

DEVON BUILDINGS GROUP

NEWSLETTER NUMBER 13



JANUARY 1995



Cover illustration is of Marker's Cottage, Broadclyst, Devon drawn by John Dyke, ©The National Trust.

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EDITORIAL:

I would like to thank everyone who contributed to this *Newsletter* with articles, pleas and illustrations. I should very much like to include a few pieces from caseworkers in each newsletter in order to keep other members in touch with the work that they do and perhaps to inspire you to join them. Casework is an absolutely vital function of the DBG, as the following article makes clear. The group produces scholarly research into Devon's buildings which is published in its *Journal* and the conferences provide us with an opportunity to visit them. Casework keeps us aware of and involved in what is happening to buildings and is part of the process of working to protect and save them. In terms of the group's activities, it is arguably the most important.

The next *Newsletter* will appear in Summer 1995. Letters, suggestions, articles, etc. should reach me by the beginning of May at the following address:

48 Park Street,
Credon,
Devon.
EX17 3EH.

Tel. 01363 773294

Su Jarwood

DEVON'S HISTORIC BUILDINGS NEED YOU!!

One of the principal aims of the Devon Buildings Group is to undertake casework on historic buildings in the county. This means looking at planning applications that affect historic buildings, at conservation area proposals, at road schemes and development projects. The Group has a good record in doing this – but our ability to continue to do so is now uncertain.

At present there are a dozen members of the Group who undertake casework. That is not many people for a very large county and all of them have other heavy commitments. The Group *urgently* needs to recruit more caseworkers. All you need is the commitment to the county's historic buildings that made you want to join the DBG in the first place.

- Plenty of help and advice is available.
- There are regular meetings of the casework team.
- It does not matter where in the county you live.
- You do not have to take on a large area: covering a small group of parishes local to you, or a small town, will make a great contribution.

If you can help the Group's casework in whatever way, please write to me at 48 Park Street, Crediton, Devon EX17 3EH, or telephone 0363-773294.

The future of the Devon Buildings Group's casework is up to you!

Chris Brooks



Tracing of the head of an Angel, late fifteenth century,
now in a Private House in Witheridge, Devon.

MEDIEVAL STAINED GLASS

INFORMATION PLEASE!

Chris Brooks and David Evans are shortly beginning a systematic survey of the medieval stained glass of Devon and Cornwall for the *Corpus Vitrearum Medii Aevum*. The *Corpus* project was set up on an international basis some thirty years ago with the object of recording all the medieval stained glass that still survives, wherever it may be. This extremely ambitious project has already published major studies of glass in Britain, France, Germany, Italy, and the United States. In Britain it is in the process of publishing comprehensive illustrated catalogue volumes on a regional basis, and we have been asked to compile the volume covering Devon and Cornwall.

The catalogue we intend to produce will be exhaustive. We do not need help with glass in an ecclesiastical setting: we will visit all the churches and ecclesiastic buildings in the area as a matter of course. It is the rest that we need to find out about. There must be panels of medieval glass in domestic buildings in the counties that are at present unknown to us – whether in houses that are privately owned, or in houses open to the public. Equally, there is likely to be medieval glass in public collections, in museums or libraries, that we do not know about. We need the help of DBG members to find whatever glass may be out there.

The glass does not have to be historically connected with the building in which it is now set or otherwise displayed. It does not matter if the panels have slowly accumulated in the buildings over many years, or have been acquired as a job lot. We are equally interested in glass that has a British origin and glass that has come from some foreign source. Nor does the degree of restoration that the glass may have undergone matter – some of the most interesting medieval glass we know has undergone drastic rehandling. The glass could well be a collection of fragments, and it does not have to retain any coherence or indeed any identifiable representations. We do not even mind if there is no surface painting left – just a plain piece of coloured glass can have a significance in the overall scheme of things. All fish are welcome to the net.

If you know of any medieval glass in a house or public collection in Devon or Cornwall – or of any glass that you *think* may be medieval – please write to Chris Brooks at 48 Park Street, Crediton, EX17 3EH, or ring on 0363-773294. Whatever you do, do not be deterred by thinking "They *must* know about this" – it is very likely that we do not.

Chris Brooks and David Evans

SOURCES IN THE DEVON RECORD OFFICE FOR THE HISTORY OF BUILDINGS

A large proportion of the documents which now occupy some 38,000 linear feet of shelving in the Devon Record Office in Exeter and its branches in Barnstaple and Plymouth contain some information on Devon's buildings. Yet it is rare to find those which give details of the construction of small properties and their age may usually be assessed only by reference to architectural features. Documents in the Record Office are usually more concerned with ownership. Even so, the third most popular subject pursued by searchers is house history (11% following 65% researching family history and 20% researching parish history) and these include those interested in their own farm or cottage, recent purchasers of barn conversions, those working on parish maps and architectural historians usually working on the more prestigious houses. The Record Office publishes a leaflet, price 10p obtainable from the Castle Street, Exeter, Search Room outlining the main sources for house history which is intended as an introduction for the beginner.

The obvious starting point is the series of Ordnance Survey maps, available in both the Westcounty Studies Library and Devon Record Office at 6" and 25" scales. Both departments also have 1:500 maps for certain urban areas such as Exeter, Newton Abbot and Barnstaple dating from the 1860s. However, many people have already traced their property back 150 years, possibly from deeds in their own possession. The next step is to look at the tithe map. The Record Office at Exeter holds tithe maps for all Devon parishes as part of the Diocesan records and also the microfiche of the Public Record Office copies from which print-outs can be made. The branch offices in Barnstaple and Plymouth hold some parish copies for the tithe maps for their areas and both have full sets of the PRO microfiche. The DRO service points at Appledore (opened on 27 April 1994), Colyton, Okehampton, Tavistock, Tiverton, Torquay and Totnes hold copies of the microfiche for parishes in their areas. The Devon tithe maps date from 1836-1847 and have an

accompanying apportionment or award, which will give the names of owners in alphabetical order, occupiers, field names, acreage and state of cultivation. Hopefully the name of the owner of a substantial property may then be traced back through electoral registers which begin in 1832 and by land tax assessments covering the period 1780-1832 and arranged by parish. For just a few parishes there are assessments from 1747 and it is also worth consulting rates (for the poor, the church, etc.) which survive in parish collections. Before this, the researcher is dependent upon the survival of deeds and leases, surveys and rentals, letters, maps and plans (most likely to be found in a family collection) and the few remaining household inventories which escaped the blitz in 1942.

Like any other County Record Office, the Devon Record Office possesses large quantities of deeds covering the thirteenth - twentieth centuries, taken into the office mainly as part of family archives or from firms of solicitors. There is a backlog of listing and in view of the recent budget cuts and the fact that so much staff time is now spent on the public aspect of the archive service, this is likely to remain. Listed material has been indexed and properties are arranged alphabetically under the parish in the Places Index, which also incorporates the 'D7' deeds of Exeter City Council properties, useful for tracing properties in the City centre. In addition, lists of deeds which were deposited with the former Exeter and East Devon Record Office, are arranged chronologically within the parish in a series of small green binders.

Occasionally, deeds contain plans of the property being conveyed. A deed of 1602 actually gives the dimensions of individual rooms of a tenement in St Mary Arches Street, Exeter (ref. 332A add/PF 44a) and a lease of a tenement in Totnes has a covenant to build a fore front, bay window and stalls in 1532 (1597A/3/50) but this detail is unusual. One should not be misled by the description 'new built house' which may just have been taken over from an earlier deed.

Family collections can produce such gems as a detailed survey of a manor house at Shute in 1559 (123M/E 98), building accounts for Chaddlehanger in Lamerton, 1587 and 1595 (1499M add 3/E 1) and papers about building Endsleigh Cottage for the Duke of Bedford, 1810-1818 (W. 1258M/LP 4/1-21). There are elevations

and plans for the proposed rebuilding of Downes, Crediton in 1830 (2065M/E 3/13-15) and for alterations to Powderham Castle *circa* 1840-*circa* 1900 (1508M Devon add/E 22/1-12).

For houses used for special purposes there are often additional records for consultation – eighteenth century glebe terriers (or surveys) usually contain a detailed description of the parsonage house and other Diocesan records and archives deposited by the Church Commissioners both contain papers relating to the rebuilding and former parsonage houses. Details about toll houses may be found among the records of the turnpike trusts in Quarter Sessions records. School deposits sometime contain deeds and papers relating to the schoolmaster's house and the Board of Education school plans sometimes include the house. For inns, parish deposits occasionally include documents relating to the Church house, which in a number of cases later became the inn. Town houses are sometimes very well documented, for example the plans of houses built on the St Aubyn estates in Devonport (accessions 153 and 387) which are now in the West Devon Record Office in Plymouth and documents concerning the houses built at Higher Summerlands, Exeter, for the Exeter Corporation of the Poor in the Exeter office, (see illustrations).

Churches and chapels have their own documentation – faculty causes and petitions in the Diocesan records for Anglican churches and building accounts in the records of other denominations, for example for Providence Chapel, Throwleigh, 1845-68 (2200 D add 6/2) and the Friends' Meeting House in Exeter, 1895 (874 D/T 93). Public buildings such as hospitals, town halls and markets are usually well documented and plans of the latter two types of building are often found in District Council records. The North Devon Record Office holds applications for planning permission submitted to Barnstaple Rural District Council between 1919 and 1955 (3057) and there is a similar series starting in the late nineteenth century for Exeter held at the Devon Record Office in Exeter. Printed bye-laws relating to building are found in District Council records held in all three offices.

Business records of architects and builders held by the Record Office are not numerous but the DRO at Exeter holds files and plans of Lucas, Roberts and Brown, architects, of Exeter covering 1942-1960s (3741 B), the records of Packer and

Son, builders, of Exeter, 1904-1963 (3845 B) and of Berry and Vincent, builders, of Crediton, 1794-1915 (1937 B). The records of the Devon and Cornwall Architectural Society (Exeter Branch), 1916-1967 (4851 G) and architectural drawings of buildings of antiquarian interest by A.W. Everett, 1930s-1960s (3116Z) are also on deposit at Exeter.

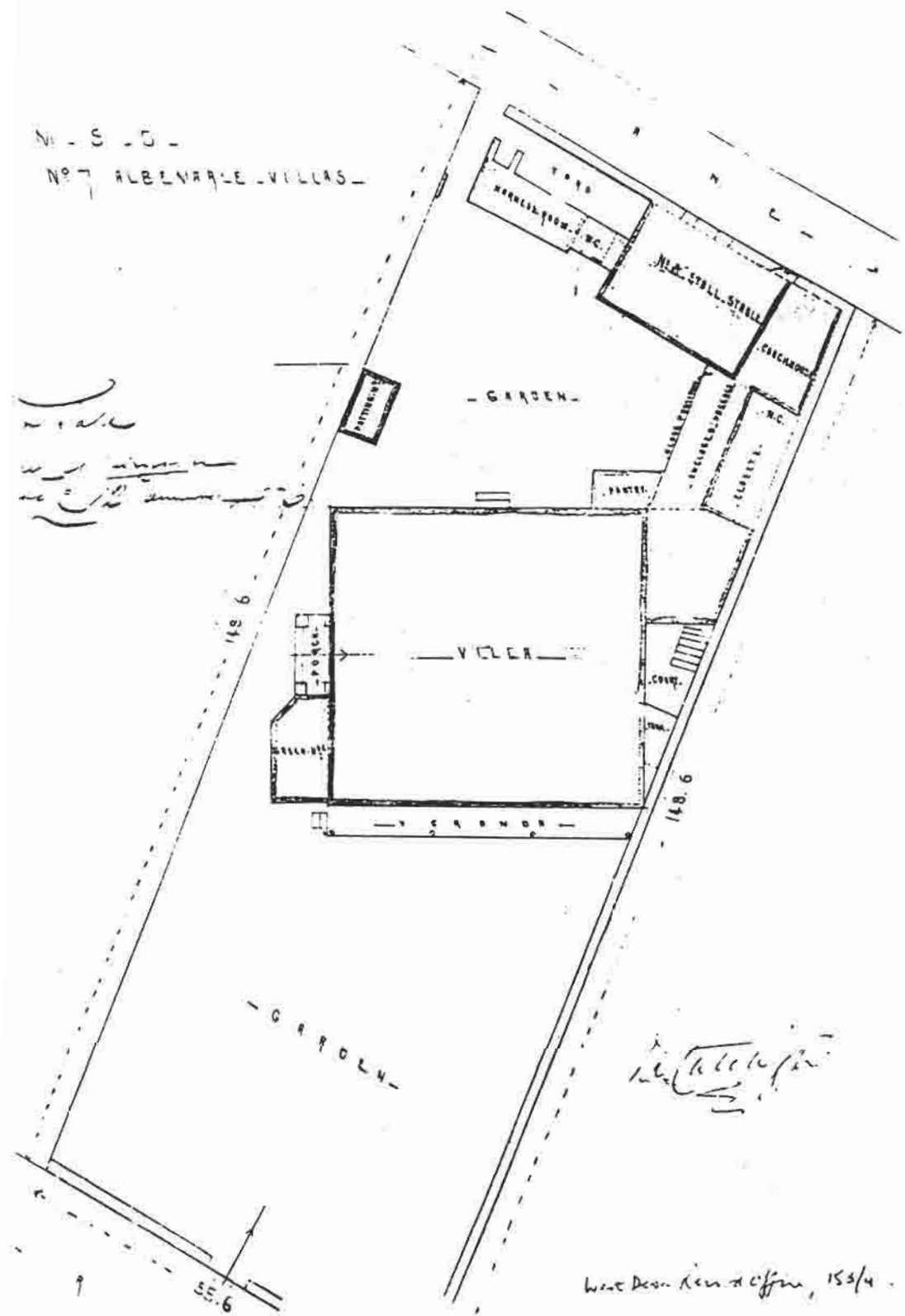
Finally, the Record Office holds some illustrative material. The diaries of the Reverend John Swete covering the late eighteenth- and early nineteenth centuries have descriptions and watercolours of Devon mansions, the main purpose of his tours being to get ideas for the rebuilding of his house at Oxton. The photographic collection of Chapman of Dawlish dates from 1900 and the Beaford photographic archive, now in the North Devon Record Office in Barnstaple, has photographs showing buildings now destroyed or altered as backdrops to village events.

Like the pedigree of a family, a building's history may have to be pieced together from a variety of documentary sources and this may be time-consuming to research. Staff in the DRO are happy to advise on the indexes to consult in spite of very busy search rooms at Exeter which have over 10,000 visitors a year. Also documents are continually being added to the DRO – on average the office takes in one accession every working day which can vary from a single item to a van load of records. There are plenty of documents to choose from and the history of your property just may be recorded there!

Margery Rowe
County Archivist
Devon Record Office



Devon Record Office, Exeter City Archives, Corporation of the Poor Map Book, showing Higher Summerlands, Exeter (Hoopers Buildings) in 1804. The houses were blitzed and Heavitree Police Station is now on the site.



Plan of 7, Albemarle Villas, taken from Document 153-4 in the West Devon Record Office, Plymouth

ECCLESIASTICAL GLEBE TERRIERS AS A SOURCE OF BUILDING DESCRIPTIONS

There is a class of vernacular buildings for which a fair number of historic references exist. These are parsonage houses and their outbuildings, which were listed and described in the 'terriers' of Glebe land and property submitted by incumbents to their bishop. They often paint a vivid picture of the buildings, in describing their layout and construction. The social aspect is also illuminating, showing that the average country parson was housed much like his contemporary yeoman neighbours. Comparing those of different dates can show how these houses evolved – and how slowly, before the reforming hand of the nineteenth century swept most of them away. Accommodation seems to have changed little in the following few examples, dated from 1613 to 1779.

Two terriers of the old parsonage at Thorverton, each telling us different things about it, combine to provide quite a rich description of this house. The first, of 1613, tells us of the plan. There was a hall, a parlour, a little room *in* the parlour, with a chamber over it, a chamber over the parlour, a buttery with a chamber over, a kitchen with a room over, the 'new house' with chamber over, and a 'little dairy house'. 67 years later, in 1680, we are told of the materials of which it was made. There was a kitchen with a paved floor, a hall with an earth floor, a parlour with a planked floor. The hall and parlour had stone chimneys, while that of the kitchen was of cob, like the walls. There were fireplaces in both the parlour chamber and the hall chamber. As before, there were five upper rooms but, this time, we are told that one of them is a study. The intriguing little room within the parlour seems to have vanished. Unhappily, this interesting house no longer exists: a new vicarage was built in 1840.

In his terrier of 1679, the vicar of Shebbear says that, 'The vicaridge house consisteth of three under rooms, the hall on the Easter side of an Entry belonging to the house, the wood house on the Wester side and the seller westward from that; all with rooms floored with stone and earth. All

three upper rooms the easter, the middle and the wester chambers, all floored with plank and plastered at the sides and at the top. The walls are stone under and mud at the top. There is belonging to it a barn, stable and stall under one roof from the dwelling house southward.' The following year he submitted the same details, with the addition of, 'On ye East side of ye dwelling house a pigsty.' Perhaps it was a new addition – or just forgotten the year before. It would be good to know what it looked like. If we did not have this evidence, we might not believe that a house of this class still did not have a separate kitchen, as late as 1680. This house was still thatched at the end of the nineteenth century, so presumably always was. Though much altered and enlarged, it is still standing.

Almost a century later, the terrier of Nymet of Rowland of 1779 tells us that the parsonage house had cob walls and was thatched. There was a parlour with a lime-ash floor, a hall (no flooring is mentioned so, presumably, it was earth), a kitchen paved with stone, a dairy and a cellar. I do not know of any reference to an upper floor but am sure there must have been one. This house was demolished in the nineteenth century.

There are many more examples available and waiting to be studied. Uneven as the information is, it nonetheless provides a valuable aid in the interpretation of the many more vernacular buildings which still survive.

Ann Adams

BISHOPS TAWTON WALL MONUMENT

The monument of Sir Francis Chichester (death date 1698) in Bishops Tawton church is an interesting piece, both for its stylistic features and the practical conservation problems it has posed during our recent work. It is a large, cantilevered wall monument, resting on three heavy corbels built into the south wall of the chancel. The design is fairly familiar; an inscription panel framed with carved foliage, and flanked by columns and caryatids. These sit on a gadrooned sill, beneath

which is a swag bearing the family's crest. Above the inscription is a cornice surmounted by an elaborate pediment and funerary urns. The carving style is vigorous, and perhaps to some tastes, coarse.



Illustration of a caryatid from Bishops Tawton Wall Monument

In recent years the whole piece has slumped producing a crack between the monument and the wall, and making it appear alarmingly unstable. In the 1950s, attempts were made to secure the structure, but new cracks opened up, and it was necessary to remove it to discover the source of movement, and to repair the increasing damage.

Inevitably, it has iron fixings that were creating the problem. Church monuments were almost always fixed with iron, which in the damp environment of the wall rust, begin to expand and split the stone of the monument. Eventually they will corrode away to nothing until the piece is in a precarious condition, even in a wall with no abnormal damp problem. We know that this monument has only been in its present position for just over a century, and yet as the monument was dismantled, many of the cramps tying it back were found to be utterly useless, breaking up into dust. Others had blown the sill into shards which have been carefully rebuilt.

The material is largely Bath limestone, but the monument has always been polychromed, much of it disguised as marble. Thus it could be made to appear a far more costly piece than it was, a common practice. The present scheme seems to be mainly Victorian and the colours have a pale, pastel-like appearance, but the original seventeenth-century scheme may well have been much more robust and florid. Evidence of under layers suggests that a dark red was used originally, and that there was considerably more gilding. Such a scheme would equate with the very similar monument at Pilton, which has a dark red sill, and that at Torrington where large amounts of gilding have been retained. Furthermore, these powerful schemes are more appropriate to the elaborate carving style displayed here.

The ornament, and particularly the border of fruit, flowers and cherubs framing the inscription, is of a recognisable late seventeenth-century design (one may compare the woodcarvings by the great Grinling Gibbons at Hampton Court Palace) but carried out with a rustic vigour characterised by energetic if sometimes slightly coarse forms. This style may be seen in a number of other monuments in the Barnstaple area; immediately, the facade of Queen Anne's Wall in the town itself, springs to mind. There one finds the bunches of fruit and flowers in a very similar vein, and other church monuments too. At

Atherington, Great Torrington, Tawstock, Braunton and Pilton are fine examples, though this is not an exhaustive list. All were executed around 1700, and all except the very martial example at Braunton, display the clusters of palms, the fruit, the wheat ears and flowers tumbling over each other in great plenty. One, at Torrington, includes also figures virtually identical to those at Bishops Tawton. The impression is of a family, or school of carvers of considerable ability, working in a distinctive style, for one need only compare other monuments in these same churches to get some impression of the vigour of the work. The school or family, was employed by most of the prominent families of the region – the Incedons, Chichesters and Bouchiers, apparently to produce more and more imposing pieces. Pevsner and Cherry notes them, generally referring to them as "elaborate but coarse" or in similar language, though one might more fairly call them examples of a vibrant rural school.

The Bishops Tawton monument itself now lies in the church, awaiting a decision on clearing, and will be refixed with non-corroding cramps, and with some form of membrane to protect the fragile polychromy from damp.

Torquil McNeillage

A PART OF BRADFORD THAT IS FOREVER BLACK TORRINGTON

When describing the location of a building its six or eight-figure OS reference is important but not more important than its parish. The parish immediately sets the building into its social, economic, geological and topographical setting. To say that a building is in Hartland parish creates a very different image from saying it is in Dartington. However nothing is quite perfect and parish boundaries have the little idiosyncrasies which come from a long evolution (unlike the soulless post codes which are a bureaucratic and relentlessly efficient creation).

A convenient map is the Ordnance Survey Administrative Areas Diagram showing county, district and civil parish boundaries as at April 1974. Devon is on two sheets, north part and south part, at a scale of 1:100,000.

Despite his enthusiasm for parishes, the writer was bamboozled by a parochial quirk which led him to "discover" a previously known Bible Christian Chapel! The writer consulted the *1851 Ecclesiastical Census* edited and published by Michael Wickes in 1990, which includes *Rehoboth* Bible Christian Chapel of 1839 in Black Torrington, in North West Devon, a parish where no such chapel is known. Then the Black Torrington meeting house licences in the Devon Record Office came up with a Bible Christian Chapel registered in 1822. This was on the East Hole estate of James Damrel, who lived in Bradford the adjoining parish. The modern 1:25,000 OS map revealed no East Hole in Black Torrington but did show a place of that name very close to the present *Rehoboth* chapel in Bradford parish. The answer to the problem of Rehoboth chapels in adjoining parishes was found in the title map and apportionment for Black Torrington. This very large map shows two areas remote from the main parish named *East Hamlet* and *West Hamlet* respectively.

The Rehoboth Chapel which is in the modern Bradford Parish was previously in the West Hamlet and was correctly returned with Black Torrington in 1851. Its predecessor of 1822 at East Hole, in the modern Bradford parish, was about 400 metres distant but still in the West Hamlet. The apportionment document in its recapitulation at the end gives the respective areas showing that the area of the two "hamlets" was nearly 18% of the total parish area.

1st Portion of parish	54,432 acres
Eastern hamlet	586 acres
Western hamlet	575 acres
Total	56,593 acres

Such severed portions of parishes are known as *outliers* and survived in some numbers into the last century although now all seem to have been administratively tidied away. The existence (and problem) of these outliers seems to be hardly mentioned in local history texts and this article is intended to draw them to the attention of researchers although not to explain the historical reasons for their existence. Mention must be made

of Hugh Peskett's *Guide to the Parish and Non-Parochial Registers of Devon and Cornwall 1538-1837*, 1979. This work of supererogation, which deals with ecclesiastical parishes, provides thumbnail maps of the parishes, deanery by deanery, and shows and lists the outliers. In the deanery of Holsworthy, of which Black Torrington is a part, Peskett shows single outliers of Bridgerule, Sutcombe and Tetcott parishes as well as the two of Black Torrington.

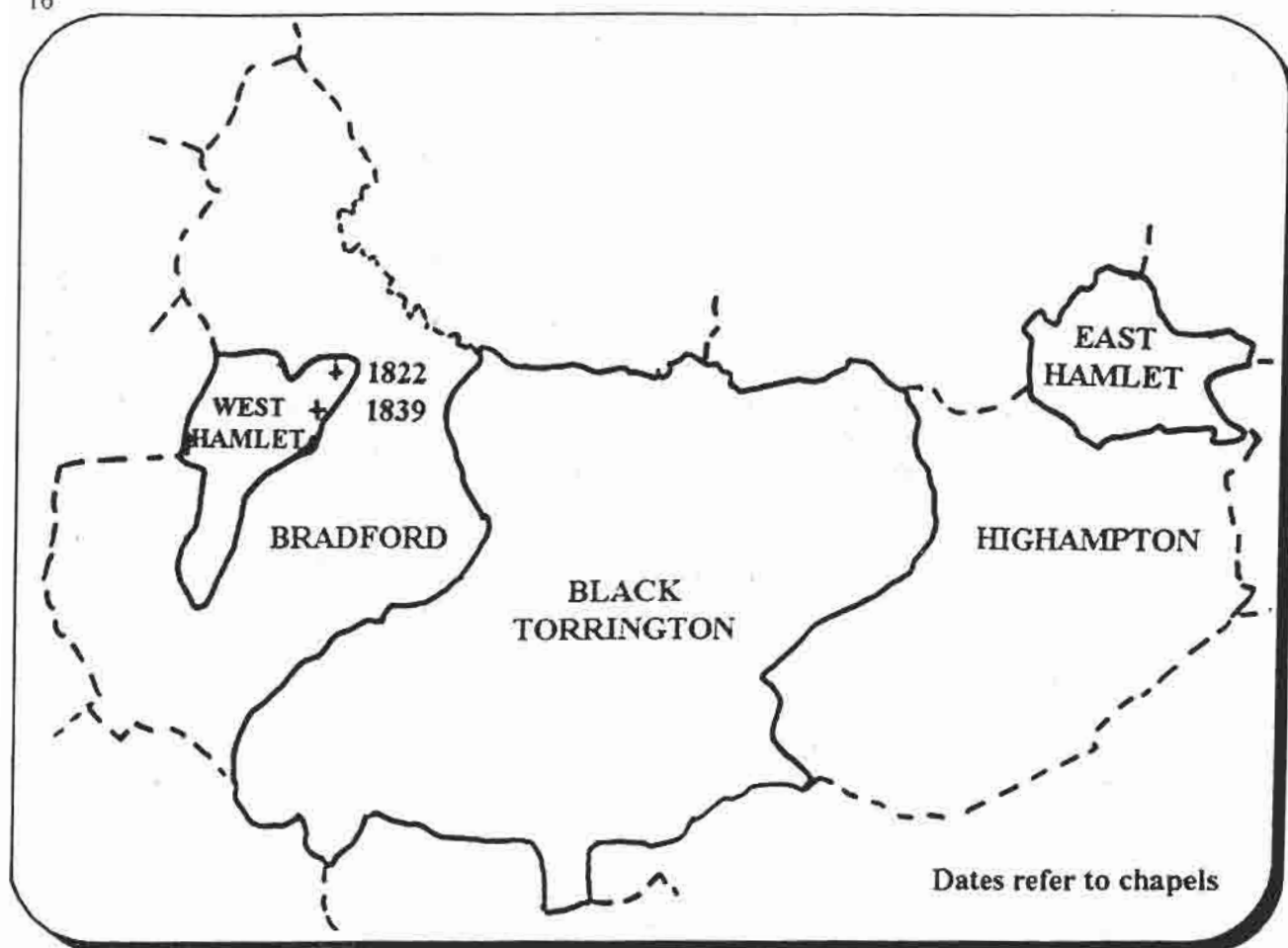
A sketch of the parish boundary of Black Torrington and its outliers is shown as an example. These outliers are tied to parish boundaries but Peskett's plans show some outliers which are fully floating.

Despite their harmless character chapels sometimes have violent hands laid upon them and Dartmouth Wesleyan Chapel was even dynamited! The 1822 chapel in the Western outlier, now in Bradford, suffered an equally violent but less sudden fate. The *Bible Christian Magazine* for 1839 tells the tale in connection with the opening of the new chapel. The site of the 1822 chapel had not been legally conveyed and on the owner's death the land "fell into the hands of one of his sons, who was an enemy to the cross of Christ". This son refused to sell by agreement and "On the next Sunday evening he forced open one of the windows of the chapel, and

thrust in a quantity of unthreshed corn....Next Saturday he broke through the wall at one end of the chapel, and broke down the pulpit." Then he took out the windows and broke up the seats and broke down the side walls so that the chapel was filled with rubble. Of course as fast as the poor demented man caused damage the Methodists cleared it away and continued to worship in a roofless wreck under tottering walls. In the end the relatives of the man were so concerned at his threats to burn down a Methodist's house that they begged the Methodists to leave, which they did and built themselves a splendid new chapel. Needless to say the wrecker came to a bad end, "the affliction was so grievous that the flesh fell off his bones before his death."

The intimate relationship of Black Torrington and Bradford serves as a reminder that parish boundaries do change and there is a possibility of outliers. Outliers were taken notice of officially in the 1851 Census and when applying for Meeting House licences but it is likely that their inhabitants regarded themselves as belonging to the host parish and would attend that parish church.

Roger Thorne



BLACK TORRINGTON PARISH & ITS OUTLIERS

Sally Woodhead. *Illustrated Guide to the Catholic Churches in the Diocese of Plymouth*. 1992 303 pages ISBN 0 9520381 0 2 £17.50 incl p/p from Author, 27, Dart Bridge Road, Buckfastleigh, Devon. TQ11 0DZ

This A4 format book bound in boards includes every Roman church between the Scilly Isles and Bournemouth. It is a visitor's guide par excellence with line and coloured illustrations and a location map for every building. It includes the 132 places where public mass is regularly available but private chapels such as Ugbrooke and most convents are not noticed. Apart from Lanherne in Cornwall, hardly any of the buildings are pre-Victorian but they are a fascinating mixture with architects such as Leonard Stokes, the Hansom brothers and Sir Giles Gilbert Scott. Not all started life as mass-houses for Shaldon was a Baptist Chapel, South Molton was a Bible Christian chapel and grandest of all, Our Lady of the Assumption, Tavistock was built by the Duke of Bedford as a colossal Anglican Chapel of Ease for his tenants. Compiling this book was a labour of love and its price is correspondingly uncommercial.

Roger Thorne

DARTMOUTH METHODIST CHAPEL

The classical Methodist Chapel, somehow so incongruous, yet a rare expression of civic pride in the town, dominated the market square with its five bay rendered classical facade with central pediment and four giant ionic columns. Originally built in 1816 and then rebuilt in 1875 by John Wills it was extended at a cost of £2,300 to seat 640 people with a Sunday school on the upper floor. It was the only building in the town centre built to a grand scale, the townsmen of Dartmouth have always been known for their tight-fistedness when it comes to building.

John Wills came from Kingsbridge and went on to become the architect of many Wesleyan Chapels in the Midlands. The Dartmouth Methodist Chapel, an early example of his work, was until its demolition, the only known surviving piece of Wills' church architecture in Devon. It was listed grade II in the 1980s.

When the Methodists combined with the United Reformed Church the chapel fell into disuse and for some years was used as a drama store by the local amateur dramatic society. The chapel was eventually sold, the new owner stripped out most of the interior before selling the property to South Hams District Council in the early 1980s. The council purchased the property to provide a much needed *Arts Centre* for the town. In the spring of 1988 the Methodist Chapel was sold to a developer (C. Alexander Ltd) for half a million pounds. The town was outraged, an ombudsman's report was called for by members of the town council, and a town councillor resigned. The following winter an application by a P. Denga to convert the building into eighteen sheltered flats was turned down. In the autumn of 1989 a Mr Ellis applied for a renewal of permission for conversion to and Arts and Craft Centre. In January 1990 Mr Denga was granted consent for a reduced number of flats, but the conditions were such that the appeal was as good as lost.

In early February the following year the chapel was blown up early one morning. The subsequent investigation showed that a prior attempt had been made to demolish the front of the building by cutting a horizontal section out of

the base of the front wall. An action which if successful could have lead to some severe fatalities. After the chapel was blown up I realised I had seen the perpetrators leaving the building with shovels one Saturday afternoon. Unfortunately it never occurred to me that they were in the process of demolishing the building.

Sadly the local amenity society were positively delighted at the demise of 'that dreadful building'. The fact that the building was listed was seen as an irrelevance and no action taken. Unfortunately both the district council and the town council (who had fought so hard against the flats) took no action against the perpetrators. The police, who initially had shown little interest, were the only party to take up the cudgels of justice when it was discovered that the chapel had been blown up.

Once the perpetrators were discovered, the police tried to bring charges under the Explosives Act, but the minister concerned used his powers under the act to stop the prosecution. In the event the police charged Mr Denga and his accomplices under listed building legislation in the Crown Court. In the event, Mr Denga was sentenced to a short prison sentence.

I understand that this was the first case brought by the police for the demolition of a listed building under listed building legislation. But what is perhaps more surprising is that this was the first successful prosecution brought for the demolition of a listed building.

Whilst Mr Denga was serving his term in jail, a new planning application was put in to build a development of nine flats by Lynxcroft Developments. A few months ago the building work was finished and the flats named Wesley Court were launched on to the market, the agents informing us that the architects had incorporated details from classical buildings to be found elsewhere in the town!

Unfortunately, the new development is out of scale with the existing buildings in the square. The facade divided into three different styles with its confused iconographic message does not have the elegance, dignity and presence of the old chapel to provide an attractive focus to the space.

Caroline Fay



Dartmouth Methodist Church - BEFORE



Dartmouth Methodist Church - AFTER (1994)

BIDEFORD QUAY

Bideford retains an important link between the town centre and the historic quay which is a working port handling about 60,000 tonnes of cargo per year. The entire length of the quay lies within the town centre conservation area. Along Broad Quay are 16 listed buildings and there are three two star listings in adjoining Bridgeland Street. Bideford Long Bridge, adjacent to the quay, is a scheduled ancient monument and has a grade one listing.

In August 1989 the National Rivers Authority published an Engineers Report identifying the need for tidal flood prevention. This scheme, of which the section covering the quay forms a part, went to public consultation. However, due to the manner in which the proposals were submitted, few people and organisations appreciated the scale of the impact that the proposals would have on Bideford.

In 1992 the NRA and Torridge District Council presented a scheme for a flood defence barrier and enhancements to the adjoining area of the quay. The NRA proposed scheme was based on the construction of a new quay wall 5.75m (18ft) into the river from the present quay wall and 1.2m (4ft) higher. Their scheme provides protection against a predicted tide level over a hundred year return period event, an allowance for a rise in sea level up to the year 2030 (as a result of global warming) and freeboard.

The proposals met with considerable opposition. The Town Council voted eight against and three abstentions with no votes in favour. Emma Nicholson M.P. expressed her opposition to the scheme. William Isaac a local businessman led a well-organised campaign against the proposals. After viewing exhibitions for and against the scheme I expressed DBGs opposition to the scheme and supported calls for independent examination.

The opposition to the proposals is based on the dramatic affect that the scheme would have on the character and appearance of this unique area and especially the views of the river and Long Bridge from broad Quay.

English Heritage also rejected the proposals and stated that "The unique relationship between the quay and the buildings fronting it will be seriously eroded....One is left unconvinced, with

an impression of post rationalisation and what may be feasible alternatives having been dismissed in a casual and superficial manner!" CPRE also expressed their opposition.

The NRA did present a list of other options with their own brief reasons for rejecting them. Many of the objectors would have had sympathy for the proposals for a scheme based on a flood wall (temporary if possible) with flood gates, at the back edge of the quay.

The Secretary of State for the Environment stated that "We have a responsibility to carry out this task in a way which conserves and enhances our environment."

Despite the opposition TDC voted twenty-three to eleven in favour of the NRA's controversial plan although only two of the nine Bideford Councillors supported the scheme.

After requests from Emma Nicholson and others to the Environment Secretary, a Public Inquiry was held in September 1993. On 29 June this year the results were published. The Environment Secretary turned down his inspector's recommendation that the scheme should be granted planning permission subject to conditions (in particular modification to provide access to lower level landing stages). The Environment Secretary agreed that "Because of its scale and bulk the scheme would interfere with important views of Bideford Bridge and would weaken visual links which bind the town and its quay to the river estuary". In his view it would significantly detract from the setting of the bridge, the listed buildings on the quay and also detract from the character and appearance of the conservation area, contrary to the aims of national policies, local development plan policies and emerging plans which seek to preserve and enhance the historic fabric of the area. However he also stated that "The NRA proposals represent the only viable option before him and that urgent need to provide flood defences for the town and the other benefits that would be gained outweigh the harm identified".

He considered it "Essential that the present scheme be modified to incorporate lower level landing stages...but that modification is not a matter of detail which can be overcome by the imposition of a negative condition". He noted that the possible effects of the proposed modification of the scheme do not appear to have been

considered during the course of the Public Inquiry and for these reasons refused planning permission.

The Secretary of State has not granted approval because of modifications to the scheme that have been found to be necessary for the embarkation of passengers onto the Oldenburg ferry and unresolved problems with cargo handling.

This is the result we were hoping for but for the wrong reasons. It means the NRA have won the case in principle but have lost it in detail. This could of course be a very politic answer to the controversial issue. It concedes the conservation arguments. It is the first time that the NRA has been refused planning permission on this scale: it does of course lessen the blow if it is turned down on detail rather than in principle.

Jeremy Sharpe

MARKER'S COTTAGE

On the Killerton Estate near Broadclyst, one in ten of the houses have survived from the late medieval period and one, a modest cob and thatch cottage, has been opened to the public. As a result of the vernacular houses survey, it has been found to have early sixteenth century paintings on the wooden screen which is the partition between the hall and parlour.

The house is known as Marker's Cottage, it was built in the fifteenth century as a single storey three-room-and-cross-passage house, with an open fire in the centre room. The smoke drifted up and trickled out through the thatch. The original smoke-blackened roof timbers and thatch (the base coat is rye) still survive in the roof. The rooms were created by head-height plank and muntin screens, two of which can still be seen.

Around 1500 the parlour or inner room was floored over, creating a first floor chamber above it. The smoke was excluded from it by extending the partition above the dividing screen up to the apex of the roof.

In the early sixteenth century, around 1530, the fireplace and chimney were built on the rear wall of the hall. With the smoke from the fire

confined to the chimney, the rooms kept cleaner and it was then that the screen was painted, as the decoration is not smoke-blackened. The St Andrew panel includes a small ship and this has been dated to 1470-1510. As an artist may continue to paint the same sort of ship all his life, it can only give guidance as to date. The paintings are therefore thought to date from around 1530 (the date of the fireplace) to perhaps 1550. St Andrew and the decorative work below him, which includes an urn and foliage, are all the same paint layer. Eddie Sinclair, the paint conservator who has cleaned and fixed the paintings, discovered that orpiment (a gold-coloured pigment) had been used for the saint's halo and in accentuating the decorative work. Orpiment is one step down from using gold, and emphasises the quality of the work done on the screen.

The unusual mix of decorative work with urns and cherubs, and the figure of St Andrew, suggests that the paintings may have coincided with the Reformation of Henry VIII and possibly explains the combination of saint and secular.

The cottage was called Town, but in the late eighteenth century it was owned by Sarah Marker, who is recorded in the Land Tax Assessments, as living there from 1780 to 1814. In 1825 Sir Thomas Dyke Acland was the owner, and the cottage became known as 'Late Marker's' and then 'Marker's'. In the mid-nineteenth century it was divided into two cottages and a lean-to forge was added to the north end. When the paintings on the screen were discovered the house was carefully investigated, the paintings cleaned with great care, and now it is fully open, three afternoons a week (Sunday, Monday and Tuesday 2-5p.m.), for people to enjoy.

Isabel Richardson

COB REVIVAL – THE WORK OF THE DEVON EARTH BUILDING ASSOCIATION

Devon contains more earth structures than any other county in England. Cob, as a building material, was in widespread use from the thirteenth century right up to the mid-Victorian period, when it fell into disuse, mainly because of the introduction of mass-produced bricks and concrete blocks, but also as a result of building bye-laws and public health legislation.

Devon also has a particularly rich heritage of medieval buildings, many of which are constructed of cob. Numerous high status yeoman farmhouses and even manor houses are built wholly or partly of cob – Bowhill House, Exeter is a noteworthy example – also many Georgian town houses, cottages and picturesque villas.

Until quite recently cob was regarded as an inferior material, despite tangible evidence of its durability and longevity in the form of thousands of standing buildings, and was considered to be unpredictable, liable to collapse quite suddenly and for no apparent reason.

In fact, this humble, much maligned and misunderstood material is, in terms of global energy consumption, the 'greenest' of all forms of construction. So, apart from the obvious need to change attitudes towards the conservation of cob buildings by correcting some widely held misconceptions about its nature and physical characteristics, it was also decided to raise awareness of the benefits of reviving the use of the material for new construction as well as for the repair of historic buildings.

In February 1991 a one day conference was held at Bowhill, Exeter and Forde House, Newton Abbot, the purpose of which was to raise these issues and discuss ways in which the problem of the conservation of cob buildings could best be addressed. One outcome of the conference was the setting up of a technical panel, known initially as the Devon Earth Building Working Group, in May 1991. In an academic sense, the historical and archaeological background to West Country cob building had been thoroughly researched and widely published. What was now required was to

provide technical guidance on how best to conserve the earthen heritage by repairing and maintaining cob structures in a sympathetic and informed way. Accordingly, group membership was restricted either to practitioners or to professional architects, engineers and surveyors who deal with cob building on a frequent and regular basis.

In order to assist the group in achieving its aims, one of which is to produce technical leaflets and other publications, Devon local authorities were approached with requests for grant aid and some modest funding was made available, the bulk of which came from Devon County Council. The group, which is now known as the Devon Earth Building Association – though there is some pressure to extend activities to include other parts of the South West, Cornwall in particular – does not have charitable status; neither does it have a formal constitution, so is unable to offer membership on an annual subscription basis. Currently, funding is raised in two ways: through the sale of leaflets and by running conferences and seminars.

So what has DEBA achieved in the three years since its foundation? It should be emphasised that, in terms of both repair and new construction, some initiatives had already been taken, most notably by Alfred Howard at Down St Mary and the English heritage team at Bowhill; so we certainly cannot take all the credit for what has developed in recent years. Indeed, if it had not been for Al Howard's pioneering work it is unlikely that the 'cob revival' would have developed in the way it has, or at quite the same pace; seeing is believing!

The first new cob building to be constructed in Devon since the end of World War II was Alf Howard's bus shelter at Down St Mary in 1980. In 1981-2 HBMC (now English Heritage) reconstructed a cob lean-to at Bowhill. Since then substantial new-build works have been carried out at Spanishlake, Doddiscombsleigh; Combeinteign-head; Down St Mary, Black Dog and Lower Tricombe, Northleigh (two-storey extensions); Stokeinteignhead (re-building of part of fire-damaged public house) and Bury Barton, Lapford. Two public amenity shelters were built for Teignbridge D.C. at Starcross and Trusham and further substantial re-building works have taken place at Bowhill, together with numerous other minor and 'cosmetic' repairs. Some repair works,

including re-building of boundary walls, have been carried out by the National Trust and major structural repairs to a cob house at Town Farm, Gittisham were undertaken by Architecton, with English Heritage grant-aid. Repairs to Hill Farm, Landkey have recently been completed for the Devon Historic Buildings Trust, supervised by Jonathan Rhind. DEBA working group members have been involved in all these projects.

Two of the group's aims have always been to initiate scientific and technical research into the performance and durability of earth as a building material and to encourage training at both artisan and professional level. However, it soon became obvious that DEBA lacked the resources necessary to achieve these aims, so in mid-1992 the group approached Plymouth School of Architecture, where a Diploma/MA course in architectural conservation had just started, with a view to collaboration. The results of this pooling of resources have exceeded all expectations and have firmly established Devon as the national focus of activity in the conservation of cob buildings.

The University of Plymouth is now committed to a programme of research into earth as a building material. Building on existing research, carried out mainly in France and Germany, and adopting an inter-disciplinary approach, the University has funding approved for several research posts which will be concerned with various technical aspects of the material; also with the distribution of cob buildings in relation to the geology, topography and socio-economic history of the areas in which they occur. An eight week part-time course on the conservation and repair of cob buildings was run in May and June of this year, as part of the postgraduate Diploma/MA programme, and it is hoped to run vocational courses at artisan level in collaboration with colleges of further education.

Following an initiative by Ray Harrison, one of the group's founder members with many years experience of researching earth building throughout Britain, a national network of practitioners has now been set up and is affiliated to ICOMOS (UK) as its earth structures committee. The University of Plymouth has established links with organisations in Europe, including CRATerre (International Centre for Earth Construction) at Grenoble, and has now set

up the national Centre for Earthen Architecture at Plymouth.

At a local level, DEBA has run two successful seminars on the subject of cob building at the Crossmead Conference Centre, Exeter and more are planned, possibly in other parts of the South West. Its members have produced three leaflets on cob building repair and maintenance, two of which were published by the Devon Historic Buildings Trust. Only appalling weather prevented the DEBA stand at the Devon County Show from being a total success. However, despite heavy rain severely curtailing building activity, the group's display still created a great deal of public interest. Encouraged by this, and by increasing public awareness of the need to develop low-energy, 'appropriate technology' forms of construction, DEBA is currently discussing with the Devon County Agricultural Association, the possibility of constructing a permanent earth building at the Westpoint site.

Looking back over the three years since its inception, the group can be justifiably proud of its achievements and its success in raising awareness of the extent and value of the cob heritage in Devon and the potential of earth as a building material. If nothing else, it has acted as a catalyst to stimulate interest in earth building both locally and nationally. What may formerly have been regarded as a sort of lunatic fringe activity, mildly eccentric, rather bucolic, quaint and folksy, is now suddenly being taken very seriously, which is all very gratifying.

Larry Keefe
Secretary, DEBA

