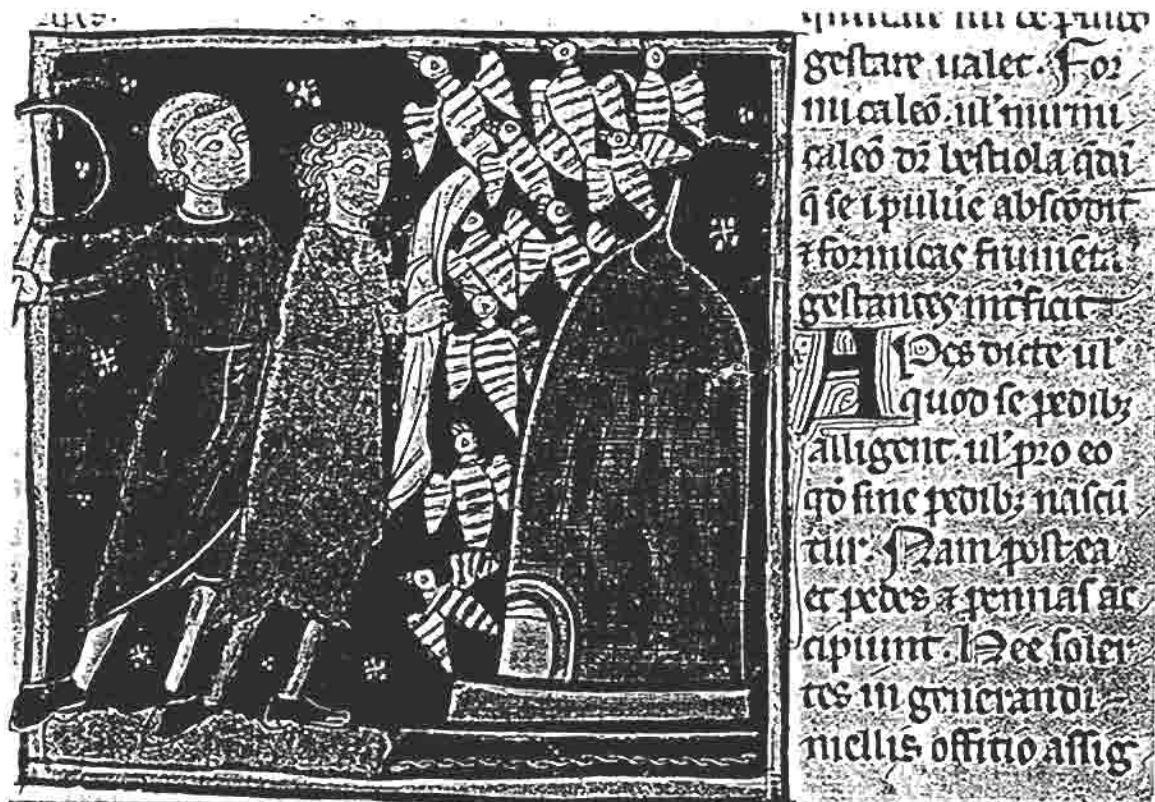


DEVON BUILDINGS GROUP

NEWSLETTER NUMBER 14



JANUARY 1996

Cover illustration is an illustration of beekeeping from a medieval manuscript.

Published by The Devon Buildings Group

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DEVON BUILDINGS GROUP

NEWSLETTER NUMBER 14, JANUARY 1996

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EDITORIAL:

1995 marked the tenth anniversary of the Devon Buildings Group and was a year which had seen some major changes. Chris Brooks, a founder member of the Group, Secretary for the past ten years, untiring supporter, promoter and initiator of many of the Group's activities, stepped down as Secretary at this year's AGM. He is succeeded by David Jeremiah. David was Head of the Exeter College of Art & Design and oversaw its metamorphosis into the Faculty of Art & Design of the University of Plymouth. He is now a Research Professor. David is an expert in Design History, particularly of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and is currently working on the history of motor car architecture and design. David's considerable experience and expertise will shape the Group as it moves into its second decade.

Letters and articles for the next edition of the *Newsletter*, which will appear along with the rest of God's creatures in the Spring, should reach me by the beginning of March 1996. Please send them to the following address:

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Su Jarwood

A CREDITON PERAMBULATION

What follows are the notes I provided for the afternoon tour of Crediton that took place after the Group's 1994 AGM. A number of members said that it would be useful to have the notes in a more permanent form, and that they would be of interest to people who were unable to be there on the day. Reference throughout is made to Norden's remarkable map of the town and parish of Crediton made in 1598. This was thought lost in the fire that burnt out Creedy Park in the early years of this century, but a copy recently came to light in the possession of the Governors of Crediton Church, and has now been deposited in the Devon Record Office. The part of the map showing the parish church and the central area of the town is included with these notes.

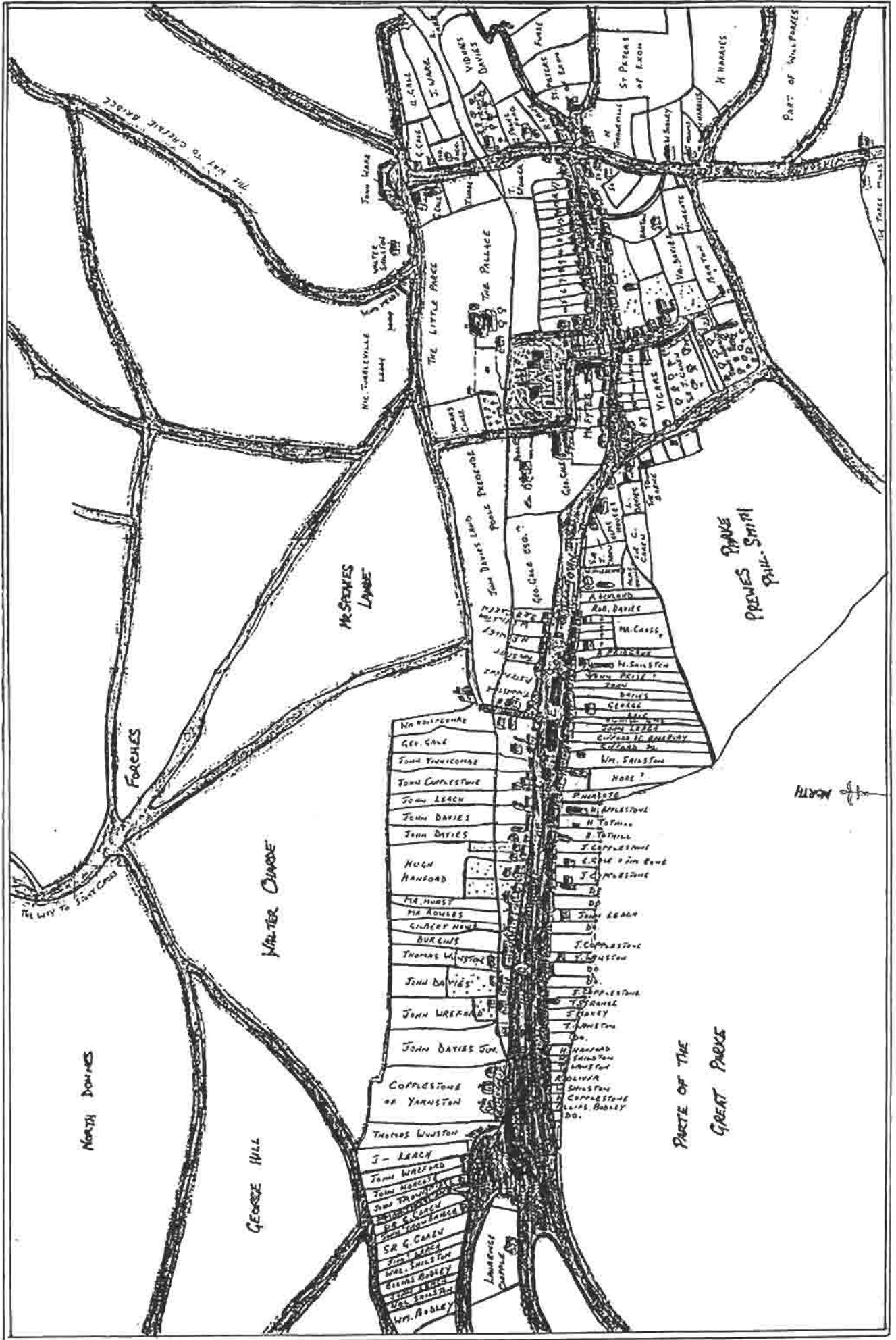
The tour begins at the parish church and proceeds down East Street.

As Norden's map of 1598 shows, medieval Crediton essentially comprised a single street running for over a mile east to west, along East Street, up Bowden Hill, down Park Street, and then along the High Street to St Lawrence's Green at the west end of the town. Running straight east of the church, East Street holds to the original line of this main thoroughfare. Norden's map shows East Street continuously built up on both sides of the road, the houses on the left – north – side all with uniform burgage plots, fifteen in all. Nearly opposite the church, **Sir John Hayward's School**, built in 1859-60 to the designs of the leading Exeter Gothic Revival architect, John Hayward – who seems to have had no connection with the founder of the school despite the identity of the names: domestic Tudor in Posbury stone with mullioned windows and ornamented bargeboards. The endowment of the school originated in the C17, and the present buildings replaced those of the combined English and Blue Charity Schools. Beyond the school the modern main road swings away from East Street down **Charlotte Street**, cut through from the Exeter Road in 1836 as part of an ambitious street improvement plan that included the cutting of **Union Road** between the church and the High Street – thus avoiding the steep ascent of Bowden Hill. East Street continues along its old line. On the right hand side some dignified early C19

houses, Nos 8a and 8b East Street retaining early shop fronts decorated with Greek key mouldings. On the left, modest C18 and C19 cottages which may conceal earlier structure. Half way down, **The Limes** set back behind its own wall, across the line of the original burgage plots: a five-bay front, the interior subdivided by retaining a heavyweight C17 staircase.

At the end of East Street is the junction with **Mill Street**: in 1598 only that part of the road running south to Exeter was so-called, the northern part, the road to Tiverton, being called **Fladder Street** – perhaps from *flodder*, to flood, as the road forded the stream that ran from the Creedy immediately north of the main road through the town. Along Mill Street to the left, **Oxford Terrace** of c1900: two miniature terraces of red brick cottages facing one another, very much in the manner of an urban working-class court. Back to the junction with East Street and left into **Tolleys**. The informally grouped houses here still retain the character of farm buildings on the edge of the main town settlement, though now much altered and with infill: Norden's map shows that the layout of 1598 is still retained, with one lane – still unmetalled after a short distance – running straight on and another, **Downeshead Lane**, curving up to the right. Giving off Downeshead Lane is the delightful **Buller Square**: early cob, stone and thatch cottages grouped around a pitched stone courtyard, the large house on the left, though much altered, may be part of the one shown standing by itself on Norden's map. The Square is the last remaining court of its kind in Crediton though others, similarly laid out, were still standing on Bowden Hill and in Church Street as recently as the 1960s. On the right hand side of Buller Square is a substantial brick house, possibly of late C17 date originally. Above Buller Square, Downeshead Lane still has early dry-stone retaining walls, constructed with considerable care, and a pitched stone pedestrian pathway, now threatened by weeds. The lane now leads into the modern industrial estate, but the name of the estate's principal road, **Commonmarsh Lane**, suggests that Downeshead Lane gave access to part of the medieval common lands attached to the town.

Back to Mill Street and down to the junction with Charlotte Street and **Exeter Road**. In Charlotte Street a terrace of small cottages in a domestic Tudor style, built c1836 apparently for



Copy from John Norden's Terrier of the Manor of Crediton by courtesy of Mr Robin Langhorne of Crediton.

retired retainers and workers from the Buller estate at Downes, just outside the town. On the junction **The White Hart**, its name recently changed to **The Crown** on its conversion to a Chinese restaurant: the present building is of 1939 by Dart and Francis, smartly managed in the Art Deco version of Neo-Georgian favoured by the Devenish Brewery between the wars. Until ten years ago the interior remained intact. The original site of the **White Hart** was on the opposite side of the road, where it was destroyed by fire in the 1920s: documentary evidence for it goes back at least to the early C18. Further down the Exeter Road, the attractive little **Exeter Road Post Office**, with C19 shop front still wholly intact. Next to the Post Office is **Culver House** – early C19, three storeys, plain red brick with sash windows – and, further down again and set back behind big enclosing walls, **Fair Park**, seemingly dating from the C18. Continuing down Exeter Road, on the left, simple C18 or early C19 terraced cottages now much besmirched by the passing traffic.

Right from Exeter Road, and on the edge of the town, the road to Tedburn St Mary runs down to **Fordton** where there is a C16 or earlier bridge over the River Yeo – it is clearly shown on Norden's map. A leat from the Yeo, now largely culverted, is still evident near the Exeter Road junction, and this part of Crediton appears on Norden's map variously as **The Three Mills** and as **Four Mills**. It seems that these were textile mills as early as the late C16 for the adjoining field is named **Rack Close** on the map. Cloth manufacturing certainly went on here in the C17 and C18, as well as in the main textile area in the centre of the town. As late as 1850 – by which time the industry had long collapsed in Crediton itself – the mill down on the Yeo was still producing coarse linens and sail-cloth. It is unclear whether any parts of the **Four Mills** still survive in the present buildings nearer the Exeter Road, or whether they vanished in the new building activity that accompanied the arrival here of the railway. What has survived is the lane that curves back from this point on Norden's map to join what is now the Exeter Road, and which is still called **Four Mills Lane**. The most important buildings here now are those that relate to the railway. A railway between Exeter and Crediton was planned in the early 1840s and was proposed as an atmospheric track, like that from Exeter to

Starcross, and was similarly designed by Brunel. It is uncertain whether any part of the atmospheric line was laid, but tenders were invited for the erection of a station building with ancillary structures as early as 1846. In the event, a broad gauge line was opened as far as Crediton in 1851. The **Station Building** survives, is remarkably unaltered, and, as the Exeter and Crediton Railway Company was an offshoot of the GWR, it was possibly designed by Brunel himself: brick, steeply gabled, canopies to both sides on timber cantilevered brackets, with additional cast iron brackets on the platform side. By the level crossing up the track from the station, the wooden **Signal Box** dates from 1862 when the London and South Western Railway Company, after much delay, built the Taw Valley line up to Barnstaple. Between the station and the signal box the masonry and iron girder **Pedestrian Bridge** dates from 1878. Contemporary with the arrival of the railway is **The Railway Hotel**, now the Dartmoor Railway: handsome and up-market, its doorcase with attached Tuscan columns. To the rear the substantial courtyard and stable buildings remain, a reminder that the Victorian railway system relied on horse-drawn transport to carry passengers beyond the stations. Adjoining the hotel, but setback from the road, is **Taw Vale Parade**, comprising two pairs of three-bay houses: they have the same doorcases and dentilled eaves as the hotel and are surely by the same architect and part of the same development.

The service road between the pairs of Taw Valley Parade gives into **Four Mills Lane**. Back along the lane towards Exeter Road, on the right, a large cob barn clearly older than adjacent buildings; on the left, at the junction with the main road, an impressive stretch of cob wall and a pedestrian path that climbs high above the road and is in part of pitched stone. Standing by the path the handsomely detailed and very intact **Norrington House**, of the early C19; associated industrial buildings belonged to the works of Henry Norrington and Sons, agricultural implement makers.

Left off Exeter Road is **Park Road**; this appears as **Back Lane** on the Norden map of 1598, and still follows the same line. At its junction with Exeter Road is **Hillbrow**, a two and a half storey early C19 house, stucco, its sash windows with eared architraves, and with a quirky timber and brick porch in the sub Arts and Crafts manner of

the 1920s. The single storey extension along Park Road is a well-mannered addition of the 1980s. Opposite is the long cob range of **Winswood Cottage** and **Spinney**, a thatched barton presumably of the C17 as no building appears in this spot on Norden's map. Down Park Road, on the right, a fine stretch of thatched cob wall, that seems originally to have been much longer: it reappears in broken sections as the front garden wall of the C20 houses further down the road. If this was at one time a single wall then its position, running along one side of the approximate rectangle of land between Back Lane and East Street, where the parish church stands, is very suggestive. Norden's map shows about a third of this land as occupied by orchards, vestiges of which still remain, and almost all of it divided between the families of Northcote, Carew, and Davies – that is, in the possession of the local landed magnates who picked up substantial new property at the dissolution of the monasteries. Crediton church was collegiate before the Reformation, and its lands were alienated at the dissolution. Did the land between East Street and Back Lane, with its carefully enclosed orchards, belong to the collegiate church? And is the fragmentary, but still impressive cob wall along what is now Park Road what survives of the original medieval boundary wall?

From Park Road into **Dean Street**, which runs back to the parish church; on Norden's map Dean Street does not quite get as far as Park Road, though a footpath appears to go through. On the left another large section of cob wall, in this position seeming to relate to one of the orchard walls shown on the map. Half way down Dean Street on the right is **The Chantry**, cultured C18 with a fine doorcase and glazed fanlight. Beyond it, and set at right angles to the road, a thatched range. On the left hand side of the road, one of the most interesting lines of cottages in the town. Norden shows a continuous line of dwellings at this point, all backing on to an orchard. Two of the cottages have lateral stacks and one of them, **No 29 Dean Street**, has the render removed to reveal careful stone construction, one side of the chimney stack carried over the door on a shaped corbel, and relieving voussoirs in the form of pointed arches over the windows: it is certainly C16 and could well belong to its early years. This is suggestive for the whole line of these houses, for there are massive masonry walls as far along

towards the church as **The Plymouth Inn**. Opposite the Plymouth Inn a small cob cottage, free-standing, its roof containing a re-used cruck blade which shows clear signs of burning, as distinct from smoke blackening: that is, it may have been re-used from a building destroyed in one of the major C18 fires in the town.

Back to No 29 and right through **Cockles Lane**, an alley between the cottages running below a first floor bridge: from the steps behind, the rear of the Dean Street houses can be inspected. Up to rejoin Park Road: down to the left is a good terrace of cob cottages below continuous thatch, almost all with their original casements, the whole terrace presumably dating from the late C18. Following Park Road to the right, it meets the top of **Bowden Hill** and continues into **Park Street**. This was an important junction in the C16 – and presumably medieval – layout of Crediton. The 1598 map shows "The Town Barn" standing on the left of the junction – hence **Barnfield**, the name of this part of the post-war estates built on this side of the town. Looking down Bowden Hill, the right hand side had a sequence of courts until clearance in the 1960s and replacement by the present, unprepossessing blocks of flats; the left hand side was largely rebuilt in the late C19. Surviving towards the top of the hill however is **The Moose Hall**, a conversion of an early C19 nonconformist chapel, its upper range of windows still intact above the crude porch tacked onto the front. The cottages immediately above the former chapel are largely C18 or early C19 in their present form, but their site was occupied by housing in the late C16 and they incorporate early cob walls. So also does **The King's Arms**, though its interior has been thoroughly mauled: the exterior, which was a dignified C19 stucco elevation, has been spoiled by the insertion of plastic windows – a major problem in this part of Crediton – though it retains pretty incised decoration to the lintels. Diagonally opposite, facing down Bowden Hill, is **No 10 Park Street**, a stately three-storey brick house of the early C19, tile hung on the upper two floors. Continuing down Park Street towards the centre of the town, the buildings on the right hand side date from the C19, several of them two-storey to the street but three-storey to the rear where the land falls steeply down to Union Road. On the left, an impressively high raised pavement from **The Lynch**. Half way down after a late C18 row

of cottages, several badly treated in recent years, is **Spurways Almshouses**, endowed by Humphrey Spurway in 1555 and built in 1557 – so the raised pavement cannot be later than the mid C16. The almshouses are of local Posbury stone, with four substantial chimney stacks to the pavement – one for each of the four poor parishioners who lived in the one-up one-down houses. The windows were Gothicized in the early C19, when the casements were given their pretty iron glazing bars, and the front doors blocked in the early C20, when new fenestration was inserted in the centre of the elevation; the building has been extended to the rear and the interiors are now wholly altered. Towards the end of The Lynch, on a site looking down the High Street, stood the **Bowden Hill Chapel**. Built as a Presbyterian meeting-house about 1729, it became Unitarian later in the C18. With a central pediment and big round-headed windows to the street, it was wholly built of cob on a sandstone plinth and had a claim to being the largest known single-cell cob construction, with interior dimensions of 42ft 9ins by 55ft 6ins. The building became structurally unsafe following a landslip in 1963; when it was recorded by the RCHM in 1967 it was still intact, with an interior that retained most of its C18 fittings. The chapel collapsed in the early 1970s and was demolished. Its destruction is the most serious architectural loss in Crediton in the second half of the C20, and one of the most serious among nonconformist chapels nationally. The feeble pair of brick houses that now occupies the site is an architectural bad joke.

Continuing from the end of The Lynch is **Union Terrace**, which, as Pevsner/Cherry rightly says, has "some of the best late Georgian houses in the Town". **St Breock**, set back and detached, has a distinctive doorcase with pilasters in the manner of Soane, and small semi-circular balconies to the windows with original ironwork. **No 2 Union Terrace** is rusticated with full-height bows not dissimilar to those that appeared at Brighton in the first years of the C19, and a Doric doorcase. The capitals for the doorcase to **No 4 Union Terrace** are identified by Pevsner/Cherry as showing the influence of Adam. Opposite The Lynch the end of **Union Road** sports a striking, and highly varied sequence of buildings from the late C19 and early C20: as follows, beginning from the end nearest the parish church. **The War Memorial** of 1919-20, with its polygonal roof on

timber columns, very much in the vernacular manner – though not the Devon vernacular – and similar to some designs by Sir Herbert Baker: it would be interesting to know who the architect was. Next to it, the **Church Workers' Institute** also strikes a vernacular but non-Devonian note with a display of fancy timber framing to the big gabled end that faces the street. Very different is the adjacent **Masonic Hall** of 1897, in an eclectic Gothic and Flemish style, brick and stone, with intricately carved date panels by Harry Hems. Next along, and dominant, **Jackson's Factory** for manufacturing cough lozenges: of c1900, three storeys in red and white brick with bands of moulded brick decoration, the whole now rather spoiled by the replacement windows that went in when the building was converted to housing in 1984. Last of the group is the jaunty **Wesleyan Methodist Chapel** of 1892, busily picturesque, with coupled Gothic arches for the entrance set below a wheel window and, stepped forward to either side, bays with rusticated quoins and wooden framed Gothic traceried windows.

Stretching west of the Methodist chapel is the **High Street**, labelled "The Burrowe of West Town" on Norden's map. Norden shows burgage plots to all properties on the right – north – side of the High Street, and to most of those on the left, though the plots at the western end on this side are truncated by the boundary of "The Great Parke" south of the town. On both sides the plots are labelled "Quellettes of the Burrowe". Shambles stood along the centre of the eastern end of the street, where **North Street** now turns off. A series of major fires in the C18 destroyed virtually the whole of the Burrowe as far east as the foot of The Lynch: the worst was that of 1743, when 460 houses were lost. So what remains on both sides of the present High Street is to outward appearance wholly of the second half of the C18 and the C19, with periodic C20 infill. On the corner of North Street, however, and significantly set back from the line of the present High Street, is a substantial three-bay brick house, with pilasters and a pedimented central bay, the windows with heavy moulded architraves, that in the centre with a moulded pediment on consoles: it looks to date from the late C17. Opposite, and further along the High Street, by **Packer's Butchers**, a narrow court runs off at right angles. It is one of several such in the town and presumably takes the line of one of the original

burgage plots. In the court, a three storey building, much altered but with an C18 staircase, and long, narrow window openings to the top floor. Were these the windows to a spinning loft? If so, they are one of the remarkably few visible signs of the textile industry that gave Crediton its prosperity in the C17 and C18. It may be that the decline of the industry had already set in by the 1740s and the time of the great fire, so subsequent buildings were unrelated to the manufactory. Back in the High Street, a substantial number of later C18 houses remain more or less intact above ground floor level, and have a range of interesting and varied detail. As well as these, worth noting going westward are: **A.E. Lee's** on the south side, its late C19 shopfront with decorated iron posts; **Dart and Francis Ecclesiastical Art Works** on the north side, Posbury stone with a first floor oriel and a miniature Gothic corbel table above the second floor; back on the south, the early C19 shop front to **Hazeldene's**; further up, the entrance to the original **Jackson's Factory**, with 1901 offices and mid C19 industrial buildings in the factory yard; just beyond is the blowy Italianate **Lloyds' Bank** of c1880, with exuberant carved decoration; on the north again, at the corner of Searle Street, the classical **Town Hall** built in 1852 to the designs of R.D. Gould of Barnstaple and incorporating public rooms for the Crediton Literary Society, but now sadly fallen from civic dignity, its ground floor disastrously converted to retail use; back on the south side, the three-storey **Liberal Club**, with big sash windows that in their proportions look early C18, and a raised porch held on simple granite piers; finally on the south side, **No 52 High Street**, one of Crediton's best C18 houses, broad rather than tall, set back somewhat from the building line, with a Doric doorcase and keystones to the sash windows. On the opposite side of the road, is the **Congregational Chapel** built in 1863 to the designs of Thomas Oliver, who would seem to have practised principally in Sunderland and Newcastle, and who won a number of competitions for nonconformist churches in that part of England in the 1860s. Positioned well back from the High Street, it is architecturally the most imposing of Crediton's remaining nonconformist chapels: it has a broad pedimented front with a giant order of Ionic pilasters, the central two bearing an arched entablature over the entrance bay, the entrance itself framed by smaller Ionic pilasters. The interior retains its gallery and

substantial C19 fittings. To the west of the chapel stands the **Manse**, designed in a complementary style.

Back down the north side of the High Street to **The Ship Inn**: elegant, urban and Italianate, with a nicely rounded corner into **Market Street**. The hotel was a posting inn, and retains its stabling to the rear. It dates from the major town improvement scheme of 1836, as also do **Nos 2-6 Market Street**, which continue the same stylistic idiom. The focus of the scheme in this part of the town was the building of the **Market**, further down the street. The market area was developed 1836-9 at the expense of J.W. Buller of Downes, relocating the shambles and their related functions on a single site away from the High Street. For the historic fabric and identity of Crediton, the demolition of the market in the 1960s was a major injury, to which the fire station that was built on the site has added visual insult. Of the market only the south range survives, its nicely proportioned, three-storey corner buildings framing a line of little shops. On **Market Street** itself, and maintaining a sense of urban decorum despite the fire station, the **Post Office** of 1901 and, further down, the slightly later **Local Council Offices**. On **Parliament Street**, across the bottom of the market site and part of the 1830s development, is **The Market House Inn**, now foolishly renamed **The Three Little Pigs**, with a paired building adjoining: both of brick with nice detailing. Forming the eastern boundary of the market site is **North Street**: it would seem to follow the line of the **Letterburn Lane** shown on Norden's map, and has a sequence of good C18 and C19 houses. Facing up **North Street** is the **Old Manor House**: the present building is of five bays, stucco, with a central Tuscan porch and generously scaled sash windows. Norden's map shows a substantial house at this point, and on an C18 map of the town that pre-dates the 1743 fire a three-storey house with Dutch gables is depicted here, labelled "The Manor House". The present building very likely incorporates much of the earlier, but – as with almost all Crediton's houses – there has been no detailed archaeological investigation of the fabric.

Eastward along **Parliament Street** and into **Belle Parade**, following the line of the C16 **Letterburn Lane**. On the right **The Gothic House**, Georgian, of three storeys with a battlemented screen wall, Gothicized windows to the front, and

pretty bay windows to the first floor at the side. A little further on is the modestly scaled and decently detailed **Branch Library** of the 1970s. Beyond this a substantial cob and thatch house with what appears to be an C18 doorcase and window surrounds in the manner of the Queen Anne Revival of the late C19. The house stands on the edge of **Newcome's Meadow**, now a public park, but originally associated with the late C18 house called **Newcome's**, which stood above Belle Parade and was another demolition victim of the 1960s. **Church Street**, right from Belle Parade and forming the eastern boundary of Newcome's Meadow, is again part of the layout of the C16 town. At its north end, but tucked away behind high walls, is the sprawling **Vicarage**, which appears to be of the late C18 and which stands on land marked as the "Vicar's Close" on Norden's map. Further over, and even more difficult to get a sight of, is **The Old Palace**. "The Pallace" is shown in 1598 as a large group of buildings standing on the northeast corner of the churchyard. The present house apparently contains extensive remains of medieval fabric, but seems never to have been systematically investigated. Finally, down Church Lane itself and opposite the west front of the parish church, is the site of the C17 buildings of **Davies' Almshouses**, endowed in 1610. The last of any early buildings here were demolished – yet again in the 1960s – and replaced by the present undistinguished flats. A little further on, and much better architecturally, a varied group of early C20 houses related to the charity, all showing the influence of Arts and Crafts design.

And thus back to the parish church.

Chris Brooks

BEE BOLES AND OTHER BEEKEEPING MONUMENTS IN DEVON

The earliest bee hive known to have been used in Britain was a conical shaped basket made of woven wicker, sometimes known as an "alveary", which had its origins in the forests of

Eastern Europe before 3000 B.C.; this early hive probably drifted into England along with early Neolithic farming migrants. The wicker basket hives were gradually superseded by coiled straw skeps, thought to have been introduced in Anglo-Saxon times from the lands west of the Elbe, although it is impossible to be precise as to date. The earliest remnants of a straw skep found in England were discovered during excavations at York in 1980, and with it were the remains of many honeybees, *apis mellifera*; the find was subsequently dated to the C12.

Beehives were originally kept in the open, but they must have suffered from weather-inflicted damage, deterioration and even loss of the colonies before graduating to purpose-built protective structures, a process of evolution which took several centuries to develop. Many of the resultant archaeological monuments, stemming directly from that period of development, remain extant today, particularly in areas of the country where strong winds and high rainfall prevail, such as Devon. The structures are classified in five categories, viz:

1. bee boles
2. bee alcoves
3. bee houses
4. bee shelters
5. winter storage sites.

Bee boles are recesses in the outdoor walls of a building, be it manor house, barton, farmhouse, barn, inn, humble tenanted cottage (often part of a large estate), garden or orchard. Each recess was large enough to accommodate a single skep, and the boles were usually arranged in groups of two, three or four, which are known as sets. A few sites contain a larger number of boles, and occasionally a solitary bole is found.

Bee alcoves are larger recesses in external walls, capable of holding a greater number of skeps than individual boles, frequently with shelving, with a tendency for the front to be ornamental when found at grander houses. Four are known to have existed in Devon, although the authenticity of one is questionable.

Bee houses are purpose built structures, designed or adapted for use by bees. Only one is known to have existed in Devon, in the

grounds of a former rectory in rural north of the county, being described in a 1727 ecclesiastical terrier as "the pigeon house".

A **Bee Shelter** formerly existed at Dunnabridge Pound on Dartmoor, constructed from granite, but the structure collapsed a number of years ago, and is now only a photographic memory.

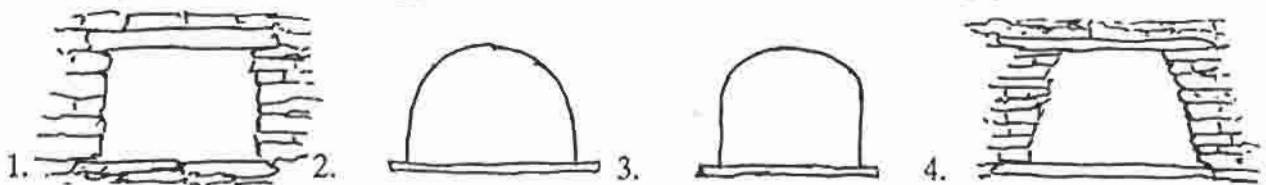
Winter Storage Sites are essentially recesses on the internal walls of stoutly-walled windowless buildings. The skeps were placed in the recesses in late November and remained there until late February or even early March, depending on the prevailing weather conditions. The building maintained a low equable temperature which caused the bees to cluster, and so they remained throughout the period; being windowless, the bees were constantly in the dark and thus not tempted to leave the cluster, feed on their store of honey or to fly. Once the worst of the winter weather had abated and the outside temperature started to rise, the skeps were taken into the orchards and fields to pollinate the early crops. Four winter storage sites have been discovered in Devon, the most recent at Georgeham.

A few walls containing bee boles have disappeared in recent years, but over 90% of those recorded are still completely or partially standing.

From the foregoing, it will doubtless be realised that there was a social structure of sorts behind these monuments. People at all levels of society are said to have been interested in, or kept bees, from the King to the lowliest peasant, but

only the more affluent were able to afford protective structures for their hives. The lack of funds did not prevent the "peasant" beekeeper from acquiring an inexpensive form of protection for his skeps; he simply made the best of the natural resources he had to hand, resorting to roughly hewn local stone stands or benches to raise his hives from the wet ground and hopefully, in so doing, denied access to vermin, whilst covering each hive with a bundle of straw, known as a hackle, to protect the skep and bees from the dampening effects of the rain.

In Britain generally, most surviving bee boles are found in stone walls, with a much smaller number in brick, although the construction material tended to be predominantly that which was readily available locally, at little or not cost. Devon is unique in having bee boles in cob walls. To date, over 70 sets in cob have been recorded, mainly within the rhomboid shaped area bounded by Barnstaple in the north, Cullompton to the east, Exmouth to the south and Okehampton in the west. Stone boles in the county tend to have been built with rubble stone; two sites have brick lined recesses in stone walls, whilst two only have been constructed solely from brick. An unusual site has come to light in recent days during the renovation of a manor house on the site of a former Domesday Manor, where five rubble stone bee boles have been found in the overgrown garden wall, each capable of holding two skeps. The arch of each recess is constructed from an unusual brick which is claimed to be of Dutch origin, with the suggestion (not the author's) that the bricks were transported as ballast on cargo ships returning from Holland in the C16 and C17.



The shape of the bole falls into four main types:

- rectangular, usually in stone, and probably the simplest form to construct (Fig.4)
- domed, with the arch springing directly from the base (Fig.2)
- arched, with the arch starting high in the vertical walls of the recess (Fig.5), and
- flat-topped quadrilateral, mainly in stone, with straight side walls narrowing slightly towards the top.

Internally, cob boles usually have rounded backs which match the shape of the skep, although occasionally flat-backed cob boles are found; the back of stone boles are almost invariably flat.

The most common material used to provide the base to each bole was stone or slate. In cob boles, the floor material is frequently the lime mortar rendering used to line the interior of the recess, although stone is sometimes used. A small number of cob sets have wooden bases, which, by virtue of the building technique, had to be put in place at the time of construction; the wooden floor is sometimes accompanied by a lintel of the same timber, from which hessian was hung to provide extra protection for the skeps in winter.

The base of the boles is generally found to be about three feet above ground level, which provided an acceptable working height for the beekeeper to manipulate his bees with ease. These sites may have presented the unwary walker with some discomfort if he or she walked idly past the boles when nectar was in short supply or the weather thundery. On the other hand, boles were sometimes located between eight and ten feet above ground level, the skeps being tucked beneath the thatch roof of the building where they were protected from the vagaries of the winter weather; at such sites, human traffic was able to walk freely beneath the boles whilst the bees flew about their daily tasks unhindered.

The dimensions of the boles vary considerably from site to site according to the apicultural needs of the individual beekeeper, and the size and design of the skep in vogue at the time. The width of boles found in the county is usually between fourteen and twenty four inches, with occasional ones as small as eleven inches wide. The height of the boles varies between

twelve and twenty inches with the depth being similar to the width.

Beekeepers have been encouraged since medieval times by the experts of their day to place hives so that the flight entrances face south or south-east to take advantage of the warming rays of the sun early in the day. It will come as little surprise therefore, to find that over half of the Devon walls with bee boles face south and a further fifth south-east. North, west and eastern directions were much less common, although a few such sites do exist.

The earliest bee boles recorded in Britain were believed to have been those at Buckfast Abbey until 1993, when the stone wall housing the three dilapidated rectangular recesses was demolished. It is probable that this wall was built in the C12, although opinions date it variously from that date to as late as the C18. Nonetheless, the abbey authorities have constructed a modern replacement wall which includes three "token" boles, but sadly, they bear no resemblance to the originals in size, shape, construction or character.

The greatest threat to the survival of our archaeological monuments is C20 man, with his ignorance of the past, apathy towards his present surroundings, and avarice which manifests itself through his insatiable appetite to develop and modernise in order to increase the monetary value of his possessions or future gains. These perils are compounded when the unrelenting battle with the elements is added to the cocktail of threats. The following are a few examples of sites damaged or lost in recent times:

Bee boles at a barton near Chulmleigh lost when the farmhouse was gutted by fire,

One of two sets of boles at a farm near Winkleigh are close to collapse, where ivy has been allowed to invade the cob garden wall,

Set of boles at a former Domesday Manor near Ashreigney, known to have been used for skep beekeeping by the family farming the land in the 1950s, but now neglected by recent occupants, and in a state of advanced decay,

Bee boles disappeared during renovations at Taw Mill during the last decade,

Barn wall containing boles collapsed near Lapford during conversion to a dwelling,

COMBE FARM, LODDISWELL

WALL SECTION

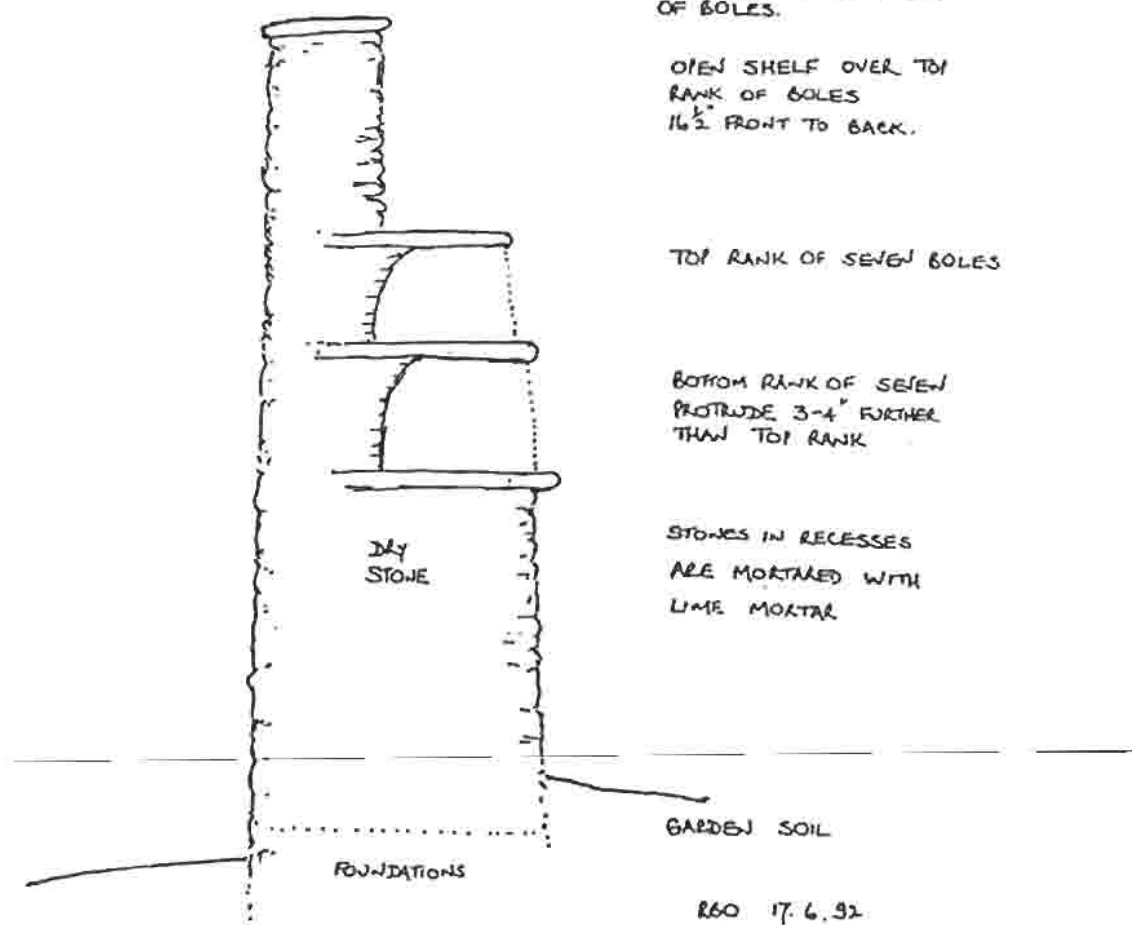


Fig. 1 Sketch from author's field notes - wall section of Combe Farm boles.



Fig. 2 Seven domed bores in barn end wall at North Tawton.

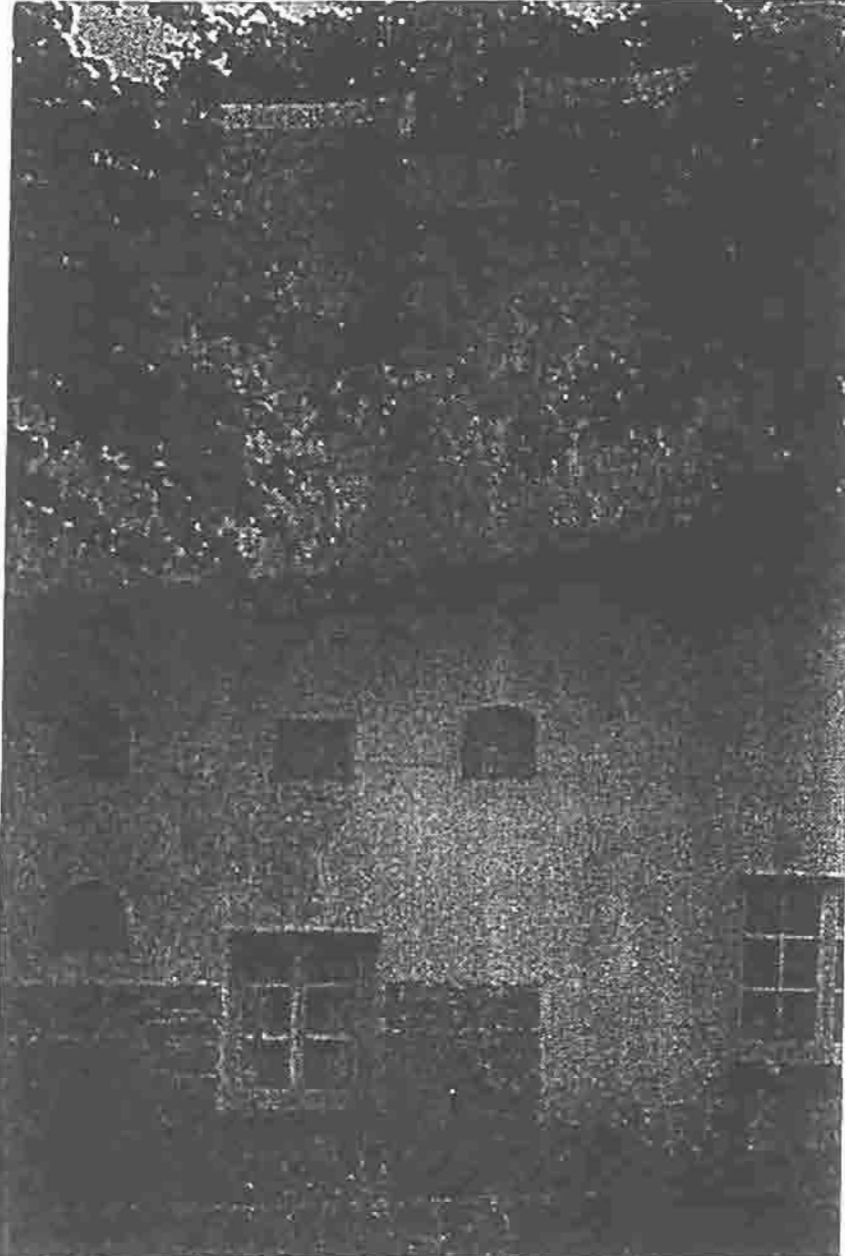


Fig. 3 One of the earliest sets of bee boles in a cob wall at the Ring O' Bells, Cheriton Fitzpaine.

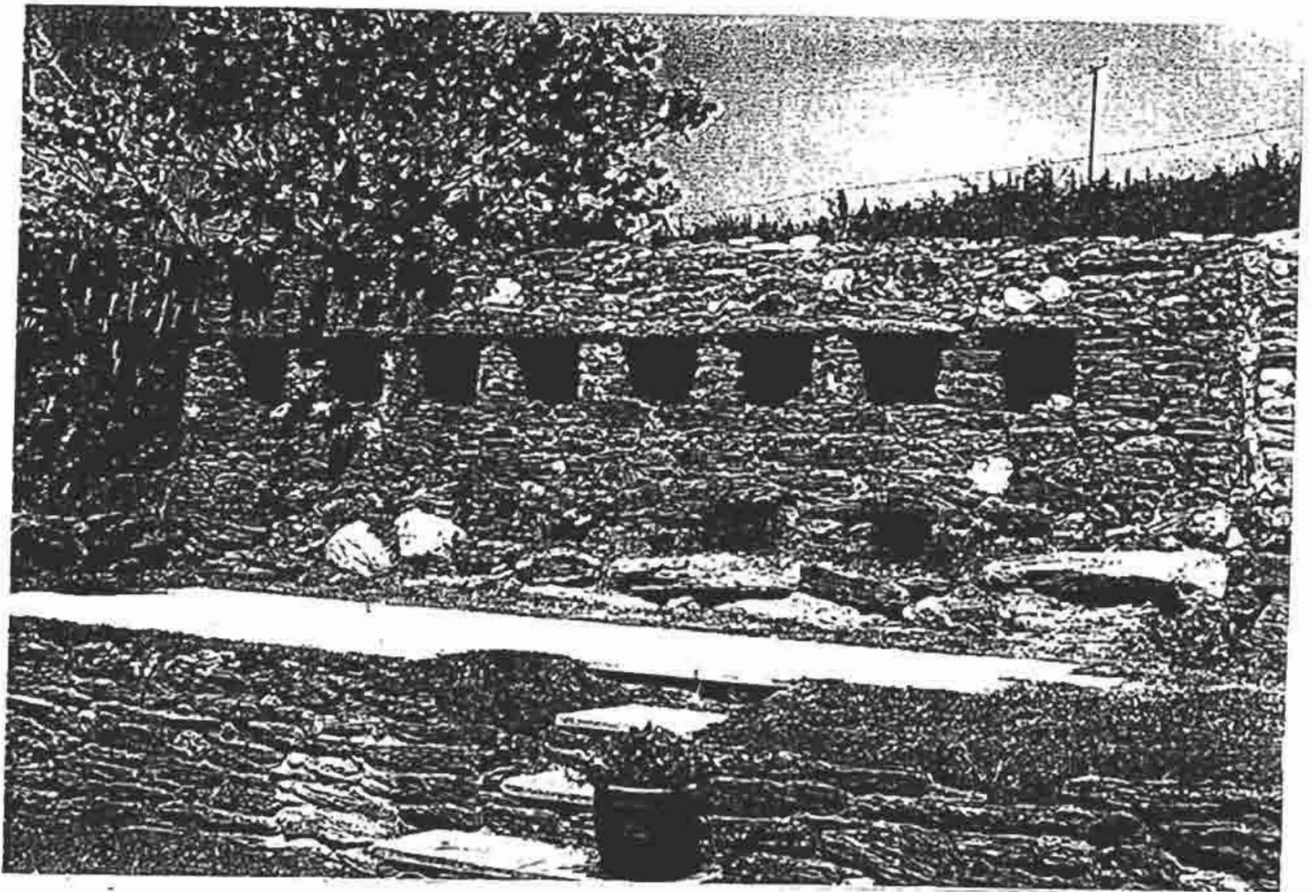


Fig. 4 Eight rectangular boles in a schist garden wall, south of Malborough.



Fig. 5 Part of the extant remains of boles east of Braunton.

Early bee boles in the cob walls of a C14 building at Cheriton Fitzpaine lost. The set of four boles in the rear wall of the Ring O' Bells at Cheriton Fitzpaine (Fig.3) has suffered from C20 vandalism, two having been needlessly destroyed to facilitate the construction of a modern lean-to ladies toilet. One of the two remaining boles has a door at its rear, so that access to the bees could be gained from inside the building; it is understood that this door has been sealed from within the hostelry in order to eliminate draughts.

This list is simply a short selection of the heritage that has been lost. Happily, the vast majority of bole owners maintain their apicultural artefacts with a degree of care, although some have only a scant knowledge of their former role and purpose.

An unusual site came to light in 1992, north of Loddiswell, where fourteen stone boles, in two ranks of seven, one above the other, have recently been saved from collapse by the preservation-minded owners. An interesting feature of this wall is its construction, with half the wall being "cut away" for the length of the boles in order to provide an open shelf immediately above the top rank, sufficiently wide to accommodate surplus skeps when the boles below were full (Fig.1).

A number of Devon bee bole sites are claimed to have monastic links dating to pre-Reformation days, but such assertions are largely speculative as confirmatory evidence is hard to find. These sites have been found at Braunton, Cornworthy, Eastdown and Petrockstowe.

The largest agglomeration of bee boles in the county has been recorded in the vicinity of Braunton and its environs, where nine sites once housed no less than ninety three boles. The largest set discovered in the county is situated to the east of the town (Fig.5); it contained twenty seven boles in three rows of nine, one above the other, whilst a further extensive site containing twenty recesses stands quietly within a cobbled yard at a barton less than a mile away. Further sites are known to have existed in the area, but sadly, no extant residues appear to have survived to corroborate or add to early photographic evidence. Clearly, the agricultural cropping pattern of the late C20 is very different from that of the C16, C17 and C18, when the majority of bee boles

were constructed in this area. Where the lush meadows and rich cornfields once offered a plethora of wild flowers literally teeming with nectar and pollen, now the sterile cereal crops and virtually flowerless pastures create the wealth without need of the honeybees' talents.

In similar vein, the former orchards of Torbay and the South Hams benefited greatly from the attentions of honeybees in the pollination of the apple, cherry and plum blossoms, whilst their hives nestled cosily in boles, particularly in the Totnes, Stoke Gabriel, Dittisham, Loddiswell and Kingsbridge areas. In the second half of the C20 many of the once productive orchards have been grubbed-out to release the land for the more financially lucrative forms of agriculture, leaving the bee boles empty and silent, a mere reminder of former days of glory.

Although over 150 sites of apicultural archaeology have been recorded in Devon, the author believes that further sites still lie dormant and unrecognised, simply waiting to be identified, and added to the record of our apicultural heritage for future generations to investigate, study and enjoy.

All photographs and line drawing by R.B. Ogden, with the exception of Fig.3, which was taken by Mrs Kathleen French in 1964.

Robert Ogden

NONCONFORMIST NOTES (AND METHODIST MUSINGS) No.1 Change and Decay

"Time like an ever-rolling stream, Bears all its sons away"; and, due to changes in society and technology, time has an equally eroding effect upon buildings that are designed for special purposes. The commonplace of today seems like a dinosaur remarkably quickly! As a child in the post-war years I can remember seeing a horse being shod in a blacksmith's shop at the bottom of

Bear Street in Barnstaple. At that time only one family in our street had a car but soon the remains of the horse culture succumbed to the car culture and stables, mews, smithies and the rest lost their original purpose. Chapels are another special class of building, being closely tied to a religious culture but they still survive in substantial numbers. But over them all hangs a threat because of the flight from organised religion, the twin threat of Change or Closure.

Sometimes closure of a chapel comes mercilessly but the bottom line for congregations is sentimental not commercial and a literal handful can keep a building in use against all the odds or even sense. Eventually the loss of the local leader, through death or infirmity, or expensive problems with the roof does give the *coup de grace* and one more chapel is on the market. Very few purchasers want a purpose built chapel as such, so closure and sale brings change and the interior is the first to suffer through conversions to a house, studio or workshop.

Change can come to chapels that are still in use because of too much or too little success. Modern charismatic congregations with growing numbers and growing enthusiasm find conventionally pewed interiors restrictive – quite literally aisles are no good for dancing. So pews are removed, floors carpeted and organs discarded in favour of guitars and percussion. Less successful congregations sometimes sell off halls and ancillary buildings, and screen off part of the church to form a social area. In the other part they remove the pews, carpet the floor and substitute chairs which permit worship in the round, miracle plays or any other activity you can think of. In this way it is hoped to rekindle the enthusiasm and spiritual experience of the congregation and all changes to chapel interiors are done with the best of intentions, whether to follow or to encourage enthusiasm. However chapel interiors are so fragile that they will not stand much removal or alteration of fittings before their character and ethos are gone for good, as abruptly as the bursting of a soap bubble, leaving a barn like space furnished with chairs. Ideas follow fashions and how many side pews were torn out, perhaps as late as the 1950s, to form "Children's Corners". I have preached in hundreds of chapels of all sorts and am still at a loss to know what purpose they were meant to serve.

Most chapels are Victorian and the most elaborate interiors are in urban chapels but their survival rate is depressing, thanks to closure or re-ordering. Hardly any large nonconformist auditorium chapels survive in Devon in anything like an intact condition. At the other end of the scale I can not think of any surviving tin tabernacle in Devon although these were a familiar sight at the turn of the century and such buildings were used for a variety of community purposes – one survives in West Somerset as a WI hall. All this presents a dilemma – congregations are voluntary bodies with a high minded purpose but with limited personnel and constrained funds. Maintaining Victorian or even older buildings as living museums can not be high on their priorities yet they are inadvertently the custodians of a treasure house of special buildings which illustrate a wealth of social and religious history as well as adding interest to the street or village scene.

This dilemma is not being resolved and the melancholy toll of closures (not to mention re-orderings) continues. In 1995 the Methodists have closed (or will close) the Primitive Methodist Chapel at Herbertonford (well short of its centenary), the Free Methodist Chapel at Honicknowle, Plymouth (1901) and the historic Bible Christian Chapel at Rackenford (1848), as well as the Wesleyan Chapel at Kenton (1870). Two listed buildings are closed and on the market – the Unitarian at Moretonhampstead (1802) and Salem Independent Chapel at East Budleigh (1819), which members visited on our Chapels Day last year. This list is but a selection.

But all is not pessimism as in recent decades there has been a degree of religious renewal although not within the traditional channels. There has been a demand for premises and a lack of sites and adequate capital for new-build has resulted in the use and adaptation of secular (or even religious!) buildings. On Radio Devon's weekly religious programme I have been giving a series of reports entitled 'Buildings and Belief' on worship in churches in Devon and Dorset chosen to provide variety in denomination and location. Since December 1994 my wife and I have worshipped in 35 different churches for the series and nine of these were buildings that were originally secular, one was in prison and one was a private house. At Barnstaple the congregation from the historic Grosvenor Street Brethren Chapel now use the cavernous GWR goods shed,

with smoke-blackened roof timbers, at Dawlish the Baptists own the former town hall/magistrates' court and across the border in Shaftesbury the Restoration church uses a former single storey egg-packing factory on a small industrial estate.

Roger Thorne

A COB BUILDING – NOTES ON RENEWAL

Gotham is an old farmstead not half a mile west of Tiverton. It last functioned as a farm in 1936 but most of the farm buildings and the orchard have survived as a unit. The farmhouse is late medieval, cob with a thatched roof, and three outbuildings around the front garden and yard are also of cob construction. None of them, however, retain their thatch. Over the years the most westerly of them has suffered from weathering, aided by stock rubbing against the wall, and the cob had thinned until holes began to appear.

The original use of the building was probably as a stockhouse, but many years before we bought Gotham in 1967 part of the building had gone. When we acquired it there were three sides of a skewed rectangle remaining, the cob had been reduced in height and the roof was corrugated iron supported on light A-frame trusses. The south ends of the side walls and part of the back (north) wall were concrete block. It was used as an open-ended garage.

In 1994 it became obvious that the building needed patching, rebuilding or removing. We felt that there were already enough concrete blocks in evidence but wished to keep the garage, so we approached Kevin McCabe for advice. As a result of the discussions we arranged that we would remove the roof, hire a tractor with a bucket to dig subsoil from the orchard and mix that with the surviving cob. The time needed for the cob work was two days mixing and rebuilding the walls, with one day for paring down and finishing.

In July Mark Lewis removed the corrugated iron and trusses, the front and rear ones acted as gables and were covered by vertical planks, this made them very heavy. When Robin Webber arrived with his tractor he dug a hole in the

orchard until suitable subsoil was available. With the bucket on the tractor he transported the soil to the centre of the floor, then gently toppled the remaining cob walls onto it. Water was hosed onto it and it was mixed with ten bales of barley straw bought from a farm in the valley. The concrete blocks in the back wall were held by very hard cement and came away in one piece. Because of the difficulty of separating the front blocks from the remaining cob on the east side and the stone plinth, it was decided, somewhat reluctantly, to leave them as they were. The good cob on the east side was sloped off and thoroughly wetted, so that the new and old cob would bind. The rubble stone plinth, with old lime plaster surviving on some of the inner surface, was rebuilt in the places on the west wall where it had been worn away.

When the mix was ready it was forked by hand onto the stone plinth. The first lift was about 70cm high, the second 50cm. The first layer was pared back to the vertical line of the plinth on both faces. On the second day the second lift was added. When clearing the west wall in the field it was found that the north-west corner was rounded and the outer edge of the cob was cut to follow the curve. Consolidation of the cob was achieved by walking along it as it was added. Finally the top of the cob was covered with polythene, held down by stones, and it was left to dry out slowly. The cob work took roughly the equivalent of five days labour. One amusing result showed a fortnight later, the remaining barley grains sprouted and we had a green bearded wall.

After two weeks of drying out the roof timbers were replaced. New wall plates were laid along the cob walls to support and spread the weight of the roof. New corrugated iron made the building weather-tight, and long eaves were left to throw the water away from the building. With the neighbour's permission a fence was put a little away from the wall so that the stock could not rub against the new cob. The cost of saving the cob was the labour and hire of the tractor, the materials bought were minimal, and the total was around the same as rebuilding in concrete block, certainly not more. The corrugated roof is toning down and the building remains a part of our local landscape.

Isabel Richardson



The building with the wall worn away behind the right hand fencing post, July 1994.



The completed building, September 1994.

INCISED SLABS IN DEVON

One type of monument which has received little attention, particularly in Devon, is the incised slab. The widest definition would include any monument where all or part of the design is cut in flat stone or other material, which would represent an enormous body of objects. More restricted definitions have been limited to include any pre-Reformation monument of this type, as well as later slabs if they have black-letter inscriptions, or include representations of the human figure, crosses or other objects: including examples where the design is incised on material other than stone (such as tile, though not brass), but excluding headstones.

Such monuments have not only suffered scholarly neglect, having little intrinsic value they have been disregarded by those seeking a source of gain, they have been left unprotected and become worn, or else covered over, or broken up and discarded, or used as building rubble as Wren is known to have done. Edwardian and later iconoclasm may account for others. F.A. Greenhill, the major European scholar in this field, thought that Devon might prove to be a rich source of undiscovered material. His unpublished notes indicate that he visited about 230 churches in Devon, considerably less than half the total. Undoubtedly more remains to be discovered.

Pre-Reformation effigial incised slabs are not common in the far West. Only one is known in Cornwall, at Helland, and it is probably of c1535. The earliest known in Devon is at Morteheo, to William de Tracy, c1322, and although worn it shows a priest in eucharistic vestments holding a chalice, with a Lombardic marginal inscription. The tomb chest on which it lies (see illustration overleaf) is an even more remarkable survival, with figure sculpture, blank tracery and heraldry in a good state of preservation (for the importance of the tracery see Cherry and Pevsner, p.579).

No other figure slabs are known until the late medieval period, though incised marginal inscriptions are relatively common in Devon, and there are a number of examples in Exeter Cathedral. A fragment of an elaborate cross, perhaps C15, survives at Ilsington. A better survival is the now headless figure of a priest of

c1480 at St Saviour, Dartmouth, discovered during building work in the 1980s, though it is Flemish, its presence at Dartmouth as yet unexplained. The latest known pre-Reformation incised figure slab commemorates an abbot of Torre, ?1523, now at East Ogwell.

Incised crosses do not seem to be common in Devon, though a remarkable collection of eight is found at Drewsteignton, all in granite, only one of which has an inscription in crude black letter. These are difficult to date as black letter survived very late in the West Country, for instance at Loddiswell, 1616, and at Lew Trenchard as late as 1633. Ilfracombe has an incised cross which is dated C12 by Cherry and Pevsner, but which may be c1300.

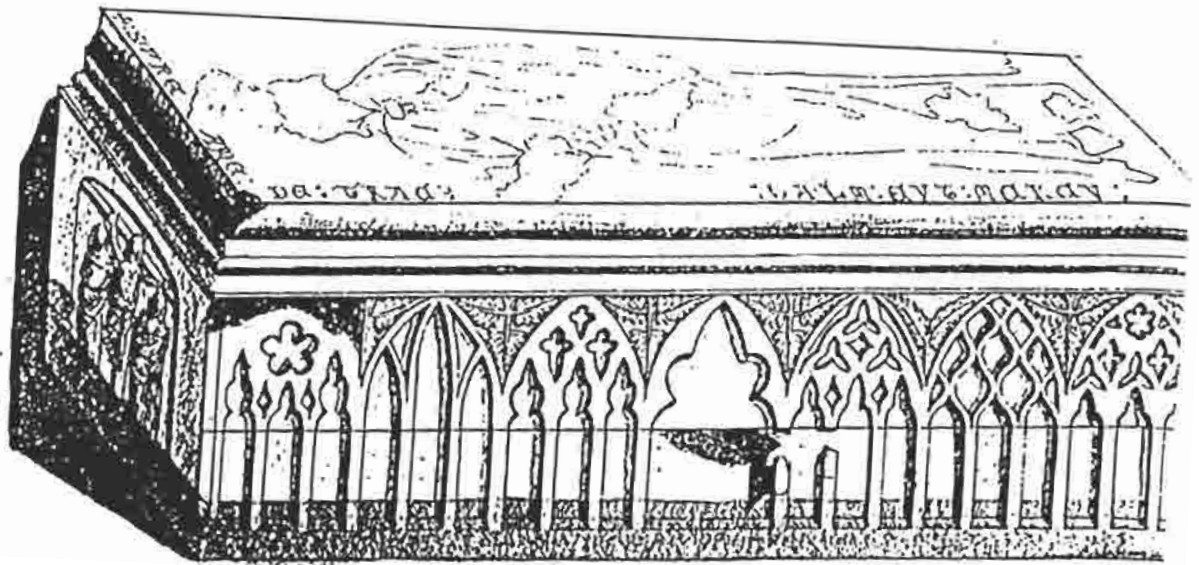
From known examples there appears to have been a revival of incised figure slabs in the C17. A skeleton list will give some idea of their popularity: Townstal 1611, Bigbury 1612, East Allington 1624, Monkleigh 1627, Plymouth, St Andrew 1645, Monkleigh 1646, South Tawton 1651, Broadhempston 1654, Clovelly 1655, Hatherleigh 1662, Monkleigh 1666 and c1670, Iddesleigh 1681. The commonest material is slate, though Townstal boasts white marble.

The study of incised slabs in Devon is still in its infancy. Reports of any examples not given above would be welcomed by David Cook, Flat 1, 26 The Grove, Isleworth, Middlesex TW7 4JU.

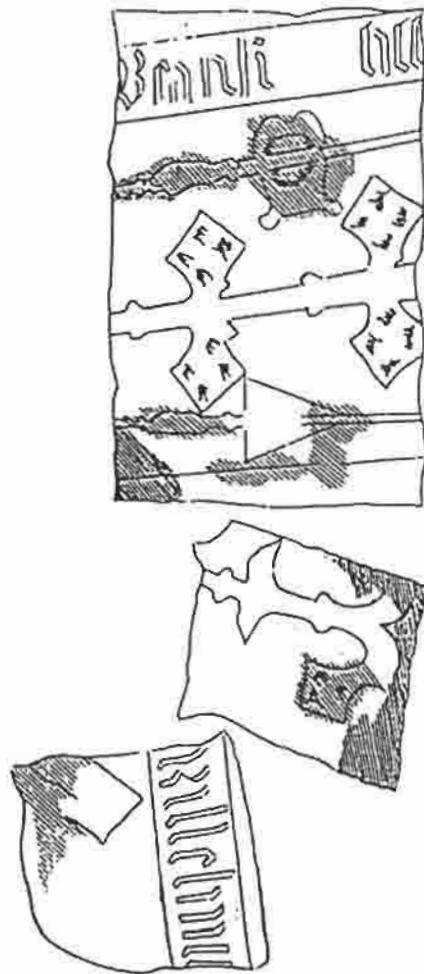
David Cook

THE GREEN MAN IN DEVON

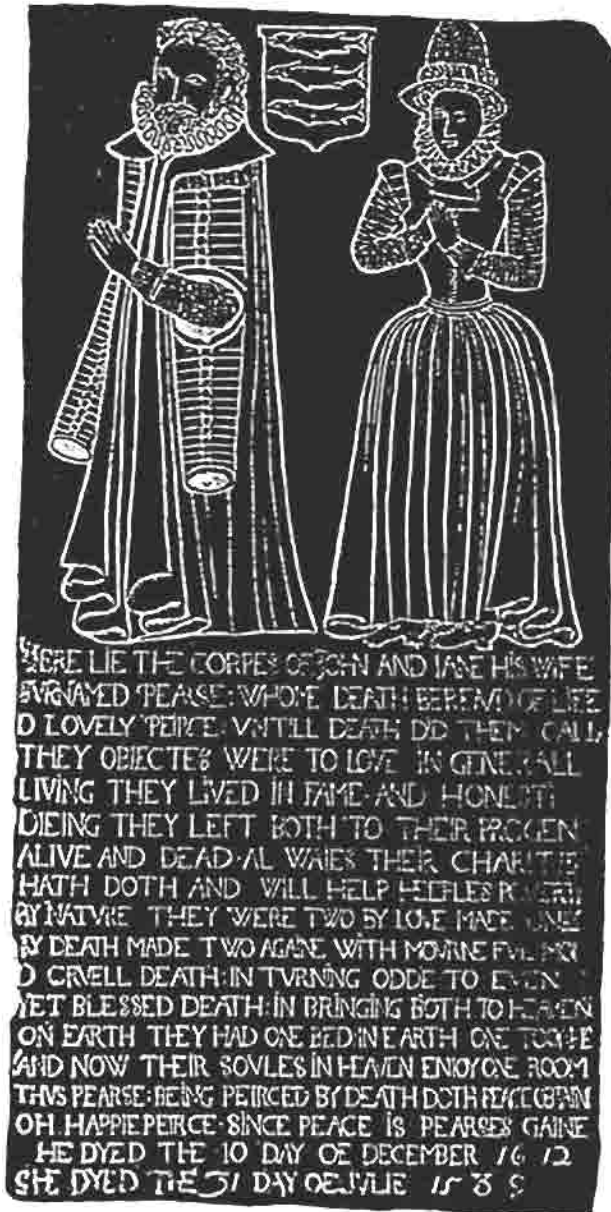
Earlier this year, after a DBG committee meeting, the question of why Green Men appear in churches was raised. Male heads masked by leaves or disgorging vegetation occur most frequently on corbels and roof bosses but there is no straightforward answer as to why they do so. A number of ideas have been suggested, most notably by Kathleen Basford *The Green Man* (1978, D.S. Brewer), and William Anderson *Green Man* (1990, Harper Collins), two writers who hold divergent views on the subject.



Mortehoe, incised slab and altar tomb to
 William de Tracy, 1322. From a drawing
 of 1795 in Incedon MS, North Devon Athenaeum.



Isington, incised cross, emblems and marginal inscription, late C15. From *Gentleman's Magazine* July 1793. The two smaller fragments are now lost.



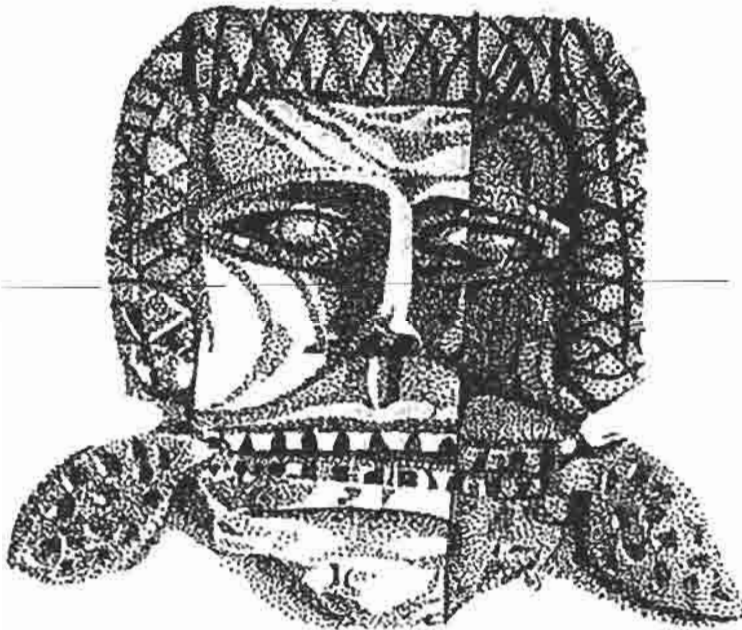
Bigbury, incised slab to John and Jane Pearse,
1612; from a rubbing by F.A. Greenhill.

What can be said with certainty is that ours is a county particularly rich in examples. Basford considered Devon to be 'one of the best of all English counties for studying the Green Man theme'. In fact, the number of foliate heads within a single church is often quite astonishing. There are thought to be twenty examples in Exeter Cathedral, at least four roof bosses at South Tawton (St Andrew), three bosses of considerable size at Sampford Courtenay (St Andrew), (see illustration below), and a positive chorus line of Green Men on a wall plate to the waggon roof in the north aisle at Stoodleigh, near Tiverton, where the heads are linked from mouth to mouth by a single running tendril.

Basford was struck by the strangeness of the Devon heads, using such epithets as 'weird', 'mutant', 'morbid' and 'macabre'. She found the figures with leaves growing out of their eyes most disturbing. These occur at Ottery St Mary, Crediton and Spreyton. She saw the Green Man largely as a demonic figure, a symbol of 'unredeemed nature', a warning against the snares of lust, a reminder that 'all flesh is grass'.

There is no doubt that this was originally a pagan motif, first appearing in Roman Art during the second half of the first century A.D. Male masks sprouting acanthus leaves appeared on Aurelian's Temple of the Sun in Rome and on the triumphal arches of Septimus Severus. Foliate heads were quite literally appropriated by the Christian church in the C6 when Bishop Nicetius recovered pillars displaying leaf masks originally from a Hadrianic Temple and set them up in Trier Cathedral. Far from being tucked away unobtrusively, they were promptly painted in bright colours. It has been suggested that Nicetius simply admired their workmanship and was not concerned with their subject matter. That motifs long associated with a Bacchic cult should have been set up as it were, by accident, around a Chancel housing sacred Christian relics, seems to me unlikely.

There are at least three strands of thought concerning the incorporation of such pagan motifs in Christian churches. One is that the Green Man was adopted as a symbol of demonic forces against which the faithful should strive. Another



**Drawing of a green man on a roof boss at
St Andrew's Church, Sampford Courtenay.**

line of thinking and one which seems to have been adopted by William Anderson, is that the development of the image took place within the Christian church and that it was imbued with a more positive aspect, becoming in itself a symbol of regeneration, creativity and, in the Gothic period, represented the goodness of Creation. Emerging from behind the leaf mask, the human head became dominant in the design, celebrating the triumph of the intellect over Nature, which was brought increasingly under control. One of the major changes to the motif came with more naturalistic representation of foliage (as at Southwell Minster) again perhaps part of a changing attitude towards the natural world. Anderson has also suggested that the vegetation springing from the mouth of the Green Man can be identified with the Logos, the word going forth. The font at Lostwithiel in Cornwall displays a Green Bishop, leaves sprouting from the mouth of a mitred head, possibly connected with this theme or with a third line of thought, namely that pagan symbolism occurs in churches because non-Christian and pre-Christian beliefs continued to be held by lay people and clergy alike. It has been suggested that kings and clerics fulfilled the rites of both the old religion and the new for a considerable time and so T.C. Lethbridge concludes 'It is not therefore as strange as anyone might think to find evidence for fertility cult on a church building'. *Gogmagog* (1957, Routledge & Kegan Paul). He cites Dr Murray's reference to a C13 priest leading a fertility dance at Easter. I have been told that at Putley in Herefordshire, as recently as ten years ago, a service was conducted in which the vicar wore a crown of leaves and a figure dressed as the Green Man came into the body of the church and touched each member of the congregation with his stick.

A figure which I find persuasive in terms of the argument for pagan survival within the Christian context can be found on a capital in Stockleigh Pomeroy church. This is of a late date, the church being unique in Devon for the wholly Renaissance decoration of its capitals, which can be dated on stylistic grounds to c1530. On one of these, alongside Renaissance mermaids is a carving extremely reminiscent of primitive fertility goddess figurines. It bears no resemblance to the more well known 'sheela-na-gig' (a female figure displaying her genitals) and is difficult, I think, to accommodate in terms of a Christian warning or teaching device.

As will now be apparent, there are a number of different ideas concerning why Green Men appear in churches and one may follow any thread or combination of them. There are also various suggestions as to why there are so many in Devon, particularly in the C15. These include economic factors. Anderson suggests that the Green Man is evidence of Devon's prosperity: 'If you could afford carving, you could afford Green Men, because they were part of the repertoire of images the craftsman had to offer you'. That the Green Man was simply a decorative motif well known to masons and carvers should also be considered.

Another idea put forward to explain the proliferation of Green men particularly in the area from Crediton into mid and north Devon is that they were used in an attempt to rail against the inhabitants' persistent predilection for tree worship. St Boniface of Crediton was said to have been active in cutting down a sacred oak in Germany, Anderson suggests that he perhaps remembered that his own part of Devon had once possessed a Bronze Age woodhenge at Bow. Whether folk memory of a site, which existed millenia before Boniface, had survived is impossible to determine. Anderson also points out that the churches of Broadnymet and Nymet Tracey (the word 'nymet' deriving from the Celtic 'nemeton' meaning a sacred grove) were originally dedicated to St Martin of Tours who was also apparently vigorously opposed to tree worship.

Apart from the examples already mentioned, Green men are also to be found in the churches of King's Nympton and High Bickington, in the Town Hall at South Molton, on a lintel over the front door of 62 Longbrook Street, Exeter and on the Jack-in-the-Green Inn sign at Rockbeare. Basford did not favour associating the Green Man with the May King of folk custom and was loath to connect him with the springtime renewal of nature. In complete contrast, Anderson asserts that 'In all his appearances, he is an image of renewal and rebirth'.

I should very much like to compile a gazetteer of Green Men in Devon and would ask Devon Buildings Group members to send me any notes they might make or photocopies of photographs taken in churches or secular settings, just quick details of a sighting would be welcome.

Those wishing to find out more about the Green Man might like to read William Anderson's

book. Although at times he can sound like a man with a mission who has become obsessed (at one point he suggests that we may be forgiven for thinking that Exeter Cathedral was really built as a kind of showcase for the Green Man), his book provides a wealth of ideas and illustrations. For those more interested in architecture than archetypes, Kathleen Basford's book provides a good history with large black and white photographs, including many of the Devon heads. Foliate beasts among the woodcarvings of Exeter Cathedral are illustrated in *Medieval Woodwork in Exeter Cathedral* by Marion Glasscoe and Michael Swanton (1978, Exeter Cathedral). The survival of non-Christian and pre-Christian beliefs is thoroughly discussed in *Religion and the Decline of Magic* by Keith Thomas (1991, Penguin).

Su Jarwood

SMOKING CHAMBERS IN DEVON

with particular reference to the South Hams

Introduction

It is some years now since Commander E.H.D. Williams first wrote his paper on *Curing Chambers and Corn Kilns in South West England*. He confined his researches largely to Somerset, touching only slightly on adjacent counties. He defined a curing chamber as one in which joints of meat or fish could be hung, in a smoky atmosphere to preserve them for winter consumption. He went on to suggest other functions for the chambers such as malting and corn drying. I have discounted such functions for the chambers described below as they are all heavily sooted. The processes of malting and grain drying involve the use of hot air, with no smoke. One would therefore not expect to find a heavy build-up of soot in such chambers.

Description

The Devon smoking chamber in its most common form consists of an ovoid, square or D-plan chamber between one and three metres across, with vertical stone walls up to 2.5 metres in height. At a level of about one metre from the floor there is commonly a narrow shoulder on the wall, all or part of the way round. The roof is corbelled in, up to three metres in height, like an Irish monastic cell or the small circular ash houses found on Dartmoor, for example at North Bovey. Entrances and other apertures to the chamber (Fig.1) may comprise:

1. A low hole at floor level with stone lintel at about the same level and opening onto the hearth. This may be for charging the smoking fire.
2. Above 1 and normally the same width, an opening, varying in height from c1 metre, as at Broomham (see gazetteer) to three metres, being the full height of the corbelled chamber roof, as at Preston. Higher up, this opening may narrow as it cuts through the corbelling (see Fig.1, type 1). The base of this opening is always at the same level as the internal shoulder of the chamber.

It is assumed that the opening had a door to gain access to the chamber: this survives at Broomham.

3. A small square hole at floor level in the chamber existing on the outside wall, as at Preston and Broomham. This may be an ash rake-out. At Preston it may have been associated with a lean-to ash house.

4. A small unglazed slit or square hole normally splayed within, about half way up inside the chamber, it pierces an external wall. Sometimes it has a plain wooden frame, as at Ware Farmhouse. It may have been used for observation while the chamber was in use, being closed with a hatch, or stuffed with old sacking. It could also have been used to control internal draughting and to provide light when the chamber was not in use.

5. A very small hole in the crown of the corbelled ceiling of some chambers, as at Ware and Broomham. It appears to be a smoke exit and is only found in chambers where the corbelled roof extends all the way round down to the doorframe in opening 2. This is shown as chamber type 2 in Fig.1.

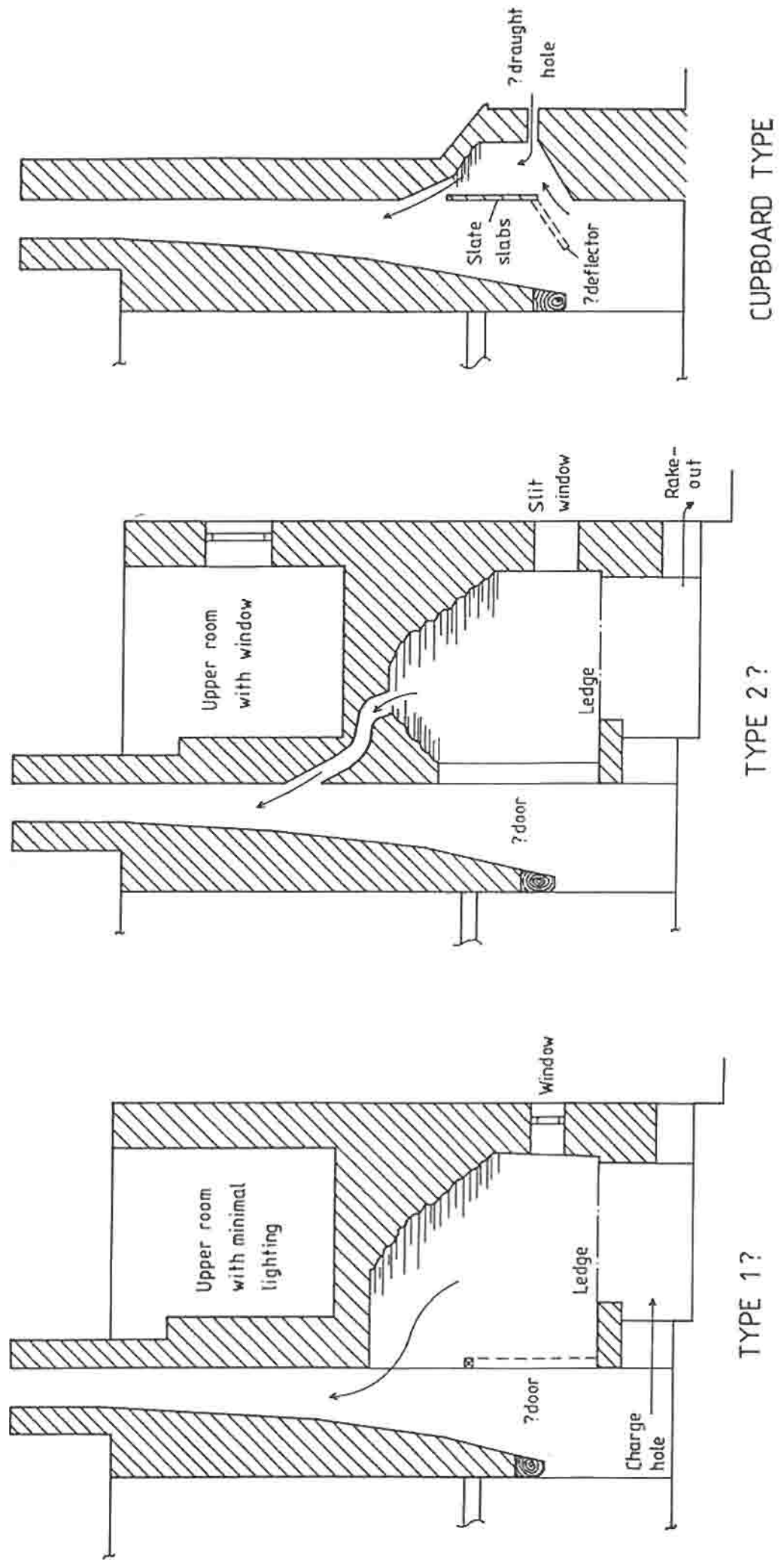


Figure 1

The means of hanging meat in these chambers is conjectural and will be discussed at the end of this article.

Other types of Chamber

An uncommon form of chamber is the smoking cupboard. Williams notes examples in Somerset (Williams, 1990a), but only one has so far been found by the author, behind the kitchen chimney of the Church House Inn, Churchstow (Fig.1). A buttress on the outer wall contains an alcove in the back of the chimney flue. At a height of about two metres from the hearth smoke could be directed into the chamber which was big enough to hang perhaps two joints of meat or several fish. Vertical slates, mortared in place, would channel the smoke past the meat, a hole at the top venting higher up the flue. A small hole in the back of the buttress may have provided a draught for the chamber. This arrangement is very early, late C15 to early C16. Most of the large chambers appear to be C17 in date, though the possible examples at Keynedon and Leigh Barton (see gazetteer) may date from the C15 or C16.

Position

The Devon smoking chamber of types 1 and 2 is normally found opening off the back of a large kitchen hearth (Fig.2). It is balanced by a large oven of perhaps 1.5 metres diameter with a domed stone roof. There may be a smaller oven opening to the side of the hearth, near the large oven. As the latter and the smoking chamber take up a large amount of space, it is common to find a small room over them, behind the chimney stack. This room always had a split-level floor, as the height of the smoking chamber is much greater than that of the oven. In type 1 this room is ill-lit, having a very small window to one side. Type 2 chambers have rather better windows with chamfers or mouldings, suggesting that this had become a higher class room. This complex is set in the low or service end of most houses in which it is found; these are without exception cross-passage houses. A few higher class sites have the complex in a side wing, as at Broomham, or in a separate service block, as at Keynedon and Leigh Barton. In most cases they were installed as part of a major build or rebuild.

Preston House (Fig.2) was surveyed by the author as part of his B.A.Hons dissertation in 1993 and can be taken as the typesite or the type 1 chamber and or the basic plan form of types 1 and

2 (Fig.1). At Preston the smoking chamber complex was part of a new service end to the house, comprising the chamber, two ovens, a possible ash house and newel stair. Dove holes were provided in the outer wall. The roof structure comprised A-frame trusses with notched lap jointed collars, through-purlins and plain feet. Dutch bricks were used to floor the small oven: although these may be later, they provide evidence that the building existed in the late C14.

These features repeat themselves on other houses with smoking chambers in the South Hams and also at Broomham in North Devon. At more than one site this construction can be shown to have been contemporary with or post-dated the flooring of the open hall. This would provide a terminus ante-quem of the late C16.

Origins

It is uncertain how long smoking has been used as a means of preserving meat. However, the normal method of doing this is to hang the meat in a confined space and light a smoky fire beneath. The general adoption of the chimney in domestic contexts in lower class houses of the C16 to C17 may have provided the stimulus for smoking in a stone built structure. Williams (1993a, p.233) notes that it was necessary to avoid broiling the meat or letting it dry out excessively.

The earliest structure known to the author which was used for smoking is the little smoking cupboard behind the chimney at Churchstow and it may be that this represents the first move away from smoking in a chimney. The two other sites, Keynedon and Leigh Barton, are badly damaged with only parts of their chambers surviving but they both display the type 1 and type 2 plan, having large ovens beside them.

Williams, in his study of Somerset chambers, saw two types based on a progression of technical advances. Thus those chambers which were mere openings off the chimney stack came first, succeeded by those which were self contained, possessing flues which fed back into the chimney stack. I have worked on this principle in Fig.1 when drawing types 1 and 2.

I have assumed that all the examples cited are smoking chambers owing to their soot encrusted wall. As I mentioned earlier, Williams suggested other uses including malting and grain drying. There is some archaeological evidence for the latter in the deserted medieval hamlet at

PRESTON HOUSE
 Preston
 Woodleigh
 South Devon
 GROUND FLOOR PLAN

Surveyed: March 1992, R.E. Waterhouse
 Drawn scale: 1:50
 Drawing no: 1 of 9
 Grid ref: SX 7435 5165



Grid North

- Phase 1
- Phase 2
- Phase 3
- Phase 4
- Phase 5a
- Phase 6
- Phase 7
- Phase 8
- Phase 10
- Phase 11

INTERPRETATION:

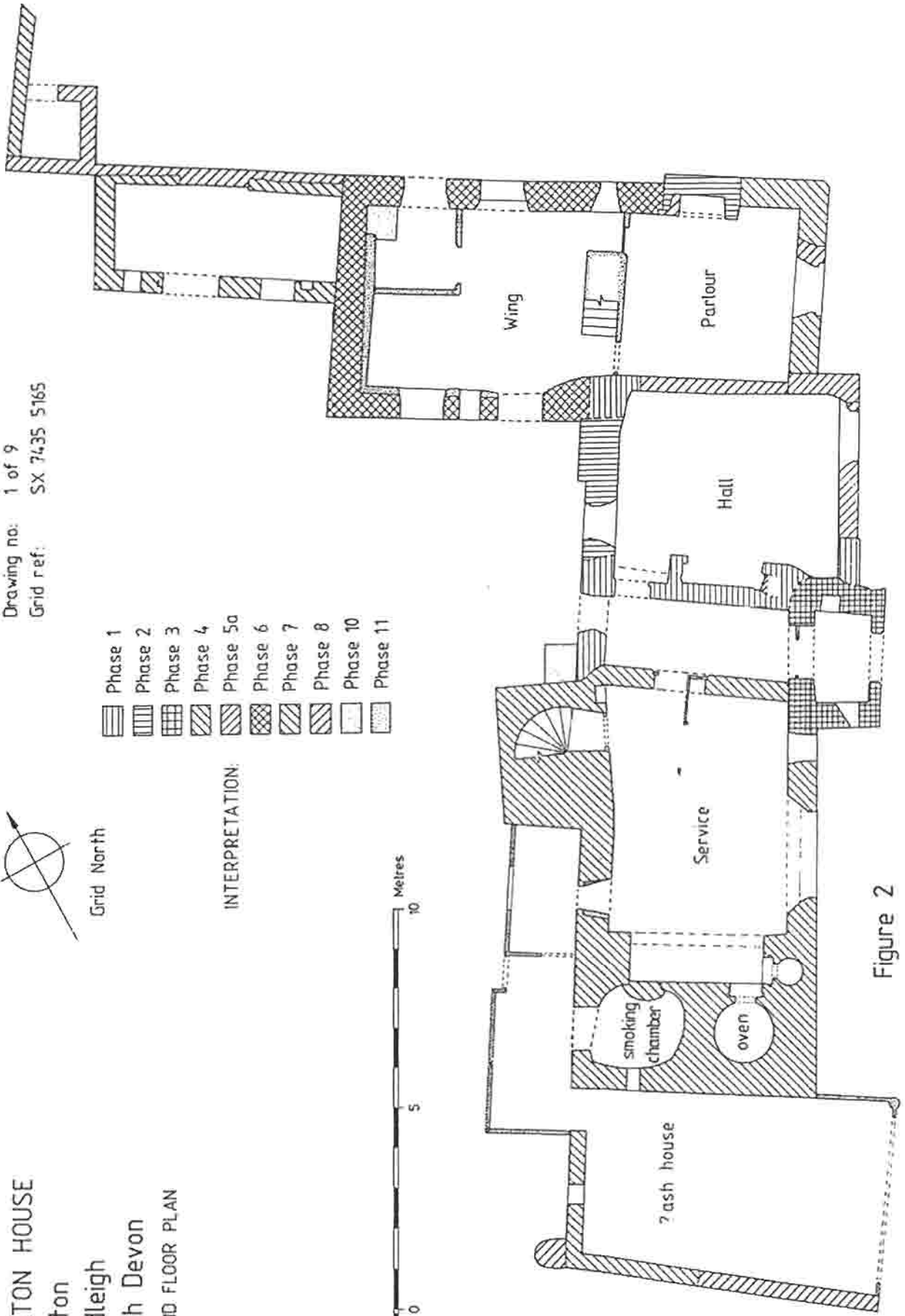


Figure 2

Hound Tor. Williams has also cited a document of 1676 which refers to a malting chamber at Langford Budville in Somerset and suggested that the internal shoulder of the large chambers may have supported a perforated floor on which to spread out the grain.

At this point the importance of Broomham Farmhouse, Kings Nympton should be stressed. It is currently being recorded by J.L. Thorp and has a service range abutting the back of a large longhouse. There is a smoking chamber/oven complex of type 2, but the chamber, which is square, has no internal shoulder. Instead it has four small holes opposing each other in the corbelled roof, apparently for rods from which to hang joints of meat. The lack of such holes in the South Hams chambers and the provision of the internal shoulder supports the theory put forward by A.W. Everitt that there was an internal wood or iron tripod or frame supported by the shoulder, on which the meat was hung. The first floor room directly over the smoking chamber at Broomham (see type 2) is puzzling. No specific function can be assigned to it, although it would be excellent for dry storage or perishable goods.

Type 1 rooms have little or no light, while type 2 rooms have larger windows and may have had a domestic function. The window in the upper room at Site X, South Brent (see gazetteer) had two lights with an ovolo moulded frame.

The possession of a smoking chamber seems to have been a high status feature. It is uncommon to find more than one house in a parish with an example, though they are not always present in manorial houses. In the gazetteer I have tried to list all those sites which have or had a smoking chamber. Sixteen of those sites are in South Devon, two are north of Dartmoor and one is situated near Tavistock. There may well be further examples as yet unrecognised in the two latter areas and more work may need to be carried out.

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NOTE: The site in Figure 2, Preston House, is For Sale at present. Details can be gained from Charles Head & Son, Estate Agents, Fore Street, Kingsbridge, Devon.

Acknowledgements

In writing this paper, I have drawn heavily on the work of others. The only sites I can claim to have found for myself are Ware Farmhouse, Churchstow & Keynedon Barton. I believe that no other person has noted the similarity of the layout at Leigh Barton to the later sites. I am therefore very grateful to Mrs Kay Contin for giving me all her information and correspondence, some of which was with the late E.H.D. Williams & Alan Everitt. John Thorp for arranging for me to visit Broomham Farmhouse. Mrs J. Sanders for information on Whymington, near Tavistock.

And, to all those who have allowed me to crawl around their houses!

Robert Waterhouse

GAZETTEER

Site & NGR	Approx. Date/Type	Comments
Church House Inn, Churchstow. SX 712458	Late C15/early C16 cupboard type	Smoking cupboard, not easily viewed, in buttress behind wide end-hearth.
Preston House, Woodleigh. SX 743516	?C17 Type 1	Dutch brick floor of small oven, late C17.
Hingston Borough, Aveton Gifford. SX 683485	?Type 1	Plan as at Preston, but chamber is 16' wide.
Jarvis's Tenement, South Huish. SX 692412	?Type 1	Plan as at Preston.
Farmstone, Halwell. SX 777526	?C17 Type 1	Plan as at Preston, but in projection of north side of service end. Dutch bricks lining small oven.
Ware Farmhouse, Ugborough. SX 679558	Type 2	Smoking chamber with roof vent and low door. Window frame in inspection hatch. Unusual in that it has a large oven but no room over.
Keynedon Barton, Sherford. SX 775433	Early, probably C16 Type unknown	Possibly a malting kiln in bake/brew house section of service range. Largely destroyed.
Leigh Barton, Churchstow. SX 721467	Early, ?Late C15/ early C16 Type unknown	As Keynedon, but behind kitchen hearth in service range. Foundations only remain, but may have had stair from outside for access to chamber instead of above firing hole.
Gatehouse Farm, Brownston, Modbury. SX 698527	Not known.	
Lower Beara Farm, South Brent. SX 710614	Not known. ?Type 1	Probably of Preston type, demolished.

Site & NGR	Approx. Date/Type	Comments
Site X, South Brent.	Not earlier than late C16 as newel spiral stair to chamber over hall is integral with structure. Type 2	Added to existing service room, as at Ware with return flue in ceiling & low access door. Plaster letters record date of blocking 1750. Chamber over probably of higher status, as ovolo moulded window frame.
Yarde Farmhouse, Malborough. SX 717401	?C16 Type 2 Maybe malting kiln.	High quality ashlar displays all basic Preston characteristics & is beside full-width hearth.
Cranche's, Galmpton. SX 69-40-	Not known	Probably single oven & chamber in end of house, but badly damaged & obscured.
Addislade Farm, Dean Prior. SX 716641	Not known	
Alston, Kingsbridge. SX 717407	Not known	
Stones Cottage, West Prawle. SX 768377	Not known	
Whymington, Sampford Spiney. SX 524714	?Early C17 ?Type 2	As Broomham (below), but with ovoid plan. Beside, but not opening off hearth.
Broomham Farm, Kings Nympton.	Hip crucks used in roof, these die out in early C17 Type 2	Square, corbelled chamber, plan as Preston but no shoulders within - holes for horizontal hanging bars. Flue in top, C17 door & frame intact in access from hearth. No hearth charging hole, but rake-out outside Cob used on first floor.
Yeo Farm, North Tawton.	?Early C17	?As Broomham