

DEVON BUILDINGS GROUP

NEWSLETTER NUMBER 11



FEBRUARY 1992

Cover illustration is of Grimstone, "a small but antique mansion"..."which commands a noble prospect of Dartmoor", by F. Masey, from Sabine Baring-Gould, *Old Country Life* (London, 1890).

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EDITORIAL: Chapels Perilous

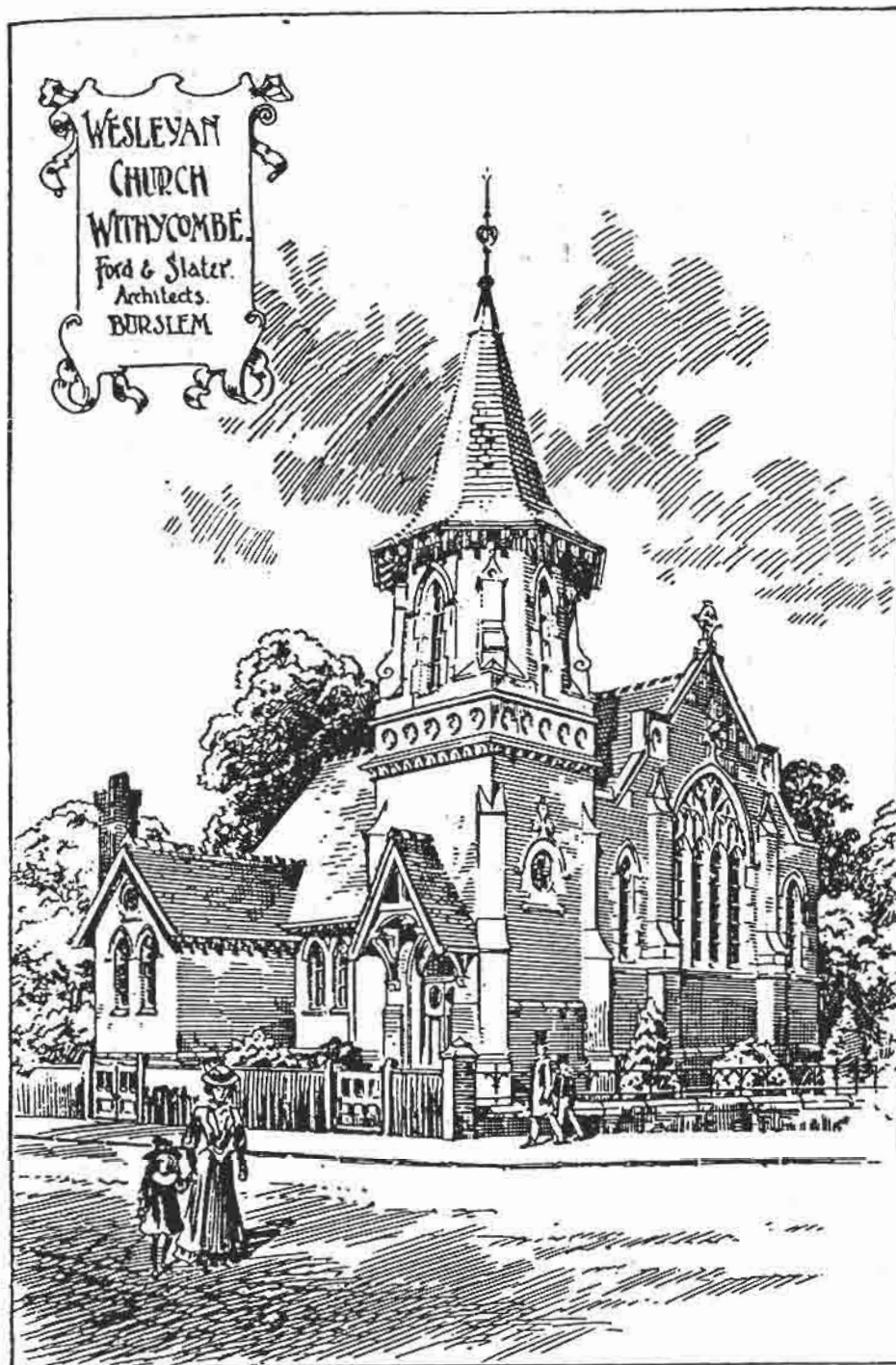
Just before Christmas the Royal Commission on the Historical Monuments of England brought out the second volume of its national inventory of historic nonconformist chapels. The whole inventory exists in archival form and has been compiled by Christopher Stell – the work of half a lifetime. The first volume appeared back in 1986 and dealt with central England; the second volume covers the South West – Berkshire, Hampshire, Wiltshire, Dorset, Somerset, Devon and Cornwall.

Nonconformist Chapels and Meeting-houses in South West England should be studied by anybody who cares about Devon's ecclesiastical buildings, or indeed about its historic buildings generally. As Stell says in his introduction to the Devon section, 'The county, which ranks by area as the third largest in the country and has long occupied a position of strategic and mercantile importance, is equally prominent in its contribution to religious dissent'; its history has 'left a legacy of meeting-houses which few other counties can rival'. The range is remarkable. Rural chapels and meeting-houses, many of them foundations of the Old Dissent of the seventeenth century, tend to be self-effacing externally, vernacular in both material and character. It is the interiors of these early chapels and meeting-houses that are memorable. And indeed moving, for the relative democracy of their internal space, particularly in the meeting-houses of the Friends, and the dignity and simplicity of their fittings – pews and galleries, pulpits and rostrums – effectively convey a sense of community identity, of a common purpose forged from real and remembered persecution. Outstanding are the Independent chapel at Chulmleigh, the Baptist chapels at Culmstock and Dalwood, the Salem Chapel at Budleigh Salterton – originally Presbyterian and now Pentecostalist – the Jesu Street Chapel at Ottery St Mary now occupied by the United Reformed Church, and the Friends' meeting-house at Spiceland, again in Culmstock.

Town chapels, as one might expect, are grander, expressing the prosperity and confidence of urban dissent as it became socially established in the eighteenth century. Later in the century came the New Dissent of Methodism and with it a crop of new chapels, proliferating in the nineteenth century as a sequence of sects – New

Connexion, Independent Methodists, Primitive Methodists and Bible Christians, Wesleyan Methodists – formed by secession from the parent church. And with the nineteenth century, in chapel building as in all other architecture, came ever greater stylistic variety. Porticoed classicism for the Wesleyan chapel at Ashburton; fancy Gothick for the Ebenezer Chapel in Teignmouth and the Congregationalist chapel in Brixham; lancets for the big Wesleyan chapel on Plymouth Road in Tavistock, twin spires for the Great Meeting-house in Bideford; English decorated for Plymouth's Sherwell Congregational chapel, designed by Paull and Ayliffe of Manchester; and a whole assortment of Renaissance styles, particularly favoured by the Wesleyan Methodists, from the relative modesty of the chapels at Halberton and Great Torrington, to the swagger of the St Peter's Street chapel in Tiverton. There is more, even, than Chris Stell includes, for the chronological limits of the inventory largely preclude late Victorian and Edwardian design. Any DBG member who wants to see just how inventive nonconformist architecture could be at this period should make a trip to Lynton.

Chris Stell's book should raise our awareness of the importance of nonconformist building in the county. It will not be before time, for many of the entries in the inventory chronicle a recent history of dilapidation, demolition, and crude conversion to new uses. The decline in nonconformist congregations over the last quarter of a century, combined with aesthetic indifference, has been architecturally disastrous. The 1729 Bowden Hill Chapel in Crediton, reputedly the largest cob building in Britain, went in the early 1970s, as did the grandly designed Mint Methodist chapel in Exeter; the Victorian Gothic Methodist churches on Mutley Plain in Plymouth and in Tower Street in Exmouth were both flattened in the 1980s. The early eighteenth-century George Meeting in Exeter – one of the proudest and historically most important chapels in Devon – is now some kind of shopping bazaar; the Congregational chapel in Cross Street, Barnstaple, an inventive Gothic design of 1870 by the Gould firm, has been largely converted to offices; Lauder's Boutport Street Wesleyan chapel in the same town is now reduced to a few walls surrounding a second hand car lot. In Torquay, the Wesleyan chapel on Babbacombe Road and, almost opposite, the Presbyterian chapel of 1863 – designed in an extraordinary version of Scottish



Ford and Slater's design for a Wesleyan chapel at
Withycombe Raleigh, near Exmouth, 1907.
From Elijah Chick, *A History of Methodism in Exeter and its Neighbourhood* (Exeter, 1907)

Gothic – are both empty, and both have been subject to demolition applications, fortunately unsuccessful, in the last few years. And across the county, in scores of villages and hamlets, the modest chapels of rural dissent have been converted to houses or workshops, or lie abandoned, awaiting the bulldozer and the developer.

The last twenty five years have taken terrible toll of the historic architecture of nonconformity. Unless measures are taken to ensure greater protection for the chapels and meeting-houses Chris Stell records – and for those that fall outside the scope of his work – his splendid inventory will soon begin to look like a casualty list.

Chris Brooks

INSERTING A ROOF TRUSS INTO GOTHAM, BAKERS HILL, TIVERTON

Some buildings are a puzzle. No matter which way you look at the work which has gone on there, things simply don't add up. This is the case with Gotham, Bakers Hill, Tiverton, home of Isabel and George Richardson. Gotham is constructed of cob under a thatch roof with some smoke-blackened rafters at the lower end, and is listed Grade II. The house has been altered and extended at various stages during its history, and this is reflected in the piecemeal construction evident within the roof space.

When I was first shown the roof at Gotham, I was totally stunned by such a maze of interconnecting timbers. Many were calmly defying the laws of gravity, whilst the majority were mere skeletons of their former selves due to woodbeetle infestation.

Perhaps the most incredible of all was the fact that four purlins, which had obviously at one time been supported in some way, were now almost totally unsupported, save for a strut from each transferring the weight of that section of roof onto the ceiling binder of the bedroom below. All four struts were set side by side on a 150mm x

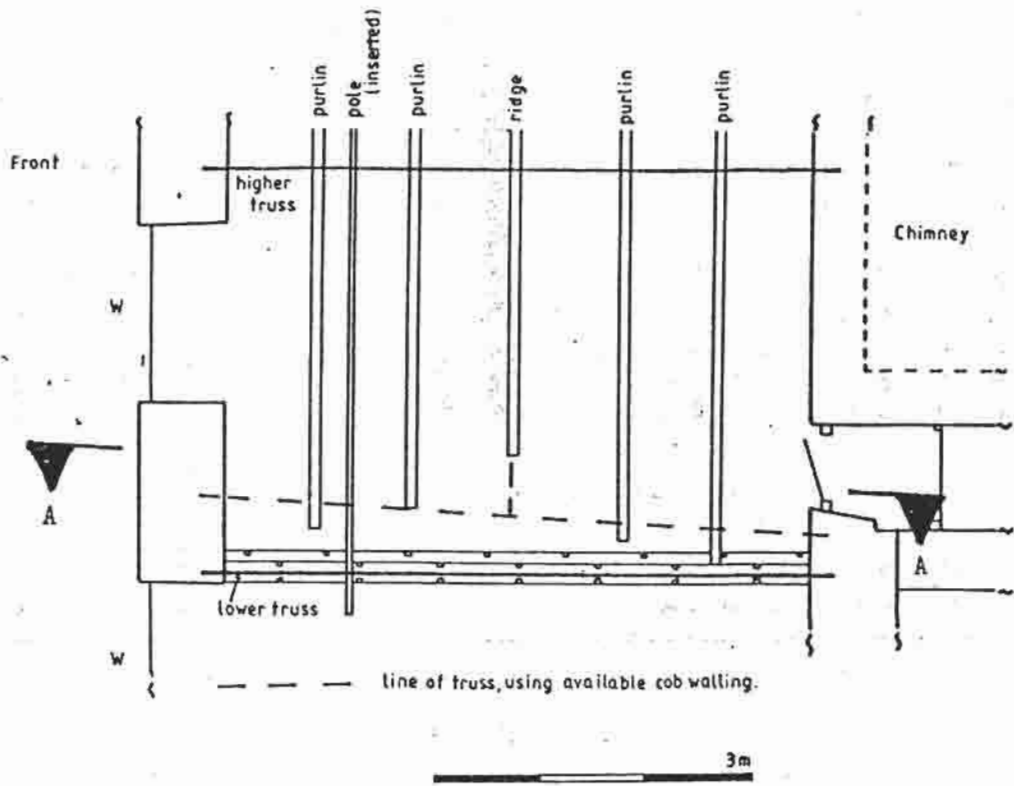
100mm timber – six by four in English – which was only intended to pick up the ceiling joists at half span. The deflection of this poor overlaid timber was worrying to see – worry turning to incredulity when it became apparent that the binder had been the only support for this section of roof for tens if not hundreds of years.

The time had come for Gotham to be rethatched, and, it became obvious that with the extra weight being added to the roof, the problem of the missing truss needed to be resolved. We agreed that I would do the work and, after some preliminary investigations, applied for Listed Building Consent to insert a green oak truss with pegged joints replicating the ones on the original, adjacent, early C17 trusses. Planning permission was granted and the Building Control department were satisfied, so I set to work.

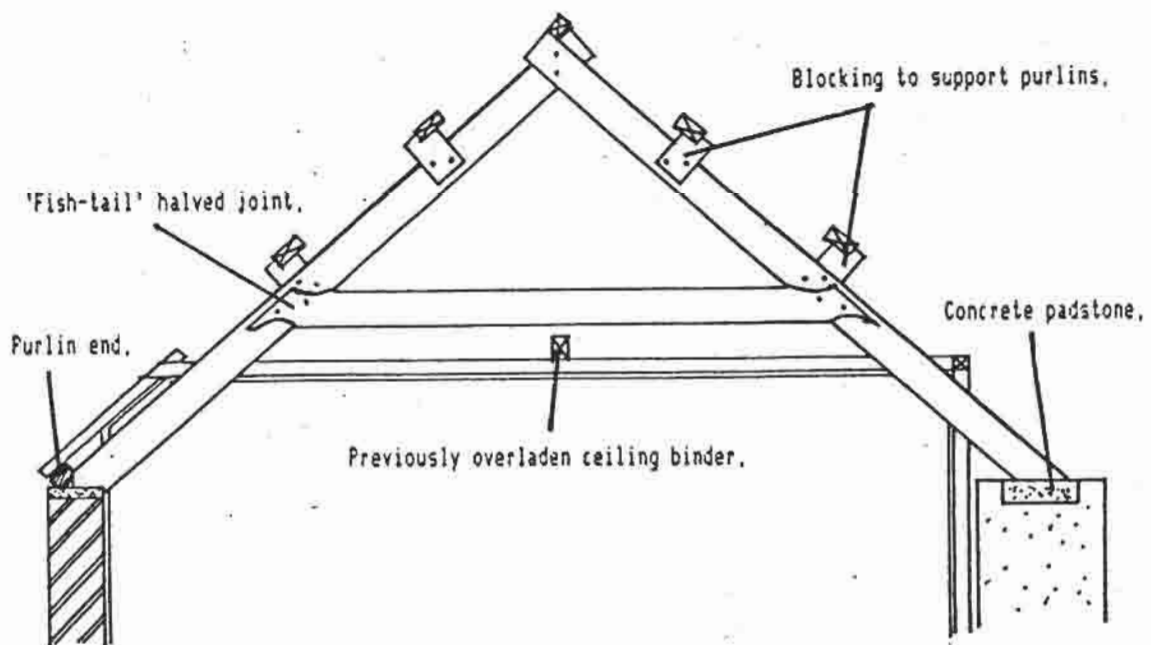
Due to various odd levels and window insertions the section of cob on the front wall where the padstone needed to be was a pillar about 1400mm wide and 750-800mm thick, so I was keen to locate the truss foot as centrally as possible on this base. Inspection from the roof-space showed that the bedroom had been effectively 'dry-lined' with lath and plaster on timber studding at some stage and that the wall-plate level was about 500mm below ceiling height. Thus the truss had to be exposed within the bedroom as it passed from the roof-space to the wall.

This was further complicated by the fact that the original timber which picked up the ceiling joists had to be left undisturbed, dropping the truss still further into the bedroom. All this served to lower the padstone level, making it necessary to dig out about 400mm of cob, before I could pour a concrete padstone to take the truss foot. I found whilst doing this that the cob had been built up by previous thatchers in layers about 100mm thick at each rethatching to enable them to drive in pegs to which the eave wads of reed were attached.

The rear wall turned out to be more of a problem. The truss foot on this side had to bear on one spot only, determined by a transverse partition and a doorway in the rear wall – a spot which is only about 300mm wide. I soon found out as I slowly removed the plaster and ventured into the building fabric, that I was up against brickwork. I also discovered that the exact spot where I needed to cast a padstone was in the valley of the roof where a rear projection was



Gotham, roof plan showing truss locations.



Gotham, section A-A showing truss details.

taken off the main house, leaving me with a wall thickness of 350mm maximum, all of it apparently in brick. Things began to make more sense when I unearthed a purlin end from the lower section of roof which was set onto this brickwork. This did, however, make my job less simple as the spot that I wanted to use was already occupied by another timber.

Still further investigation, this time through the loft hatch of the single storey outshut to the rear of Gotham, made the picture very clear indeed. The original roof, thatch and all, still existed under the current roof which had been kicked out to cover the outshut, creating the need for a new purlin. This had been set on a brick pier right where I wanted to put a padstone.

It was at this stage that I realized that Building Inspectors have their uses. A phone call to the local Building Control department in a concerned tone of voice and the inspector was on site within two hours. Following a very brief appraisal he stated that the brickwork was probably more stable than the cob. I then took the Building Inspector into the roof space to show him where the new truss was going and why it was needed. As he pulled himself upright on one of the original rafters, the sapwood on it disintegrated under his hand, scattering dust everywhere and causing him to emit a short expletive, while his face was a picture of wonder.

The inspector had some difficulty in concentrating on the area of the roof in question as his eyes darted around the gloom trying to take in the fact that his worst nightmare actually existed! When he could speak, he was very interested and utterly amazed, just as I had been when I first saw these roof timbers. He satisfied himself that what I was doing was correct and necessary, and left.

I poured a concrete padstone in the cob approximately 560mm x 430mm x 150mm deep, and a leveling course of concrete on top of the brickwork and under the old purlin end where an original timber block had long since rotted away.

Leaving time for the concrete to cure, I then turned my attention to the roof space and the offending purlins. I needed to remove the struts supporting the top purlins to have working space to insert the new truss timbers, so a transverse brace was inserted between those purlins. The lower front purlin remained supported by the old strut, and the lower rear also had satisfactory temporary support. There was also an inserted

round timber purlin, intended to add support, but which was in fact only touching two rafters, so that one was removed.

At last I had an unobstructed area in which, with the aid of string lines and a level, to accurately measure for each of the truss members, and to establish the angles of each side of the roof, which to my surprise were pretty well equal.

Good fortune was on my side in late February, the sun shone and I set up the new truss members outside on trestles. I chiselled away in the glorious weather, glad to be out of the thatch and wood dust of the roof space. I made the apex and the collar beam joints with halving joints for ease of assembly within the roof space. The collar beam joints were replicas of those on the adjacent trusses – a form of dovetail with curved sides, appearing like a fish-tail. For these I used a router to cut the curves and an electric saw and chisel to remove the waste wood.

Having cut the joints, I assembled the truss on the ground and checked all the measurements. The moment of truth had arrived when the timbers had to be placed in position. It took three people to manhandle each of the three truss members up into the roof space via the bathroom window and the loft hatch. Each timber was 63mm x 225mm and approximately 4.5m long – 2.5" x 9" x 16' in the old lingo – and weighed in the region of 120kgs – 2.5cwt.

Each blade was taken up and the apex joint clamped temporarily whilst the collar beam was brought up and put into position. Thankfully the whole operation went smoothly and the truss sat in place with no trouble at all. Oak pegs were driven home to secure the joints.

All that was needed now was to block off from the truss blades to pick up each of the unsupported purlins and to replace a section of ridge timber which had been removed to allow the new truss to be installed. There were also holes in the lath and plaster walls and ceiling of the bedroom where the truss blades passed through. Isabel expressed her wish to repair these with like materials, so I split out and nailed up oak laths. She then arranged for a plasterer to make these good with lime plaster.

To work within a roof space can be cramped; to insert a truss into an existing roof using timbers of the required length can be frustrating and even near impossible, without destroying that which you are attempting to save. With some planning,

forethought and flexibility of approach, the truss insertion at Gotham went as smoothly as I could have hoped. Almost one year on, with the roof rethatched, all seems to be well; but then, it wasn't really going anywhere before I started!

Mark Lewis

A LA RONDE

In January last year, A la Ronde was acquired by the National Trust, the first major house to be purchased by the Trust in Devon since ill-fated Dunsland in 1954. There were two reasons for this exceptional course – firstly the importance of the house and its contents and secondly the threat of building development on the remaining 10 acres of its estate.

The house reopened to visitors on 28 April 1991. During the intervening three months it was thoroughly cleaned, surveyed by the Trust's architects and provided with a newly researched guidebook. In the process a number of intriguing issues emerged, the most fundamental concerning the authorship of the house, until now claimed by the Parminter cousins themselves.

The traditional history of A la Ronde, the cousins' Grand Tour made over ten years and the assumed influence of St Vitale at Ravenna are well known but now a nineteenth-century reference has been found attributing the design to a Mr Lowder. A silhouette portrait of a Dr Lowder appears at A la Ronde and it may be that this, and the reference, is of the same John Lowder who in 1816 built an octagonal planned school in Bath with wedge shaped classrooms (now demolished). In any event, to suggest that the house bears much resemblance to the mosaic encrusted Byzantine chapel seems very far fetched and there is as yet no evidence to support that theory.

A second query concerns the spacious second floor rooms. These are now lit by dormer windows installed by the Reverend Reichel, owner of the house between 1886 and 1923, who also replaced the original thatched roof with tiles. What was the former use of these rooms, apparently unlit by any window or borrowed light and should the Trust eventually replace the thatch

and return them to the gloom?

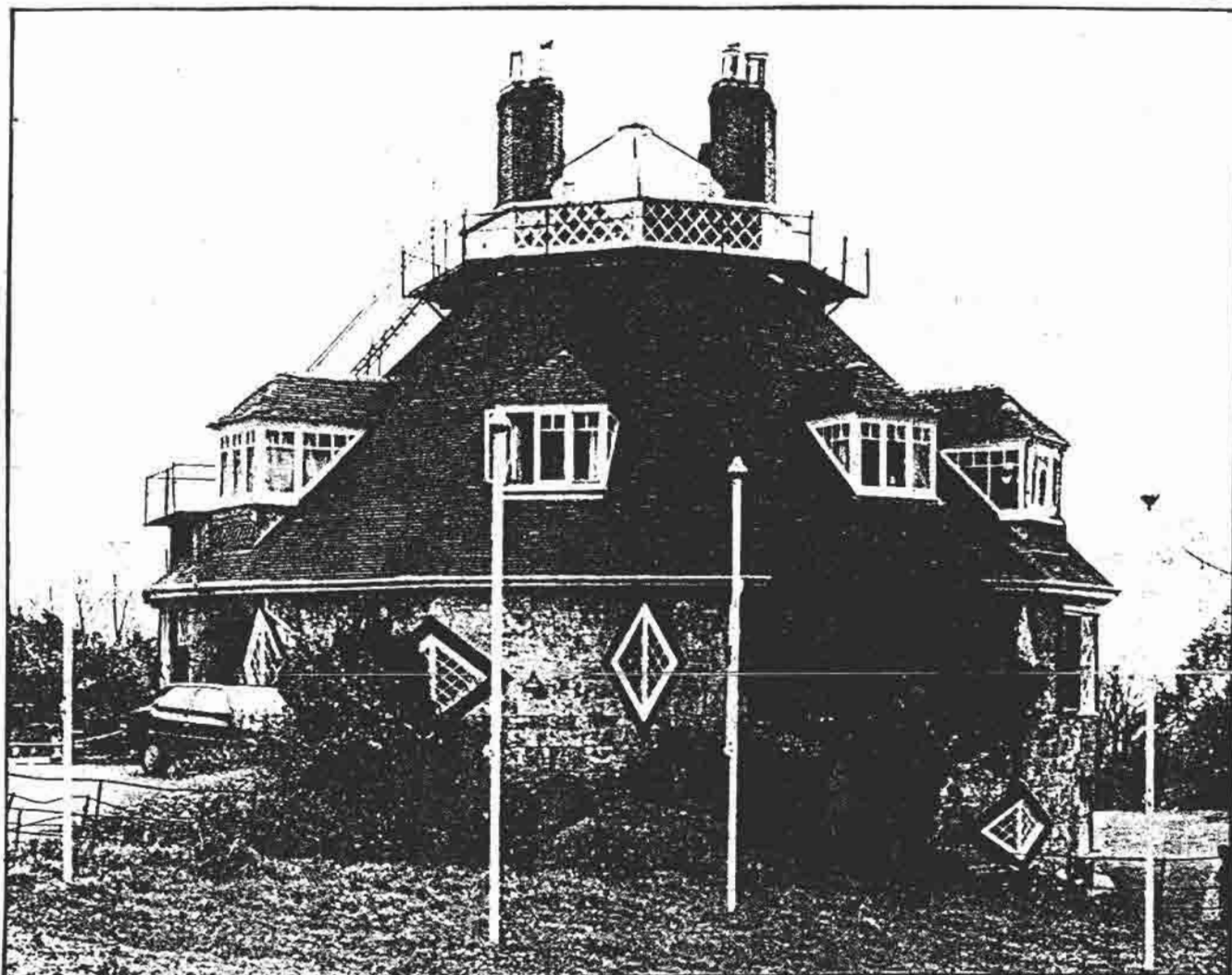
In due course the modern wallpapers and paint will be removed and the house redecorated. Judging by preliminary scrapes it is becoming clear that originally, above dado level, the interior of A la Ronde was painted with a vivid green distemper – everywhere in every room. During April one room was repainted, temporarily, in this colour to judge the result and it has proved very satisfactory. In some cases, dados were sponge finished and others painted creamy brown. Experiments in recreating these effects have also been successful.

Outside the house, the barn, until recently providing stabling and its associated uses, needs to be investigated. It is constructed of cob and thatch, partly refaced in brick by Reichel. Whether it predates the house remains to be seen.

Finally, the garden and pleasure grounds, tantalisingly described in Mary Parminter's will as having an 'obelisk, fountain, shellery, hot house, greenhouses, sundial, ornamental seats and ornamental gates and lattice work'... is now no more than a few bumps in the landscape. Careful replanting to recreate in some way this elaborate setting and to hide the suburban encroachment of Exmouth, which has already reduced the area of the grounds by half, is needed.

The trust has launched an appeal for £850,000 to cover the costs of these works and to fund conservation of the furnishings and the shell and feather decorations as well as updating essential services for the property. It will be a long time before the work is finished but the gradual changes should provide a constant source of interest to visitors.

Hugh Meller



A la Ronde, Exmouth

DISCOVERING A SEVENTEENTH-CENTURY YEOMAN'S HOUSE AND FAMILY: Hayne, Zeal Monachorum

When we bought Hayne, late in 1984, we knew nothing of its history, beyond the fact that the cartouche on the front referred to one George Snell, who could have been a distant relation. The two storey porch and lobby entry suggested a C17 date to us but, in the Grade III listing, it was simply described as 'whitewashed under a thatched roof, dated 1809'. We were charmed by its proportions (all four principal rooms are over

16' roughly square by over 7' high), by the massive front door and a branching upper staircase with turned banisters in a closed string. And it was almost totally unmodernised. Part of the west gable had fallen out and been rebuilt in blockwork the year before, but otherwise, little seemed to have been done to it since the First World War. A year later, it was re-surveyed and given grade II* status, as the consistently C17 building we had hoped it was.

A little research in the manor papers, tithe survey, parish registers, etc., revealed a good deal about those who had owned or lived in the house. Keeping a close eye on the ground, in the garden, and on the structure, during repairs, was equally rewarding historically. Hayne was a farm of the manor of Zeal Monachorum, itself given by Cnut to Buckfast Abbey, in c.1018, and not dispersed

until 99 years later. The sequence of potsherds from the garden goes back to at least C13, which is a likely foundation date for the farm, although there might have been a settlement much earlier. The garden also produces worked flints of c.200 B.C.!

The most dramatic physical revelations came in 1990, when the whole south front had to be re-rendered. This gave a total view of the cob face, confirming the evidence of the continuous ovolo eaves cornice, that the porch and whole front elevation was a single build, despite a 28" two-storey partition wall between the hall and its chamber and the lower end rooms. It also gave four pigeon holes, in a nicely sculptured recess in the wall of the lower end chamber. Best of all, stone blocked under the rendering, there were four fully carpentered mullion and cross windows, the upper two with oak vertical bars and one with iron hangers and catch, for an opening light. These, too, confirm the impression of a single C17 build, with an edge moulding to the mullions which is very similar to those on the hall ceiling joists, the jambs to the second floor doors and the upper flight stair newels. The windows were not a total surprise, as three had been represented by wall cupboards, although all at different heights. Restoring them, it was seen that the original cill height was at the base of the frame. Where necessary, two cills have been restored, to represent both the window and the cupboard.

Although there is now no direct evidence in four of the present window openings, the presence of scroll stop chamfered lintels, to the mullion and cross windows and to the similarly proportioned openings in the porch and lower chambers, strongly suggest a very symmetrical original fenestration.

Re-opening the access from the parlour to the ground floor cellar and stripping off the worm-eaten pine cladding to the front door frame, showed that exterior door frames were bead moulded. A third is dispersed as lintels, in a C19 extension to the lean-to possible dairy and in the bedroom above the cellar. It presumably stood in the eastern outer wall of the outshot.

There is some evidence that the stairs were originally housed in a porch, similar to but wider than that on the front. The walls on two sides of the stairs are the same thickness (c.21") as those of the porch. Also, there is a large beam protruding from the back wall of the house, at about first floor ceiling height, now above the

slightly lower ceiling of a C19 bedroom, over the cellar. A similar beam was found, during repairs, in the west wall of the porch, at ground floor ceiling level. It seems likely that both were to improve the bond of cob walls at right angles.

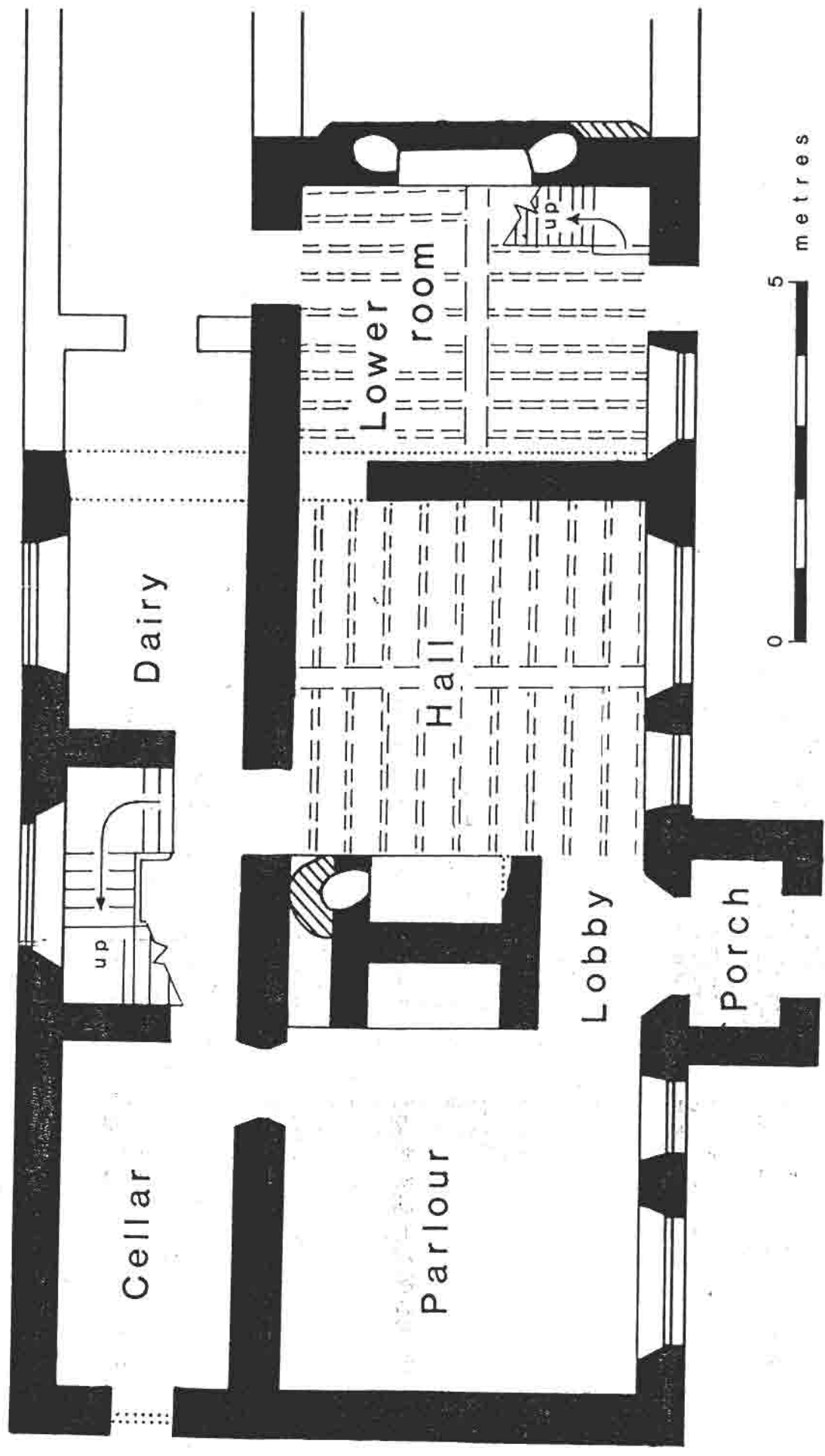
Much of the interior timbering is re-used from an earlier house. The fireplace lintel in the parlour is part of a floor supporting beam, with threaded type joist slots. The great cross beam in the hall is plainly of earlier style than the joists and had much larger slots, each of which is carefully packed. The interior door and window lintels are all jointed and shaped for some other purpose and even the mullion and crosses show signs of being of re-used timber, with odd peg holes entirely irrelevant to their present function.

The testimony of documents and artefacts enrich the emerging picture. In a town, most rubbish is just rubbish but, on an isolated site, broken pottery and glass have a special significance, for one can know the names, if not the faces, of those who once used them. C17 tenants left a handsome wine bottle, of c.1680, in the roof space, bits of sgraffito, trailed slip and other wares (some of c.1669) from the Barnstaple potteries, and a quantity of green window glass from panes 3" x 5". The C18 tenants called themselves yeomen and were accorded the public titles of 'Mr' and 'Mrs'. They also lived in some style, according to one of their rubbish dumps, owning many wine bottles (some with personal seals), twist stem wine glasses and fine china. They also used jolly trailed slip decorated chamber pots from south Somerset.

Architecturally, Hayne has much in common with such houses as Brookland, in Chulmleigh, and the *unfortunate Great Hele, in Colebrooke*, but both of these have or had ovolo moulded two or three light windows, without transoms. Hayne's fenestration appears to be unique among its surviving contemporary neighbours.

History

Hayne was a farm of the manor of Zeal Monachorum since the Middle Ages. Pottery from the site goes back to C13 or earlier (the garden also yields Early Bronze Age flints). The manor was given to Buckfast Abbey by King Cnut and was held by it until the Dissolution. It then went briefly to the Pouletts, for a couple of generations to the Seymours and then to the Parkers (of North Molton, later Borringdon, later Saltram), from 1617 to the late C18, when it was sold to the Leys of Trehill, in Kenn. The manor,



Hayne, Zeal Monachorum, ground plan

including Hayne, was finally split up and sold in 1918.

At least from the early C18, Hayne was on renewable three-life leases. It may have been built by a prominent yeoman of the parish, George Snell (1663-1739), a six-times great grandfather of the present owner, or his father. When the then tenant, Andrew Snell, died in 1740, he left a son of only 14. The lease was renewed by a presumably childless cousin, Samuel Snell, a tanner of Sandford. He nominated this boy and his cousin, John Wreford, aged 12 (four-times great grandfather of the present owner), as the next 2 lives. Andrew jr. also died young, which was how *his* son, George, came to be in possession but not tenant and, therefore, without tenants' right. John Wreford (of Domesday Natson in Bow) managed to live on to 1809 – which is why George Snell put his own initials and that date so hugely on the porch. George had taken out a new lease, in his own name and those of his second son and youngest daughter, some 12 years earlier, to come into effect on the death of his cousin. It no doubt felt like a long wait and lost him the chance to purchase, when it was offered, in 1801. He lived until 1824 and died worth £2000. An abstract of his will survives and his bequests included his threshing machine – quite modern for 1823 Devon. He was described as a yeoman. His parents were married at Clannaborough, in 1751, and were then described as *Mr Andrew Snell* and *Mistress Mary Partridge*. It was no doubt her nephew who was the Roger Partridge, Overseer of the Poor of Zeal Monachorum in 1769, and whose bottle seal dated 1770 was found in Hayne garden in 1989 (along with parts of a twist-stem wine glass and some pretty late C18 tea wares). The second son mentioned above, another George, was tenant at the time of the tithe survey, in 1842, but his sister Tryphena does not seem to have lived to take up her tenancy.

A William Snell was the last Snell tenant, in 1870, and may have been a brother but was probably a more distant relation. By then, it was long since other than the largest farms (Hayne was around 125 acres) had been profitable enough to maintain a family or house of any pretension and most of the principal yeoman families had already left the land, as a sole source of income, and gone into commerce, the law, the church, medicine or, later, the army. The Wrefords embraced most of these professions. John Wreford's (1735-1809) eldest daughter married

the surgeon of North Tawton and had one daughter and nine sons – all of whom they managed to send to University. Six became successful medical men (two FRSSs and two FRCPS), one a barrister and one a Plymouth wine merchant (Fellow Pembroke, Cambs). The daughter married a Devon born vicar with a Cambridge living and their three sons were all senior Wranglers, the eldest retiring from being Chief Justice of Ceylon to Exmouth – becoming, as Sir John Budd Phear, President of the Devonshire Association in 1886. The present owner's descent is from the 4th medical son, Dr Richard Budd of Barnstaple MD FRCP (1809-1896).

Description

From the east, continuous buildings comprise barn, shippin, stable and house. It is not, however, a longhouse. Although Hayne is shown on the Tithe Map as already under one roof (or at least as a continuous building) in 1842, the house and adjoining stable are butt jointed and the latter is closed with a full gable a half storey lower than the house and so is presumably an addition. The barn was probably once separate and is older than the present house, with one jointed cruck and one soffit chamfered cross beam, apparently in situ. There was further contiguous building to the west of the house, which included a large pound (or cider making) house, all demolished about 1950 and almost certainly only abutting the main house.

Hayne is (presumed late) C17, Grade II*, three room plan and facade, two and a half storeys, two storey porch. A traditional 2+1 plan has been combined with the symmetry imposed by the lobby entry and porch, in an arrangement of mullion and cross windows. It appears, from cob and carpentry evidence, to have been all rebuilt at the same time, in the later C17, with timbers from a previous house re-used in the joinery and internal lintels. Main walls c.28", front and stair porches c.21" thick, cob on c.45" high stone rubble base.

Exterior

An ovolo moulded oak soffit runs under the eaves of house and porch. A cartouche, with 'G.S.1809', on the porch, records the taking up of a tenancy but probably does not relate to any significant alterations. All four horizontal windows and the two small windows in the porch and at the lower (east) end replace windows which were, themselves, replacements of various ages (since c.1770?). They were made in 1990, of

English oak, with a rebated chamfer section designed by the owner. The four mullion and cross windows were discovered, blocked up, under the rendering and were restored the same year. They and the two small windows all have scroll stop chamfered exterior lintels. In the porch C19 oak seats are set above earlier ones. The C17 double skinned oak front door has iron clout studs and fleur de lys hinges, with a scroll stop chamfered lintel over and bead moulded frame. The porch floor was laid in 1991, from old roof slates found on the site. The Cornish slate threshold fills the site of the original oak one.

Interior

Lobby, against side of central stack, has one ogee edge moulded ceiling joist (as in hall), C19 half panelling and good quality ceramic mosaic floor.

Parlour (left) has massive late Georgian pine door from lobby and the horizontal window has oak cill and panel above, probably also late Georgian. Access to ground floor cellar reopened in 1985, revealing late C17 bead moulded door frame. Late C17 mullion and cross window has ogee edge moulding on face of mullion (all the rest, like the joists, moulded on sides). A reused C16, shortened, floor supporting beam, with threaded type joist slots, is fireplace lintel. This, together with old oak pegs in wall above, suggest a panel or plaster overmantel (to be replaced).

Hall (right) has late C17 panelled oak door from lobby. Soffit chamfered cross beam with plain step stops is probably earlier than the ogee edge moulded joists. Fireplace lintel soffit chamfered with scroll stops. Chimney cut back on left, lintel supported on re-used part of C16 shouldered door frame. Cloam (clay) oven on right, set in apparently re-built stone rubble. Evidence under former brick hearth that original styles were mauve/grey volcanic trap. Cornish slate hearth laid 1989. Late C17 mullion and cross window, with ogee edge moulding on sides of mullion. 1990 oak cills represent original cill height and base of former cupboard. (Under latter, many fragments of green window glass, from leaded panes 3" x 5", were found.) C17 carved oak chest from North Tawton. C18-C19? wall cupboards.

Kitchen/utility room (lower right) has soffit chamfered axial beam with scroll stops. Plain joists, some cut, indicating back stairs moved at

least twice. Rough oak fireplace lintel. Cloam oven on left, brick oven on right, both with C19 cast iron doors. C19 window opening, pine wall cupboard and panelling and oak bench seats (latter cut 6" into wall, with original face exposed above). Evidence for original window opening above present side door. Former drain under present back stairs. Probably late C19 staircase and boxing-in.

Kitchen chamber has 1991 factory made stair rails and dog gate, on site of (presumed) C19 banisters. Four pigeon holes in moulded wall recess, discovered and glazed 1990. Mainly oak floor, with some evidence of partitioning. Replacement oak window in late C17 opening.

Hall chamber has presumed late C17 oak boards, random widths 9.5" - 13". Late C17 mullion and cross window, with original oak bars, small replacement cill at original height and original cill at base of former cupboard. Replacement oak horizontal window and cill, above C19 oak window seat. Part of C17 panelled bed from North Tawton.

Porch chamber has wide oak floor boards. Replacement oak window in original C17 opening.

Main stairs have walls of stair porch cut off at first floor level, for addition of C19 bedrooms above original north outshot (rear lean-to). Stair rail and wall cupboard presumed early C19. Ovolo moulded casement a pine replica (made for Bradninch Manor) replacing (1988) a modern 'picture' window, and north wall restored to full thickness. Most stair treads and upper, branching flight, C17. Latter's eight original turned oak banisters C17 - 4 to each section but 5 to right branch - within a closed string. Ogee edge moulding to shortened newels with C19 caps. 1990 replacement handrails. Devon C16/C17 oak plank chest on landing.

Upper chamber (right) has ogee edge moulded oak doorframe. Walls and ceiling plastered, broken by exposed part A frames and purlins. Elm floor boards. End gable rebuilt in blockwork 1983.

Attic (left) has roof open to the thatch. Late C17 A frame trusses. Pegged and nailed lap jointed collars with variant dovetail halvings on east sides. Late C17 false panelled pine door. Ogee edge moulded oak door frame. Mainly oak floor boards. Original 3 light window in east

gable reduced, to accommodate later, brick, kitchen chimney.

Parlour chamber (right from landing) has late C17 mullion and cross window, with ogee edge moulding to sides of mullion and iron furniture for an opening light. Replaced oak bars. Restored original cill. Late C18/C19 pine floor boards. Original fireplace opening (wood surround to be designed for it). Oak replacement horizontal window above C19? window seat.

Ann Adams

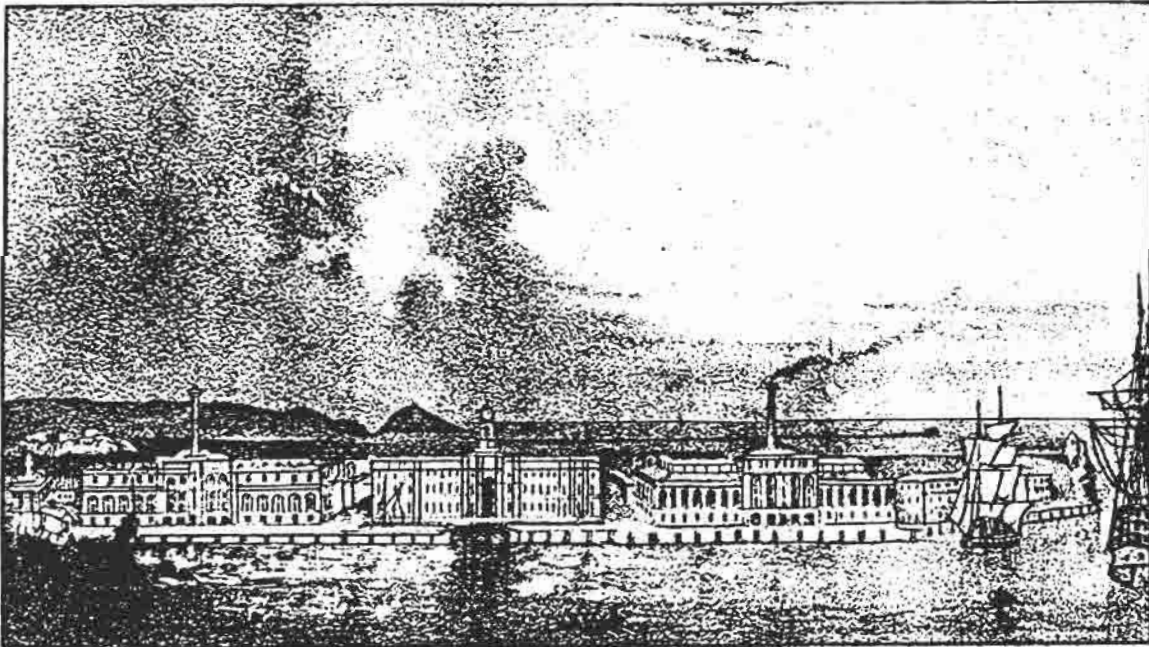
CASEWORK: The Past Year and the Future

Much of what follows is based upon my report of the year's activities to the Group's AGM in October.

The architectural contrepiece of the DBG's last annual conference, *Maritime Plymouth*, is also the county's biggest architectural headache for conservationists: the Royal William Victualling

Yard. For a couple of years it has been a particular concern of the Group's, and some account of the present position is an appropriate start to a consideration of our recent and future casework.

Designed by Sir John Rennie, and built between 1824 and 1832, the Yard is probably the most monumentally conceived set of buildings intended for naval use in this country; it is also one of the largest surviving early nineteenth-century industrial and manufacturing complexes. As members of the Group will know, the Victualling Yard will be relinquished by the Navy in 1992, and the Property Services Agency, which now owns it, is seeking a purchaser for the whole place. Given the national – indeed international – importance of these buildings, it is deplorable that their future should depend upon the vagaries of the market. Although the Yard is statutorily protected, it is difficult to see how conversion to new uses could not involve a whole range of deleterious alterations. The one scheme to have emerged so far, as members will perhaps recall, has come from Plymouth City Council: it managed the not inconsiderable feat of making the proudest set of buildings in Devon look like a dinky version of Covent Garden Plaza – all heritage street furniture, bistros, and hanging



Lithograph & Printed by G. Rowe

Exeter Hall, Cliftonham

The Royal William Victualling Yard, Devonport,
from H.E. Carrington, *The Plymouth & Devonport Guide*
(Devonport, c.1835)

baskets. Although the scheme was rejected it indicated just how disastrously trivializing such redevelopments are likely to be – witness the crass commercialization of the St Katherine Dock in London and, despite Prince Charles's approval, the retail and residential conversion of Albert Dock in Liverpool – a scheme as incongruous as it is grotesquely irrelevant to the real needs of that city. The Royal William Victualling Yard must not be allowed to go the same way. When Chatham Dockyard was closed in the early 1980s, its historic core was preserved, to be opened to the public and run by a Trust. This, surely, is what should happen to the Victualling Yard. Unfortunately, nobody, to my knowledge has yet investigated the feasibility of such a course of action, and, given present day enthusiasm for market forces and the selling-off of publicly owned assets, one cannot be optimistic. Whatever happens, 1992 will certainly see some kind of proposals for the Victualling Yard's future, and the Devon Buildings Group will certainly seek to be involved in the debate that those proposals will engender. There is talk of the new University of Plymouth finding a home in Rennie's buildings, but I do not know whether the talk is yet any more than building campuses in the air. If the Yard is not to be preserved as it is, then a large institutional use, such as a university, could well be the best option, and would certainly have the advantage of maintaining a single functional identity for the whole complex. In the meantime, if any member of the Group has a spare £12,000,000 – the last asking price that I heard – and some good ideas about what could be done with a twenty-acre riverside site and several million cubic feet of historic buildings, they should contact the Committee at once.

The Victualling Yard is a problem of redundancy on a huge scale. Far more familiar to the Group is the problem of redundancy in agricultural buildings – a problem that, in fact, is also huge in scale, but that, instead of presenting itself in the dramatic form of one major case, appears in piecemeal form as scores of individual applications. Again, over the last year, and despite the continued recession, proposals for the residential conversion of redundant farm buildings have formed a large part of the Group's casework. In my report to the 1990 AGM, however, I was sanguine enough to detect some signs of a change for the better; the emergence of new policies in the National Park, new guidelines issued by West

Devon Borough Council, and a slackening of demand for barn conversions in the property market, all assisted by continuing opposition from bodies such as the DBG, suggested that the tide was beginning to turn. 1991 has seen some confirmation of this, most importantly in the revision of the Devon County Structure Plan that reached its third and, hopefully, final form in the early summer.

In the Group's annual conference that dealt with the future of farm buildings, back in 1988, particular attention was drawn to the provision in the then prevailing Structure Plan that allowed 'the alteration or conversion to a dwelling of a suitable disused or redundant building, providing that the building is worthy of conservation'. Doubtless the stipulation that the building should be worthy of conservation was well-intentioned; however, the criterion of worthiness was taken to be whether or not the redundant building was included on the statutory list of protected buildings. In other words, if a redundant farm building was listed as being of outstanding architectural or historical interest, that was taken as grounds for allowing it to be converted to residential use, despite the fact that such conversion almost invariably destroyed the very architectural or historical interest that caused it to be listed in the first place. On several occasions over the years the DBG has drawn attention to the absurdity of such a policy, as also have other amenity groups and conservation officers at both district and county level. That pressure seems to have paid off. In the Revised Structure Plan the policy has been crucially altered; it is worth quoting the provision in full. Future policy will be: 'To permit, in certain cases, the alteration or conversion to a dwelling of suitable disused or redundant buildings considered worthy of conservation, provided that the alteration or conversion will achieve the conservation of the building and its historic and architectural interest, does not give rise to major extension, reconstruction or alteration, and can be provided with services'. Once the Revised Structure Plan goes through, this alteration of policy will allow local authorities to refuse consent for any conversion of a listed farm building where that conversion would damage the building's historic and architectural interest, and to do so with the support of the Structure Plan. It will also, of course, allow conservation societies to object to conversions for the same reasons. This should

mean that listed building consent in such cases will be much more difficult to obtain, and that the conservation standards required for consent will be far more rigorous. As a result, the policy change could spell the end of the 'barn conversion' as we have come to know and hate it over the last decade. The DBG will need to pay close attention to the implementation of the policy during the coming year.

Meanwhile, as I say, applications to convert listed farm buildings have continued to come in: since the 1990 AGM the Group has objected to cases in Drewsteignton, Winkleigh, Chagford, Widecombe, Bishops Tawton, Milton Abbot, Chawleigh, Brentor, Yeoford. Other cases in which we have been concerned have been distinctly varied. In Torquay we opposed proposed alterations to the NatWest bank in Fleet Street – a fine and characteristic late Victorian building – and also commented on some aspects of plans to convert the old Town Hall, an earlier Victorian building in an Italianate style, to shops – shopping, of course, being the sole human activity encouraged in central Torquay. In neighbouring Paignton we joined the Victorian Society in objecting to proposed alterations to the building that was the Torbay Cinema. There are probably less than thirty pre-First World War cinemas left in Britain, and the Torbay, opened in 1914 as the Paignton Picture House, is one of them. There have been a number of proposals to demolish listed buildings which we have opposed: a distinctive group of nineteenth-century warehouses in Totnes; a pair of Georgian cottages in Newton Abbot; a range of lime-kilns dramatically sited on the north Devon coast at Bucks Mill. Among the more idiosyncratic cases, the group objected to a scheme of residential conversion not, for once, on a redundant barn but on the boathouse of a coastguard station outside Brixham. And, among the more insensitive proposals, we objected, along with several other amenity and conservation groups, to a scheme to extend the main carpark in Tavistock into the surviving precincts of the Abbey.

1991 also seems to have been a year for the publication of larger planning strategies. As well as the revised County Structure Plan, which I have already mentioned, the DBG has commented on the Mid-Devon Environmental Strategy and on the Local Plans produced for Tiverton, Tavistock, and Bere Alston.

As well as these new cases, there have, of course, been developments in older cases. As I

described in the last *Newsletter*, one of them, the Dartmouth Methodist Church, came to an end that was decidedly sensational: it is after all, fairly rare for the planning and redevelopment problems of a historic building to be resolved by recourse to dynamite – particularly in the middle of a busy town. Another long-running case that I fear is soon to come to a similarly destructive end is that of Shapland and Petters in Barnstaple – though this time the destruction will be fully legalized. The Shapland buildings, standing on the riverside at one end of Barnstaple bridge, are a distinctive industrial group purpose designed as a joinery factory in 1889 by W.C. Oliver. Six years ago, in what was then our sixth case, we opposed Shapland's proposals to demolish the buildings and asked English Heritage to consider them for spot-listing. The Shapland's management promptly threw a fit all over the pages of the *North Devon Journal* and threatened to sack the entire work-force, close the factory, move out of Barnstaple, and never ever come back again if anybody even so much as breathed the word 'listing' within a hundred yards of their buildings. In the event the buildings were not listed, but Shapland's did not knock them down either. Despite the fact that demolition had been advanced as the *sine qua non* of future prosperity and viability, the firm has continued to use them for the last six years. But now, it appears, no more. In autumn 1991 they applied for planning permission to demolish and to replace the buildings with a new factory, the design of which reaches startling heights of mediocrity. This time the DBG has worked through the Victorian Society, which wrote to North Devon arguing that the buildings should be retained and re-used, and to English Heritage asking again that they be considered for spot listing. In the event English Heritage did not consider Shapland's worth listing: the inspector said that there were better and more aesthetically striking examples of late Victorian industrial buildings. So there are; but they do not happen to be on the end of Barnstaple bridge, occupying a key site along the bank of the Taw – and it is the context as much as the buildings that is vital here. Without listing, North Devon District Council was unlikely to listen to conservationist pleading and, predictably, gave permission to demolish. The firm does not intend to act immediately upon the permission, but unless somebody has a change of heart, it looks as if the Shapland and Petters factory will join the woefully long list of interesting and worthwhile buildings that have been flattened by the good,

and not so good, folk of Barnstaple in recent years.

That fairly brief review of the Group's recent and current casework gives some flavour, I think, of the architectural and historical variety of the cases we now handle, and also of their geographical spread. Since the DBG's inaugural meeting in July 1985, we have dealt with more than 160 cases related to historic buildings, and we have had some measure of success. That is a record with which we can be reasonably pleased, especially given the steady publication of the *Newsletters* and the successful organization of conferences and AGMs. But the Committee has become increasingly aware of the difficulty of adequately monitoring what is happening to historic buildings throughout the county and, as a result, of the large number of cases that we simply do not get to. Under our present set-up, however, the Committee, and particularly – to special plead for a moment – the Secretary, cannot undertake the additional load that a substantial increase in our casework effort would involve. But there can be no doubt that, if the Group is to succeed in its objects and if it is to have more of an influence on the preservation of the county's historic buildings, then we do need not only to increase our casework, but also to be sure that it is carried through efficiently and consistently.

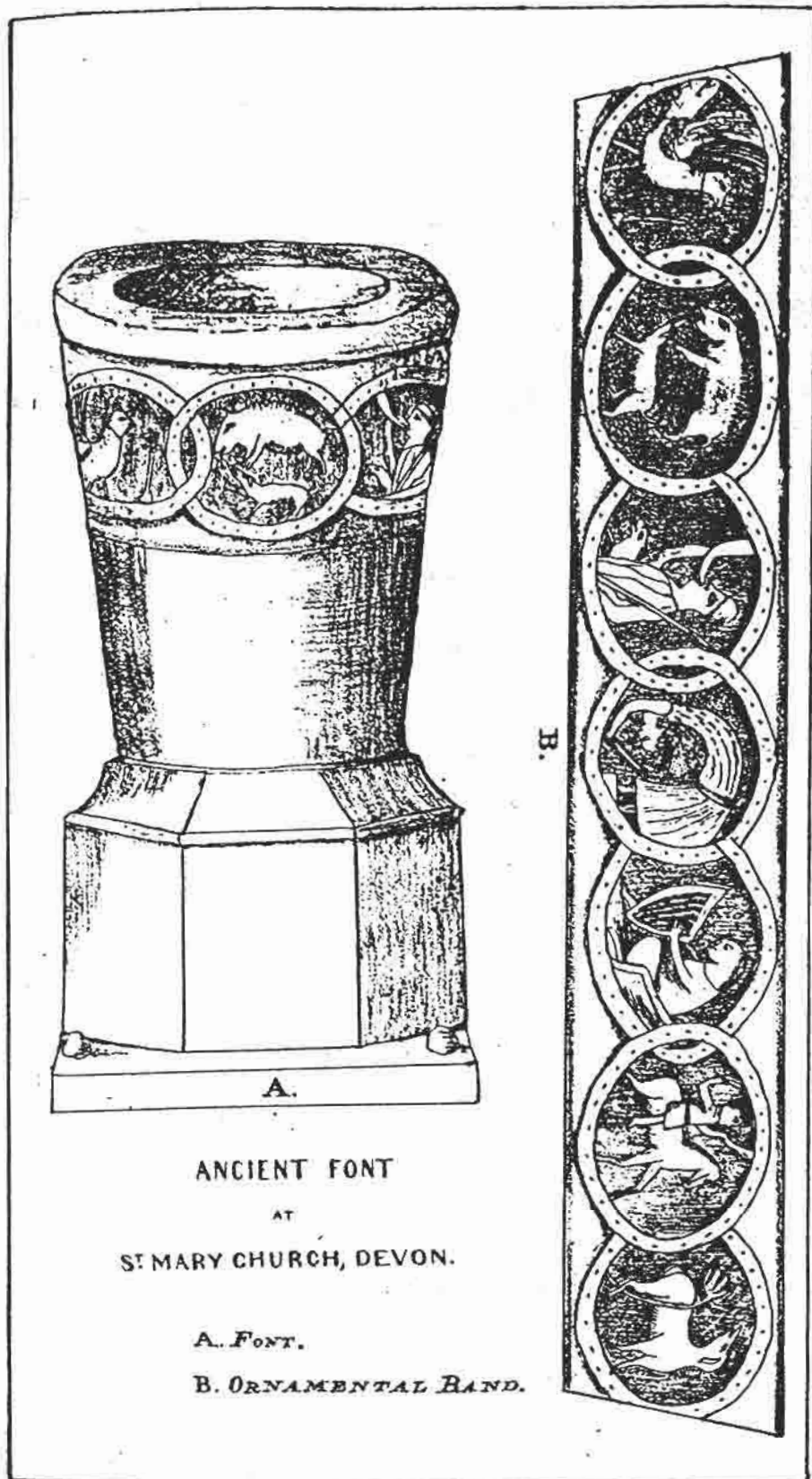
The Committee has given much thought to this problem over the last year, and has decided on a fundamental reorganization of the Group's casework. Up to now, all cases have been discussed by the Committee and action taken either through the Secretary or through one of the *Committee members*. This has had a number of benefits: a pooling of different sorts of expertise, a sharing of experience, and close control over the kind and quality of representation the Group makes. But it has a number of drawbacks: coverage tends to be patchy, response time tends to be slow; moreover, the concentration of casework within the Committee has meant that the Group as a whole has become over-centralized. The change in the nature and make-up of the *Newsletter* has been one attempt to entice more members of the Group into more active participation. The reorganization of casework is intended to increase our coverage of the county, to respond more regularly to cases – particularly to applications for listed building consent – and to involve more of the membership in the actual casework.

During 1992 the Committee intends to set up a county-wide network of caseworkers. We would hope to have at least one caseworker for each of Devon's ten local authorities, and some areas will have more than one. For obvious reasons most members of the current Committee will also act as caseworkers in their particular district. But the Committee membership by no means covers the county, and certainly does not have a monopoly on the Group's expertise. Accordingly, a number of DBG members have been approached with a view to recruiting them to the casework team. Experience in and confidence about casework obviously varies among members of the Group, and some members who might otherwise like to be involved may feel nervous about their abilities. I think this is largely the conservationist version of stage-fright and is very quickly overcome by a small measure of experience along with the support that comes from working with others who are confronting very similar difficulties. In order to address initial problems, and to look at some of the basics of casework, a workshop day for aspirant caseworkers was held on Saturday 25 January at Exeter University. Members can expect an account of the day and a report on progress in setting up the new casework team in the next *Newsletter*. Meanwhile, if anybody would like to take on casework in their area, I would be delighted to hear from them.

Chris Brooks

THE BRITISH ACADEMY CORPUS OF BRITISH ROMANESQUE SCULPTURE: A Request for Assistance

The British Academy is funding an ambitious project which aims to catalogue all discoverable Romanesque sculpture and architectural ornament in Great Britain and Ireland. Each county has a nominated field worker who, in the case of Devon, is myself, and groups of counties are



ANCIENT FONT
AT
ST. MARY CHURCH, DEVON.

A. FONT.

B. ORNAMENTAL BAND.

FEATHERSTONE, LITH.

St Marychurch, Torbay, 12th century font.
From George Oliver, *Ecclesiastical Antiquities in Devon*,
3 vols. (London, 1840-42), volume 1

coordinated to ensure consistency.

The intention is to provide as comprehensive a catalogue as possible, supported by photographs, measurements, description and, where necessary, drawings.

While Devon is not famous for its Romanesque sculpture, apart from the architectural ornament at the cathedral, it is a very large county which will take a great deal of time to cover adequately. All help in tracing Romanesque material, whether information about its location or references to it, and particularly any volunteers for assistance on the project, will be most gratefully received. The British Academy will cover modest expenses and the costs of photography.

I would be very interested to hear from any Devon Buildings Group member who would like to take part in the project, or who has any information which will help. Please write to me at English Heritage, Keysign House, 429 Oxford Street, London W1R 2HD.

Francis Kelly