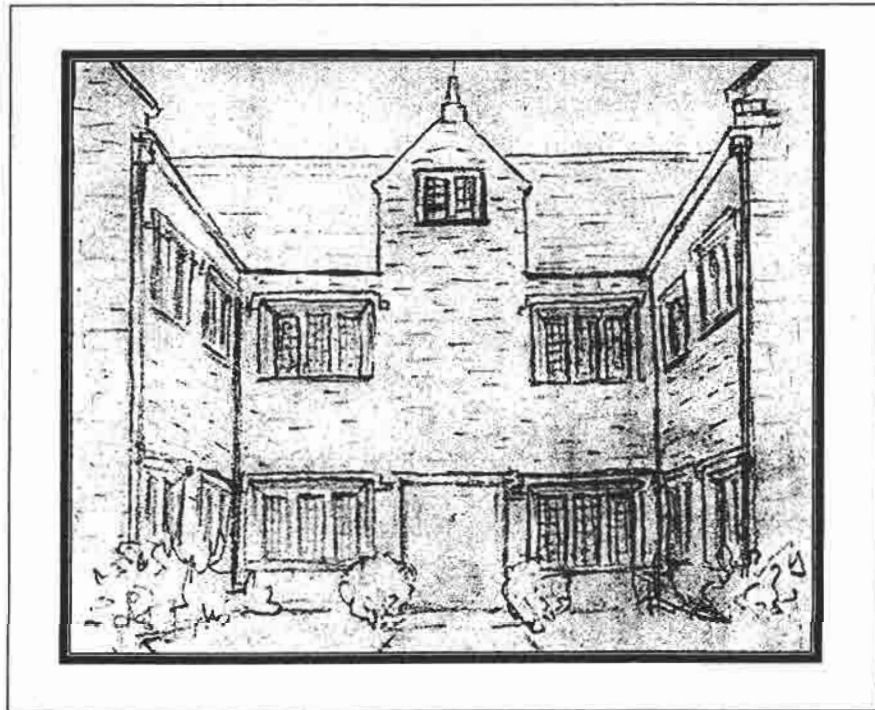


DEVON BUILDINGS GROUP

NEWSLETTER NUMBER 18



Summer 2000

DEVON BUILDINGS GROUP

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Front cover: The Walronds, Cullompton: *Ann Adams*,
Buckland Abbey ceiling: photographs: *Ann Adams*,
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REVIEW OF 1999

Newsletter 17 came out in the spring, its contents rather less balanced than had been intended, as the principal article, based on a thesis, proved too good for a newsletter and has had to be held back for publication in the forthcoming Research Note 2. We always hope that some of the information and opinions expressed will inspire discussion and offers of further articles but, disappointingly, little feed-back has so far been forthcoming. Apart from the two events of the year, the Newsletter provides the only contact of the committee with the membership and of the members with each other. We all need a wider in-put, to maintain the vitality of the Group so, if you have any comments, corrections, additions and, of course, new material, do please send it in to the Secretary.

The 14th Summer Conference was on the subject of Tree-ring Dating of Structural Timbers and was held on 26th June, at the Waie Inn, Zeal Monachorum, where our three remarkable speakers drew a record audience of over fifty members and their guests. DBG member Cathy Groves, of the Department of Dendrochronology at the University of Sheffield, spoke on the theory and technique of dating by growth rings – overcoming almost seamlessly the shock of discovering that she had forgotten to ask for an OHP and that such an item was not to be found in a rural pub !. With her clear exposition and plenty of slides, it was hard to see what we could have missed in the diagrams. Our second speaker was DBG committee member John Thorp, of Keystone Historic Buildings Consultancy, Exeter, who showed us a rich collection of slides of mainly vernacular Devon roofs, taken over a

period of many years and demonstrating a number of different construction details and the simply huge scantling of the oldest ones, some of which had dated to the early C14. The morning session concluded with a brilliant presentation by Peter McCurdy, of McCurdy & Co. Reading, on his reconstruction of Shakespeare's Globe Theatre in London. Apart from this ' and other construction commissions, he also advises the Weald & Downland Open Air Museum in West Sussex and teaches courses at nearby West Dean College. Among the most fascinating aspects of the medieval and Tudor timber building techniques – surely increasing our respect for the old carpenters and those who follow them – are the sophisticated 'allowances' which have to be incorporated into complex joints, to permit them to be made and dismembered on the ground and then to fit, when re-assembled vertically.

Devon historic structural timbering being almost exclusively confined to roofs, the afternoon programme of site visits was something of a nightmare to time, with so many people to get up and down ladders at a series of venues. We had eventually managed to find four farmhouses, with medieval to late medieval carpentry, where we were welcome and which were not too far apart. The owners were wonderfully hospitable and patient and the two optional church visits, intended to occupy half groups (no one could have been expected to have over fifty people in their farmhouse at one time) gave convenient flexibility. Thorne, in Clannaborough, although an incomplete roof, was the oldest, at early C14. Leigh Barton, at East Leigh, had not dated but cannot be a lot younger and boasts a complete smoke louver. Lower Chilverton, in Coldridge, is a remarkable house with

an early C16 roof and later screens and moulded ceiling beams. Cleavehanger, also in Coldridge, showed an early screen and splendid crucks, with side & face pegging, all now a barn. In the event, the day did not over-run nearly as badly as the Church Woodwork Conference of 1997 and, at the end, over twenty members and the speakers rested their legs and were refreshed with tea and cake at Hayne, while they talked over their day.

The AGM, on October 9th, was held at the White Hart Hotel, on the east side of Fore Street, Cullompton and, as usual, attracted an excellent attendance. The inn is a late C18-early C19 building with a dignified Tuscan porch and the upstairs room, where we met, showing signs of having once been a small Assembly Room – like our venues of previous AGMs, at Ashburton, Great Torrington and Moretonhampstead.

The business of the day found the Committee strengthened by four new members who had generously agreed to serve. They are, as it happens, all archaeologists: – Stuart Blaylock, Stewart Brown, Colin Humphreys and Richard Parker. Members continuing to serve, from previous years, are: - Ann Adams, Oliver Bosence, Chris Brooks, Jo Cox, Su Jarwood, Dawn Honeysett, Peter Roseveare, Jenny Sanders, Jeremy Sharpe, John Thorp and Robert Waterhouse.

The Group's finances were shown to be still sound but the Treasurer expressed some concern in an apparent subscription drop of about twenty members and suggested that we should, perhaps, be actively looking for a few more. Administration – postage, stationery, etc, amounts to about £150 p.a. and the two events – the Conference & the AGM - are each

budgeted to approximately the same sum. Each Newsletter and Register costs about £260, with the unit cost between £1.70 and £1.75. To pay for these basic membership entitlements, the Group needs a membership approaching 150, which it had been maintaining for the past several years. At the same subscription rate (£8 Single, £10 Joint), in 1998/9 it had, for some reason, dropped back to the level of 1993. I did not propose a rise in subscriptions and it was agreed that they should remain at the current rate and the income be re-assessed at the next AGM. In the meantime, members should try to encourage suitable people – and preferably those willing to do a little casework – to join.

At the conclusion of business, Dr David Pugsley gave an illustrated talk on the history of Cullompton's development, largely based on the Tithe Map, which gave a useful idea of its layout, former industries and their sites, particularly the tannery, the mills & leat. Like so many other Devon towns, Cullompton was largely thatch roofed and suffered some hugely damaging fires. However, in many cases, subsequent re-building was confined to the original sites and he cited at least one roof he knows of, where the new has simply been built above that which was burned. It appears that many were also simply re-fronted and that much of the original plan still remains behind. He outlined some of the trades which had once made the town prosperous and described the Cole Brook and its long leat, which once powered at least three mills – not just for corn grinding but also for cloth fulling and then paper making. The last major industries were tanning (a very large C19 tannery building still stands, as an antiques warehouse, on the southern edge of the town) and bell casting. The principal

gentry family of the parish, from at least the C14, were the Moores of Moore (or Moorhays). One Sir John Moore (d.1511) was Recorder of Exeter and, like at least two of his sons and some of his grandchildren, is buried in the church. They are supposed to have been at Cullompton for twenty generations, before the male line failed in 1711. Their coats of arms decorate the parclose screen, behind which they probably had their seats and their burials, and they are assumed to have been principal early contributors to the building of the church.

As the interior of Cullompton's most distinguished house, The Walronds, could not be seen, I showed slides of it, which I had taken some ten years previously. These slides were augmented and introduced by a set very kindly lent by Dr Todd Gray, of a map of Sir William Courten's estates near Cullompton, which includes a map of the town (not his property). The map, from the Wyndham collection in the Surrey Record Office, was drawn in 1633 and shows all the buildings, of which, apparently, only the parish church and The Walronds were then roofed in slate. (This map was published in 'Devonshire Documents', by the Devon & Cornwall Record Society, 1996). The Walronds is a tall, rubble built house, with symmetrical wings projecting forwards to the street and large, probably Beer stone, ovolo-moulded mullioned windows. The interior is distinguished by good fireplaces, elegant plaster ceilings and splendid armorial plaster over-mantels. Despite its name, it was built 1605-1607 by one John Peter, a lawyer, who had married Elizabeth Parris, heiress to the original property. It got its present name when the Walronds, of Bradfield, inherited it in the C18.

The walk-about after lunch was led by various members, according to their interests and expertise, John Thorp speaking on the houses of Fore Street, Stuart Blaylock contributing on several buildings and Chris Brooks on the importance of the former Bielby bell foundry (by one of the mill sites) to so many Devon churches. Our visit to Cullompton was beset by unexpected disappointments.¹ Not only was The Walronds not available to us, through vandalism, which has caused all the downstairs windows to be boarded up and the owner to close it to all visitors, but the church was almost inaccessible, too. As requested, Dr Pugsley had established that our visit would not coincide with a wedding – but no one had mentioned that it would do so with a major religious conference, or that its tower would be covered in scaffolding and green netting. Those who were allowed in, at the west end only, were able to see something of the church's magnificent proportions, largely created from wealth from the woollen trade. From where they stood, they could see the great full-width screen (like Chulmleigh's), the magnificent six bay painted wagon roof of the nave, supported on angel brackets and divided into 24 cross ribbed segments, of c1450. Also the panelled roofs of the aisles, of c1500, and the exciting fan vaulting of the Lane aisle on the south side (built by the cloth merchant, John Lane, begun before 1529 and decorated inside and out by elaborate carvings of the symbols of his trade) - and the great and unique Golgotha, which now lies in sections at the west end of this aisle. Slides of this huge and extraordinary woodcarving, on which the Rood would once have stood, were shown at our Church Woodwork conference of 1997.

Opposite the White Hart, John Thorp pointed out to us (against the roar of

market day traffic) No.8, Fore Street, a multi-storeyed C17 merchant's house, with timber framed jettied front with brackets, though no longer with the gables it must once have had. Then The Walronds, followed by a dignified later house, now joined onto the last of this row before the corner. This last house, now called the Manor House Hotel, has a four gabled jettied front, with carved brackets. It was, in fact, never a manor house but was built by one Thomas Frock, in 1603, and like The Walronds, still retains the cross passage plan. It was enlarged in 1718 by William Sellock, who also added the hooded shell porch, the dated lead rainwater head, at the back, and decorative crenellated lead guttering on the north side – a rare survival. The family of the original builder, the Trocks, were local benefactors and an earlier member had given the almshouses, in 1522, which still stand on the east side of the northern edge of the town. These have been much rebuilt but retain a four-centred doorway and hint at their former appearance in the scattering of Beer stone in their largely mauve volcanic trap rubble walls.

The walk along the leat was especially interesting, as it survives so completely behind the modern back gardens, with a pleasant walk maintained beside it. Much of the site of Middle Mill and Bielby's former bell foundry is without still standing features, but Lower Mill is still there, now a house, with its breast-shot wheel still visible underneath. At the back, Dot Butler and Barbara Keene were especially pleased to find the sluice gate bears the trade plate of a former iron foundry of Tiverton. Some saw the still standing tall tannery building at the end of the town, with its characteristic C19 big span variant king post trusses exposed on the upper floor. (I took the

opportunity of buying a late C18 country chair). Nearby, an attractive row of about eight cottages, almost certainly cob and originally thatched, demonstrated strikingly the need for attention to fenestration in the maintenance of character, even in the less obviously important parts of town or village-scape. All these cottages appeared to have replacement UPVC windows but most retained the proportions of the original casements. The one cottage with large panes and top opening lights effectively ruined the appearance of the entire row.

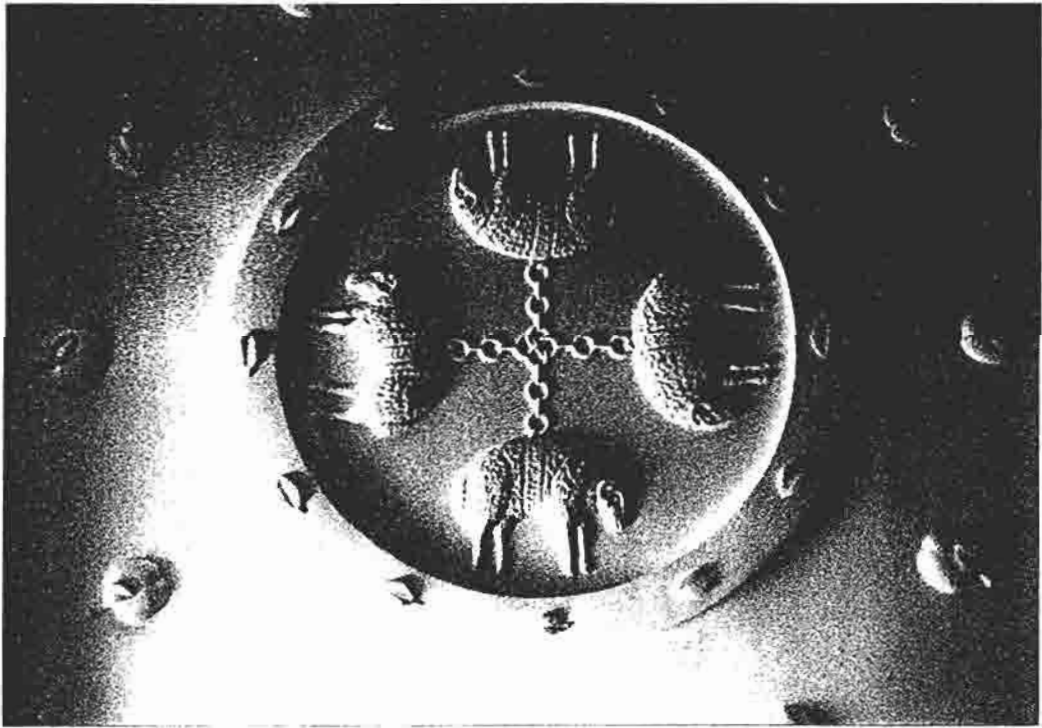
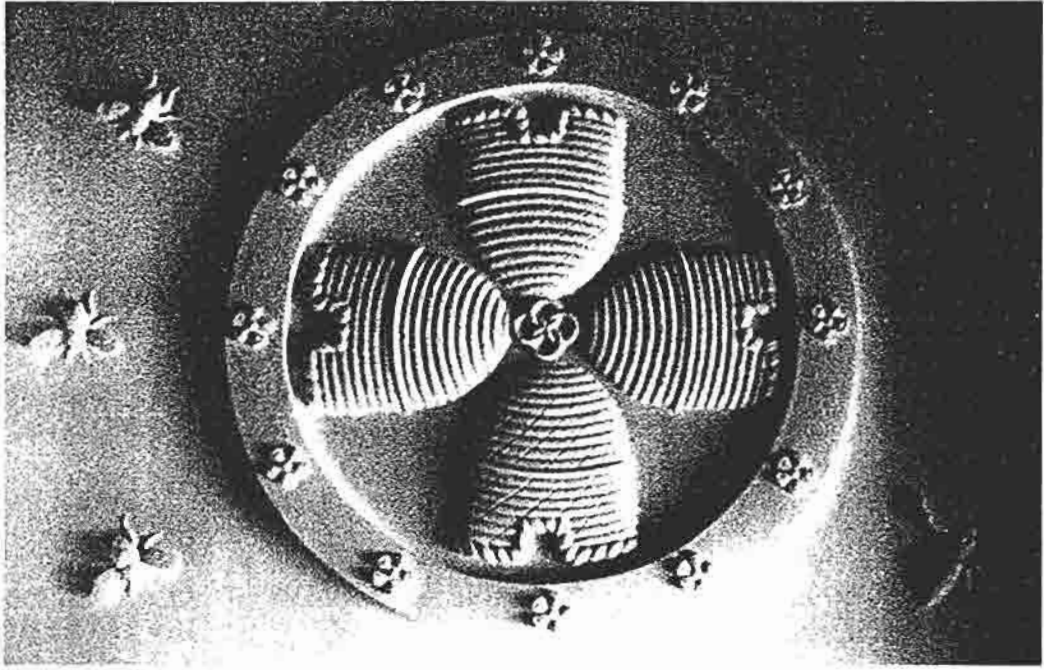
DBG's 15th Summer Conference was held at Ilfracombe, on June 10th 2000 and will be reported on in the next Newsletter.

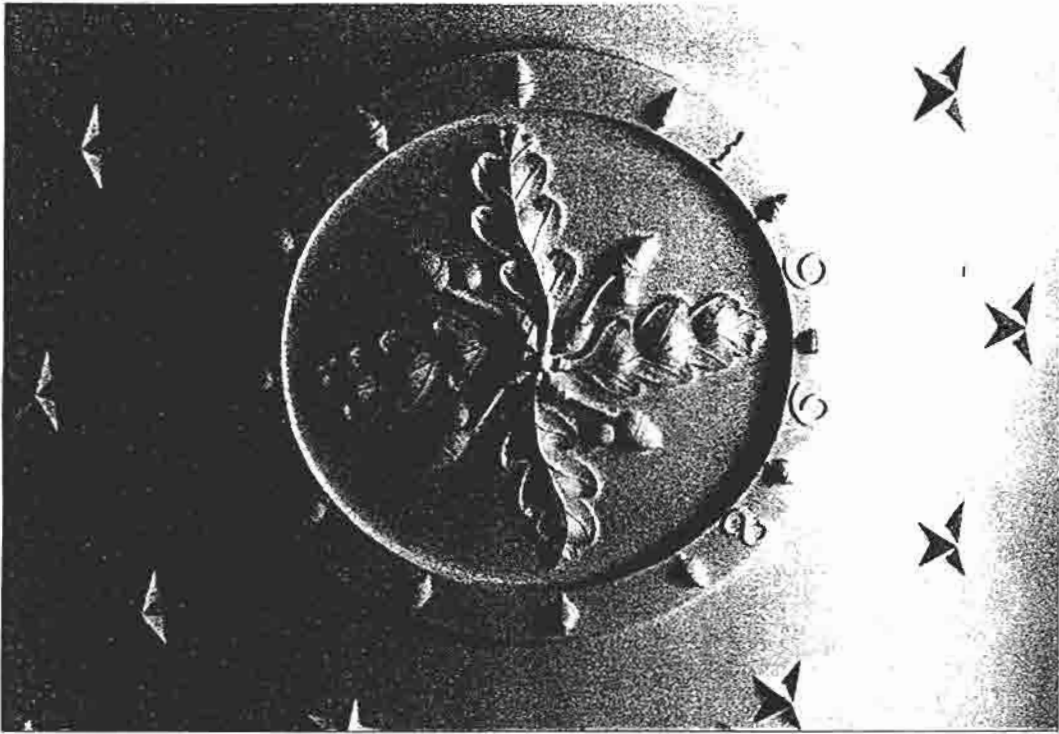
The AGM will be held on Saturday 7th October, at Colyton.

Ann Adams

THE DRAKE CHAMBER CEILING AT BUCKLAND ABBEY

How many of the National Trust houses, I wonder, have been seriously damaged by fire? In Devon, there have been two spectacular conflagrations. In 1967, the remote and romantic Dunslund, with some of the finest decorative plaster ceilings in the county, was totally destroyed. Thirty years previously, Buckland Abbey was partially gutted, when a chimney fire spread uncontrollably. It, too, had a fine plaster ceiling in the Great Hall but, unlike Dunslund, no good photographic record of the interior. Apart from the Hall,





restoration was swift and brutal, with concrete and steel replacing panelling and plaster. Shortly afterwards, in 1948, the Abbey was given to the National Trust and opened in partnership with Plymouth Museum. In 1988, several of the severe museum interiors were successfully modified but Drake's Chamber (so-called) remained untouched and unlovely.

The Chamber had been re-panelled, after the fire, with rescued wainscoting but this sat uneasily beneath a modern concrete ceiling, supported by an RSJ. However, one advantage of having no visual record meant a more imaginative restoration than is normally the case was possible and it was decided to install a new decorative plaster ceiling, in the Devon tradition involving in situ, hand-modelled lime plaster.

I was asked to design and model the new ceiling. By the start of the project, in 1988, I had had over ten years experience in repairing early plasterwork, particularly in Devon, where the decorative tradition dates back to the 16th century. Several families of Devon plasterers have now been identified to that period (it is a popular misconception that Italians were employed) and, between them, they produced a wonderfully exuberant vernacular display, until the dead hand of repetitive 18th century classicism snuffed out their initiative. Sadly, by the time the ceiling was actually constructed, ten years later, I was no longer in a position to carry out the site work - but was able to liase as designer with the excellent team from Kervaig.

The new ceiling design was intended to illustrate the long and diverse history of the Abbey, from the Cistercian foundation, through the 16th century and Francis Drake, up to the National Trust and the present day. It was also

considered important that this should be a modern design, as no attempt was being made to restore anything from a particular date in the past. Nevertheless, the overall construction and form would respect the enduring westcountry tradition and fit comfortably into a room of generally 17th century appearance (with the exception of the structurally vital RSJ, which chopped the ceiling into two non-matching halves !). Additional 'crossbeams' were introduced, to divide the ceiling into six roughly square panels, which were lathed out with sawn oak and lime plastered. Each of the panels featured different motifs, although these were arranged in a repeated circular pattern. The motifs were designed exclusively to suit Buckland and were not copied from any existing plasterwork. The two main themes are agricultural and maritime history and this is reflected in the frieze surrounding each panel – three have an apple and foliage border and three show a twining rope and a series of jaunty fishes.

To describe the ceiling in a clockwise direction (looking up) and starting from the corner between the two windows, the panels depict the following:

1. (maritime): a central motif of a mariner's astrolabe, and outer circle of scallop shells and corner sprays of fish hooks.

2. (agricultural): the central design depicts four traditional 'fleece' symbols, an outer circle of cider apples and corner sprays comprising cider barrels and teasels.

3. (maritime): a maritime compass of about 1580 (pointing to the real north), a ring of starfish and corner sprays of anchors.

4. (agricultural): a quartet of straw beehives (skeps), a circle of bees

(including a queen) and corner sprays of crossed scythes.

5. (maritime): the centre illustrates four interlocking shot gauges, a circle of crabs and corner sprays of mariners' dividers.

6. the last panel brings the whole ceiling into the 20th century, with a central stylised oak leaf design, surrounded by acorns (representing the National Trust) and the date 1998, a circle of twelve stars (to recognise the financial support from the EC to the Abbey) and corner sprays of crossed fire hoses (a reference to the fire earlier in the century, which had necessitated the restoration).

Various elements of the design have changed over the ten year gestation period: some alterations were worked out between the designer and plasterers on site, when their input was appreciated and developed, and the initials of everyone involved are surreptitiously incised into the plaster. The individual modellers had a chance to express their own creativity, within the overall bounds of the design, and this gives the ceiling its unique lively quality. It is probably the only ceiling of its kind to be made in Devon for some 350 years.

The plastering firm, Kervaig (now, sadly, disbanded) comprised four skilled plasterers who, between them, had experience of working on other recent celebrated restoration projects – Uppark and Prior Park, particularly. Buckland's ceiling, too, has now been recognised as, in 1999, it received an R.I.C.S. award for 'Building Conservation'. It can be seen whenever the Abbey is open.

Jane Schofield

ANNA HULBERT

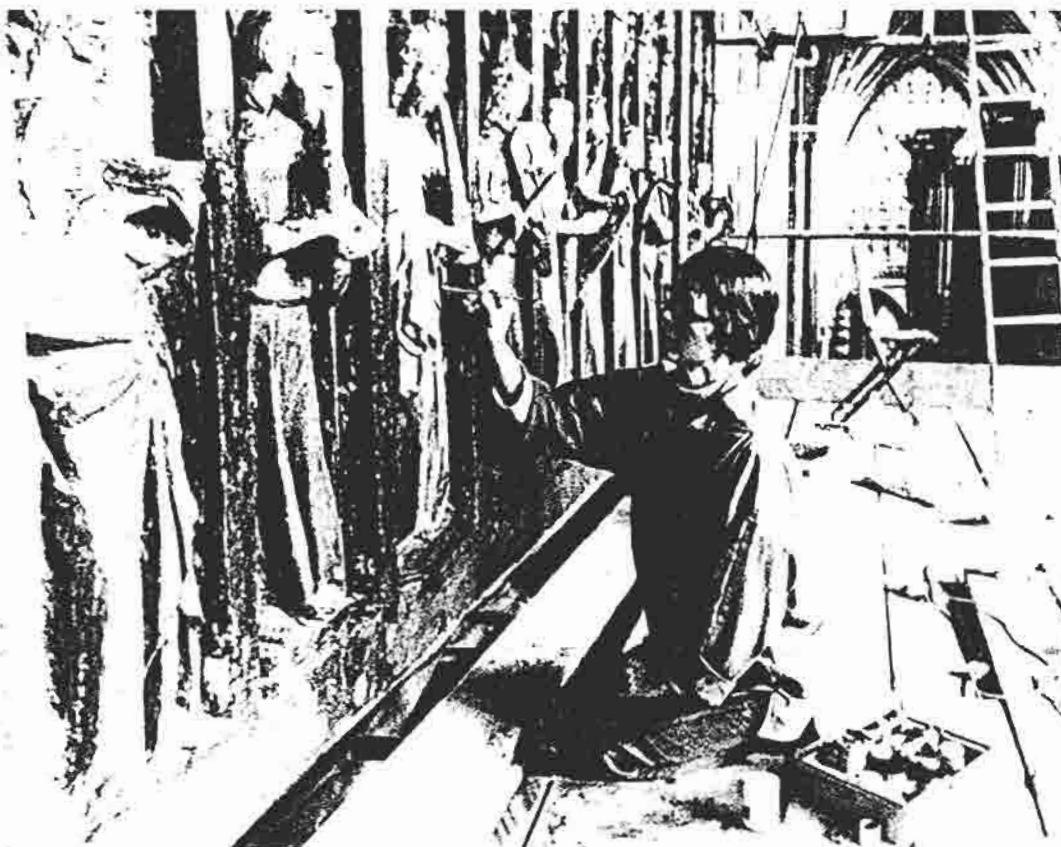
Many members of DBG will be shocked and saddened to hear of the death of Anna Hulbert, from cancer, in April this year, at the age of 55. She had wanted the news of her illness to be confined to just a few of her closest family and friends, in the belief that she would recover and continue her work. Her positive attitude and faith stayed with her to the end and she died peacefully at home, with her loved ones around her.

Although she lived in Oxfordshire, she also regarded Devon as home, spending months on end at Exeter Cathedral or working in many small parish churches, where she specialised in the conservation of painted rood screens, wall paintings and ceilings. In places such as Bridford, Manaton, Uffculme, Bratton Clovelly she worked tirelessly over long periods, often in difficult conditions, sharing her knowledge with teams of assistants and parishioners alike, and making life-long friends wherever she went.

She gave the best years of her life to those days. Many of us will always associate her with Exeter Cathedral, in particular, where she was called in, in 1976, to rescue the magnificent roof bosses from repainting, working eastward down the nave, conserving their exquisite polychromy through crossing, transepts and quire. The Minstrels' Gallery and numerous screens and wall paintings also benefited from her attention.

The results of her discoveries were shared in numerous publications, aimed at both the scholarly and at a wider audience. Anna's art-historical background, combined with her wide theological knowledge, were

Anna Hulbert



Anna Hulbert at work in Exeter Cathedral, 1976.

Photograph with kind permission of the Dean & Chapter of Exeter Cathedral.

particularly useful in enabling her to recognise and reinterpret works of art.

Her death is a great loss. She was a totally unique personality who gave of her time and knowledge to everyone willing to listen. Anna's greatest gift was her ability to inspire. She was mentor to many and a friend who will never be forgotten.

There are two causes for which Anna was working in recent years, that reflect her life-long concerns: finding funding and materials for the newly set-up conservation course in the Theology Faculty of the University of Iasi, Romania and resourcing saddlery and harness, to remedy the severe shortage which is currently causing suffering to horses and donkeys in that country. Those wishing to contribute to a fund in Anna's memory, for 'Equine Welfare/Conservation of Church Art in Romania' may send a cheque payable to 'S.J.Hulbert re Anna Hulbert Romania Fund' to S.J.Hulbert, 1 The Green, Chidley, WANTAGE, Oxon OX1 0BT.

Eddie Sinclair

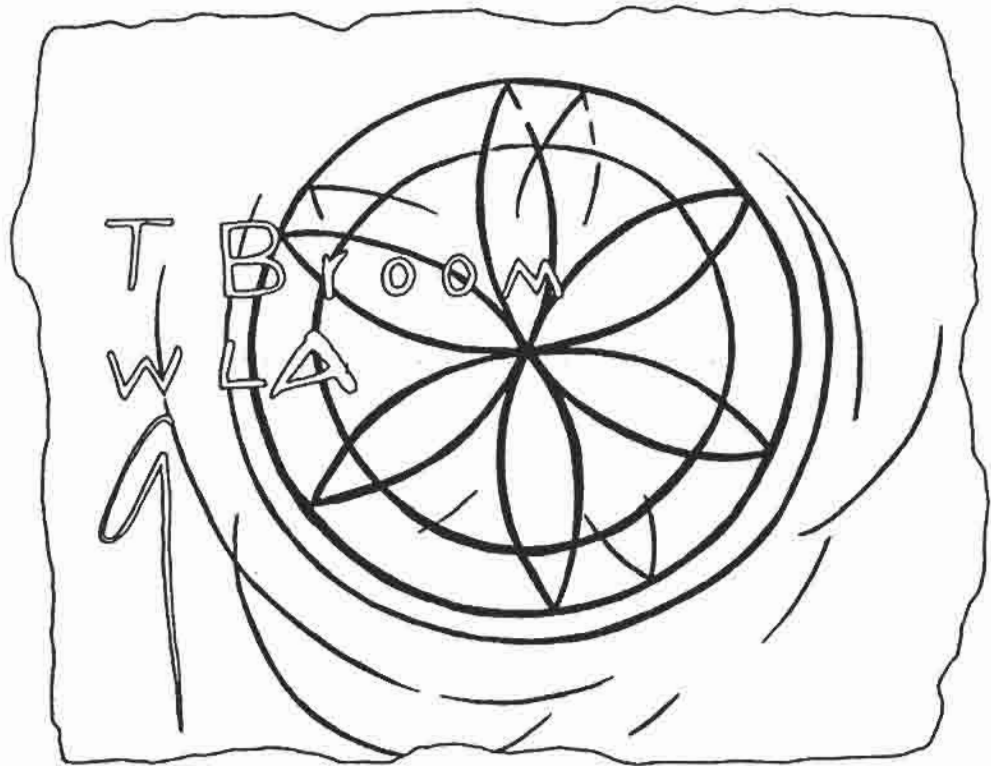
PROTECTIVE CHARMS ON DEVON BUILDINGS

One interesting sideline to the study of old farmhouses and farm buildings is to search out the various graffiti. There are usually initials somewhere in the building, often accompanied by a date. Sometimes there is more, like the record of a wet journey inscribed on a pane of window glass at 10a High Street, Totnes: "W & A dried here on 17th *1765* May on their way from

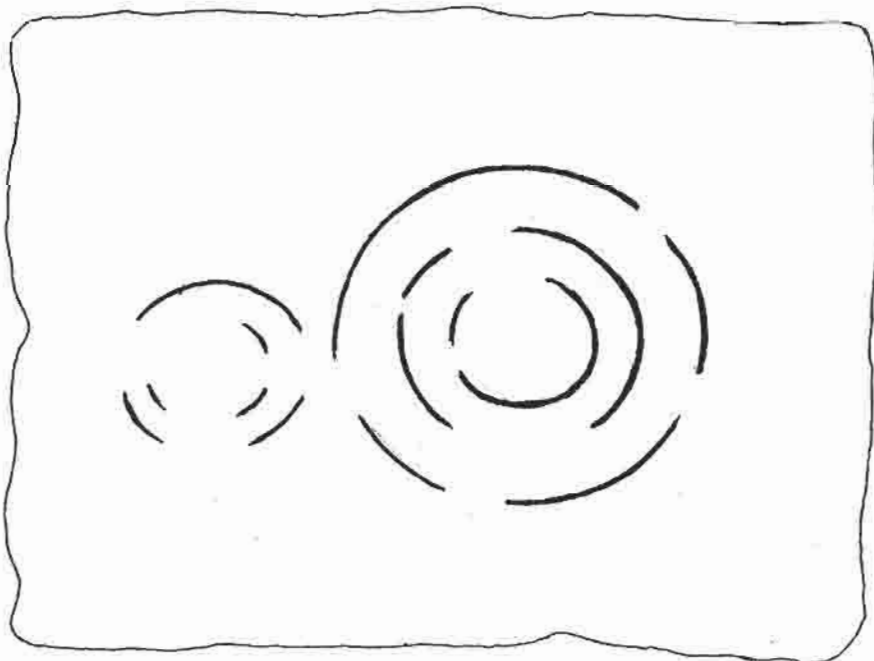
Plymot to Newton and Teignmt." By its nature such graffiti is confined to a specific building or room but there is another class, which is widespread and found in many Devon houses and farm buildings.

These are geometric motifs, usually incised multiple circles or six-petal motifs (also known as daisywheels), which are believed to represent charms or talismans with magical significance for those who made them. Such symbols are known as sigils – marks of religious or occult meaning – and are found throughout England dating from the 16th century into the 19th century. By far the most common is the six-petal motif or daisywheel and this author has noticed examples on historic buildings from County Durham to Cornwall. Their significance has only recently been recognised due to the work of Timothy Easton who is working on a taxonomy of the marks he has found in Suffolk. He has published a short article on his findings, 'Ritual Marks on Historic Buildings' in the Spring 1999 edition of *The Weald and Downland Open Air Museum Magazine*, and he has been in correspondence with Keystone Historic Buildings Consultants in relation to such sigils found in westcountry buildings. According to Easton the great majority of these marks appear to date from the 17th and 18th centuries and some of the motifs can be traced to contemporary books on magic and charms. He argues that they are a protection from witchcraft. Their common association with house and barn doorways certainly imply some kind of charm or protection, from more superstitious times.

Easton has identified two basic categories. The first is of those produced by the builders of the house. These appear to be quite rare in Devon,



The daisywheel charm from Pound Farm, Luppit



Concentric circles from left door jamb, Broadnymet church (deconsecrated c1835)
Origination Angela Blaen. (no scale available)

but one has been noted on the underside of one of the truss principals, right near the apex, in the late 16th century roof at Poltimore House, near Exeter. Peter McCurdy, a carpenter who specialises in the repair and restoration of historic buildings and was responsible for the timber framing in the recreation of Shakespeare's Globe Theatre (as those who attended the 1999 Dendrochronology Conference will remember), has noticed similar symbols on Tudor and Jacobean roof trusses and believes that they were put there by the original builders (personal comment). It seems likely that these charms were intended to protect the fabric of the building. The Poltimore example comprises two incomplete daisywheels superimposed one over the other. Such symbols are commonly incomplete. It seems that the making of the sigil was more important than what it ended up looking like.

The great majority of westcountry examples fall into the second category; those created by the occupant or user of the building, and these are believed to have served as magical charms intended to protect the house or, more commonly, agricultural produce. In Devon farmhouses they are usually found in association with external openings, most commonly recognised on doorframes or doors or on the stud-and-panel screens lining the cross passage, just inside the doorway of the farmhouse. They may also be found around window openings or fireplaces but such examples rarely survive. At Upcott Barton, Cheriton Fitzpaine, a series remain incised into the plaster of a mid 17th century attic room. This room was obviously a store of some kind because it had a trapdoor down onto the stair landing. It was presumably a wool loft or maybe for cheeses. Either way, the daisywheels

are associated with a room designed for the storage of farm produce. Occasionally such symbols have been noticed in church porches as for instance, the inscribed circles inside the porch at Broadnymet.

Such symbols in houses are heavily outnumbered by those in agricultural buildings, where they usually occur in barns or where animals were kept or where dairy produce was made. The illustrated example comes from Pound Farm, Luppit. It is inscribed on a block of Beerstone on the external face, close by the jamb of the doorway of the mid-late 17th century barn. It is set at about eye level and the name T.Broom and the initials WLA have been scratched on later. It also features an inner circle, other incomplete circles and a second incomplete daisywheel. Elsewhere at Pound Farm there are two more examples on the front of the door to the adjacent block, probably a late 17th century cider cellar, and there are open circles alongside the stable doorway.

The sigils most commonly occur around the entrance to the threshing floor but they can be found inside, particularly around windows. However at the 17th century barn at Whelmstone Barton, Colebrooke, the older plaster (original and first repair layer) is covered with sigils, simple circles, multiple circles and daisywheels. The sheer number here suggests that they were produced over a long period of time; maybe at every harvest. This is the only Devon barn where so many have been noticed. However other old barns outside the county often contain multiple sigils, as for instance at the monastic tithe barn at Place Farm, Tisbury in Wiltshire. Further east the timber-framed barns of Norfolk and Suffolk are often packed with them.

These charms represent a significant cultural element associated with traditional farming and it would be very interesting if members could send in examples they have noticed and these might be published in forthcoming newsletters. The information needed is the form of the sigil (maybe a rubbing), and its position, particularly with reference to openings. The daisywheel form is by far the commonest (or so it is thought) but simple open circles, and multiple concentric circles are also known from the county. Easton has also found what he describes as the spectacles motif – two adjacent circles linked by an arc; and the Ave Maria motif – the initials A & M (in Suffolk these are often found on the timber lintels of kitchen fireplaces). Other variants no doubt remain to be discovered. Most examples appear to be post-medieval and the latest known to the author are the two daisywheels inscribed on the outside of the door to the ‘new barn’ at Batworthy Farm, Chagford, which was built between 1868-89. However the great majority seem to date from before 1800 and most 19th century barns have no evidence of such ritual marks.

John Thorp

JAMES RAVILIOUS

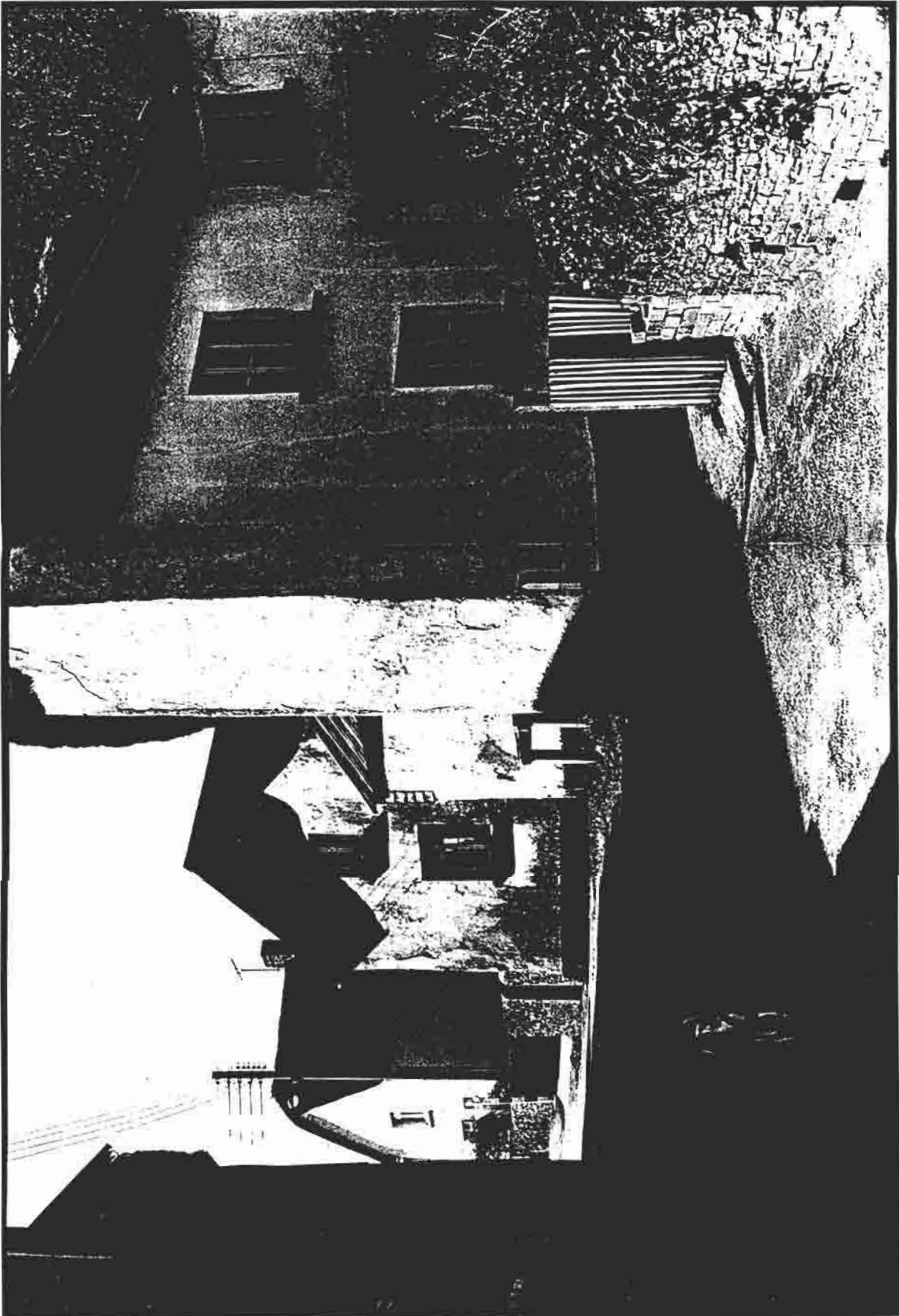
The photographer James Ravilious, who has died aged sixty, made a major contribution to English landscape art. His photographic record of a small area of countryside between the rivers Taw and Torridge in north Devon became an essential analysis and celebration of English rural life.

His background and family life were the heart of the artist and the man. Born in Eastbourne, the son of the painter and engraver Eric Ravilious, and the artist Tirzah Garwood, he both drew on and imaginatively developed against his parents’ creativity – though not without a struggle. His father died when James was three and his mother while he was still a child; she had remarried after Eric’s death and James was brought up in the care of John Swanzy, his step-father’s brother. Influenced by his guardian’s concern that he should be financially secure, Ravilious left Bedford School at seventeen, to begin a career in accountancy, but by the age of twenty had sufficiently overcome the innate shyness of his artistic background to apply to St Martin’s School of Art – though under a pseudonym, so that he would enter on his own merits.

At St Martin’s he began to experiment in painting, drawing, engraving and woodcuts. He began to enjoy photography – Edwin Smith, the photographer husband of Olive Cook, whose joint books on English buildings, gardens and landscapes were touchstones all his life, was later to become a special inspiration. A decisive moment came in 1969, when Ravilious visited an exhibition of *Henri Cartier-Bresson*, whose ability to use photography to provide insights and interpretations of the most fragmentary moments of ordinary life profoundly affected him.

Another friend, Peggy Angus, who had been a student with Eric Ravilious, had introduced James to the work of Thomas Bewick. This was also a decisive influence because it opened a way for Ravilious into the English landscape tradition represented by Bewick, Samuel Palmer, John Constable and John Sell Cotman.

A Ravilious
portrait of a
cob village:
North Road,
Exbourne



The greatest stream of all the influences on Ravilious came, however, from his wife, Robin Whistler, the daughter of the glass engraver Lawrence Whistler. After their marriage in 1970, the couple moved to a small cottage near Dolton, north Devon, where, in 1972, Ravilious was offered a job teaching evening classes in wood engraving and lino-cutting at the rural arts centre in the next village of Beaford, then recently established by the Dartington Hall Trust. The centre's first director, John Lane, quickly saw Ravilious' potential and became his patron, commissioning a photographic archive of the land and people of north Devon.

Over the next quarter of a century, Ravilious compiled – alongside an important archive of over 10,000 historic photographs – a unique portrait of life and landscape in a small area of relatively remote countryside within a ten-mile radius of Beaford.

The results are compelling. Time after time a Ravilious photograph brings out some aspect of our common humanity. Each photograph is intimate, in the sense that the observer is drawn into a relationship with both the subject and the photographer. His pictures resonate with integrity and spiritual power, conveying, just like a great painting, so much more than the subject they ostensibly portray.

Ravilious' own modesty, both of character and lifestyle – he was paid only the most modest salary and, throughout, used his own equipment – allowed him to be an ordinary member of the society in which he was living and working. In turn, his presence as a photographer was accepted by his subjects as part of everyday life.

His books found a ready audience locally, as well as on the wider scene, because they so keenly identified with their subject matter; almost every photograph carries the name of the individual portrayed. So it was with his and Robin's first book, 'The Heart of the Country' (1980), and their subsequent collaboration 'A Corner of England' (1995), in which James' photographs are enhanced by Robin's perceptive captions. She was his life-long muse and greatest friend, supporting his work while bringing up their children, Ben and Ella, and latterly caring devotedly for James through his final illness.

The growing recognition of Ravilious as a photographer, and his importance in the English landscape tradition, has been ably chronicled by Peter Hamilton in his book 'An English Eye' (1998). In recent years, his work has been seen in major exhibitions in this country and abroad. A current exhibition at the Burton Art Gallery, Bideford, Devon, shows his photographs of orchards, originally commissioned by Common Ground, alongside an exhibition of prints by Calvert, Palmer and Blake entitled 'The Spiritual Landscape'. Ravilious would have enjoyed this happy juxtaposition.

Peter Beacham

We are pleased to reprint here, with permission and in full, Peter Beacham's obituary of James Ravilious for the Guardian newspaper of October 1999. A new and important collaborative book, with essays by Peter Beacham and photographs by James Ravilious, 'Down the Deep Lanes' is to be published by Devon Books in July 2000, for which an order form is enclosed.

NEW MEMBERS

New members since Newsletter 17 are:

Roger BRYANT, Lane End House,
Arlington, BARNSTAPLE EX31 4SW

Collette HALL, St Ives Cottage, Silver
Street, BRAUNTON EX33 2EN

Dr David & Helen HALPIN, Gorwyn
House, Cheriton Bishop, EXETER
EX6 6JL

Ronald HEWISH, Upper Linhay,
OTTERY ST MARY EX11 1JZ

Martin WATTS, 1 Trinity Cottages,
CULLOMPTON EX15 1PE

Changes of Address & Tel.No.

Veronica CHESHER, St Winnolls
Cottage, Barbican Hill, EAST LOOE,
Cornwall PL13 1DZ (01503)262335

Peter ROSEVEARE, (01752)318275

Roger & Roslyn THORNE, 50 Well
Oak Park, Dryden Road, EXETER
EX2 5BB (01392)494048

It is pleasing to record that several of the lapsed members have rejoined, since the AGM, so the short-fall mentioned in the annual report is now considerably less than then appeared

CASEWORK

We are still very short of members willing to do a little casework at local level, monitoring planning applications in their own areas. Even if you are not prepared to do this on a regular basis, please do not fail to inform our

Casework Co-ordinator, Peter Roseveare (note new telephone number above) or your nearest Committee Member, as soon as possible after noticing any proposal, or building's condition, which might cause concern. The opportunity to object, in ordinary cases, is usually strictly limited. Current members of the Committee are:

Ann Adams (Secretary) (01363) 82292
Stuart Blaylock, Cullompton, (01884)
33966

Oliver Bosence, Newton Abbot,
(01626) 821609

Chris Brooks, Crediton, (01363)
773294

Stewart Brown, Topsham, (01392)
877284

Jo Cox, Exeter, (01392) 435728

Dawn Honeysett, Crediton, (01363)
866230

Colin Humphreys, Barnstaple, (01271)
882152

Su Jarwood, Exmouth, (01395) 265636

Richard Parker, Exeter, (01392)
274265

Peter Roseveare, Plymouth, (as above)

Jenny Sanders, Tavistock, (01822)
614503

Jeremy Sharpe, Okehampton, (01805)
603587

John Thorp, Exeter, (01392) 259304

Robert Waterhouse, Ashburton,
(01364) 652963

Our new Caseworker for the Dartmoor National Park area (replacing Veronica Cheshier, who served for so many years and has now moved back to Cornwall) is Gerry NICHOLLS, Hunter's Moon, Woodlands, Dousland, YELVERTON PL20 6NB (01822) 854495

During the past year, the Committee has made responses to Devon County Council on its consultation documents and has also discussed a number of applications brought to its notice. In most cases, it has commented upon

them to the relevant planning authority. Among those specifically considered were alterations to interior church furnishings at St David's church, Exeter and the Congregational church, Crediton. The proposed sitings of various super-markets in Crediton were also commented on, as were concerns for Knathorne Cottage, Crediton; Welltown Farmhouse, Walkhampton; Truelove Farmhouse; West View Terrace, Exeter; the early Dissenters' Burial Ground, Exeter; Rashleigh Barton, Wembworthy and Hooe Barn, Plymouth. Interventions, of course, vary between reasoned outright objections to requests for particular sensitivity. Although probably not ideal, Fowler's former psychiatric hospital at Exminster, subject of so much correspondence and an article in DBG's very first Newsletter, seems to have a secure future at last.

All members are asked to maintain a local vigilance and report concerns to one of those people listed above. Should any member feel that an unlisted building is in need and deserving of statutory protection, a mechanism exists for spot listing and a recommendation should be sent to the Secretary, immediately, giving full details of the building, its location and planning application number, if applicable. In all casework the Committee expects to receive a copy of any correspondence written on behalf of DBG. Non-caseworker members may, of course, intervene under their own names but in no circumstances should DBG's name be used, where the committee has not been previously consulted.

NEW BOOKS

Two forthcoming books, for which we enclose flyers, are:

Volume 1 of 'Exeter Engraved', a collection of over 200 historic views of the city and its buildings, by Todd Gray, which promises to be of great interest to DBG members – as does Volume 2, on the Cathedral and other churches of the city, expected next year.

'Down the Deep Lanes', by Peter Beacham & James Ravilious, as described below James Ravilious' obituary. Another we shall all want to own.

Published in 1999 is Chris Brooks' brilliant and definitive study of all aspects of the 'Gothic Revival' (Phaidon) available at bookshops at £14.95

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2000

Saturday 7th October, at Colyton