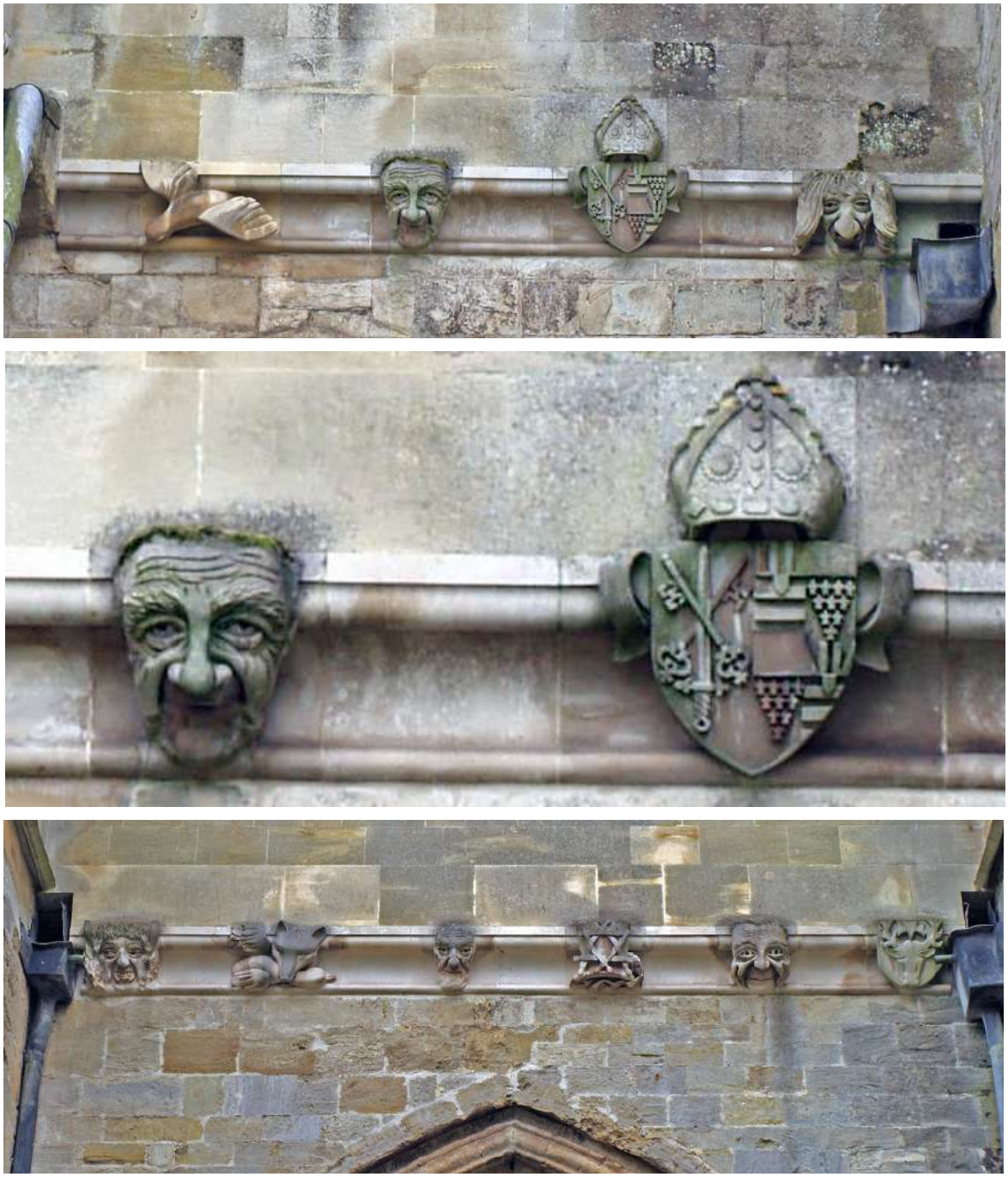
The parapet west of the north tower, was taken down and rebuilt in 1971 (Figure 2). A large amount of the ashlar stone for the rebuilding came from the demolition of St Mary Major Church. This stood west of the west front of the Cathedral, where the cross from the top of its spire, re-sited in the grass, marks the original position of its tower. The corbels were carved from French Lapine



lime stone. This was used because of its similar character to Caen limestone which was one of the stones used on the 12th and 14th century cathedral.

From a personal sentimental position, the Springer Spaniel in the corner was a dog I had once owned , his name was Bob, but he answered best to biscuit (Figure 3). I particularly gave him a long tongue because when he licked you it always felt like it was a mile long. The frog looking through the primrose was something I had once seen (Figure 4). Flowers are a good subject to get ideas from, lots of flowers appear to have a face in the centre. The ugly faces were thought to ward off the evil spirits.

Figures 1 (left) (Peter Dare), 2 (below) (Jo Cox), 3 (bottom left) and 4 (bottom right) (Jo Cox).



Figures 5 (top), 6 (middle) and 7 (bottom) (Jo Cox).

The next parapet replaced, in 1972, was west of the north door (Figure 5). Most of the ashlar was again from St Mary Major church. The corbel course was Portland limestone, another stone found in the medieval cathedral. Two of the corbels were a caricature of Bishop Robert Mortimer, who was then Bishop, and his coat of arms (Figure 6). The other carvings included a seagull – there were not as many of them in the close as we have today - and, at the end, a caricature of one of the young apprentice masons.

The corbel course east of the north tower was rebuilt in the same year in Portland limestone with ashlar from St Mary Major (Figure 7). On the right is the Dean's coat of arms with the Dean, Dean Marcus Knight, with Canon Barmforth in the centre. When I went to see the canon to make some sketches for the carving he produced a much better sketch of me, than I did sketching him, but I was pleased with the result of the carving. The Exeter morris top hat and ribbons, with the crossed

Figures 8 (top), 9 (middle) and 10 (below) (Jo Cox).

swords across the front, is the emblem of the English Folk Dance and Song Society. The fox and the goose are from the folk song and the mask is from a Spanish folk dancer I saw at a folk festival when dancing in Spain with the Exeter Morris Men.

In 1974 the second parapet from the east end of the north aisle was rebuilt (Figure 8). This was a time when I and the masonry team had been to Beer and quarried a quantity of Beer limestone. Some of this was used on the corbel course. The ashlar above was Bath limestone from the back of the old market in Queen St, which was demolished to build the Golden Hart shopping centre. This is one of my favourite groups of carvings. The second from the left was based on my daughter Polly. When she was a young child she collected a bucket full of caterpillars, which she left under a Bramley apple tree in the garden, consequently the caterpillars ate every leaf on the tree, as depicted in the carving to the right of Polly. The carving to the left is the butterfly - the inevitable result! (Figure 9). Then to the right is the Bishop of Crediton, Bishop Wilfred Westall in his favourite wide brimmed hat. Next to the Bishop is Butch, he was a Boston Terrier who was a regular visitor to the close with his owner, Mr Jean Morel. They used to park on the road in the close near to this carving and spend some time both having a smoke and watching the work progress. Butch really did smoke his pipe after it had been lit by his owner. The carving in the corner could not believe it either but it was true! (Figure 10).

Peter Dare Master Mason 1970 - 1986

The Walronds Part 2

Figure 1. The Walronds, Cullompton (John R L Thorp).

Since the last issue of the *Newsletter* the Cullompton Walronds Preservation Trust has been successful in their bid for Heritage Lottery Fund Money. This is to be spent on the capital works needed to put the house (Fig.1) back into good order and develop the scheme for a Vivat Trust holiday let on the upper floors and continued community use on the ground floor. This dual arrangement is intended to provide enough income for the future maintenance of the building from the holiday lets, which will support the ground floor uses.

In advance of the second stage bid for Heritage Lottery Funding, the Trust commissioned a Conservation Management Plan and specialist reports. A joinery report was commissioned from Hugh Harrison, John Thorp provided a background report on the history of the plasterwork and Torquil and Ruth McNeilage of McNeilage Conservation, a detailed report on its condition. Eddie Sinclair provided a polychromy report, Nicholas Durnan, a masonry report and Holy Well a report on the glass.

In a house in poor condition, like the Walronds, it is sometimes said that this kind of report-writing is a case of fiddling while Rome burns and the time and money would be far better-spent just getting on with the essential repairs. In truth, good quality repair and conservation of a historic building that has been neglected is horribly expensive. It can also be difficult to sort out exactly what is essential and what may be cosmetic. It makes good sense to get it right first time, whether it is private money or, in the case of the Heritage Lottery Fund, public funds that are being used. Specialist reports are the way to avoid inadvertent blunders and losses of interesting fabric, to keep costs down by outlining what really does need to be done, how it should best be done, and what may have to be left to be done in the future. Crucially, they also help to predict costs and justify applications for grant-aid.

A general grasp of the major phases of the development of the house is a useful backdrop for specialists. By the time their reports were produced, a draft of the Conservation Management Plan for the Walronds was available. This had arrived at a general understanding of the development

of the house based on observation and documentary history. For example, the very extensive work for Frederick Burrow in 1890, which cost nearly £1,000, provided a clear date for some of the late Victorian alterations and repairs. Burrow (Fig.2) had antiquarian interests and his restoration of what was visibly the most important house in Cullompton, where he worked as a lawyer, was both an act of philanthropy and a badge of his status in the town. The penultimate owners, Miss Yeoman and her niece, June Severn, had left some information about what they had done to the house, including a well-meaning but ill-informed repainting of the hall overmantel.

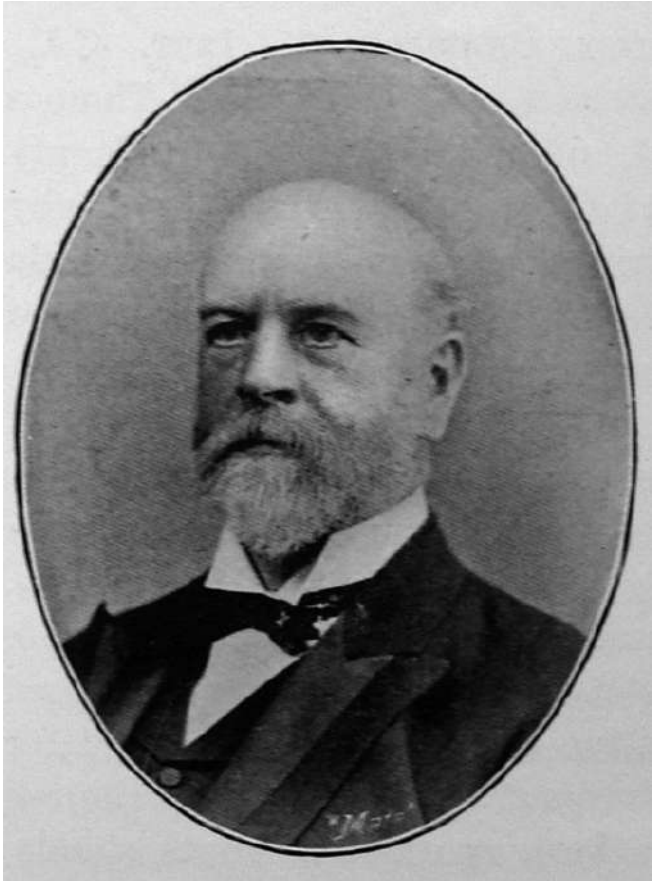


Figure 2. Frederic Burrow in 1907 from J F Snell's *Devonshire* in Mate's County Series.

Thanks to good co-ordination by the Trustees and their architects, Benjamin and Beauchamp, all the specialists were on site together with the architects, on one day. This was a very memorable occasion, generating lively and competitive discussion about interpretation. Some existing ideas evaporated in the face of evidence, others were confirmed and developed by it and new ideas and puzzles presented themselves. This kind of co-operative effort to understand a building, making use of all that specialists can bring to the debate, is one of the greatest pleasures of working with historic buildings.

The following covers only a fraction of what was discovered and subsequently written up and analysed in the joinery, plasterwork and polychromy reports. The masonry and glass reports will have to wait for another DBG Newsletter.

Some aspects of the parlour panelling

Analysis of the parlour panelling (Fig.3) by Hugh Harrison, assisted by Peter Ferguson, produced a wealth of information. Some of this tied neatly in with documentation about Burrow's work on the house. Close observation began to fill the gaps in the paper documentation by finding the evidence of major and frequent minor changes and repairs that took place as owners and occupiers tinkered with the finish of the house to make it suit their particular preoccupations, whether comfort, fashion, history or condition.

Dating and Details

Hugh Harrison identified the parlour panelling as secondary, and not part of the principal 1605 phase of the house. The panelling cuts into the 1605 plaster cornice. It is likely to be c.1660s in origin and both Hugh and John Thorp began to think of comparable examples of overmantel design and marquetry frieze in other houses of high status (Figs.4-7).

One curious aspect of the construction of the 1660s panelling was moulded elements carved out of the solid, rather than applied. This is a technique also found in the parlours at Chevithorne Barton,

Figure 3 (top). The parlour (John R L Thorp). Figure 4 (bottom). Ford House, Newton Abbot (John R L Thorp). Figure 5 (top right). Wyld Court near Axminster (Hugh Harrison). Figure 6 (middle right). A section of the marquetry frieze at the Walronds which has been stripped of its varnish (John R L Thorp). Figure 7 (bottom right). The marquetry frieze at Wyld Court, Hawkchurch, near Axminster (Hugh Harrison)

near Tiverton and Holcombe Court in Holcombe Rogus. It provides small-scale panelling with a proud moulding which may be a precursor of the bolection moulding commonly found in larger matrix panelling of the later 17th and early 18th centuries. There is another interesting example of small panelling constructed in this fashion at No 10, High Street Totnes. This is later in date, being associated with sash windows of early 18th-century style.

Close examination established one major surprise, which was that panelling had at one time extended right across the existing window opening in the east end of the room, which extends right up to the pavement. To date there is no consensus on whether the wings might originally have had blind walls to the street on the ground floor, in the same fashion as Bampfylde House, Exeter (lost to bomb damage) (Fig.8), or whether an original street elevation window had been blocked up to reduce noise and increase privacy, and was later re-opened.

Very extensive repairs had been undertaken to the parlour panelling (Fig.9). One phase of this work was for Burrow, nicely confirmed by a date, June 8th 1890, and a pencil signature on the back of a softwood repair panel that had come adrift on the south wall. 'J. Lay and F. Shapter, Brook Street, Dawlish', are the first names we have for any craftsmen who worked on the Walronds before the late 20th century. During the work done for Burrow it was recorded that a 'secret cupboard' had been found in the parlour. No doubt this was in the section of panelling east of the chimney-piece and replaced in softwood. Documentation had established that in Burrow's day miniatures were hung on the panelling. Pin holes may represent their locations.

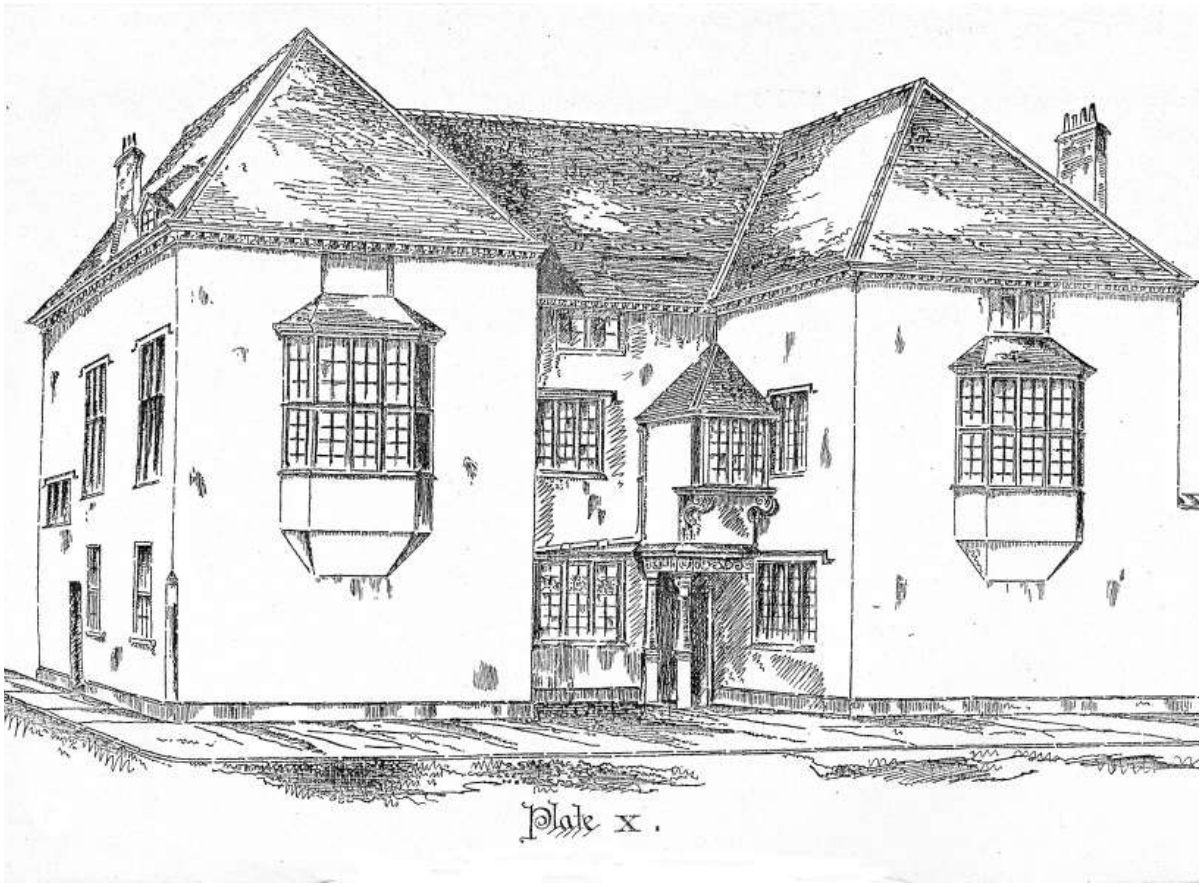


Figure 8. Bampfylde House, the late 16th-century Exeter town house of the Bampfylde family. James Crocker's drawing, published in *Sketches of Old Exeter*, 1886, shows that there were no windows on the front elevation of the ground floor rooms in the wings.

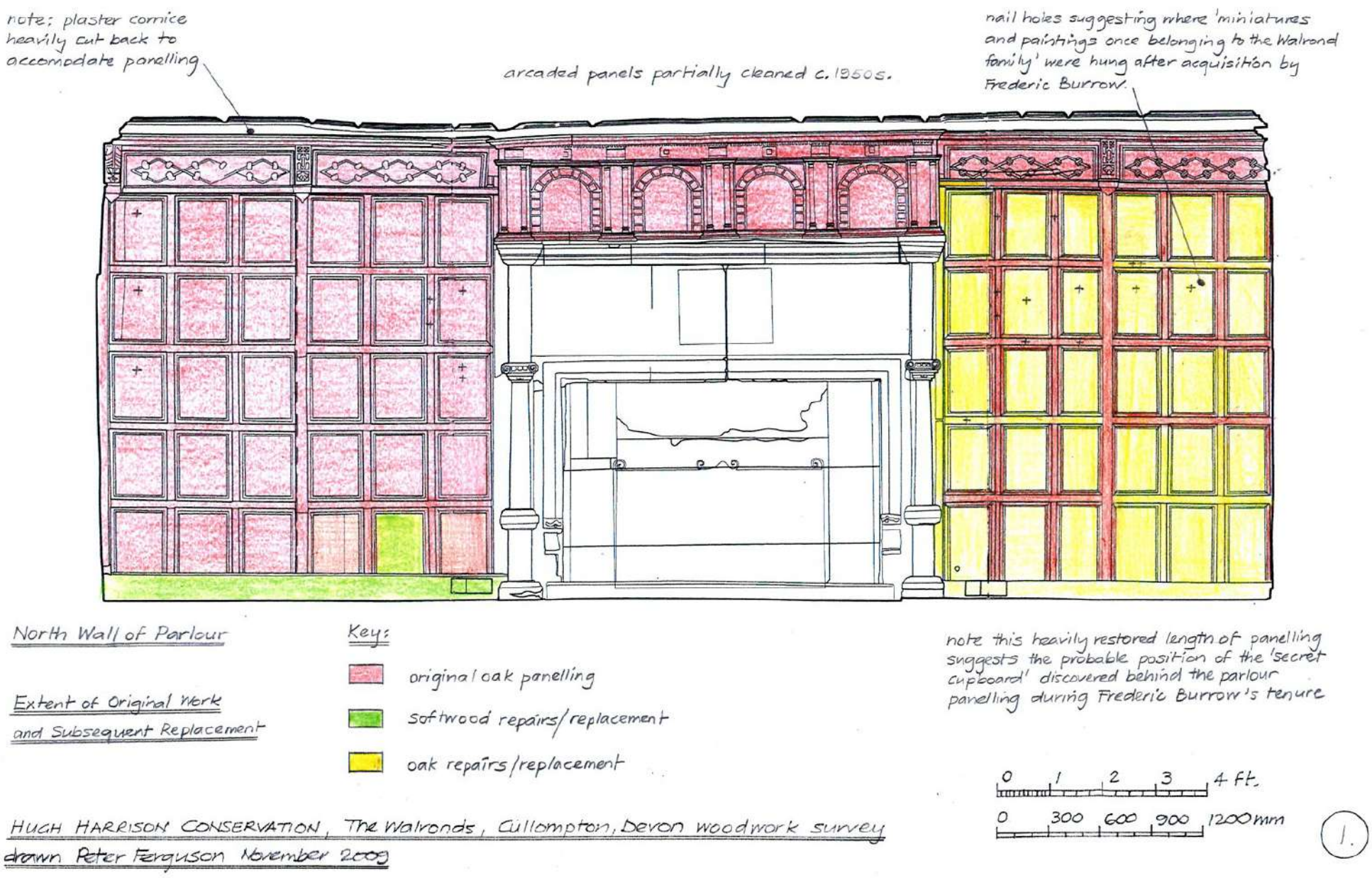


Figure 9. The north wall of the parlour, drawn by Peter Ferguson for Hugh Harrison's joinery report showing the extensive replacement of the panelling.

Finish

The parlour panelling preserves at least two periods of graining. The shutters of the east window retain some very exquisite and delicate walnut graining, date uncertain but perhaps 18th century (Fig.10). A less refined 'tiger stripe' graining was applied to the softwood panels.

Figure 10. Refined walnut graining on one of the parlour shutters. (John R L Thorp).

Plasterwork

John Thorp provided a background and context report for the decorated plasterwork. Introduced from Italy to England via Henry VIII at Nonsuch Palace in the 16th century, courtiers followed the royal fashion established at Nonsuch. Sir John Thynne's Longleat in Wiltshire probably provided the decorative inspiration for much of the decorative detail used in the south-western gentry mansions of the mid 16th century.

Ornamental plasterwork in Devon spread very quickly from the gentry to the urban merchant classes, and thence to the richer farmers on a scale which happens nowhere else in England. Moreover a south-west regional style soon developed, comparing favourably with that from the other British regions. Much of this 16th and 17th century plasterwork has gone, but a remarkable amount survives. The assemblage of plasterwork at the Walronds is an important example of a strong tradition of locally-produced plasterwork art from the period.

Construction

It is interesting that, from the start and for clients of all social classes, it seems that the construction and execution of the Devonshire plasterwork owes all to the native vernacular tradition of lime plaster rather than the continental technique using Plaster of Paris. Where it has been possible to examine the make-up of the ornamental plasterwork it is clear that the earliest examples are pure lime plaster on a lath base, e.g. 10a High Street, Totnes, probably dating from the 1550s or early 1560s. Soon after the technique developed even further towards the vernacular style. All Devon plasterwork from the 1570s or 80s onwards up until the 18th century was made in the following manner. A base coat of cob plaster (clay and sand bonded with copious amounts of cow-hair) was applied to a ceiling clad with riven oak laths (or, occasionally, water reed). Such cob plaster would retain its moisture for a relatively long time, which suited the plasterer when striking out his rib-pattern. The ribs and any other mouldings were then hand-run using the same sort of cob plaster. Then the whole surface, ribs and mouldings, was given a 2-3mm skim of lime plaster, usually mixed with silver or light-coloured sand and bonded with fine hair, such as goat hair. Finally the lime plaster decoration was applied. Most of this was cast from moulds, but the more expensive one-off creations were hand-wrought *in situ*, although these, too, usually include elements of cast decoration.

The principal rooms of the Walronds enjoy ornamental plasterwork, dated in two places to 1605. These rooms were designed for ornamental ceilings from the start. This is illustrated by

the contrast in construction of the upper floor levels over the principal and service rooms. In the principal rooms (as far as can be examined at the second floor level) the beams are plain and square in section. They are accompanied by vertical full-height thin joists, somewhat like up-ended planks, which, when lathed-and-plastered below, provide a flat ceiling as a ground for an uninterrupted display of ornamental plasterwork. The earliest dated example of the use of similar upended plank joists is from 1598 from Exeter Guildhall. This system contrasts with the ceilings over the service rooms of the house which use the more traditional system of chamfered and stopped beams projecting below ceilings hung on square-section joists.

The ornamental plasterwork falls into two basic categories: ceilings with friezes and overmantels. There are three rooms with ornamental plaster ceilings and four with friezes. The hall, which now has a frieze with a plain flat ceiling, may well have had an ornamental ceiling in 1605.

Ceilings with ornamental plasterwork are to be found in the parlour, the principal chamber over the parlour and the Great Chamber or State Bedroom. It would be surprising if there was not also a decorated ceiling in the hall, which preserves a frieze, but there is now a plain flat ceiling there. The surviving ceilings feature overall geometric patterns of moulded ribs. This was a style developed in the mid 16th century, probably from Gothic timber prototypes and in general use throughout England up until c.1640. In the usual way there are cast bosses over the main intersections of the ribs and cast sprays on projecting angles. The friezes comprise repeating lengths of cast pattern, usually set between hand-run mouldings.

Overmantels. There are three ornamental plaster overmantels. The most elaborate is the one over the fireplace in the hall. This takes the form of a strapwork cartouche decorated with ribboned putti and swags of fruit and featuring the armorial bearings of the Peter family impaling Paris with the initials IP, HP (twice) and EP, as noted in the Walrdons, Part I. The same arms and date feature in the overmantel in the Great Chamber, but this is a simpler design. Here the shield is held by a pair of cherubs dressed in Roman garb under a scrolled frame. It includes similar swags of fruit and a lion's head. The third is over the fireplace in the chamber over the hall. This is a much less elaborate affair consisting of a pattern made up from the cast bosses and angle spray motifs used in the ceilings. The main two are good examples of the form. They are largely hand-wrought in lime plaster but are decorated with cast decorative elements.

The Devon context

Devon retains probably the greatest amount and widest variety of ornamental plasterwork from the 16th and 17th centuries of any English county. Devon plasterers kept up with the changing fashions on a national level but quickly absorbed them into a robust regional tradition which consistently displays a very high quality of craftsmanship.

There were clearly a number of family firms or workshops working in Devon in the 16th and 17th centuries, but, with the exception of John Abbott, few names are known. However they can be identified from their work, and particularly the repeated cast elements they used. The moulds for the cast elements were the plasterer's stock in trade, and also their trademark. Without an intensive study of these motifs it seems that there were three or four main 'firms' operating in Devon in the first half of the 17th century alongside several smaller, more local, enterprises.

The single-rib style of the Walronds ceilings is restrained and conservative compared with others of the same date. For instance the main rooms of many grander houses, such as Forde House in Newton Abbot (1610), Grange in Broadhembury and Bradninch House in Uffculme all feature enriched double rib ceiling patterns richly ornamented with a variety of angle sprays and other cast motifs. Maybe these plainer ceilings at the Walronds might be better regarded as the end of the Elizabethan plasterwork tradition built just too early to feature the new, more lavish, Jacobean styles. They are relatively sparsely decorated using only one design of angle spray, which seems

Figures 11a (above) and b (top right) The Walronds Great Chamber ceiling of c.1605 and a detail of one its daisy-like bosses. (John R L Thorp).

Figure 12 (bottom right). The Great Chamber ceiling of Holcombe Court, c.1591, showing the same daisy motif. (John R L Thorp).

to represent hops, a unique example, known to date, of this motif in the county. Most of the bosses are very simple designs, but the ceiling of the Grand Chamber features a distinctive design of a ring of daisy-like flowers containing tiny female faces (Fig.11). Holcombe Court, the Bluett seat in Holcombe Rogus, includes a fine chamber with an overmantel dated 1591 commemorating the marriage of Roger Bluett to Elizabeth Chichester. The ceiling of this room has a simple single rib design which includes similar bosses ringed with daisies containing tiny female faces (Fig.12). This ceiling includes no angle spays although the frieze is decorated with a series of simple sprays. Whilst these do not include The Walronds hop motif exactly they are of similar size and style.

The two main overmantels at the Walronds are significant examples of the type. June Severn and her aunt mistakenly thought the features of the hall represented the Caribbean interests of previous owners of the house. In reality the overmantel is not so specific. Its cartouche design, complete with its putti and swags of fruit comes from European Renaissance sources. For instance, in his book *Art and Decoration in Elizabethan and Jacobean England* (1997) Anthony Wells-Cole identifies the source of a drawing of a similar (but not identical) cartouche featuring ribboned putti and swags of fruit in John Abbott's book as the Florentine painter, Benedetto Battini through an engraving in a Flemish publication of 1553 *(Vigilate Quia Nescitis Dem Neque Horam)*.

Precise cast detail on the overmantel can be recognised on other contemporary overmantels in East Devon. There are two plaster overmantels at Holcombe Court. One is the armorial one in the chamber with the single-rib ceiling described above (it is dated 1591), and another features an Old Testament tableau. Both are framed in strapwork cartouches featuring swags of fruit so similar to those at the Walronds that they probably came out of the same mould. There is another analogous overmantel at Widworthy Barton, which is also dated 1591. Not only does the cartouche feature the same swags of fruit but the apron below has strong parallels with those under the Walronds overmantles – the reeding from the one in the hall and the rosettes from the one in the Great Chamber (Fig.13).

The hall overmantel

Construction

The overmantel in the hall of the Walronds is a key architectural and historical feature, providing both a date for the house and the initials and arms of the family for whom it was built. It is currently in a sorry state with regard both to condition and presentation.

The report by Torquil and Ruth McNeilage considered its structure on the basis of necessarily limited observation and their understanding of other examples. It is modelled and cast in lime plaster, with a lime-rich backing coat containing hair (but surprisingly little hair in comparison with some of the ceilings here) forming the base and a finer lime skim. Cast elements are added in lime plaster. The larger elements would have been supported on an armature, probably of timber. The laths are riven oak, fixed with iron nails. It would have been made *in situ*, with only the cast elements perhaps made off site.

On the basis of comparisons with other examples the structure of the overmantel would be expected to fall broadly into two parts:

1. A projecting sill, formed from a single longitudinal timber to which laths were nailed to carry the plaster mouldings.
2. An upper panel – the overmantel proper – which would consist of vertical studs or a frame to

Figure 13 (right). Comparison of the motif of the bunch of fruit in the hall overmantel at the Walronds (top) with the same motif on the outer bottom corners at Holcombe Court, Holcombe Rogus (centre) and below the vertical scrolls at Widworthy Barton, Widworthy dated 1591. (John R L Thorp).


1605
HP
·IP·
·EP·

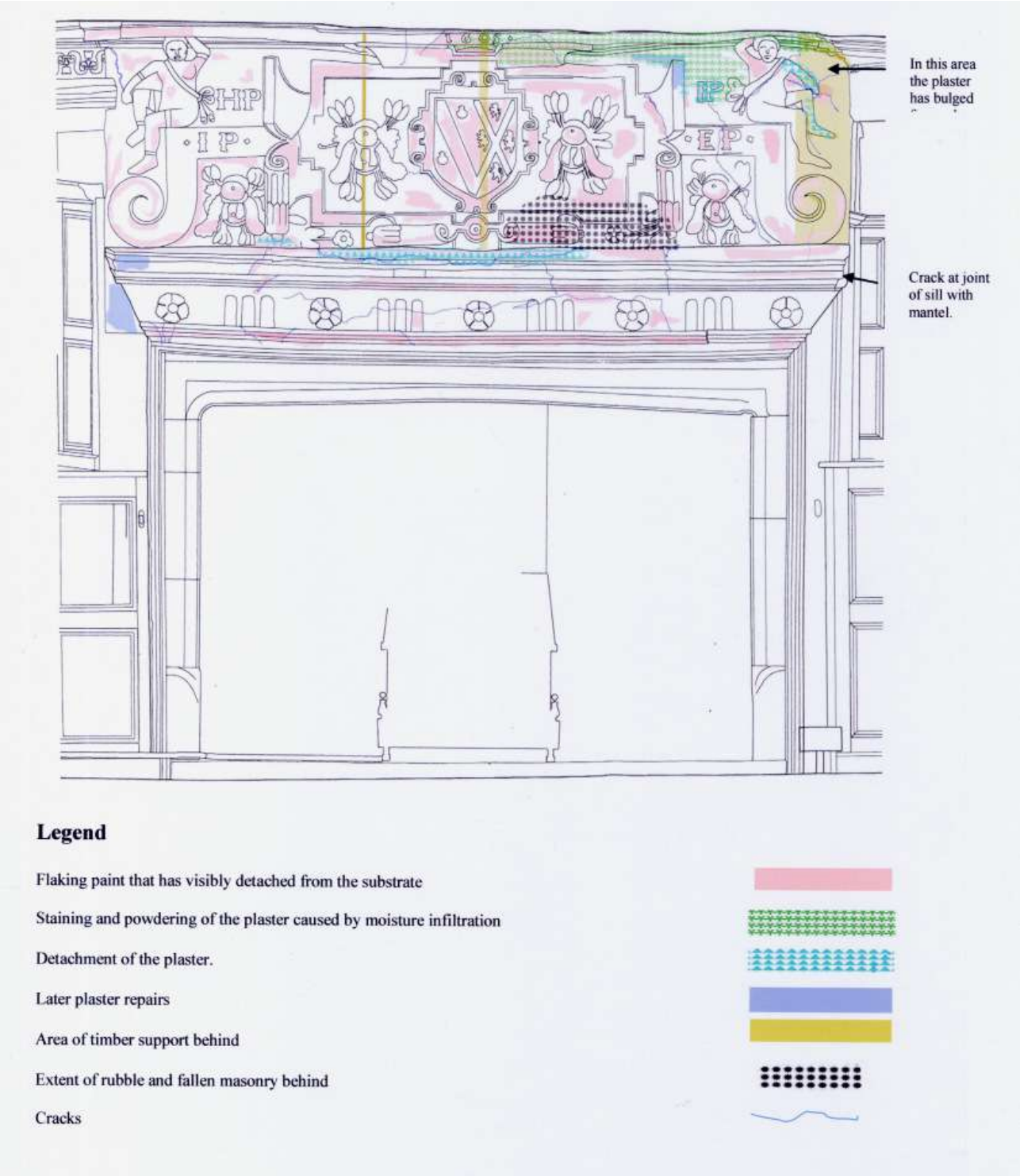


Figure 14. The pattern of paint, plaster and cracking on the hall overmantel from the McNeilage report.

which the longitudinal laths were nailed and, again, the plaster built up in layers to form the strapwork panels; cast elements would then be added to the face, probably on to a dowel or armature of timber or iron.

It was possible, following the removal of a timber panel on the window jamb at the north end, to see into the void behind the Walronds hall overmantel. This void was approximately 30mm at the top, but became 70 or 80 mm lower down. Riven oak laths could be seen running horizontally along the length of the panel, with healthy nibs of plaster squeezed through the gaps between the laths. The laths at the northern end were thin, no more than 10mm wide; those closer to the centre of the panel were perhaps 20-25mm wide.

There was no sign of a central stud on to which the laths could have been fixed, and no sign of a gap in the plaster nibs, indicating where a lost stud might have been. However, a long rod inserted into the northern end of the overmantel did appear to meet a blockage around the centre of the panel, which might represent a stud. In addition, there is a visible vertical member (marked on the drawing) that may have some structural function, but appears to be only circa 12mm in thickness, making it a poor substitute for a true stud. If there are indeed only two small central studs/battens and a board at either end, this would represent fairly minimal support for the lath structure.

The hall overmantel is therefore a lath and plaster panel; laths run longitudinally and are of different widths – those at the north end are significantly thinner than those in the centre. At the north end, these laths are – or were – fixed to a board that runs vertically up behind the panel, and that lower down the wall forms part of the wainscoting. A second obstruction close to the centre of the panel may be another vertical board or stud, to which the laths are fixed. There was not, nor had there ever been, any further fixing for the laths between the edge of the panel and the centre. There is therefore no evidence that any of the upper panel is fixed back into the masonry.

A large longitudinal timber forms the base of the projecting sill. This is decayed at the north end, but sound at the south end. No fixing from this sill back into the masonry was observed, but it may nevertheless exist.

In this context, the general stability of the whole panel is interesting, not to say remarkable. Lath and plaster is, of course, comparatively light in weight and as such requires little in the way of support, but one would expect (as found elsewhere) studs at 600mm centres to which the laths were nailed. It would seem likely that the overmantel is fixed back at the level of the projecting sill, possibly with iron or else with timber built into the stonework behind. The exact nature and condition of any such fixings is difficult to ascertain without more opening up. To an extent, the load of the overmantel is also borne on the timber lintel and jambs of the fireplace surround. The lintel is not a particularly large member, and could not bear great weight for long. In addition, the moulding has been affected by the failure and crushing of the lintel; the northern end has been pushed forward by approximately 30mm. If the fixings have failed and any significant load from the overmantel is indeed bearing down on the moulding, this is a situation of grave concern.

All this establishes the overmantel as a priority for structural repair, but only after having first resolved the problems of water penetration from the back wall of the house.

The McNeilage report also identified the pattern of paint and plaster and surface deterioration on the ovemantel, which was graphically illustrated along with the pattern of cracking (Fig.14).

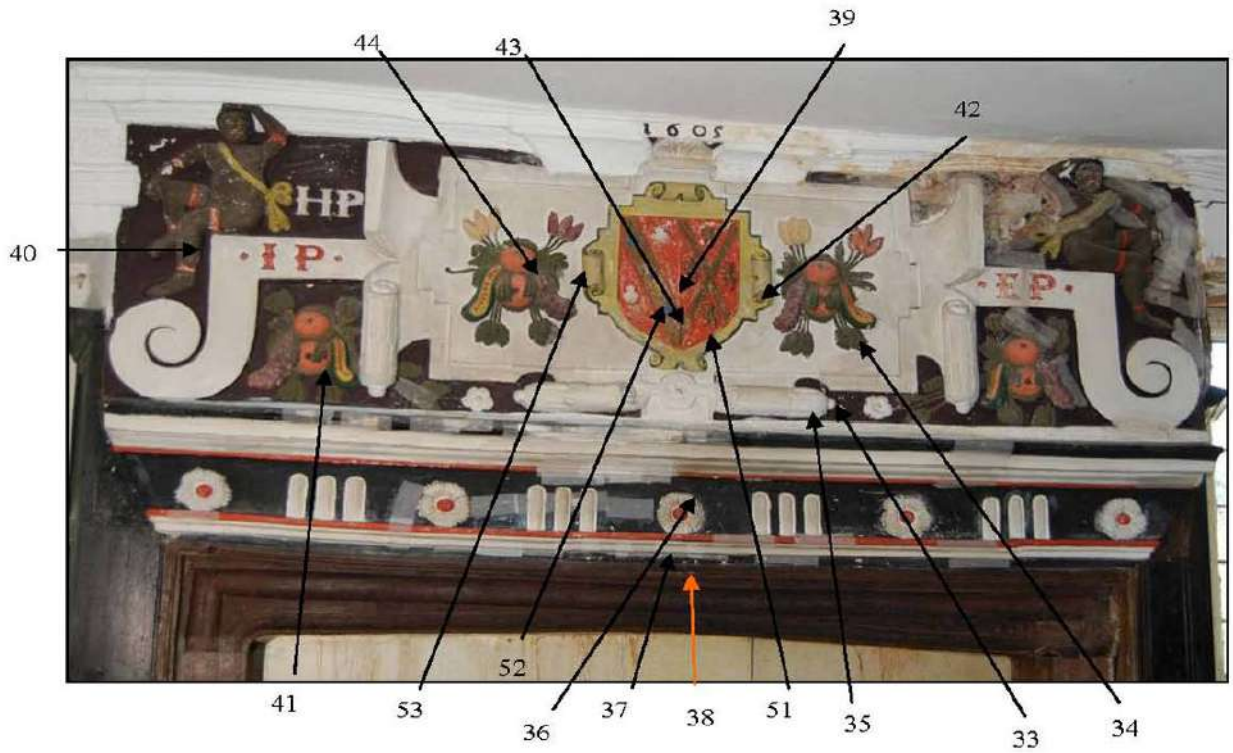


Figure 15. The location of paint samples taken by Eddie Sinclair from the hall overmantel.

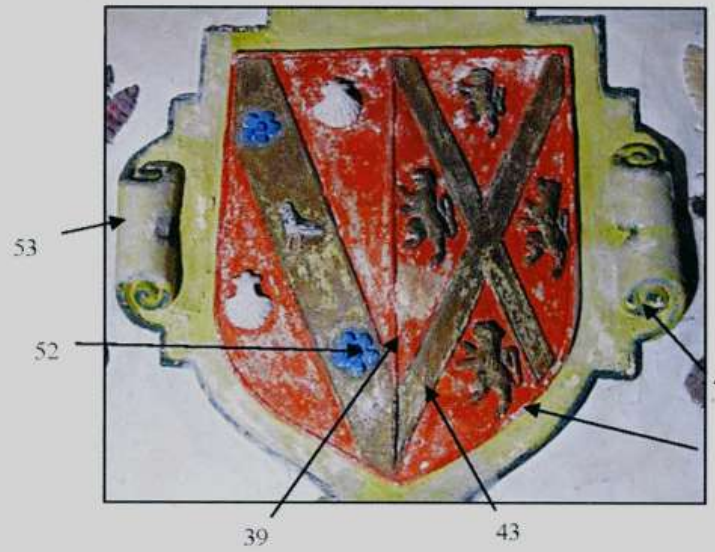
Overmantel colour

One section of Eddie Sinclair's extensive report on colour at the Walronds covered the hall overmantel. It made reference to two useful sources on its 20th century colour. When the Walronds was occupied by a teaching order of nuns, the prospectus for their school, *Our Lady of Dolours Convent School* (undated, but before probably around 1941 – the nuns left in 1942) included a photograph showing the overmantel painted cream or white. When Miss Yeoman and her niece bought the house the overmantel was, in their words, 'covered in layers of paint, yellow on the surface, white and brown below. One layer was grained'. They believed that traces of colour might be found on the coats of arms 'under all that mess' and set to in the winter of 1955. It took them 'three weeks... to wash, scrape, rub with the assistance of paint remover' the overmantel after which they 'found specks, patches, lines of the original colours, just as they had been more than 350 years ago'. June Severn then 'set to work to restore the coat of arms'. It must either have been at this time or later that the putti were painted black and the fruit in bright modern colours.

Samples of paint were first examined unmounted, under a magnification of x25 to ascertain they were representative and coherent and then sent to Catherine Hassall for analysis. Samples were then mounted in resin and polished to reveal the cross-sections which were examined under magnifications of x200 and x500. Paint from key areas was dispersed onto glass slides and the pigments identified under polarising light at magnifications of x1000.

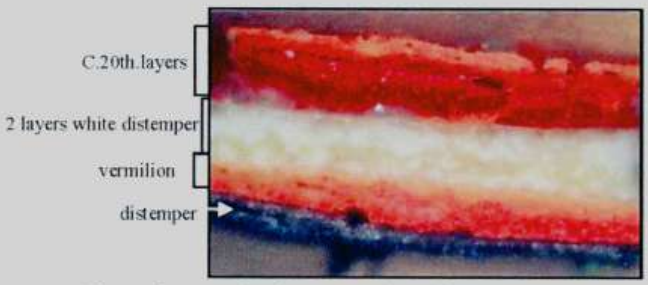
This method of paint analysis made significant contributions to understanding various features in the house. Of the 59 samples taken in the course of five days, 15 taken from the hall overmantel built up a picture of how colour had been used here over time (Figs.15, 16). The summary of what was found on the overmantel is as follows:

- The original decoration involved a red ochre primer followed by what could have been a scheme of marbling. Two samples from the shield with the Peter and Paris arms showed an early vermilion layer.
- After this are at least four off-white distemper layers.



Close-up of central shield and location of paint samples.

Evidence of a polychromy scheme which could be original can be seen in samples 51, 53 (see below) and 42.



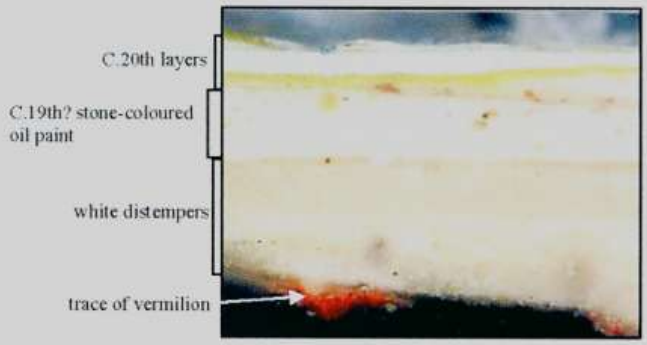
Photomicrograph of cross-section of sample 51
x200

None of the nineteenth-century stone-coloured oil paints are present beneath the modern paints in this sample-presumably they were cleaned off in the 1950s.
The vermilion in this sample and in 53, below, could be original.

The present damp problems are causing the paint medium and the most soluble pigments in the latest paint scheme to flake and powder.
In the photograph above, the plaster beneath the modern red overpaint is stained a dark red. This could be the ghosting of the original decoration.

Analysis has revealed two modern paint schemes.

Sample 52, taken from the blue flower on the shield showed only twentieth-century paint.



Photomicrograph of cross-section of sample 53
x500

Only one of the ?nineteenth-century stone-coloured oil paints is present under the twentieth-century layers. The vermilion here and in 51, above, could be original.

Figure 16. Some of the analysis of the paint samples from the hall overmantel from Eddie Sinclair's report.

- This is followed by five schemes of oil paint, based on lead white. The first oil decoration has a build-up of thick black surface dirt so must have been in place many years. The fourth of these five schemes has a translucent brown organic layer over it, which may be varnish or a layer of glue size.
- Above the lead paints comes, from mid to later 20th century, paints based on zinc white. In sample 36 three of these schemes are found, all white (one of them presumably dating from the photograph in the 1940s school prospectus.
- The final two schemes are both polychrome.

The final lead-based paint may have been applied during the Burrows refurbishment. The brown scheme visible today on the wooden fire surround belongs to this phase of work. This area appears not to have been touched up in the 1950s campaign.

The red ochre and possible scheme of marbling are of particular interest, given the common assumption that overmantels were limewashed white and heraldry usually identified by texture.

This glimpse into extracts of the specialist reports on the Walronds shows just how much they can reveal about the evolution of an individual building and changing tastes in its presentation, as well as providing the essential data for the priorities and nature of repairs. They have an impact on the wider understanding of historic Devon buildings, too. The reports on the Walronds have generated a better understanding of the time-frame of different fashions in panelling (there is some 1605 panelling in the hall) as well as reminding us that, in the same way that plaster workshops of the 17th century can be identified, perhaps the use of particular techniques and decorative motifs might also lead to identifying ateliers of craftsmen at work in wood on different Devon houses.

The Walronds is one house exhibiting what is already known to be an exceptional county tradition of decorated plasterwork. However, the links identified with Holcombe Court indicate a plasterwork atelier in east Devon which may also have worked in west Somerset. Understanding the construction of the hall overmantel is essential for its repair but also reveals vernacular methods of construction that are usually (thankfully) invisible. If the great majority of 16th and 17th century ornamental plasterwork was not coloured, but simply lime-washed, relying on the interplay of light and shadow for its effect there are exceptions to the rule. Coloured plasterwork was found amongst the excavated fragments from an armorial overmantel from Mount Wise, demolished in the Civil War and excavated in the 1980s. At the Walronds we have an example *in situ*. Recovering this early scheme is not a priority in a house where essential repairs in the immediate future will absorb all the funds the Trust has worked so hard to find, but might be a project for the future and would transform the presentation of the pr4incipal room in this exceptional house.

Jo Cox

Sources

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McNeilage, Torquil and Ruth, ‘The Walronds, High Street, Cullompton, Devon, plaster overmantels in the hall, great chamber and small bed chamber; plaster ceilings to the parlour, parlour chamber and great chamber, condition assessment and proposals’ (November 2009).
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Changing times for Dartmoor Longhouses

INTRODUCTION

A short appraisal of the fate of a small number of longhouses on and off Dartmoor within the period of the last 30 years – a span which has seen a considerable decline in farming accentuated by the older generation of farmers retiring, little or no familial continuity, various restraints and constraints and the repercussions of the arrival of Foot and Mouth disease in the winter of 2001 which decimated their stock and hence affected their livelihood. With the exception of the old farmhouse, Crebor, the repair and restoration of the sample of longhouses below has been undertaken in the context of both listing and Dartmoor National Park policies towards longhouses.

BOWDEN, BUCKLAND IN THE MOOR SX727737 in parish of same name

Owners: Mr & Mrs Robertson. Grade II* listed building. Location: Dartmoor.
300m (950') on a steep slope in a sheltered spot opposite Buckland Beacon.

Bowden, a traditional longhouse, was continuously farmed by previous owners Mr & Mrs Stone from 1950 to 1996. It was sold in September 1997 together with 15 acres to the present owners who moved in in 1998. The neighbouring farm, Ruddycleave, is still worked by the son and grandson of Mr and Mrs Stone.

The house part dates back at least to the 15th century. The wide traditional cross passage remains. Substantial smoke-blackened roof timbers can be seen, indicating that it had begun as an open hall house. The shippon end was converted in part in the late 1700s to take in a kitchen with hearth. The remainder of the shippon is not in use by animals. The floor above has not been converted and is used as a store.

In the 18th century or 19th century it is possible that the house was extended uphill to form an extra tenement, the less robust roof timbers bearing carpenters' chisel marks [though interestingly out of sequence and thus probably reused].

The 1950s fireplace has now been removed to reveal the 16th century hearth, the Victorian elements have been taken out and the interior updated and restored.

The old cobbles in the yard have been removed and relaid.

The farm has retained several substantially built farm buildings, most of which are Grade II listed, including a cattle shed (cow house), pigs' house, and threshing barn (latterly used by Mr Stone's sheep & lambs). At the present time, Mrs Robertson keeps ponies.

From photographs of Bowden taken during these two very different pre- and post-1996 eras of farming and restoration, externally the longhouse and the yard remain very much the same.

Figure 1. The front elevation of Bowden in 1995 and 2011. The slurried slate roof has been replaced and renewed using small graduated slates and without losing the bow in the ridge that indicates the great age of the building. (Jenny Sanders).

Figure 2. The rear of Bowden in 1995 and 2011. The 20th century windows have been replaced with small-pane casements. (Jenny Sanders).

Figure 3. The hall fireplace in the 1950s reopened to reveal the 16th century lintel and jambs. (Jenny Sanders).

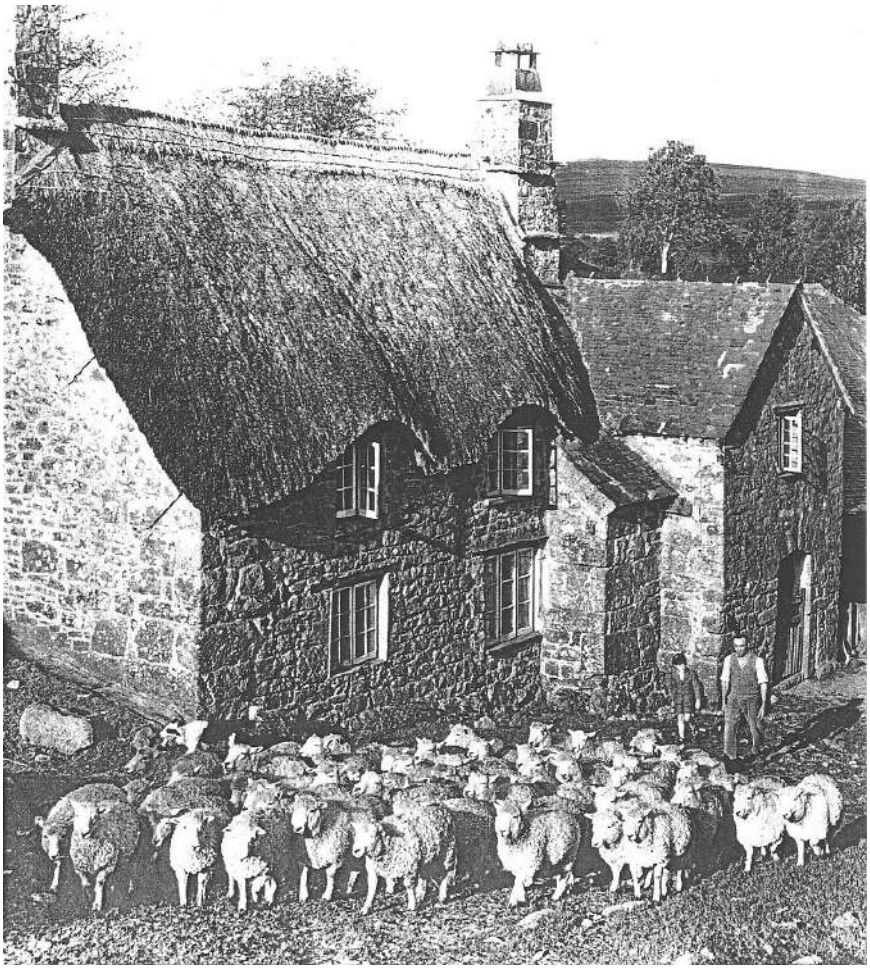


Figure 4. The presence (or absence) of livestock defines the setting of the architecture of a Dartmoor longhouse. Mr Stone and Fernley with a flock of sheep (unknown source) and Mrs Stone with geese. (Jenny Sanders).

CORNDONFORD, SX 693745 WIDECOMBE PARISH

Owner: Mrs Williams. Grade II* listed building. Location: Dartmoor
300m (950') on a slope and sheltered partly by Corndon Down

Figure 5. The front elevation of the house in 1975 and 2002 (and see front cover, photographed by the late Elizabeth Gawne). The revived granite paving to the yard is an important part of the architecture of the farmhouse. (Jenny Sanders).

Annie Williams purchased Corndonford in the 1990s. Before her arrival the house part had been sadly neglected for a considerable period and was no longer occupied by the owner, although he lived nearby. The shippon end, however, was used by his cattle. It had been a busy vibrant farm in the past.

Today it is again a working farm of 80 acres. Annie no longer has her own two shire horses to look after, but three shires belonging to a friend and sheep and cattle to 'keep' on behalf of other local farmers. She also has time for her lovely garden which has blossomed over the years she has been there. Her daughter, Charlotte, lives in a converted barn in the back yard and is fully involved with the Dartmoor Hill ponies.

Corndonford is believed to have started out as a late-medieval longhouse. It has been gradually added to in the past with a stair turret and later an outshot (dairy), and rearranged in the cross-passage area to form two small rooms at the lower end. A prestigious porch was added in 1718 bearing the initials RW.

The shippon remains unconverted and still has its cattle standings. It appears to have been rebuilt at some stage, probably in the 19th century, as its line differs slightly from that of the house.

Corndonford's two yards are both constantly busy and bustling and the many farm buildings are all in use. One of the buildings, a threshing barn, is Grade II listed and backs onto the front yard where there are traces of a horse whim (horse-engine house). Another lies across the road and is also Grade II listed.

The transformation of this farm has been remarkable: the photographs help to show the extent to which the property has recovered.

Figure 6. The simple blacksmith-made iron and wooden door bolt (still in use!) is the kind of vernacular feature that is easily lost in a restoration. (Jenny Sanders).

Figure 7. The hall pre- and post-restoration. (Jenny Sanders).

Figure 8. Annie Williams has created a fine garden at Corndonford, seen here before 1994 and in 2002. (Jenny Sanders).

THE OLD FARMHOUSE, CREBOR, GULWORTHY TAVISTOCK SX 457725
Location: off Moor at 114m (375') on a fairly steep slope between the Tavy & Tamar valleys. 3.14 acres

First mentioned in 1327, this property has been included because of the merit of its conversion. It was almost unrecognisable as a dwelling before a major restoration process began in 1996, having been virtually abandoned since the new farmhouse was built at the beginning of the 20th century.

An historic house in the vicinity of Crebor mine, it had some elegant features worth preserving including two staircase turrets of different centuries (16th and 17th) with stairs turning inwards towards each other as they rose up, a shoulder-headed doorway and a huge hearth, and a small Georgian fireplace clinging to the wall of a floorless chamber. The lower end had been used mainly for sheep and poultry and here the has architect created a galleried landing and bedrooms.

Hayes Barn, attached to the house, was also converted into a dwelling at the same time.

Figure 9. Crebor in 1985 and 1997. (Jenny Sanders).

Figure 10. The lower end has been converted as part of the house with a new staircase introduced. (Jenny Sanders).

SCRIBBLES, CHADDLEHANGER SX 465777 Parish of LAMERTON

Owners: Mr & Mrs Roberts. Grade II* listed building.
Location: off the Moor, at 182m (600'), on very steep slope in part of a field.

Dating back to at least the 14th or 15th century, if not earlier, this attractive longhouse has quite a history, having been converted into a cattle house way back beyond living memory.

Generations had passed before the true identity of the 'barn' was discovered. The roof had been blown off in a gale in the 1980s but another decade passed before the building was put on the market.

It was purchased by Mr Roberts in 1993 who has undertaken most of the restoration himself. When repairing the roof commenced some old thatch was found which sparked off the research into the background of the building. The arched entrance door seen in the photograph is certainly remarkable for a cattle house! Roof trusses of new green oak were also made by the owner. By 1995 he had largely repaired the stonework. This is local hard sandstone with lacings of thin stone chippings and some pierces of quartz. In 1998 it was finally thatched.

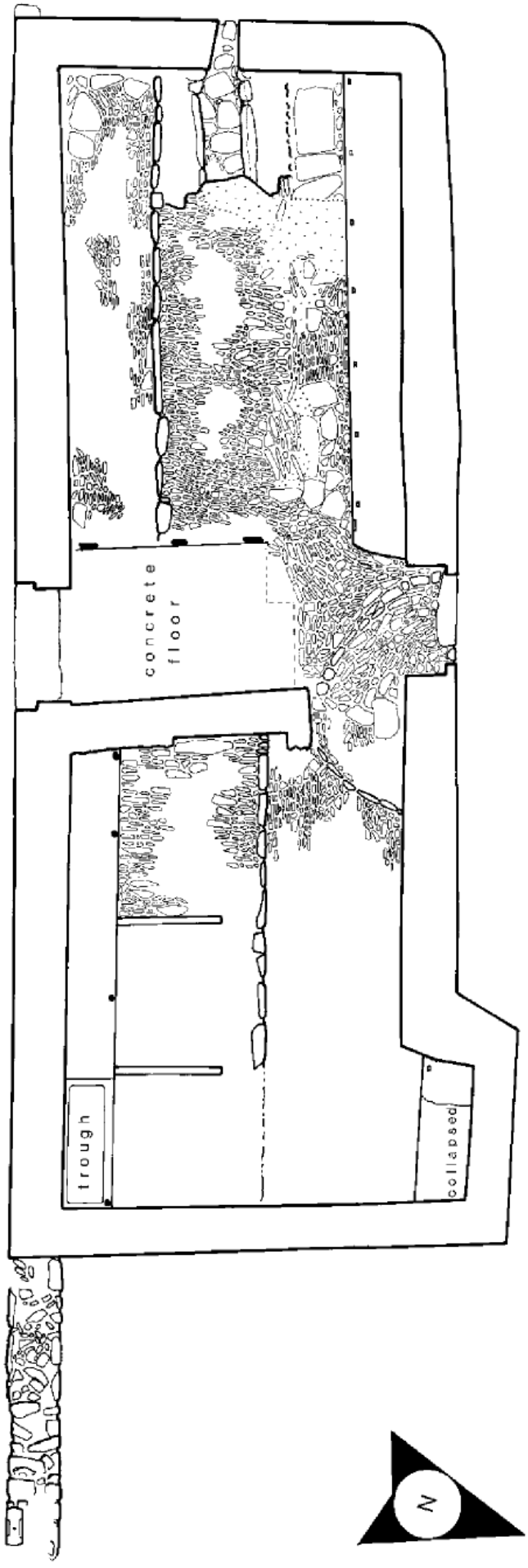
As John Thorp noted in an earlier DBG Newsletter, from the outset Dartmoor National Park explained that they would implement their policy of insisting that unconverted shippon ends of longhouses remain unconverted and in this case, that they would refuse any application to enlarge the building. The result of this is a very small house which is not overwhelmed by additions. The central drain in the shippon end, a key feature for identifying a longhouse, had been later amended to an off-centre drain, presumably when cattle became too big for two rows to be tethered tail-to-tail (or perhaps it was recognised that they needed more space) and only one row could be fitted in the shippon. (Thorp, J R L, 'A Longhouse at Lower Chaddlehanger' *DBG Newsletter* Number 9, October 1990, pp.7-12)

Figure 11. In common with many old farmhouses, sited for shelter and access to water, Scribbles sits comfortably today in the contours of the landscape. (Jenny Sanders).

Figure 12. Scribbles in 1991 and after restoration as a house. (Jenny Sanders).

Figure 13. The Hurdwick stone medieval doorway before and after restoration. (Jenny Sanders).

Figure 14. The lower end is still identifiable as a longhouse shippon from the large central drain hole. (Jenny Sanders). The drawing (right) shows two phases of drain in the shippon end to the right, one centrally located and one off-centre. (JRL Thorp, Keystone, 1990).


concrete
floor
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N

HIGHER DITTISHAM, WALKHAMPTON SX 536705 Walkhampton Parish

Owners: Mr & Mrs Miall. Grade II listed building.
Location: Dartmoor. 186m (600'+) at a meeting point of ancient tracks, the old Church Way passing by it. On a steep slope. 16 acres when purchased in the 1990s.

Earliest mention: 1281.

This interesting house has had a chequered life like many others, but it has been rescued.

The oldest range was a longhouse, with an open hall, and with the shippon on a slightly different alignment to the dwelling part. A cross-wing at the upper end dug well back into the hillside, (shown in photo), was added in 1663 bearing the date and initials RPM (Richard Maddocke) high above the entrance door (and slightly to one side). Permission had to be sought to reinstate window and the date-stone. The door apparently served the old house and was brought from the original cross passage to the wing. A stair turret thought to have been added at the same time leads up to a solar on the first floor.

When a new house was built close by at the turn of the 19th century the old house was converted into cottages and farm buildings. Later in the mid 1900s it became a cattery and kennels.

By the 1990s it was in an extremely sad state and a full-scale restoration process began to take place, which entailed moving many, many tons of earth - a daunting task. Damp had penetrated over the centuries into the rear wall where the inner room and later wing were platformed into the hillside. There were also various finds, including parts to mullion windows, and when the hall floor was lifted a slate-lined sink was discovered several inches beneath with its outlet through the wall into the cross passage.

Outside there is a large barn c.1900 and opposite this a former piggery. Behind the house there is also a beautiful garden.

In 1994 Mr and Mrs Miall were ready to move in and an open day was held to celebrate the forthcoming occasion.

Figure 15 (left). The medieval hall and shippon were in the right hand front wing, the shippon reduced in height by the date of the 1993 photograph (top left). The smaller 1993 photographs at the bottom show the building during works including digging out the ground to rear of the cross-wing. Figure 16 (above). The hall fireplace before and after restoration. (Jenny Sanders).

YOULDITCH SX 523768 PETER TAVY PARISH

Owners: Mr & Mrs P Smith. Grade II listed building
Location: Dartmoor 300m (950') on a steep slope overlooking villages and the far countryside, with 1.05 acres of land.

This moorland farmstead lies at a critical height for the viability of farming today, with very few Dartmoor working farms exceeding the 350m (1000') mark.

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Youlditch was built in the 17th century as a traditional longhouse, with hall, cross-passage and shippon, and later increased by piercing through the thick wall at the upper end to form a kitchen (dairy) reached by 2 slate steps. The hall's proportions are modest and cosy, it has a large hearth with an impressive granite lintel, most likely hewn and brought down from the moorland above. The floor has slate flagstones, which were removed and replaced during renovation. The beams are chamfered with traces of straight-cut stops. The cross-passage between dwelling part and lower (shippon) end was a generous width and up until the 19th century a right of way passed through it.

The last farmer to farm Youlditch with its 46 acres was Mr John (Jannie) Phillips. His family had owned it and lived there for around a century or more. After John Phillips' death the property lay unoccupied until at least 1975 with everything remaining as it was last used.

From an aerial photograph taken in 1968 the property looked neat with a well-tended, productive vegetable garden. In 1975 it looked sad and derelict.

After a succession of owners who made some modifications to the property, it was purchased in 2003 by Mr and Mrs Smith who have made a huge impact on the house and the land belonging to it. Extensive and lengthy repair work to the exterior was carried out with the excavation of the hillside at the upper end. Reclaimed Delabole slate was used for the roof and solar panels were inserted in the roof at the lower end. The old porch has a modern replacement, the damp problem was solved with under floor drains and other methods, and the cross passage and kitchen were given limestone floors allowing more light to enter the house. Most of the timber work is in oak.

And thus, the working farm per se has disappeared and a totally different scene greets the eye.

The owners' one acre of land is used – in Mr Smith's words 'purely as a domestic hobby' - and cultivated for their own use.

Figure 17. Youlditch in 2004 and 2011 showing the lower end remodelled and solar panels. (Jenny Sanders).

Figure 18. The lower end in 1976, 1990 and 2011. (Jenny Sanders).

Figure 19. Two-seater privy in 1975, one for a child and one for an adult. Located to the right of the shippon, see figure 18, top photograph. (Jenny Sanders).

Figure 20. The interior in 2011 showing the shippon end converted from animal use to sitting room with amazing views over the countryside. (Jenny Sanders).

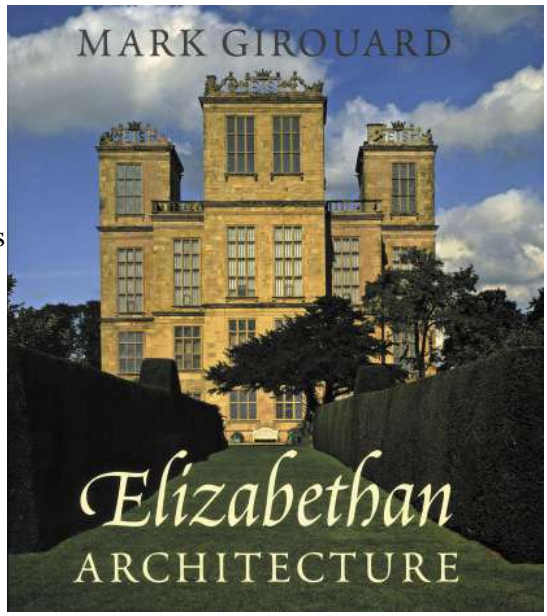
Figure 21. The cross passage in 2011. The glazing flanking the door and pale limestone floor were designed to bring more light into the passage. (Jenny Sanders).

SUMMARY

All of the above houses have been regenerated to an exceptional degree by their new owners and it is uplifting to know that these historic buildings have been brought back to life and that their future seems assured for the time being.

Jenny Sanders

A Tremendous Book



If you want an architectural book that is a feast for the eye while at the same time being a definitive essay, this is the one for you. Mark Girouard's 2009 work on the architecture of the greater Elizabethan house is a huge work in every sense, being 516 pages long with no less than 607 (predominantly coloured) illustrations and weighing over seven pounds. It is sumptuously produced by Yale University Press and astoundingly low-priced at its advertised £45, although amazingly it is readily available for considerably less through certain outlets.

Its full title is *Elizabethan Architecture: its Rise and Fall 1540 -1640* and it has received such ecstatic reviews from doyens of architectural history, Nicholas Cooper and Andrew Saint, that it would be presumptuous of me to do much more than to quote from what they have said. Inter alia 'this is the fullest account of Elizabethan building that has ever been published and perhaps the fullest that ever will be' and 'no-one involved in the study of the period at whatever level will be able to do without it' (Cooper), and 'some books are so rich and various that a review can hardly do justice to them. This is one of them. What is rarer than its range of learning and illustration is Girouard's mastery of the material. ... When he pronounces he convinces. Its great subject, so long neglected as a whole has now been treated definitively and illuminatingly. Here is the best monograph on English architecture since John Summerson's *Georgian London*.'(Saint)

Gatehouse at Hardwick Hall, Derbyshire
Credit line: National Trust © NTPL / Martin Charles

Hardwick Hall, Derbyshire.jpg:
Credit line: National Trust © NTPL / Graham Challifour

The ten chapters define the scenario in which these extraordinary buildings were constructed, analyse the process of their construction, look at particular designers and the grandee clients who commissioned them, and above all describe the architecture of the buildings. The wonderful series of illustrations are sufficient justification on their own for acquiring the book but inevitably one moves from these to the text which explains the whole context and nature of the buildings. Only four Devon buildings have a mention which is perhaps an interesting reflection on the relative poverty of grand architecture in this county, but such a provincial attitude should not be taken to such a magnificent book. If your book shelf is strong enough to carry it, go out and get one!

Peter Child

Website Extracts 2010-2011

2010 AGM at Sandford
November 2010

Seventy members and guests participated in the DBG's 2010 AGM held in the Parish Hall, Sandford, roughly twice the usual attendance. Glorious autumn weather was a welcome complement to an excellent and varied day.



The business format included a report by the Secretary, Peter Child, on last year's events followed by Lyn Auty, Treasurer and Membership Secretary.

Lyn reported that members have increased to 195 and noted that a number of learned institutions have retained their memberships for more than twenty years. As voted at last year's AGM, membership fees will increase as from January 1st to £15 for a single and £25 for a joint. Banker's orders need to updated, please!

The DBG is in a sound financial position despite a second year of deficit operations. The situation should improve further with the increased income from membership. Next year will involve exceptional expenses due to celebrations and publications surrounding our 25th Anniversary but these are within our financial forecasts.

Peter's report included the AGM at Torre Abbey and the afternoon tour guided by Michael Rhodes, Head of Torbay Museum services, and Paul Richold of the architectural firm Architecton who have been both restoring existing fabric and installing new facilities in a modern idiom. The summer outing to Plymouth spanned numerous centuries with lectures by David Evans on military architecture, Jo Cox on the 19th century local architect John Foulston and Jeremy Gould on Plymouth's post WW II city planning and redevelopment necessitated by the extensive damage by the blitz. The afternoon tour included the modern areas, the Elizabethan House and garden, and ended in the Citadel by kind permission of the MoD, with a fascinating postscript of a walk along the Hoe whose sombre war memorials and monuments were balanced by warm sun and families frolicking.

Peter also reported on the business of the Committee and noted that, with the departure of Robert Waterhouse to Jersey and the resignation of Ann Adams due to ill health, additional members are needed. He listed a number of areas in which the DBG had been active and effective from commenting on proposed government legislation (PPS 5) to supporting HLF grant applications (Walronds in Cullompton). He regretted, however, that the DBG has not been as active as we might wish in the area of casework and asked those present to keep us informed of any building matters of concern.

Brief reports on the website and the 2010 Newsletter were followed by thoughts about the DBG's

possible 25th anniversary celebration. Preliminary suggestions are for an afternoon at Poltimore, near Exeter, to include tours of the house and garden, and a series of talks, to be followed by a birthday party. Members were asked for any memorabilia, reminiscences, photographs…anything really, about the DBG's early days. These could form part of an extended Newsletter.



Three talks followed the formal AGM business including John Thorp on the architecture of Sandford and vicinity, Robert Waterhouse on Dowrich and Mary Rose Somerville on the research project focusing on the bench ends at St. Swithun's Church, all the subject of our visits after lunch. The local community, especially Michael Lee at Dowrich and Jim King of the Sandford Heritage Group, could not have been more welcoming and generous of their time and knowledge. The sun shone, the sites visited were of the highest quality and interest…yet another memorable DBG outing! Many thanks to our speakers and all who contributed.



New Palace Theatre
January 2011

On 19th January the *Plymouth Herald* published an article regarding the very poor condition of the New Palace Theatre on Union Street.

The theatre is a Grade II* building and has been on the Victorian Society's list of the most endangered and best Victorian and Edwardian buildings in the UK. Designed by William Arber of the London based firm J T Wimperis and Arber, it opened in 1898 with seating for 2,500 in an opulent and highly decorated colourful interior. Quickly repaired after a fire, it reopened in 1899 as the New Palace Theatre of Varieties and for more than sixty years offered a wide range of theatrical and variety entertainment.

In 1961 it became a bingo hall then in 1983 the Academy Disco. It was closed down in 2006 after a drugs raid; the owner was sent to jail. Thereafter the building quickly deteriorated.
Local MP Oliver Colvile met Dr Simon Thurley, chief executive of EH, to express his deep concern about the state of the building. He was accompanied by local businessman Tam Macpherson. Thurley explained that EH would fund 80% of the costs of making the building

watertight and secure. But with local authority budgets so stretched already there is little hope that any balance could be found from public coffers. A sustainable future use needs to be identified, not to mention restoration funding sought.

The building is far too good an example of its style and type, and its place in the sociology of Plymouth too important, for its degradation to be allowed to continue.

Those interested in further information about the New Palace Theatre and its context might consult *Guide to British Theatres 1750-1950*, Earl, John and Michael Sell (eds.) (Theatres Trust, 2000).

Web address for the listed building description:http://www.britishlistedbuildings.co.uk/search?q=palace+theatre+plymouth
Web address for a photograph of the theatre: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Union_Street,_Plymouth

New Publications
January 2011

Two new publications have come to our attention. One which will be of particular interest to those who came to the Summer Conference in Plymouth is Jeremy Gould, *Plymouth – Visions of a Modern City*, published by English Heritage, £7.99 (available June 2011).
Jane Passmore, *Exeter's Almshouses*, is published by M J Passmore at a cost of £7.95; more details available on the Westcountry Studies Library Newsletter.

Alf Howard
March 2011

In Memoriam – Alfred Howard and the cob building revival.

It was with great sadness that the Devon Buildings Group learned of the recent death of Alf Howard at his home at Morchard Road in mid-Devon.

Mr Howard, as he preferred to be known, played a crucial and pivotal role in the revival of traditional cob construction for both new build and historic building repair. As a young man in the 1930s Alf worked in his family building business, alongside older men, some of whom had probably been working with cob since around the turn of the century. At the outbreak of war in 1939 Alf enlisted in the Royal Engineers and was sent to northern France with the BEF. He was evacuated from Dunkirk in May 1940, a fact of which he was always very proud. He later served in Italy and was present at the battle for Monte Cassino. After the war Alf returned to the family business and also opened a timber yard, which became very successful.

In 1980 he was asked by Down St Mary Parish Council to construct a shelter in the village for children waiting for the school bus. This attractive little building in the village centre was a gift from Alf Howard to the Parish Council. Apart from its roof timbers of seasoned oak, the most remarkable features of the building were its walls, of mass cob built off a cut stone plinth. This was the first example of a new cob building in Devon since the 1930s. It created a lot of interest locally and was featured in the local press. Alf's principal motivation was in keeping the cob building tradition alive by 'showing them how it was done'. Within a fairly short time, once news

of his activities spread, Alf was approached by some Devon conservation officers, SPAB and English Heritage with requests to give practical demonstrations of this ancient building technique. He subsequently appeared on both local and national TV programmes, and travelled to various sites, some of which were outside Devon, to give advice on cob construction. Within Devon he gave influential advice at meetings of the Devon Rural Skills Trust.

Having seen many serious cob building failures in his time, Alf was also interested in developing non-invasive, conservative repair techniques and putting them into practice. Over twenty years later, these repair methods are in widespread use by architects, engineers and surveyors in the South West and in other areas of Britain. Alf had a keen intellect but was, above all, a master craftsman, with a profound knowledge of traditional building methods and materials, The lore and wisdom of Alf Howard, his quiet humour, his omnipresent flat cap (winter and summer pattern) and his roll-up ciggies, will long be remembered by all who knew and worked with him, with respect and affection.

Larry Keefe, Devon Earth Building Association

Exeter Archaeology Closes Down
April 2011

We very much regret to hear that Exeter City Council is closing Exeter Archaeology from 1 April 2011, with 13 permanent staff made redundant. Its closure will represent an enormous loss to the South-West's professional archaeological and historic building expertise. There will be no comparable expert body left in Devon.

The Unit was set up in 1970 and from the first was unusual in tackling standing buildings (initially something EH disapproved of; I remember our being moved out of buildings and back onto site to appear to be digging when an EH visit was due). Between 1971 and 1990 the Unit recorded 57 buildings in Exeter, seven in Topsham, and others in Newton Abbot, Dartmouth, Silverton and elsewhere. Many of these projects were carried out as major historic structures underwent demolition and are therefore unique records. A few were published (Dartmouth, Silverton, Exeter Guildhall, Bowhill) but it was hoped that a volume drawing together the work in Exeter would be produced. This never materialized, so most of these projects can only be seen from the magnificent collections of large line drawings, phased plans and photographic records, currently held at Exeter Archaeology's premises.

A still larger number of recording projects has been tackled in the last 20 years, when the Unit retained a high reputation for meticulous recording in the county and beyond; a selection of its work on town houses, industrial buildings, churches and rural buildings will be seen in the *Proceedings of the Devon Archaeological Society* and elsewhere.

Following problems in recent years which brought sharp reductions in staff, the Unit has found it increasingly difficult to compete for commercial contracts as cheaper archaeological bodies have arisen.

Casework

Introduction
Long term members of the DBG will remember early Newsletters devoting a large amount of coverage to various casework items which were dealt with by committee members. A summary list of the approximately 150 sites covered appears under Publications/Casework Studies of this website and, until 1994, narrative coverage appears in the relevant Newsletter. In many instances, but not all, the Group's views were instrumental in a conservation-led solution being achieved. Inevitably in some instances development pressures won; we live with the results.

In his Secretary's report at the 2010 AGM Peter Child stressed the importance of our representations at planning approval stage. He expressed concern that fewer planning applications seem to be coming to our attention and urged members to contact us if they are aware of inappropriate proposals. As a way of highlighting the issue we have introduced a new section of the website for Casework and plan to up-load individual cases, our representations, and, if appropriate, the subsequent decision taken. Because everything that appears on the website will form a part of the subsequent Newsletter, the information will have both more immediate access and an historical annual record. Please take an active part in making our views and efforts an effective part of the planning approval process.

Case 1: 10/1906/03. Proposed Redevelopment 69-73 Sidwell Street.
The Devon Buildings Group wish to object to this application for the following reasons:

1. The proposal removes completely nos 70-73 Sidwell Street and replaces them with a single block with a unified design. The site lies within the St Sidwell's Conservation Area and the buildings in question are described in the Council's Appraisal and Management Plan of the area as: 'buildings that make a positive contribution to the character of the area'. While these buildings have suffered much alteration over time, they still recognisably retain their essential early 19th century form of straightforward well-proportioned three-storey town houses, rendered with sash windows. They also constitute part of a continuous row of houses of similar period and therefore have high group value. There must therefore be a prima facie case for their retention because they contribute significantly to the character of this part of the conservation area. It is surprising that no Statement of Significance by which the importance of the buildings can be assessed has been submitted with the application as is now required by PPS 5.

2. The design of the replacement block is of poor quality and although it tries to maintain the nature of the buildings which it replaces, it fails in that [a] the pairing of the upper windows in a characteristically institutional form clashes with the conventional wider spacing of domestic windows in the other existing buildings in the terrace [b] the inclusion of very large dormer windows adds a top-heavy appearance to the building, (the proposed similar dormer in the roof of no 69 will look completely out of place in this attractive period building) [c] the roof line is continuous in contrast to the present buildings which enjoy different roof heights adding to the interest of the street scene.

3. While the Devon Buildings Group's primary remit is with the conservation of existing buildings, the poor design quality of the proposed new block behind the street frontage is also a matter of concern. In particular the extensive use of flat and mono-pitch roofs gives the building a clumsy appearance. This building will not make 'a positive contribution to the character and local distinctiveness of the historic environment' as required by PPS 5 [HE7.5]. It will in fact detract from the quality of this part of the conservation area.

For these reasons the Devon Buildings Group respectfully request Exeter City Council to reject this application.

Notwithstanding these objections, Exeter City determined to approve this application at their meeting on 17.1.11. However it was subsequently discovered that English Heritage should have been consulted on the proposal under the statutory requirements for large developments in conservation areas. The decision was put on hold until the Historic Areas Advisor for English Heritage had provided an excellent and wide-ranging report. This should have changed the decision to refusal but its impact was compromised by arriving so late in the planning process – not the fault of English Heritage. Jo Cox spoke on behalf of the DBG committee for the permitted five minutes allotted for objectors but the final decision was for approval. So it is farewell to three modest Georgian buildings in the St Sidwell's Conservation Area, a very disappointing outcome.

Case 2: Exeter: Smythen Street [r/o 102-104 Fore St].
This building, a 17th century Exeter townhouse, was investigated and recorded by Exeter Archaeology about ten years ago in the process of its careful repair which was carried out with grant aid. It is unlisted but is on the Local List. The current scheme extraordinarily represents virtually a total demolition and rebuild of the previously conserved building. The DBG has objected.

Case 3: East Worlington
The Group objected in 2009 to a proposed development in East Worlington village which involved a large house accompanied by a pair of social houses and a small car park to serve both these houses and the adjacent village hall. The hall is listed and the access to the proposed development would open up the pleasing hedged frontage opposite to the hall to the detriment of its setting. The DBG objected to this aspect of the proposals and recently (Dec 2010) new ones have been submitted which are under consideration. Unfortunately these new proposals involve the same access provision, so the Group has objected again.

Case 4: Black Torrington church cobbling
The cobbled path leading up the parish church in Black Torrington is a fine example of this traditional Devon practice which survives in many of its churchyards. However in 2008 the PCC considered it to be a safety hazard and to be a deterrent to church-goers so proposed to cover it with a semi-permanent new surface. The Group objected both on the grounds of the loss of the fine cobbling and because they felt that there was an available alternative route. After much debate the Chancellor of the Diocese ruled in 2010 that the path could be covered but only with a reversible material and subject to its condition being monitored. He also required the replacement of the very ugly railing which had been erected without permission alongside the path and to which the group also objected.

Edited by Jo Cox & Dawn Honeysett