

DEVON BUILDINGS GROUP

NEWSLETTER NUMBER 17



Spring 1999

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Illustrations

Front cover: detail from Joseph Coles' map of Exeter 1709, courtesy of the Westcountry Studies Library.

North Tawton Map: detail of the town glebe drawn for Rev. Richard Hole c 1772, courtesy of J R H Arundell, Western Australia.

Broadhall c 1900, courtesy of Mrs I Sampson, North Tawton.

All other drawings and photographs by the authors.

SECRETARY'S REPORT

Since Newsletter No. 16, 1998 also saw the production of the new Register of Members (which I managed to get out just in time for the Summer Conference, saving postage on about forty copies), the Conference itself, in Exeter, and the AGM, in Kingsbridge.

Membership reached a healthy high, by the summer, with 148 paid up members and three more have joined since.

Our most grateful thanks to Lyn Auty, for typing Newsletter No. 16 and to Dawn Honeysett for typing No. 17.

Casework has been mainly confined to interventions on behalf of buildings brought to our attention by members or friends of members, demonstrating the beginnings of a pattern suggested at previous AGMs and outlined elsewhere in this Newsletter by our Casework Co-ordinator, Peter Roseveare. Of ongoing concern is the still uncertain fate of the former psychiatric hospital at Exminster - the subject of an article in our very first Newsletter some fourteen years ago. Time must be running out for this important building.

About fifty members attended our 13th Summer Conference on Saturday 13th June, at the temporary exhibitions gallery of the RAM Museum, Exeter and at a walk-about in the city in the afternoon. The subject was 'Conservation in a Cathedral City: Recent Concepts, Problems and Practices in Exeter'.

As usual, it was a very full programme, with the only real hitch unfortunately at the beginning and for which we apologise. The catering staff managed to hide the coffee in a lobby, instead of serving it, which delayed things a bit. Also as usual, the committee members' traditional generous donation of cakes was much appreciated, both at the beginning and at tea-time.

Jo Cox chaired the Conference, introducing and thanking the speakers, all four of whom are actively and professionally engaged in Exeter conservation, as officers of the City Council.

The ancient city of Exeter, from the days when it was a legionary town of the Romans, who built the first of the protective walls around it, has had its fair share of handsome, interesting and sometimes important buildings within them, usually evolving gradually, in response to changing needs. But it has also had its times of traumatic destruction; in the Civil War of the 1640s, when it suffered two damaging sieges, and especially in 1942, when the German airforce inflicted terrible destruction in the notorious Baedeker bombings.

Such times of sudden and devastating change must, of necessity, evoke a response. Exeter, at the end of the 1939-45 war, faced a challenge and, perhaps an opportunity which it would surely not be unfair to say the city failed dismally to rise to. Where some European cities put all their patriotic resources into painstakingly detailed re-constructions of whole streets of buildings, bombed almost to extinction, Exeter seemed to have lost, temporarily, all its civic pride and proceeded to demolish, presumably in the name of progress, at least as many of its historic buildings as Hitler had destroyed in the name of hate. And although much of what came to replace them was inappropriate and mundane in the extreme, a few buildings bore the distinctive stamp of their era and may be creating a conservation problem of their own, as a once shamed city perhaps too hastily considers replacing them, in turn. Be that as it may, our speakers demonstrated how very far Exeter has come since the 1950s, although some of the pressures cannot be much less today.

Appropriately, as Curator of Antiquities at the Museum and my co-organiser of the day, our first speaker was John Allan. His

subject was 'Conservation and Archaeology at the Cathedral' and was mainly concerned with the then current excavations at the cloisters, in advance of a proposed re-building, to house the extended Cathedral Library. Not, perhaps, exactly 'conservation' but showing how, from medieval foundations in the trenches and the existing scars on the south wall, quite an accurate reconstruction could be achieved.

John was followed by Mike Baldwin, Project Architect with Exeter City Council, and he showed us the results of a recent study, commissioned by the City, into its building stones - a surprisingly wide variety, both in the structures as built and among those used, not always appropriately, in repairs.

Andrew Pye, Exeter City's Archaeologist and Planning Officer, spoke on the 'Archaeology of Historic Buildings' and the City's present excellent scheme of setting up an archaeological database for the entire city, with all known historical information on every site, towards the maximum prior information in advance of any planning application. Presumably, Exeter is one of English Heritage's pilot cities.

Our last speaker was Mark Stobbs, Conservation Officer, on 'The Humbler Buildings: Issues of Quality; Demolition or Repair?' He gave us a fascinating look at the pragmatic side of town conservation; analysing the vital ingredients of streetscapes and several different ways of preserving their character.

After lunch, John Allan showed members the Cathedral cloisters excavation in progress on site, and an architect's model of the possible re-construction of them, housed in the Cathedral. There was then a walk down to North Street, where John Thorp showed the back gallery at No. 18 and described the painted panelling discovered there after a recent fire.

At St. Nicholas' Priory, approximately one-third of the Group took afternoon tea and the remainder were divided into those who were guided around 21 The Mint (formerly part of the Priory and boasting a splendid arch-braced roof above an inserted floor) by Carol Griffiths, and those who were guided around the nearby Exeter Synagogue by Eddie Sinclair, who was currently conserving the recently revealed painting.

When all this had been completed three times, we walked to the Quay and the day ended with Mike Baldwin showing us the wonderful Abbott plaster ceilings, full of fruit and flowers and writhing snakes, at the Customs House - a most satisfying building of the late C17, which has still, sadly and inexplicably, not yet found a present day use since its conservation several years ago.

We owe a tremendous debt to all our excellent speakers and guides, and also to Athene Adams, who came down from London specially, to add the professional qualification necessary to secure our unique concession to serve teas at the Priory. The logistics of this exercise were extremely complicated, as St Nicholas has no vehicular access and the lane to Bartholomew Street ends at double yellow lines on a bend. We had to bring in everything by hand, including all the crockery (only the water urn was supplied and transported by the Museum) and the brilliant idea of holding a parking space at St Mary Arches was frustrated for some time by having to queue to get back to it, after unloading! Luckily, tea was just ready for the first party, the morning's rain turned to sun and the members were able to enjoy the buildings in optimum conditions, rare in 1998. We were lucky again.

Saturday 10th October saw about 30 members at Kingsbridge, for the AGM. Unfortunately, Marion Gibson has resigned from the Committee, due to pressure of work, but we gained two new members.

The 1998/9 Committee consists of : Ann Adams, Oliver Bosence, Chris Brooks, Sally Cotton, Jo Cox, Dawn Honeysett, Su Jarwood, Peter Roseveare, Jenny Sanders, Jane Schofield, Jeremy Sharpe, John Thorp, Robert Waterhouse.

After the business part of the day, Robert Waterhouse gave an illustrated talk on the early development of the town, 'planted' in the thirteenth century (Buckfast Abbey, which owned much of Churchstow in which it lay, was granted a market there in 1219) and some of the early building still discernible behind the seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth century frontages. After lunch, he took us on a tour of part of the town, particularly exploring the backs, including several of the original burgage plots still visible in gardens and waste, and the exciting remains of an important medieval courtyard house. An extremely interesting rounding off of DBG's year.

Ann Adams.

CASEWORK NOTES

Looking back at my notes for the 1998 February Newsletter it is now apparent to me that I was so engrossed with the complex issues of the Shimizu case that I forgot to acknowledge receipt of copies of several casework letters from Robert Waterhouse. With apologies for this oversight, these are now summarised below.

Both cases were in the Kingsbridge conservation area, the first dealing with an application to partly replace the existing street frontage windows of the **Fore Street Congregational Chapel** with plastic units. Robert objected to the change in character which would result from the proposal

pointing out that this was one of the few original street facades.

His other case related to a proposed redevelopment of the **Old Telephone Exchange**, also in Fore Street. It appears that the building was to be converted into a shop at street level with flats above. Robert pointed out that the building was an excellent example of inter-wars telephone exchange with a handsome frontage which formed an important part of the streetscape at the top of the town, which would not be improved by the installation of a plate-glass shopfront, and that there appeared to be little need for another shop in that part of Kingsbridge as several nearby had already closed. It was suggested instead that the ground floor should also be residential use, which could allow retention of the sash windows, and that other details should be given more thought to be in keeping with the existing character.

Neither of these cases required conservation area consent or notification, and may not have been advertised as required pre-Shimizu, but they underline the fact that we need much more personal vigilance of the kind reported above if we are to continue to meet the Objects of our Group.

To take an active part in the preservation of historic buildings or groups of buildings in Devon, especially through casework on buildings or groups of buildings under threat (Object IV) takes time, tenacity and tact - but above all requires local knowledge. In simple terms, the DBG objectives can only continue to be met if members keep a watchful eye on planning proposals in their area.

When Lawrie York Moore first took on the task of Casework Co-ordinator, and I agreed to give a helping hand, we conceived the idea of casework membership clusters - small groups of DBG members living within tolerably easy reach

of their local District Planning Office and each other, who could 'take turns' at maintaining watch on planning application lists and notices, then inspecting applications at the planning office when thought to be necessary.

This, we thought, would ease the burden and avoid any risk of duplication of effort (although the latter now seems to me to be highly improbable). Unfortunately, before the idea was fully developed and casework groups formed, Lawrie had to withdraw. I still feel, however, that the idea would be worth reviving, and with the issue of the 1998 Register it should be possible to consider some form of localised contact grouping with the up-to-date information now available.

There are 10 district planning offices in the County (including Plymouth and Torbay) and we have some 120 members who live in those districts. It would be too much to expect the geographical distribution of members to divide equally into the districts to provide groups of 12 (or groups of 10 including National Parks), nor would it be reasonable to expect all resident members to be willing or able to take on DBG casework, even on a shared basis, so it is possible that local groups may consist of 3 or 4 members in some districts.

It would be essential for each group to pass copies of all casework correspondence to the DBG Casework Co-ordinator (for record purposes) who would report to Committee meetings and update members through the Newsletter. Local groups could organise their own casework discussions as needed, and could invite the current co-ordinator or any other member, Committee or otherwise, to discuss a particular problem. In addition, it should be possible for any group which needs assistance to make immediate contact with the casework co-ordinator.

I do not use the word 'immediately' lightly, for as with all planning application

responses time is of the essence, and it is always necessary to identify sound reasons for objection as quickly as possible, before time limits expire. If any caseworker is in doubt as to the most effective way to proceed they should refer the matter back without hesitation, bearing in mind that while the necessary expertise can undoubtedly be found somewhere within DBG membership, it is not necessarily available by return!

Our Secretary received a letter from a member expressing concern about the delisting of buildings in one district which had been taking place. As the information was received after the event the situation was beyond recovery. The importance of advance warning cannot be over-emphasised.

One recent case did work well due to information provided at the proper time (or perhaps due to the fact that no planning application was involved) was that of the former **Devon County Asylum, Exminster**, the last asylum in this country to be built on a variation of the radial plan, designed by Charles Fowler in 1842 (who also designed the London Fever Hospital, Covent Garden and Exeter Market).

The buildings have been subject to increasing dereliction and, 'acting on information received' Ann Adams was able to gather photographic and other evidence and to write a firm letter to the Heritage Secretary, the Rt. Hon. Anthony Banks, M.P., with copies to Teignbridge D. C., English Heritage, Victorian Society and others, which produced a supportive response. This is an important Devon building which deserves conservation by sympathetic re-use, and I hope that this will eventually be the case when we get an update.

I know that the Committee is anxious to see an increase in successful casework, and is ready to support any effort in that direction, but, as you may have gathered

from the foregoing rambling comments, the starting point for any casework can only be the individual member's knowledge of some local planning proposal which needs to be challenged in the hope that needless damage can be prevented.

I would be delighted to hear from any member who feels able and willing to set up a local casework group. We do have some existing caseworkers who already form the basis of such local groups, and I would be pleased to hear from them also, with a view to setting up a caseworker list for cross contact. Some members deal with casework referred to them by the Council for British Archaeology, which is a different area altogether - more about that later perhaps.

To finish, I have recently received some encouraging information concerning planning decisions and subsequent appeals relating to conservation area applications in various parts of England, which indicates that planning authorities, (no doubt advised by their conservation officers) seem to be more inclined to refuse applications which affect the character and appearance in conservation areas, and appeals against such refusals are being dismissed!

So - Shimizu may rule, but does not necessarily win. "He who controls the past, controls the future." (*George Orwell*).

Peter Roseveare.

BROAD HALL, NORTH TAWTON

It would be fair to say that hardly anything is known about this house. Cherry and Pevsner refer to it as the 'remains of one notable older house of stone. Gable end with late medieval six light projecting bay window, with a doorway on the left.....

the mullions enriched with finely carved Perpendicular foliage. Chimney on the left belongs.'¹ Hoskins describes it as the most interesting house of the town, 'a late C15 building of some pretensions on the Square, probably a small manor house originally'.²

Apart from the window's being, in fact, an eight light bay or oriel (there are two more on the ends) and there having been another doorway on the right (removed for the insertion of another shop window, earlier this century), there is little to add. So far there appears to be no documentary evidence, despite the investigations into the history of North Tawton undertaken by Rev. H. F. Fulford Williams.³ A descendant apparently of both the owners of one of the woollen mills and of some of the rectors, he was in a good position to make such enquiries but still found no history for Broad Hall.

Devon does not have too many medieval town houses of quality and, as this one is vulnerable to almost everything, being hard on the narrow pavement, it seems to deserve at least a superficial investigation before any more of it crumbles away.

In 1998, a map appeared (from Australia), showing a bird's eye view of much of the town and apparently drawn to show the extent of the town glebe which, at the time of the tithe survey, amounted to some eight acres. The map is undated but the names on it suggest circa 1770. On this map, Broad Hall is shown as forming far more of a projection from the building line than it has today and as having a huge arched entrance on the right. Unfortunately, the draughtsmanship everywhere leaves much to be desired. However, an attempt has been made to delineate the salient features of all the street frontages, with projecting porches, railings, steps, etc., so one must doubt whether the very large entrance arch and Broad Hall's very different relationship to its neighbours can be entirely imaginary. None of the present buildings now on the west side of the Square seem to be shown

on the map and I suggest that those frontages were extended eastwards, some time in the early C19. One or both of the small arched doorways could have been moved, as we know occurred more recently with one of them.

Who built Broad Hall and why is not, it seems, recorded but the quality of the carving on the chamfers of the window mullions shows that it was certainly built for a man of considerable importance. Unfortunately, the descent of the ownership of the manor, as of the advowson (not always the same, in this case) seems to have been frequently fragmented among heiresses for centuries, making a likely candidate for the builder of Broad Hall far from obvious. The Valletorts were the lords and patrons of the living in the second half of the C13 and built a moated manor house, of which the remains were still clearly visible in the early C17⁴ and of which traces can still be seen today in Court Green, adjoining the churchyard. They were granted a market and three day fair in 1374 but seem to have run out of male heirs at about the same time and a Valletort heiress took the lordship to the Champernoun family in 1377.

For some reason, the advowson of the rectory had been acquired by Sir Richard Stapledon before 1317 and it was his family who held it until before 1397. Then Thomasine Stapledon married Sir Richard Hankforth and it was divided between their two daughters, of whom Thomasine married Sir William Bouchier (Lord Fitzwarren by 1449) and Ann married Thomas Butler, 7th Earl of Ormonde, both in the first half of the C15. William and Thomasine Bouchier had a son, Fulke Bouchier, Lord Fitzwarren, who was dead by 1480; and a daughter, Blanche, who married Bartholomew St. Leger and died in 1484. Fulke's son, John Bouchier, was created 1st Earl of Bath in 1537. Thomas and Ann Butler (Ormonde) had a daughter, Ann, who married Thomas St Leger before

1515. Although it is known that this is how the presentation to the living descended, nowhere is it clear whether or how the lordship of the manor was related.

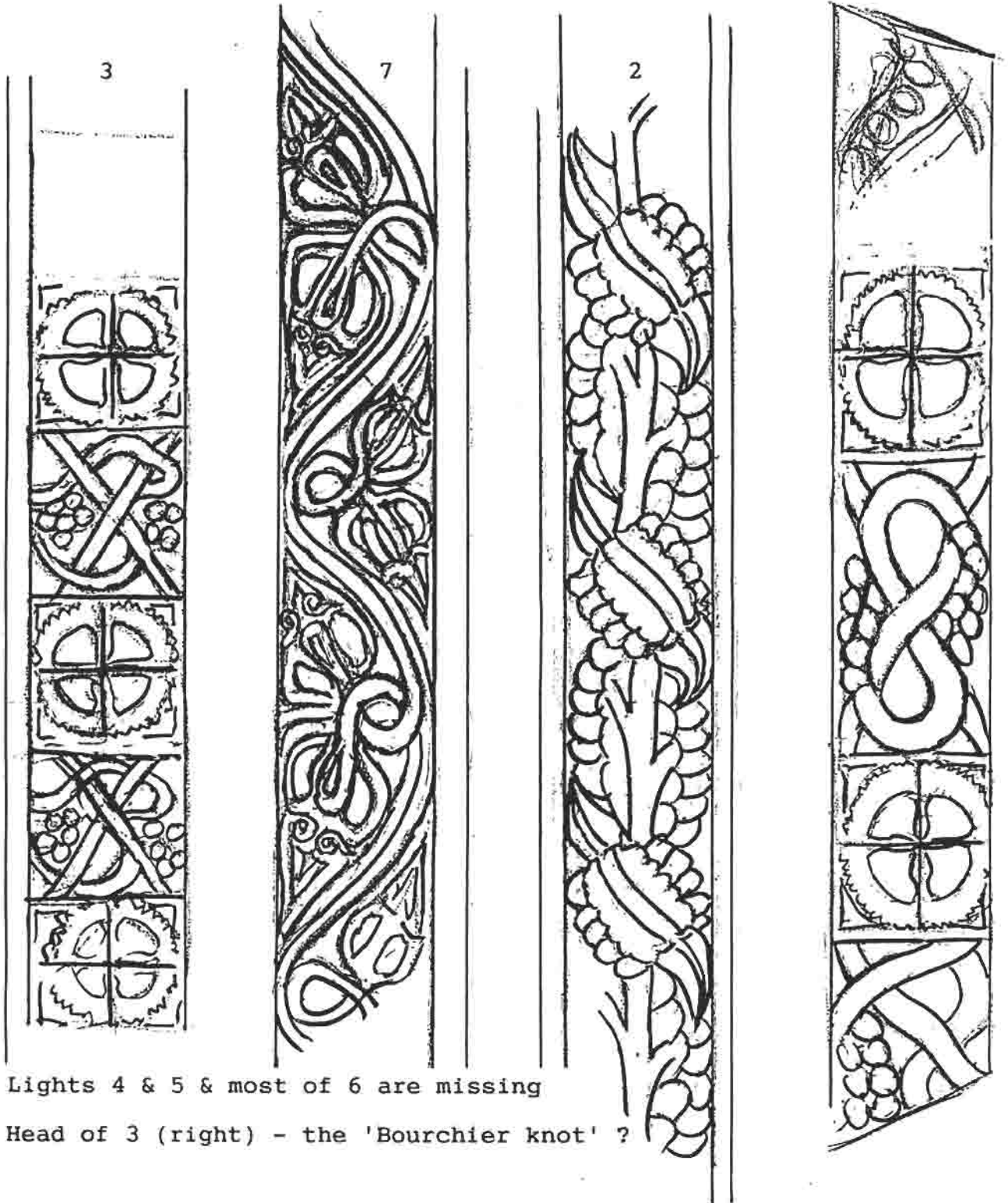
Richard Wood of Ashridge Manor in North Tawton, married a Valletort/Champernoun heiress circa 1400 and, six generations later, Alexander Wood married an heiress of (a presumably later) Bartholomew St Leger. Their son, Richard Wood of Ashridge, had the presentation to the living in 1561 (by St Leger permission). As all these families married into the St Legers, it is not surprising that it was the Trustees of the St Leger family who finally sold the Manor of North Tawton to the Newton-Fellowes/Wallop family of Lord Portsmouth, in the C18. If any builder of Broad Hall is recorded, he just might be found among the Portsmouth papers in Hampshire.

The local likely candidates seem to be member of one of two families. If the device on the head of one of the windows is the 'Bouchier knot', then it may have been one of them. There were Bouchiers, (presumably from a younger son of the family who became the Earls of Bath of Tawstock) resident at North Tawton and they gave their name to a road still called 'Bouchier Hill'.

In the church is a fine carving of the Champernoun arms on the head of a bench end. There is also the head of an apparently late C15 window in the north aisle, in which four angels (similar to but smaller than those at Bratton Clovelly) hold the arms of Champernoun and three others, which Fulford-Williams says are Valletort, Hankforth and Butler but do not appear to be. Risdon says that (North) Tawton is one of the places where the Champernouns 'planted' themselves and implies that they were still there at the beginning of the C17 - despite the lack of documentation. Probably they are the most likely to have built Broad Hall as the manor house for their own branch. Dean Milles' enquiries⁵



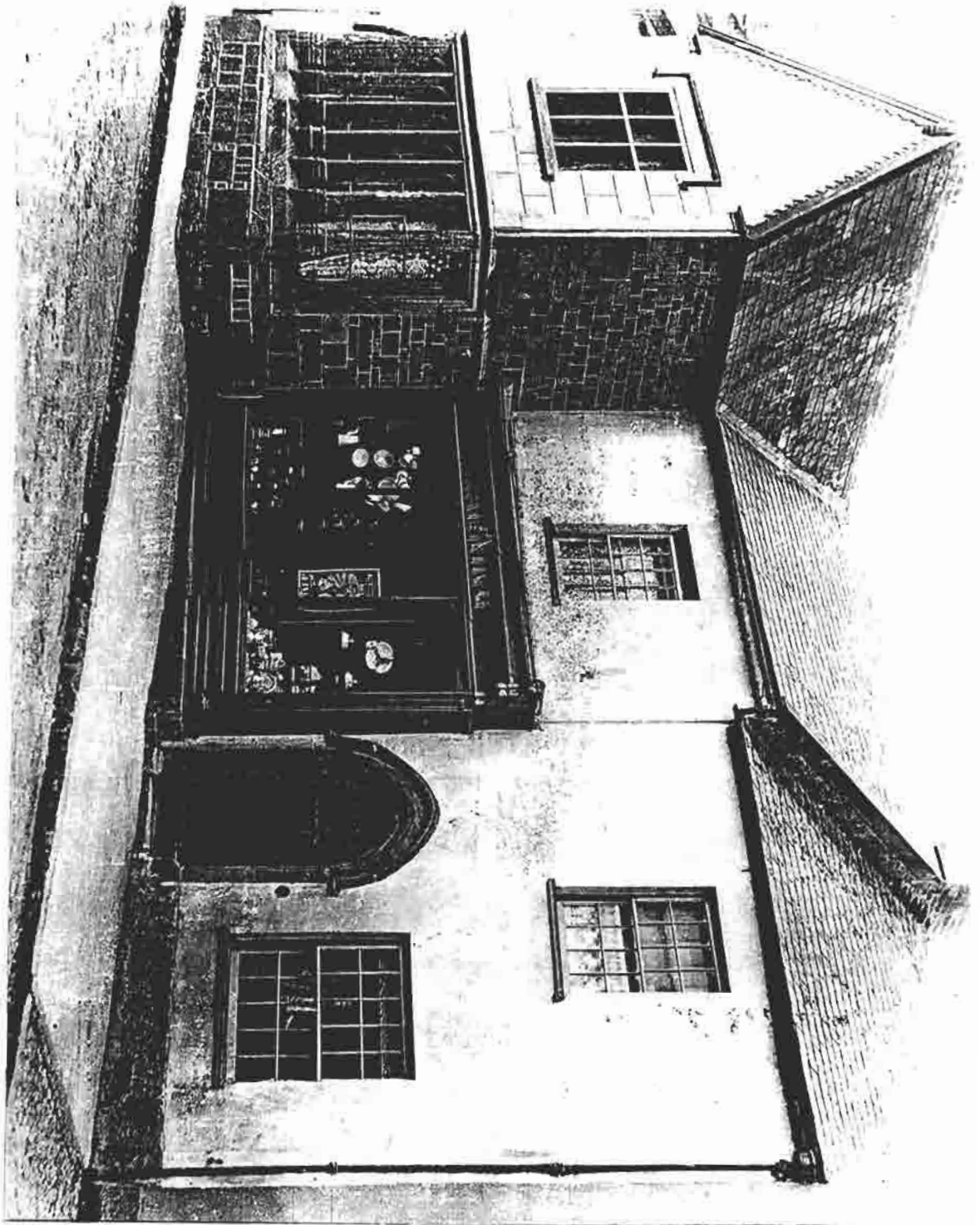
Head of a turbaned man from the mini bosses in the north end

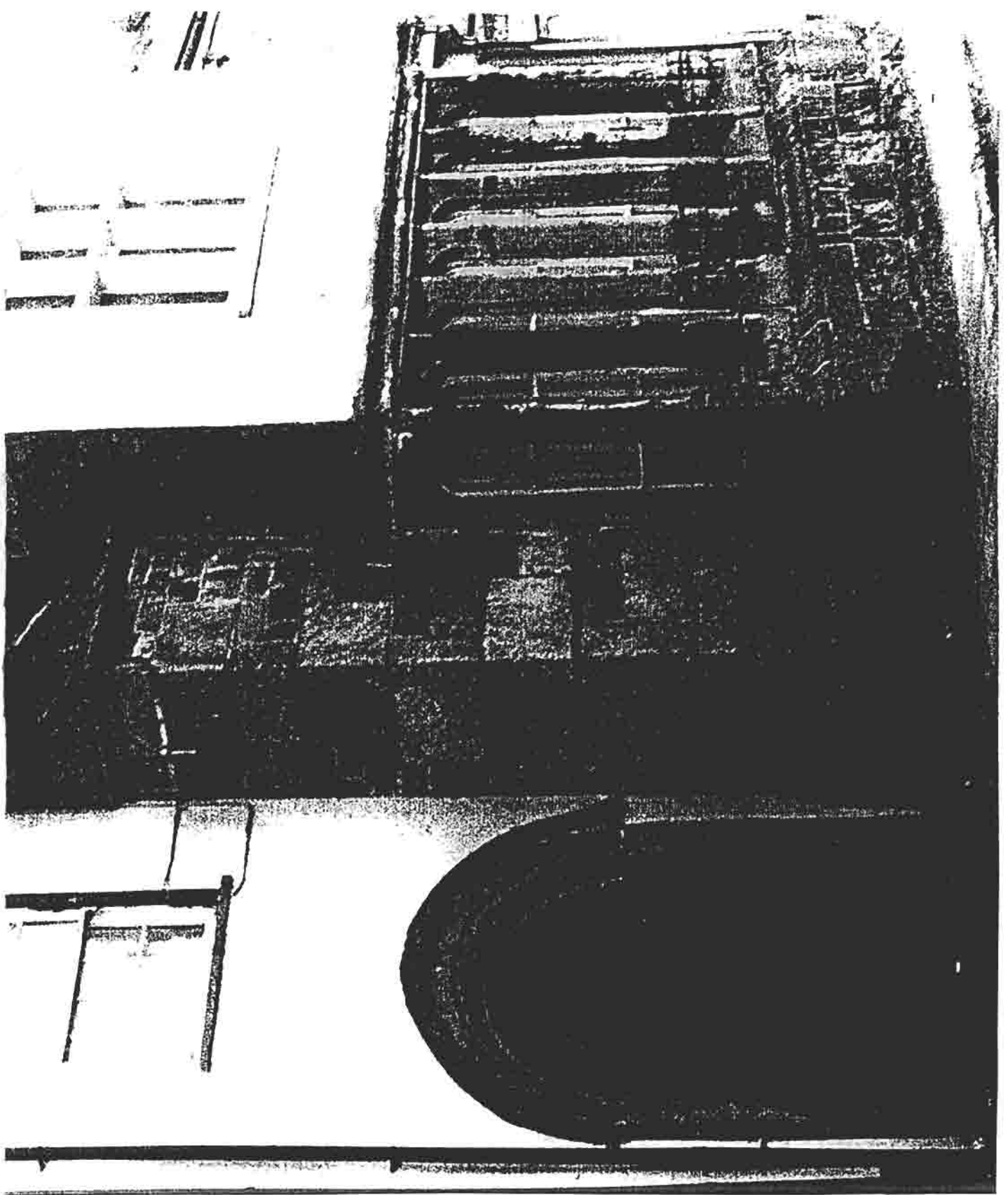


Lights 4 & 5 & most of 6 are missing

Head of 3 (right) - the 'Bourchier knot' ?

BROADHALL circa 1900





confirm that it had formerly been the venue for the manor courts, although the practice had been discontinued some time earlier, probably in the C17.

Very unfortunately, the whole roof was renewed in the C19 and again within the past fifty years, with no recording of what was there before.⁶ The street end is shown as gabled in the circa 1770 drawing but may well not have been when built.

The condition of the carving on the heads and the inner chamfers of the mullions is often very poor and heavily soiled by exhaust fumes. Three must have crumbled away some time ago, as they have been replaced by plain granite shafts, but it must be supposed that every one of the eight lights once had a separate design, as all those which survive are different. The middle lights have serpentine foliage designs while the end two have rosettes, one of which is a face. Each light has foliate spandrels.

The cills and bases of the mullions are in granite but the decorated shafts, themselves, appear to be in Beer stone. The corner mullions, now much decayed, seem to have been crocketed. The repairs were, unfortunately, made with iron staples, which have corroded seriously and are bursting the stonework. Because of the considerable deterioration, the drawings here can only be an approximation to their original appearance. Pugin's drawing of the contemporary fireplace at the Bishop's Palace, Wells, shows something of what these window surrounds must have looked like, having serpentine designs similar to but less complex than those at Broad Hall.

Since writing the above, the new owners have given me the opportunity to see the ground floor interior, very briefly, and especially the massive fireplace associated with the external stack. This enormous feature was blocked in, when the building was listed, leaving nothing inside but a warren of presumed C19 partition walls

and changes of level. A sight of it dramatically alters one's perception of the house. The lintel is c 3 m long and, like the jambs, is c 75 cm wide by c 30 cm deep - all in granite and with a single rectangular hollow chamfer. The left jamb almost abuts the window which, itself, constitutes the whole of the gable end wall and is only c 30 cm thick.

The fireplace, which appears to be intended more for cooking than for show and perhaps a century younger than the window, is plainly in situ - which does raise the question of whether the window is a later insertion, presumably of C19. It could have been salvaged from the ruins of the moated medieval manor house on Court Green, or from elsewhere in Broad Hall, and repaired, with its quite expensively crafted granite replacement mullions, at the time of its re-erection.

Unfortunately, considerable further research has not revealed an owner of the necessary means and antiquarian tastes likely to have done it. In a c 1845, as we have seen, the entire town of over eight acres belonged to the rector - then Rev. George Hole - who also had eighty four acres of glebe land and tithes worth nearly £800 p.a.⁷

However, although none of the other town properties are even mentioned in the schedule, Broadhall appears to be an exception. For many years it is recorded as belonging to the Medland family. In 1775 a Robert M. (a butcher) was owner/occupier;⁸ In 1780 a Thomas M. (his son) was owner/occupier; in 1804 a Robert M. lived there and it was presumably the same who took an apprentice there in 1823;⁹ in 1832 it was owned by a Thomas M. of Exeter and occupied by a Robert M.;¹⁰ in 1845 probably the same Robert M. was owner/occupier and the property described as of fourteen acres, including a house & gardens.⁶ In 1856 Broadhall was put up for auction, with three sitting tenants; the

main house, 'with courtilage, stables, coach house, garden & premises' being in the occupation of a surgeon. The other two houses were also occupied by respectable persons and all described as having been 'recently and substantially erected' and being in 'an excellent state of repair'.¹¹ It would seem that considerable rebuilding took place on the site c 1850 and we may be looking at this window in an anachronistic context. This in no way diminishes its intrinsic interest but, alas, it remains as much as an enigma as ever.

Ann Adams.

Acknowledgements

Our thanks to the owners of Broadhall, Mr & Mrs Jordan, for kind permission to view the interior, and Dr Jean Shields, for some useful documentary evidence.

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COUNTRY HOUSE SQUASH COURTS IN DEVON

When I joined the National Trust's Regional Headquarters at Killerton in 1981, I was surprised to discover a squash court embedded in the middle of the office. Unfortunately the tempting prospect of playing on a court so conveniently situated was never realised since the Trust's costume collection, which had moved to Killerton in 1978, urgently required storage space and regrettably it was the squash court that was sacrificed. With barely a murmur of protest it was divided horizontally and is now virtually unrecognisable as the court built by the Acland family in the 1920s - where St. Luke's students played after the last war and where Sir Richard Acland continued to practise a canny game until well into his sixties. Whether the court would have been obliterated so easily today is less certain.

In 1996, the National Trust sought to convert the squash court in the west wing of the Marquess of Bristol's Great House at Ickworth, Suffolk, into an 'arts and education facility'. Planning permission was refused on the grounds that an early twentieth century squash court (it was built in 1909) would be lost and opposition to the scheme forced the issue to public enquiry. In fact the Trust won its case but not before research had been conducted into the hitherto unpublished history of country house squash courts. Over 100 surviving private courts were identified in Britain and what follows has been prompted by those discoveries.¹

The game originated at Harrow School in the 1820s as a pared down version of rackets, using House yards for make-shift courts. The first true squash courts were not built at the school until 1864 and although the game then assumed a distinct identity, improvised courts persisted for, as late as 1898, 'The Encyclopaedia of Sport'

revealed that, *almost every boy at Harrow plays a game with a racket and a soft india-rubber ball known there as "Squash" wherever there is to be found an asphalt floor and a wall.*² The game's popularity spread quickly through other schools, universities, clubs and barracks, encouraged by the ease in which relative proficiency was achieved, besides being independent of the weather and natural light.

In 1883 an old Harrovian called Vernon Harcourt built the first private court near Oxford. Others followed and by the turn of the century there were a number of specialist court builders, many of the courts being architect-designed. Just as billiard rooms had been popular with the Victorians, so squash courts became the prerequisite for the affluent householder in the new century. A typical court, built in 1897 by the Holland Hibbert family of Munden, near Watford, cost £162.³

In 1907 the Tennis and Rackets Association had, on the recommendation of the squash rackets committee, first considered regulation but despite publishing the now accepted dimensions of a court in 1911 (floor area 32' x 21') these were not prescribed until 1923. Standardisation of rules of play followed in 1924 and were first published by the Squash Rackets Association in 1929/30. It was also about this time that the first private courts in Devon were built.

The earliest surviving court in Devon is at what has now become the Deer Park Hotel at Buckerell. The original house dates from the eighteenth century but by the 1920s it belonged to Edward Parry who had made his fortune out of the Canadian Pacific Railway. One of his sons was a Cambridge squash player and it was for him that the court was built by the specialist firm, Carters Sports of North London. It is a detached, rendered brick building with a standard floor size, flush teak door, spectator's gallery, a glazed roof with

artificial lighting and maple flooring.⁴ As such it fulfilled all the basic court requirements specified by contemporary trade journals. Although the Parry's left Deer Park in 1947, the hotel still maintains the court in a playable condition.

Contemporary with the Deep Park Court is the one at Killerton. It was built by Sir Francis Acland for the benefit of his three sons after a serious fire had damaged the house in 1924.⁵ His architect was Randall Wells, a practitioner of Arts and Crafts buildings. The court measured 32' x 21' and is probably the only private court to be built at first floor level, in this case absorbing several bedrooms. Despite that it had a solid floor, a gallery and originally a glazed roof. The court was in constant use by the family and after by St. Luke's students, when a college hall of the residence moved to Killerton after the Second World War.

Carters Sports produced a catalogue of 169 courts built by the firm between 1878 and 1938. In addition to the Deer Park court, the firm built two others in Devon for private clients. The best known was at Ashcombe Tower, a house by the New Zealand Architect Brian O'Rorke who established his reputation by designing the interiors of Orient Line ships. His client in 1933 was Major Ralph Rayner, a keen squash player who later became MP for Totnes and was knighted in 1956. The court formed a two-storey east wing to the house with a changing room and shower beneath the gallery at one end. The exterior walls were rendered with 'a waterproof cement'⁶ but that did not prevent flooding in the 1970s. By then Sir Ralph had stopped playing and his wife converted part of the court into a flower room. Since then it has been made into a studio by the addition of a horizontal partition and the opening up of a picture window at one end.⁷

Carters' other court was at Bickington Lodge, a Victorian house on the main road

just west of Barnstaple. In the 1930s it was owned by Lieutenant-Colonel John Poynder, an Indian Army officer who had two sons, Charles, a schoolmaster and John, both enthusiastic sportsmen. They played cricket for Devon as well as squash and the court was built for them. Charles, a large man who was able to dominate the game from the middle of the court, was renowned as a distinguished player.⁸ In the 1960s, the Lodge house was demolished and the site developed for new housing. Only the gate piers now remain but surprisingly the court, sited to the west of the piers, was converted into a house and there it remains.

Yet another court to suffer conversion is at Hazelwood House, Loddiswell, near Kingsbridge. The house belonged to the Peek family and it was Richard Peek who in 1845 built an unconsecrated Congregational chapel next to the entrance drive. By the end of the century the chapel was disused and adopted as a garden store. Then, in the 1930s, as squash became fashionable, it was given a new lease of life by becoming a games complex. One half had its windows bricked up, the roof partially glazed, walls rendered and a gallery added to make a squash court only 4" narrower than standard. The other half, formerly a Sunday school, became a billiard room. Squash was played here until 1940 and again in the 1950s although by then it had become more of a family play room.⁹ Recently, Hazelwood has changed hands and the court now has a door in its front wall and is used for occasional studio and performance space. It was probably unique among squash courts in having a Victorian letterbox set into its wall.

The only other private court in Devon appears to be one at Powderham Castle, built by the 15th Earl of Devon, the bachelor rector of Powderham, in the early 1930s. Like many courts of that time it was constructed by converting an existing building, in this case part of the stable block, using a cement render on the brick

walls and concreting the floor. The present Lord Courtenay claims the court is "quite playable but a bit rough on rackets not to speak of the players". Nevertheless Powderham's court enjoys the distinction of being the sole surviving private court in Devon still privately owned.

As a post script two other courts should be mentioned.

The Manor House Hotel, Moretonhampstead, was built as a private house by the 2nd Viscount Hambleden in the 1890s. Its squash court however was not added until the 1930s, after the house had been sold to the Great Western Railway in 1928. Thus, although it is an early court for Devon, it was never privately owned.

High Bray House, north of South Molton, belonged to the Acland family until 1921 when it was sold. According to the Christopher Hartnoll, who now lives there, sometime between then and 1939 a barn near the house was converted for what appears to be a form of sporting activity. It was rendered internally at one end and was used by the Army during the war, but it is not known for certain if squash was ever played there. Although the barn's width is only 17 feet it may have been possible since even smaller courts were built.

Hugh Meller

Gazetteer of Private Devon Squash Courts

1925	Killerton House, Broadclyst Size - 32' x 21' Conversion within house Listed - Grade II Owner - The National Trust Not in use, now offices
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c. 1925	Deer Park Hotel, Buckerell Size - 32' x 21' Detached, purpose built Unlisted. Owner - Deer Park Hotel. In use	2 Edited by the Earl of Suffolk and Berkshire, Hedley Peek and F.G. Aflalo, London 1898. 3 Information from the Viscount Knutsford. 4 Information from Mr Noar.
c. 1930	Hazelwood House, Loddiswell Size - smaller than standard Converted from a chapel Unlisted Owner - Gillian Kean Not in use, now a studio	5 Information from Sir John Acland, BT. 6 Country Life, February 13th 1937. 7 Information from Major Ranulf Rayner.
1934	Ashcombe Tower, near Dawlish Size - 32' x 21' Purpose built with house Listed - Grade II Owner - Major R. C. Rayner. Not in use, now a study/studio	8 Information from John P Phillips 9 Information from Sir William Peek, Bt.
<hr/>		
<u>FOXHOLE FARMHOUSE, HALWILL</u>		
c. 1934	Powderham Castle, Powderham Size - smaller than standard Converted from stables Unlisted Owner - Lord Courtenay In use.	In 1998, Foxhole Farm came on the market for what was claimed to be the first time in 300 years. Sadly, of the two bachelor brothers who lived and farmed there, one had died and the other, not long afterwards, became ill and was admitted to a nursing home.
C. 1935	Bickington Lodge, Bickington Size - probably standard Detached, purpose built Unlisted Owner - unknown Not in use, now a private house	Their way of life and methods of farming had hardly changed since the 1930s and the whole farm offered us a unique opportunity to capture some of this on film and on paper, before much of it was inevitably swept away. J. S. had already been invited to see the bakehouse and had twice visited the house, briefly, and realised its importance. When it subsequently came on the market, we were allowed, with the kind permission of the estate agents, to make a quick survey and photographic record of this evocative

References

- 1 Research was by Dr Marcus
Lodwick and Nino Strachey.

place. Here we offer what we hope is a reasonably accurate plan of what may well be an evolved longhouse, is certainly an evolved hall house, enlarged and remodelled at the end of the C17 or the very beginning of the C18 and hardly altered since.

We do stress that all the measuring was done on only two brief occasions, between the farm's being offered at auction and the completion of its sale, and on one of those days (it being 1998) we were considerably hampered by pouring rain.

Aligned roughly NE - SW, on a slight spur above meadows leading down to the river Carey, Foxhole lies only a few miles NW of Bratton Clovelly, where DBG held its 10th AGM in 1995 and where members visited some other ancient farms. In 1998, it comprised a house, various barns and outbuildings, (one barn, across the road, already sold off for conversion) and about a hundred acres of fairly poor quality land.

The Soby family, who sold it, seem to have acquired Foxhole, either by purchase or by marriage, around the end of the C17. The first entry in the Halwill parish registers is the baptism of Elizabeth, daughter of Josiah and Mary Soby, in 1704 - which cannot have been long after the house was enlarged and the handsome staircase installed. There is no earlier mention of that particular name at Halwill, although it is found in Egloshayle in Cornwall from the late C16 and at Beaworthy in the C17.

Foxhole's first mention is in 1238, earlier than any of the other outlying settlements to Halwill, itself in existence before 1086 and a small royal manor. From the tithe map of circa 1840, we can see that it is, in fact, a shrunken medieval hamlet. It was then divided between three owners and two occupiers, each with parcels of land almost equally scattered over the whole settlement and many clearly showing their strip system origin.

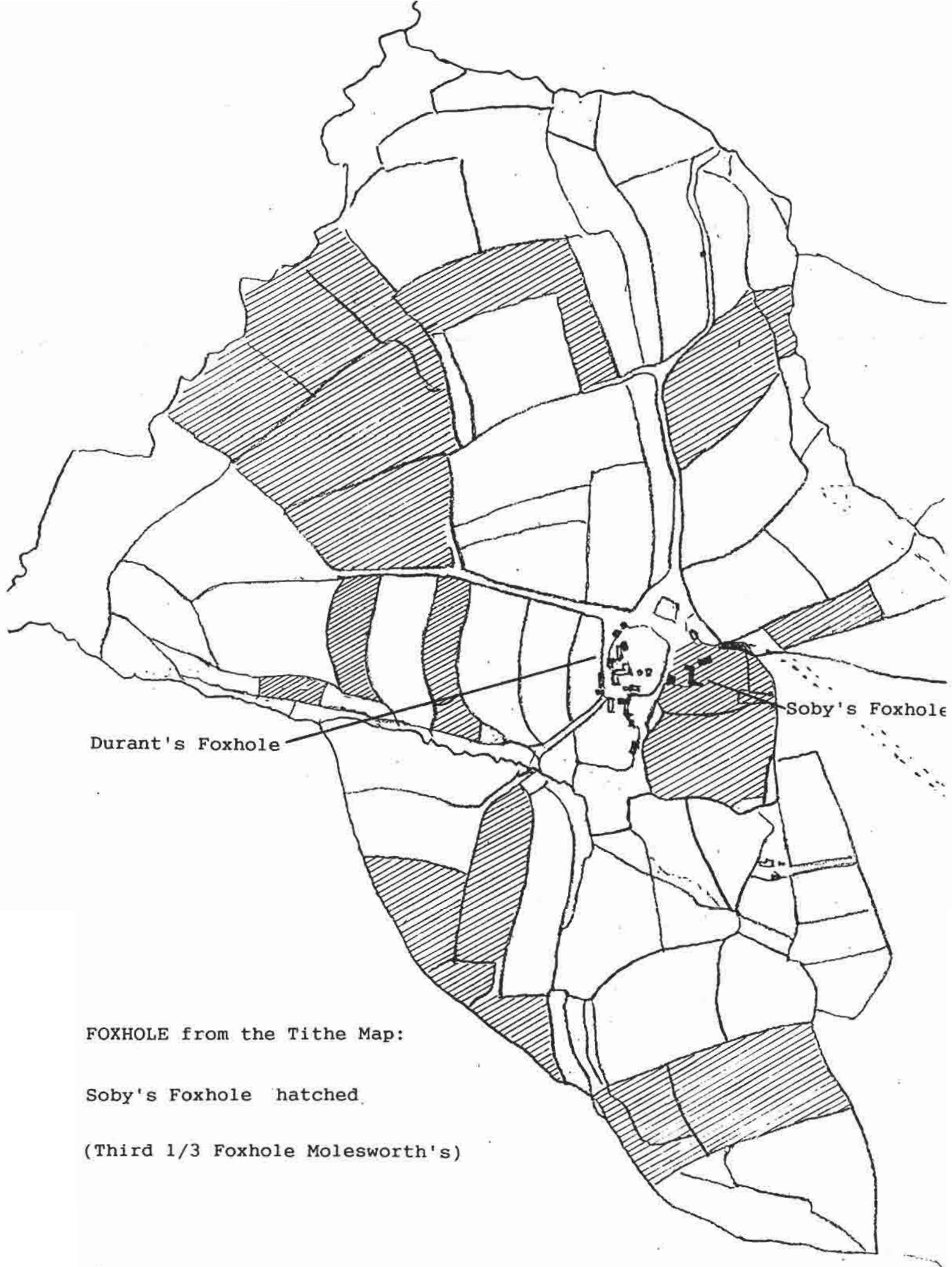
By the sale, in 1998, much of this had been 'rationalised' but Foxhole's holdings were, nonetheless, still widely dispersed. Like each of the other settlements in the parish, Landhill, Upcott and Stowford, Foxhole once had a common of its own although, by 1840 they had all become part of the glebe lands, with the rectory owning the grazing rights. Benjamin Soby then owned some 60 acres and the house and barns which are the subject of this interim description.

The House

Foxhole, like its outbuildings, is built of cob on a stone rubble plinth. It is now slated, or equivalent, but must formerly have been thatched. It has two exterior stone stacks; one to the right of the entrance, heating the hall, and one on the NE end, heating the parlour and the parlour chamber.

The entrance, with a projecting bread oven to its immediate right, leads into a cross passage, floored with pretty late C19 ceramic tiles for two-thirds of its length and with cobbles for the other third, where it is closed off for a fuel cupboard. The screen between the passage and the hall, on the right, has been replaced by a thick, neatly coursed stone wall. However, in the cupboard, can be seen over 1 m of its original head beam, with a deep slot on its underside, for the planks, and peg holes, for securing the muntins or styles. The end of the passage has been stopped off, in recent times, with concrete blockwork. On the hall side of the screen wall there is a prominent jetty, with the joist ends plastered over.

Both the principal ground floor rooms are spacious, the hall only a little longer than the parlour and separated from it by a thick wall. The fireplace in the hall has one granite jamb, a granite lintel and one rubble stone jamb, all hollow chamfered and presumably dating from the late C16 or early C17. A chamfered ceiling beam, with neat scroll stops, rests on the rubble jamb.



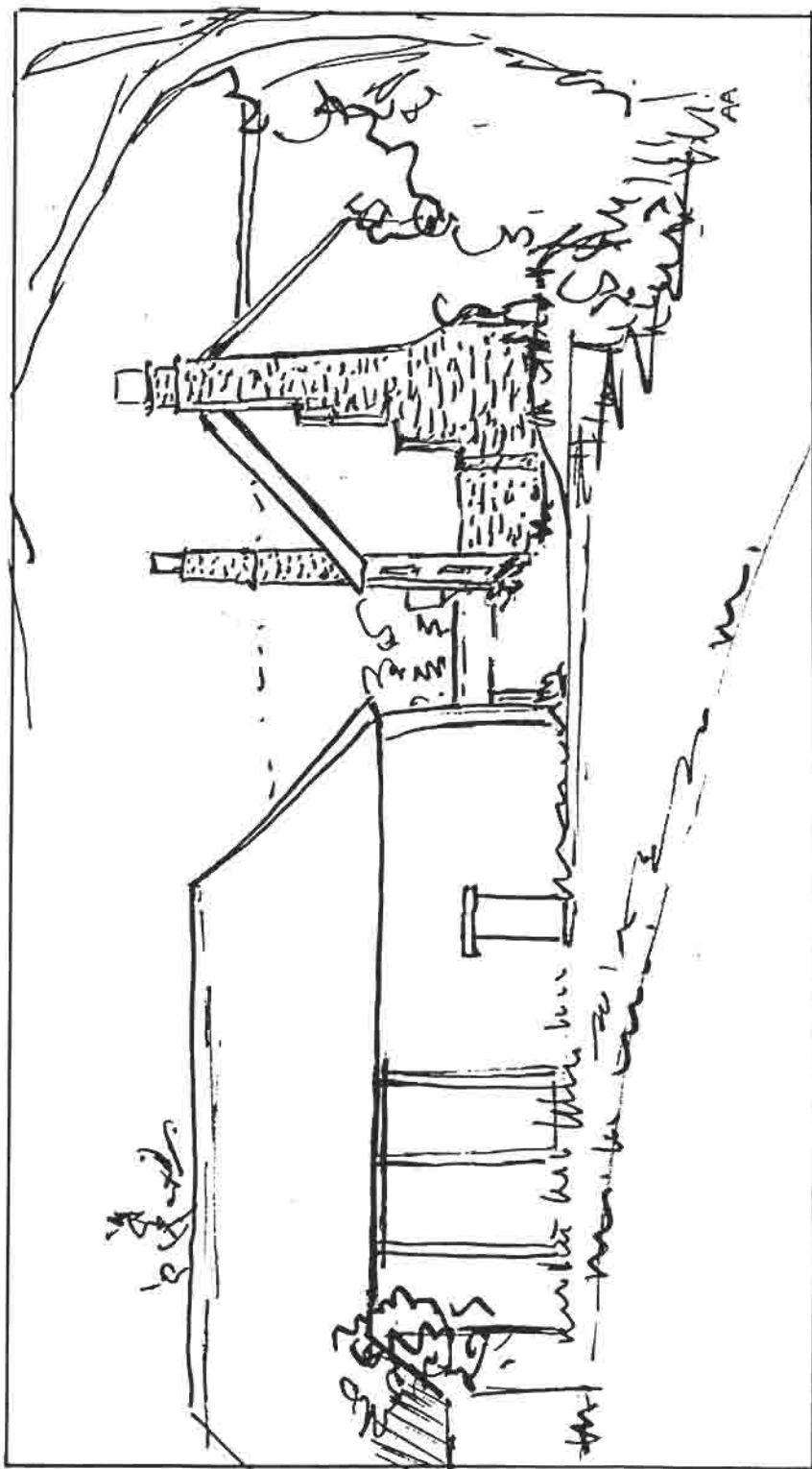
Durant's Foxhole

Soby's Foxhole

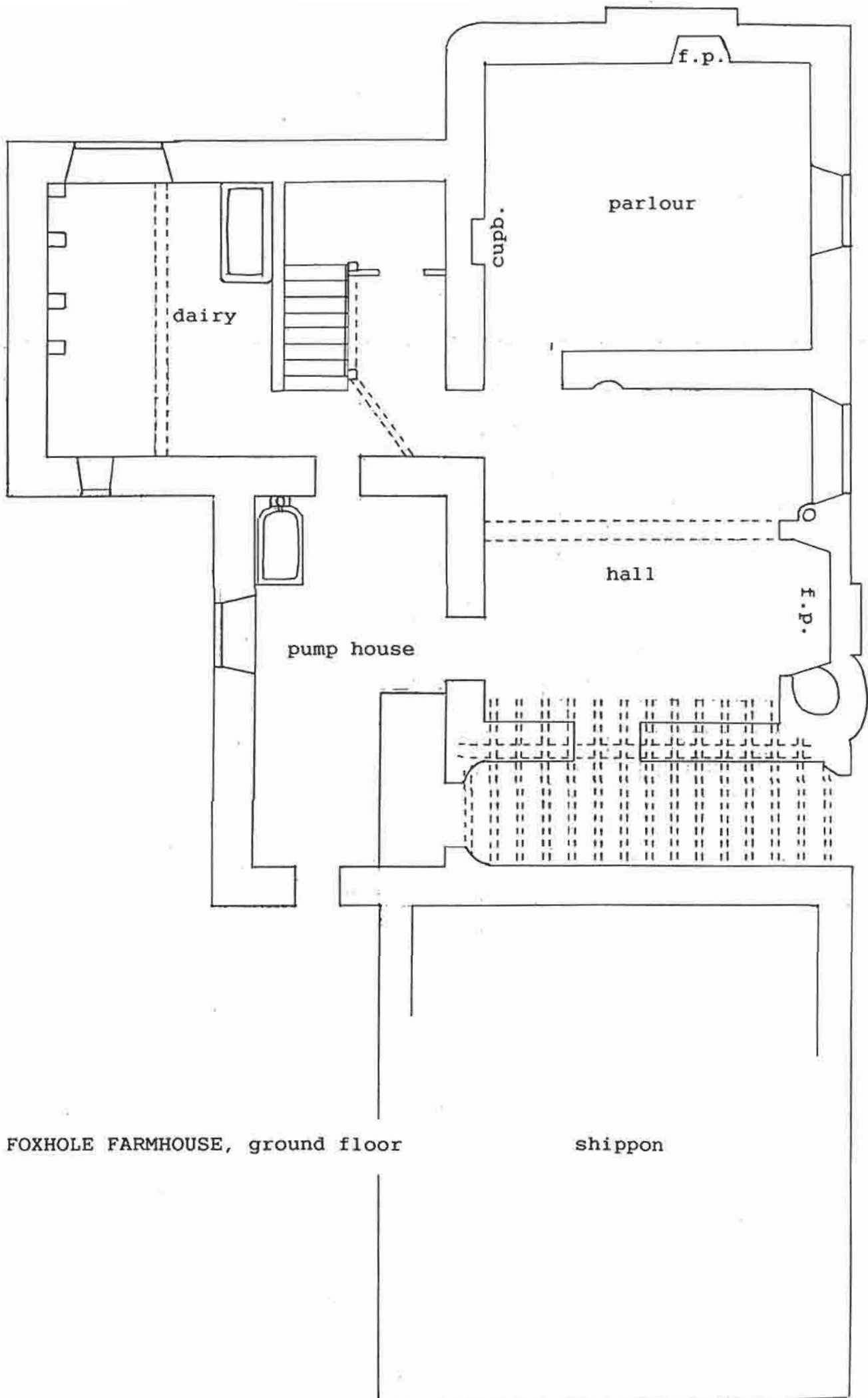
FOXHOLE from the Tithe Map:

Soby's Foxhole hatched.

(Third 1/3 Foxhole Molesworth's)

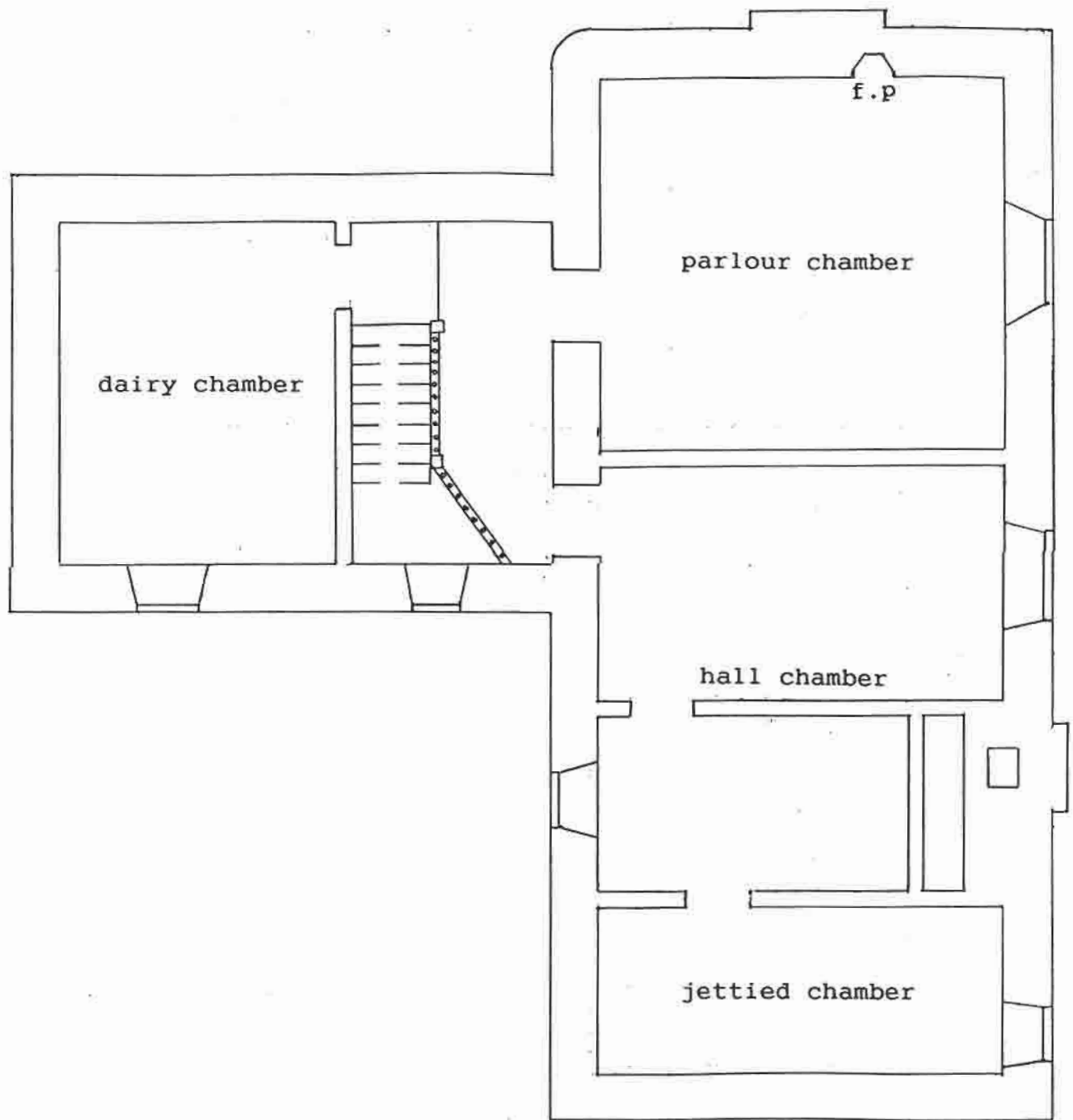


Foxhole Farmhouse and its threshing barn from the north east

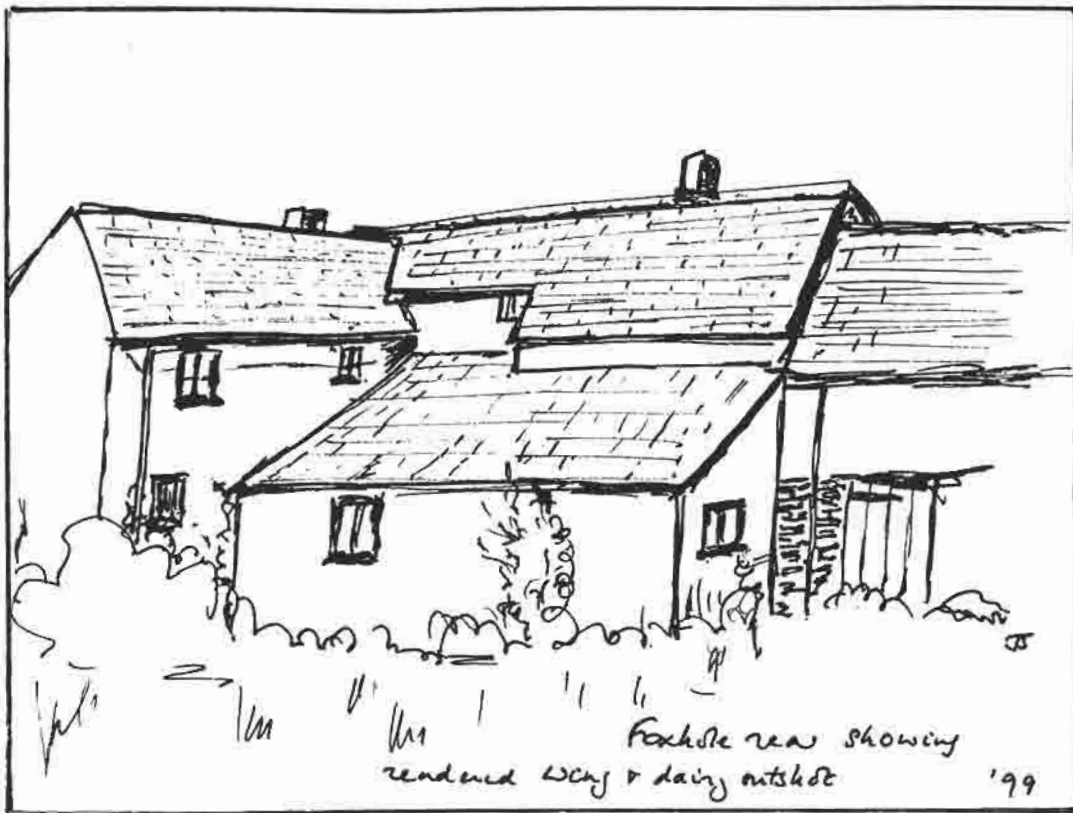


FOXHOLE FARMHOUSE, ground floor

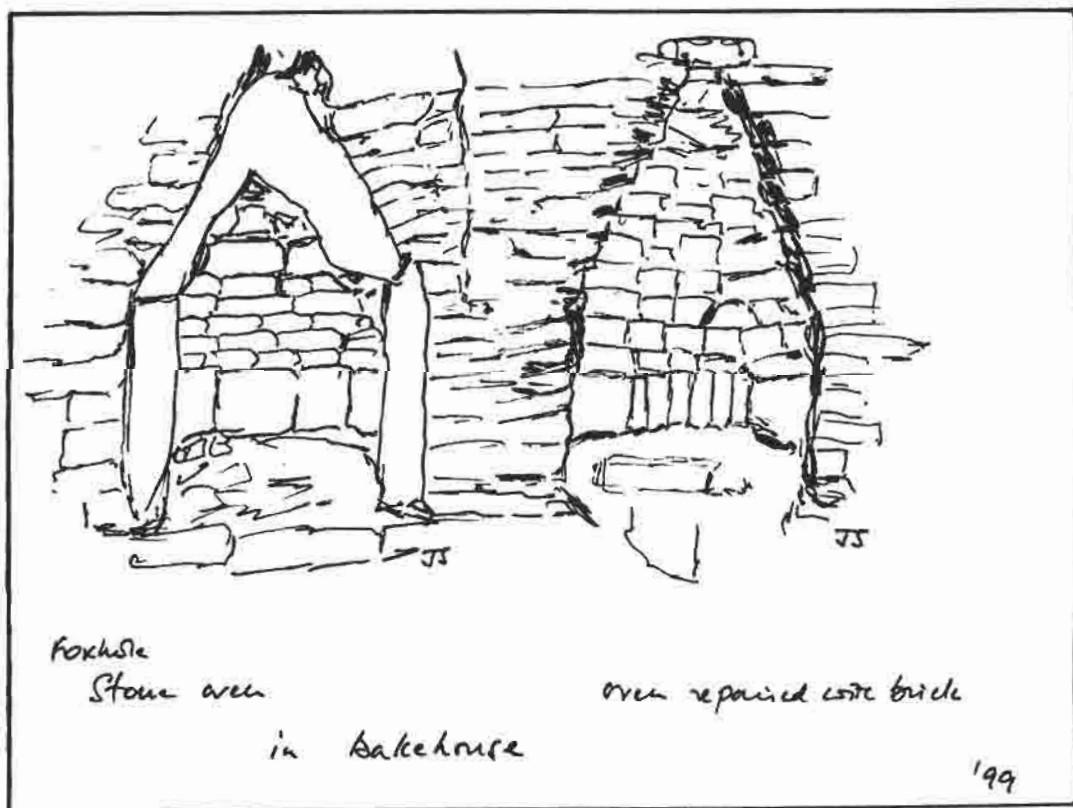
shippon



FOXHOLE FARMHOUSE, first floor



Foxhole rear showing
 rendered porch & dairy outshot 199

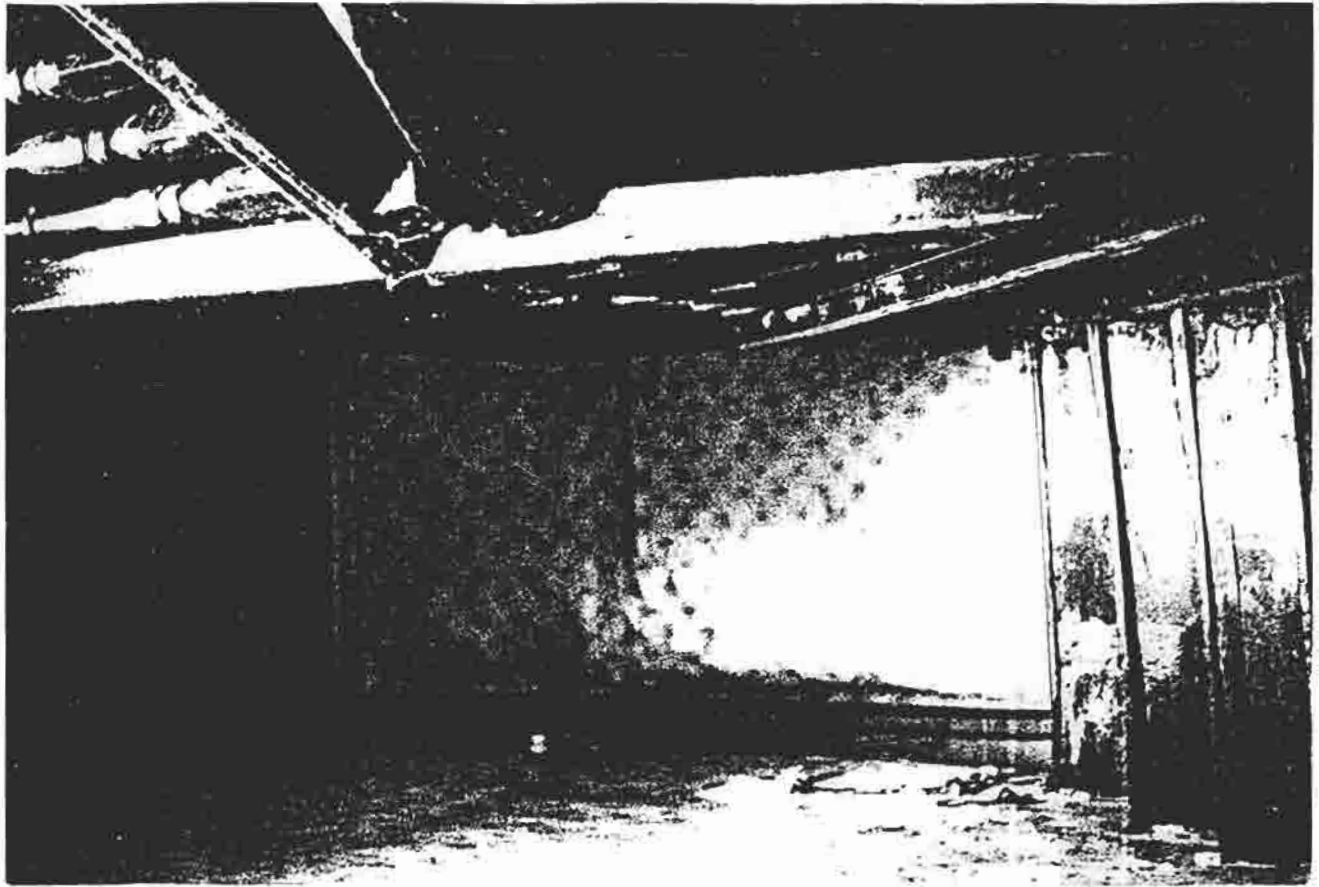


Foxhole
 Stone arch
 in bakehouse

over repaired with brick

199





In the right side of the hearth is an oven and, on the outside of the rubble jamb, is a deep 'copper' like feature which could, presumably, have been heated via the fireplace. It was apparent that, until a comparatively few years ago, the cooking had been done on the open fire and apart from the great suspended kettle, there is no evidence of a source of heated water, before the fairly recent coming of the bath. There is a curved recess in the parlour wall which, presumably, was once a cream oven, and a small open shelved cupboard in the same wall.

From the back of the hall a door and steps lead down into the pump house, which is under a lean-to roof and was probably once an open yard. It contains a sarcophagus shaped granite trough, with a pump at its head. About half of this room has been partitioned off with concrete blocks, to make a bathroom, and this blockwork (which is not shown on the plan) also closes the cross passage and the rear door of the pump house.

The parlour has an ogee edged window seat, a C19 fireplace and a good quality C18 oak wall cupboard with a door and two deeply shaped shelves. The doors connecting the parlour to the hall and the hall to the stair hall are together in a corner and give easy access in every direction. The latter doorway has curved jambs, to allow the passage of cider barrels to the dairy.

The stairs and dairy are contained in a rear wing, supposedly added in the C17. The fine staircase, with nine turned balusters in a closed string (presumably 1680 - 1700) rises from immediately outside the door to the dairy and connects to the bedrooms via a jettied landing with 18 more turned balusters. The space under the stairs is a large cupboard. The wall between the staircase and the dairy is a stud partition.

In the dairy is a very large granite salting trough and part of a piered slate shelving

system. A rather light, roughly chamfered ceiling beam lodges within the right window splay and suggests that the opening has been enlarged. There is a small window with a round head in the left wall, where there is a thinning of the wall itself (not shown in the plan) and it may be an adapted doorway. The doorway to the pump house, facing the bottom of the stairs, seems to be C19 and one must wonder how water reached the dairy before then.

From the first, square, landing at the top of the stairs, a door opens on the left to the chamber over the dairy. The second landing is one step higher and leads to the remaining bedrooms. It is cranked quite sharply, presumably to afford more light to the stair hall below - a delightfully eccentric piece of vernacular carpentry.

Both the doors are on the left and pierce the thick outer wall but the wall between the bedrooms is only a stud partition, above the thick wall dividing the hall from the parlour. The first door enters the parlour chamber, which has a tiny C19 grate into the end flue and an ogee edged window seat, like the one below it. The second door leads into the unheated hall chamber, (at the time of writing, partitioned with probably early C20 tongue-and-grooved panelling, to make two rooms) and the little end chamber, above the cross passage and the jetty, leads out of it. There are cut boards here, suggesting at least occasional ladder access to and from the cross passage. Where the hall stack rises in the chamber above, an ingenious (if smoky, from the leaking stonework) warm cupboard has been created, either to heat the room slightly or to air clothes.

The stairs, the landings and all the bedrooms floors are made of superb wide oak planks. Some of those on the landing and in the end bedroom are cut from the same curving trunk and proof, if it were needed, that the insertion of the stairs and the flooring of the upper rooms was all

done at the same time. The bases of the principals of the (presumed late C17) A framed roof break the ceilings in all the bedrooms.

In the house, when we saw it, there was a rare and fascinating oak long-case clock of the early C18. The case was of slightly rustic craftsmanship but the brass face was elegantly decorated with the usual fancy cast spandrels and the whole a further testimony to the solid prosperity of the Soby family of the time.

The Outbuildings

To the left of the entrance, the shippon appears to have been considerably rebuilt, re-roofed and enlarged but traces of two blocked entrances to the cross passage remain in the wall. It was not possible to see any traces of a drain.

In the yard, immediately to the NE of the house, is a handsome cob on stone threshing barn, with opposing doors and probably dating to the early C18 and with the remains of the later horse engine house to the rear.

Behind the house and about 20 m to the W, there is remarkable detached bakehouse, with two corbelled stone ovens, one in the centre and one to the right. Contiguous with and apparently part of the bakehouse is a square building with a corbelled stone dome, which may always have had a central hole in it. It is said to have been an ash house, although it seems both over-elaborate and over-large, even if one considers that the ovens were baking for the whole hamlet, and none too conveniently placed for carting to the fields. The flue was dismantled when the rest of the building was altered to become a cart shed, earlier in the C20.

Other minor buildings back the threshing barn and flank the yard and the tithe map shows that, in the 1840s, there were several more.

This is only a brief description of the appearance of an ancient farm in its last days, now sold away from most of its land and gone out of use, probably for ever. We have not, so far, had time to research the manorial, taxation, etc. records but we have made a quite comprehensive photographic survey and mean to extend this study in the future. If any readers have any information to add, we should be most grateful to hear from them.

Jenny Sanders & Ann Adams.

BOOK REVIEW

Ann Musson has been deeply concerned, for many years, that the historic port of Topsham has still not been re-listed and believes this omission has been seriously deleterious. She has watched with dismay the steady diminution of the richness of interior features which characterised its house - mainly of the late C17 and early C18 - and has taken the courageous step of writing and publishing a lavishly illustrated colour A4 booklet about them. She is, of course, right in believing that most inappropriate interior alterations are made in ignorance of the value of what is being swept away. The owners of Topsham houses will no longer have any excuse for not being aware and the rest of us can delight in these interior and exterior details - for the most part photographed by the author, even to the interesting contents of a skip!

'Topsham Houses, Warehouses, and Trades: 1700s and Earlier' is sold entirely for charity and is available at Topsham Museum, at local charity shops @ £4.50. If by post from the author, Strand House, Topsham, Exeter, Devon, EX3 0AW, please add £1 p & p.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

Thursday 27th May, 7.45 p.m.

Members Hugh Harrison and Ruth and Torquil McNeillage are speaking, in St. James' Church, Christow, near Exeter, on their recent conservation there of the plaster Royal Arms of 1682 and will give a history of such arms in churches. They will also talk about their conservation of the wooden Gibbon memorial of 1660. No charge but a collection will be taken, for the St. James' Heritage Fund.

Saturday 26th June, 10.00 a.m.

Devon Buildings Group's 14th Summer Conference, on the Tree-Ring Dating of Buildings, at the Waie Inn, Zeal Monachorum. Speakers will include members Cathy Groves, of the University of Sheffield, and John Thorp, of Keystone Historic Buildings Consultancy, Exeter. In the afternoon, we shall visit some houses in the area.

Free to members.

Guests £10.00

Saturday 9th October, 10.00 a.m.

Devon Building Group's 14th Annual General Meeting, to be held at Cullompton.

GROVES Ms Cathy M. -
Dendrochronologist, Sheffield University
138 Forres Road, Crookes, SHEFFIELD,
S. Yorks. S10 1WF
0114 2660017

Devon Buildings Group exists for the greater knowledge and protection of the historic buildings of the county.

Enquiries for membership and material for publications to the Hon. Sec. Mrs Ann Adams, Hayne, Zeal Monachorum, CREDITON, Devon, EX17 6DE.
01363 82292

NEW MEMBERS (not entered in the new Register)

BALDWIN Mr Michael J. - Project Architect, Exeter City Council.
Collaton Cottage, Jericho Street,
THORVERTON, Devon, EX5 5PB
01392 860853

BOUMPHREY Mr Christopher R. - Antiques Dealer.
Finehay, Mariansleigh, SOUTH MOLTON,
Devon, EX36 4LL
01769 550419