

west sides of the yard dated from the late 18th and 19th centuries, but the cottages on the south incorporated fragments of an earlier house.

The eastern section of the cottages had been an open hall 20 feet wide and about 36 feet long, spanned by two jointed cruck trusses, parts of which lay in the debris. In the east wall was a wide blocked fireplace of uncertain, possibly 17th century, date; the timber-framed west wall had collapsed so that no features apart from its general construction could be distinguished. Beyond to the west was a room about 20 feet square, formerly two storeys, with 17th century fireplaces in the west wall, the upper one having a contemporary plaster vine-scroll frieze above it.

The jointed cruck trusses were apparently of elm, and of a very high standard of construction, with cambered arch-braced collars, wind-braced butt-purlins, and a yoke at the apex to carry a canted ridge-piece. From the collapsed timbers it could be calculated that the walls of the building stood 10 feet high, and the total height to the ridge was 21 feet. Clearly this had been a building of some social importance, probably dating from the later 15th century.

A CRUCK-ROOFED HOUSE IN NORTH CADBURY, SOMERSET

BY CLARE AUSTIN AND SIR ROBERT DE Z. HALL, K.C.M.G., F.S.A.

The report which follows is the outcome of our first collaboration. We addressed ourselves to the particular building, No. 21 Woolston Road, North Cadbury, near Wincanton (ST635273), and the adjoining Club Room, for the purpose of placing on record the only instance then known in Somerset of a simple cruck truss, where the blade sprang from plinth level.¹ The house proved to be complex, and during its examination and the discussion which followed we established not only more about its development, but the range of our joint interest in vernacular architecture. This, in effect, is that expressed by M. W. Barley in his *The English Farmhouse and Cottage*, as one of the specialised fields for the local historian. This is not the ideal report, where a documentary approach can be used to give life to an archaeological study, but even on the more limited scale we hope that there will be interest for others as well as ourselves in the elucidation of plan, extension and modernisation, largely in the context of the post-medieval period.

The building is picturesque rather than exciting. It is T-shaped, facing on to the road which forms the southern boundary of the village (Plate VII). The church and North Cadbury Court lie a few hundred yards to the south. In the provisional list of buildings of architectural and historical interest it was assigned to Grade II, the main visible evidence being a blocked four-centred stone door frame, considered to be of the sixteenth century (Plate VIII). The presence of internal features of interest was brought to the notice of one of us and of E. T. Long in 1960 by the late Lady Langman. In summary, these were parts of the cruck blades, a jointed cruck truss, and insertions consisting of internal stone doorways, ceiling, stone newel staircases and a chimney stack. It was then

¹ After this article had been prepared, we found two buildings in Stocklinch St. Magdalen, near Ilminster, one of which contains three simple cruck trusses rising from near ground level, and another where the bottom six feet of a timber construction are visible, of which the form makes the presence of a cruck blade probable in the latter case, the base rests on a stone.

thought that the building was constructed during the late fifteenth century, and modernised in the Tudor period. No attempt was made at systematic recording at the time, largely for lack of known comparative material in Somerset. Delay in examination has, however, brought a positive advantage, since a cruck blade has become exposed right down to its base, on account of erosion of plaster, and some original walling has come into view. At the outset of this report, we must express our thanks for being given the fullest access by Mrs. J. A. Montgomery, for the North Cadbury Village Hall Trust, and by the then caretaker-tenants, Mr. and Mrs. Parker.

Documentary examination has been limited to the tithe survey of 1839, when James Bennett owned Cadbury Court and most of the parish, including this building. The apportionment shows that the tenant, John Morris, had a few acres of land adjacent to the house, quite insufficient to be thought of as a farm. The accompanying map shows a supplementary building, evidently an outshot, on the eastern side of the side at the north end. On the OS 1:2500 sheet, revision of 1901, this building does not appear, but instead there was an extension, clearly marked as such, on the north end.

The building, externally, is of coursed rubble, mostly random, partly squared, and of a variety of sizes; the best work, particularly at the quoins, belongs to the head of the T. The earliest walls were evidently most unstable, since parts of the present walls have bulges and curves, and there have been major repairs, particularly at the sides of the blocked door (Plate VIII). An external chimney stack serves what is now the parlour, in the eastern part of the T, and the bedroom above (Plate IX). It is not early, unlike other lateral chimney stacks in Somerset. It contains apertures, now blocked, at each level; they are rather over a foot square, with corresponding recesses, now made into cupboards on the inside. We at first thought them to be vents for the disposal of ashes, but the height is awkward. All windows are recent and of wood, those upstairs being in dormers. The roof is thatched, the south-eastern end being half-hipped.

Internal description starts most readily from the present living-room, the original hall (Fig. 1). This is at the south end of the stalk of the T, which runs at right angles to Woolston Road. The room is broader than it is long, 17' by 13' to the nearest foot, with a wide fireplace, now blocked by a modern stove, on the north end and well over to the east side. Between it and the west wall are two stone arched doorways, visible in outline behind wallpaper. The nearer one leads to a cross-passage. The further one is blocked, but, as can be seen from upstairs under a trapdoor, opened to a stone newel stairway, the back wall of which faces on the passage in the same line as the back of the chimney stack. At one end of the cross-passage is the blocked stone doorway, and at the other a modern door. Both stack and passage are just over 5' wide. Across the passage is a wooden partition, apparently modern, within which are pantry and store. In the pantry can be seen a rubble plinth, rising just over 2', with a wall above suggesting cob which has been smoothed and whitewashed. Inside the partition is an upright of the jointed cruck truss, rising from the plinth and flush with the wall. There is no sign of the corresponding upright on the other side. There is no ground floor connection with the modern additional structure, though it houses a recent staircase, which leads to the Club Room above.

On the south side of the living-room, a wall has been replaced by a partition, and a passage leads to the present front door in Woolston Road. The parlour to the east of

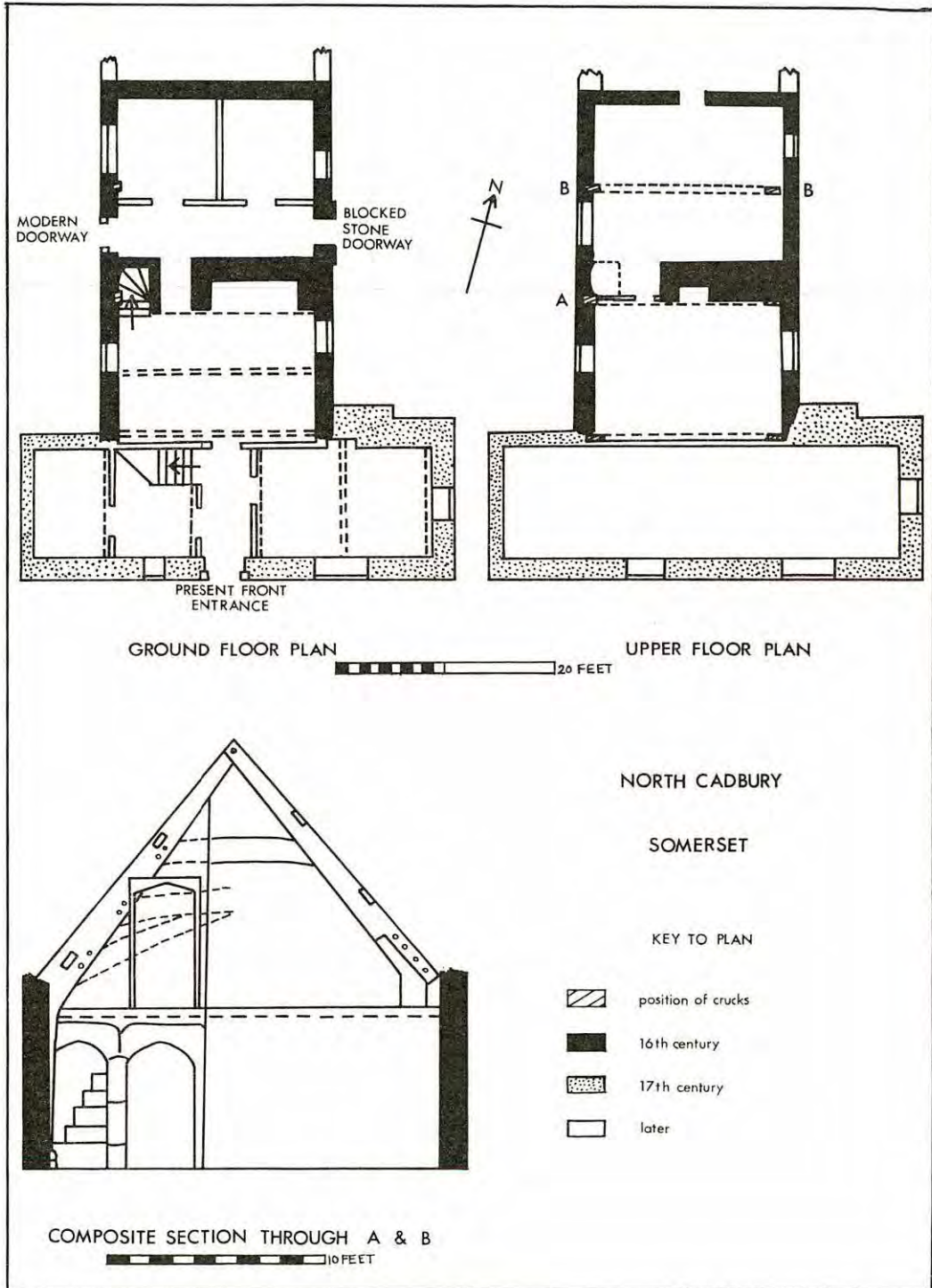


FIG. 1

the passage is only 11' wide, though 16' long, and in these proportions lies the reason for the external chimney, to allow of the fireplace being flush with the wall. On the west, a similar area is occupied by a staircase and two stores.

The living-room ceiling has a frame round the sides, a main beam from east to west, and closely placed joists. The main beam is fairly deeply chamfered, with an angle between chamfer and soffit of about 150 degrees. Little relevant work has been done on mouldings in Somerset, but a subjective assessment would be of a date in the middle of the sixteenth century. In the southern part of the house, some smaller ceiling beams running from north to south are visible in the passage and store. The chamfers are deeper and steeper, and the combination of these with wave (scroll) stops suggest a seventeenth century date for the beams and this part of the house in general.

Upstairs, the present bedrooms are over the front rooms and nothing can be seen of the roof structure. The Club Room is over the living-room, passage and service rooms and is in two parts, divided by the chimney stack. The stone stair previously mentioned begins with a step in the living-room and turns, with steep steps, through 90 degrees, to emerge on the ceiling over the passage. Thence there are another two steps through a 'Tudor' headed doorway (Plate X), which is fixed to the inner side of the western cruck blade. The blade rises from plinth level, almost flush with the outer side of the stone doorway giving on the stair. (Plate XI). Part of the upper end of the blade, and the whole of what can be seen of its counterpart, is occupied by the chimney stack, and there is a small, clearly sixteenth century, fireplace (Plate XIII).

The visible cruck blade is markedly cranked, thick at the elbow, so that there is a smooth curve on the inner surface, and tapering to the apex. The maximum thickness is 1' 5", while at the apex it is less than half this measurement. The apex is morticed and tenoned; the ridge-piece is not visible on account of plaster. Before the chimney-stack and doorway were inserted, there were two collars, the lower with small arch-braces, all mortices being clearly visible at the doorway. The size of the room is similar to that of the living-room below, being 13' 3" from the centre of the cruck blade to the centre of the truss at the south side of the room. Of the latter, because of boxing in, only the rafter elements can be seen, but it corresponds in every way to the cruck truss, from the upper collar (which remains) to the apex. Whether a cruck truss is concealed must remain a matter of doubt; but it was certainly an open truss.

The trusses are linked by two tenoned purlins on each side with windbraces springing from the junction of the trusses and the lower purlins. The purlins have been cut into later, to accommodate the dormer windows. A feature of particular interest is at the south-east corner, where the upper purlin can be seen to have been halved and cut to a point, and is butted into the truss while the tenon passes through; and a piece of matching tenon, cut off and now lying loosely in its mortice, shows that the original roof extended beyond. The corresponding mortice on the other side of the room has been boarded over. At the north-west end, the lower purlin passes right through the visible cruck blade (Plate XI). All timbers in this part are well finished, though without decorative detail.

The other, larger part of the Club Room shows a remarkable contrast. The different height of the floor, corresponding with the level of the top step of the stairs, is not unusual. But the two bays, divided by the jointed cruck truss, are unequal in length,

that nearer the chimney being 10' 6", the other 9' 3". All timbers are rougher than those of the inner room, and this applies particularly to the purlins. These rest in shallow trenches, and one, at one place, was of insufficient scantling for it to be squared off. The central truss is open, with a morticed collar at the same height as the upper collar of the inner room. The upright member on the west inclines slightly, being only partly sunk in the wall at the top, but wholly so below ceiling level. On the east, the upright has been cut off and pulled into the vertical in the course of repairs, as can be seen from traces of the previous walling on the wood. As a result, it is a foot clear of the present wall, so that the exterior of the joint can be studied in detail (Plate XII). At the end of the room there is a framed timber gable, with a collar at the same height as that of the open truss. Between collar and apex wattling, presumed original, is visible. How far down the framing goes cannot be determined, on account of concealment by a modern dwarf wall and some mutilation when the outside staircase was inserted. By analogy with other buildings which we have found in central south Somerset, it is not unlikely that the frame extended to ground level, being encased in walling later. What is certain is that the gable at least was an exposed open end, since the wood is clean and weathered on the outside, while inside, throughout the inner and outer bays, there is a dark incrustation on the timbers, except where they have been replaced. Both trusses are morticed and tenoned at the apex, but the line of the joint is opposed to those in the inner room. Ridge pieces remain, lying in diagonal notches.

The outer room, partly owing to the different placing of the purlins, but also to vagaries in walling and rewalling, is a foot wider than the inner one. The irregularity of the walling suggests that the original work was in a very soft cob. A patch of this can be seen on the inside of the wall, by the side of the stairs. No timbers are sufficiently exposed for an opinion to be formed whether there was lateral timber-framing at the earliest stage.

Interpretation of the building has not proved straightforward. There are at present no criteria by which it can be asserted, in Somerset, that a jointed cruck is later than an unjointed one or, on the other hand, that both types may be contemporaneous. Quite recently, we have seen more than half-a-dozen houses where timber-framed ends, or partitions, or both, are in association with jointed cruck trusses, inserted ceilings being a feature common to all; and persuasive but not conclusive is a house opposite one of the above instances where the association is of timber-framed end and full length, simple crucks. There is also some relevance in Ashford Old Farmhouse, Isle Abbots, where a hall with collar-beam roof is succeeded to the north by a large service room with jointed crucks, the house ending with a timber frame, the bottom of which has been walled in. The same difficulty applies to purlins. Trenched purlins are common from mediæval times onwards. Tenoned purlins, though less common, have a similar range in time — extremes are the Chapel at the top of Vicars' Close, Wells, of the early fifteenth century, and dated re-roofings of 1798 and 1804 at 26 and 28 East Street, West Coker. At the time of examining the North Cadbury house, neither of us had seen a mixture of contemporaneous purlin types in one house, but we have since done so at Ashford Old Farmhouse, and one of us, on second thoughts, tends to a similar view about the two types in the older part of Bratton Farm, near Wincanton.

When we first considered the house at North Cadbury, it was in terms of a linear expansion from an original hall, of which the living-room and the room over are the

remains. Besides the contrast of carpentry, there were details, in particular the careful treatment of the outside of the fully visible cruck blade and the reversed apex joints of the jointed cruck truss and north gable, which led us to suppose an original three-bay hall. The previous southern bay had been proved to exist by the present south-eastern purlin joint, and we imagined a similar one at the north, a service area being provided by a screen, not fixed. This bay being sacrificed in the plan for inserting a chimney stack, stair and formal cross-passage, an extension was made, using a jointed cruck truss. And the new service area was ceiled also, to provide the route from stair to chamber on one hand and, on the other, servants' sleeping quarters or storage loft.

This solution presented difficulties. Why, at so late a time should the jointed cruck truss have had full length uprights? Though we do not reject this solution, for lack of sufficient comparative work on small medieval and sub-medieval houses in Somerset, we now substitute the easier answer of a fifteenth century four-bay building, all erected at the same time. There is now sufficient evidence of mixed carpentry to justify such a conclusion, though in a situation where examination of every fresh house has led us to modify our ideas about others, we emphasise that the conclusion is provisional.

By whatever means, then, the house was modernised in the sixteenth century, to a standard rather higher than one thinks of as appropriate to a yeoman's house. A further improvement in accommodation was required in the seventeenth century, and this was made by replacing the southern bay with a wing. The planning of this provided a new passage into the living-room, as well as a new parlour and the additional space across the passage. As a result, the old stone framed front entrance became irrelevant. Possibly part of the wing is earlier, but it is very noticeable that the stonework is of a higher standard than elsewhere, particularly at the quins. A final comment is that the external chimney stack appears to be an insertion. The rubble stonework is slightly different, and the string course above the plinth is not continuous with that of the rest of the wing, besides being in a distinct style. It may appear naive to suggest that the wing was first built with a stack flush with the wall, involving a fireplace projecting inconveniently into a room already long and narrow; and that soon afterwards — for there are similarities as well as differences in the masonry — a decision was taken to rebuild so as to get more space. Or was the chimney built first and the walls later?

AN EARLY JOINTED CRUCK BUILDING AT SOUTH BRADON, LANGPORT RURAL DISTRICT

BY LIONEL F. J. WALROND, A.M.A.

This building, a low-roofed derelict thatched cottage, was measured in June 1952 (Fig. 1), but permission to remove decayed wall plaster was not forthcoming, owing to a dispute over ownership. Lying to the south of the road (ST366186), the building itself was bounded on the south and west by the R. Isle, with an extensive garden between the house and the road. It was here that excavations produced three skeletons and the footings of a wall believed to be that of the lost church of South Bradon. If it were so, this cottage may have been the priest's house, which existed in 1571, being mentioned in a glebe terrier.