

THE MEDIEVAL HOUSES OF STOCKLINCH

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I. GENERAL. This study has been of 7 houses — four farmhouses, two of which went with no more than 25 and 20 acres respectively, one house with orchards and a smallholding, and two with little more than a small orchard and a garden. Dating to the late 15th or the early 16th century is proposed, principally from the abundant evidence of formerly open halls. The term 'medieval' is used in the sense of the original building having been before about 1530. We have studied the houses at leisure over two years, during which we have also visited many other houses within a radius of 5 miles and, in the absence of any previous study, have gained an impression of vigorous building activity during the period. It is to be emphasised, however, that dating criteria are few. We have been able to return several times to most of the houses and pay tribute here to the friendliness and interest of the owners, in both Stocklinch and elsewhere. This has led more than once to the identification of features which might have been overlooked.

Location and topography. Stocklinch, two miles north-east of Ilminster, is one of a group of villages which lie at the foot of high ground to the north of the main road A303. Their lands are drained by the river Parrett on the east, the river Isle on the west. The Isle touches Stocklinch at Ilford Bridges and is there only a little over 50 feet above sea-level. Thence south-eastwards the ground rises slowly through the fields to the principal village street at about 100 feet. The gradient then increases sharply north- and eastwards, to a maximum of over 300 feet. The parish is almost two miles long from north-west to south-east and half a mile in breadth. In this small area, just under 500 acres, there were two manors, Stocklinch Magdalen and Stocklinch Ottersey, each with its church, though the boundaries of manors and ecclesiastical parishes did not entirely coincide. Stocklinch Magdalen church is in the village street, while that of Ottersey is on higher ground and isolated, save for manor-house, rectory and a few houses below it. The land of the two manors comprised just over 400 acres, the glebes a third of the remainder, while the 19th century tithe surveys showed only three other freeholds of over 10 acres.

Documentary evidence. We found that 6 of the 7 houses had been the property of the Ilchester Almshouse Trust, with the aid of whose records we were able to trace the tenures by which these and other properties were held, in several cases back into the 17th century¹. The documents also contained a number of references to occupations, and so helped towards an impression of the social and economic make-up of the community. The process was aided by the discovery of two inventories, one of the 17th century relating to an Ottersey property, the other of the 18th century identifiable as concerning one of the houses to be described². The Almshouse Trust is the successor of the Ilchester Corporation, in whose Bailiffs and Burgesses was vested the ownership of the former manor of Stocklinch Magdalen, with additional lands in Ottersey. The transaction was completed in 1475, following an assignment for the benefit of the poor of Ilchester 50 years previously. If we have taken a correct view of the time when the houses under discussion were built, the development took place not long after ownership passed formally to the Ilchester Corporation.

The documents of most importance to us have been a survey and reference book, commissioned by the Clerk to the Corporation in about 1792 (hereafter cited as the 1792 survey), the records then being in much confusion. The tithe surveys (Stocklinch Magdalen, 1845; Stocklinch Ottersey, 1839) have also been of great help in piecing together the nature of the holdings of land which went with the houses.

Economic and social deductions. The 1792 survey shows that the Corporation owned 160 acres, of which, from the tithe surveys, a quarter was in Ottersey. Towards the end of the 18th century, half the land had come into hand and was let either on short term lease or at will. Earlier in the century, close on three-quarters of the land was subject to the West Country system of 99 year leases, backed by lives³, and the rest was held by copy of court roll. Several of the documents relating to leases show specifically that copyholds were being replaced. The largest holding, before the leasehold system began to break up, was just under 40 acres. Among the dozen leaseholds, the next largest were of 20 and 16 acres. One or two might be termed smallholdings, but several had too little land to support a family, while at the bottom of the scale was 'a moiety of a cottage and garden', three perches in all. From these leaseholds have survived 5 dwellings, two of them styled 'farmhouses' in the 1792 survey, one going with a smallholding, and two described in the survey as 'houses', though by modern standards they would be nearer to cottages.

There were 7 copyholds, covering just under 50 acres in all. The largest accounted for 25 acres; the smallest was a single narrow strip in the Middle Field. Five have been traced as having had a

building, ranging from a 'dwelling house, outbuildings, barn . . .' going with the largest copyhold — the house still stands — to a cottage which included the smithy. This last, surprisingly, was copyhold in the early 18th century, leasehold in the middle, and copyhold again by the end.

Both the map and the reference book of the 1792 survey show that an orchard was the normal accompaniment of a house, whether other land was much or little, and even today, in spite of clearance, there are many cider-apple orchards in the residential area. The 17th century inventory mentioned above, of a leaseholder, who was also a shoemaker, lists hogsheads both at home and at a village the other side of Ilminster, where they had been sent with cider. That of the 18th century shows that the lessee combined dressmaking with cider manufacture, while the lease of her predecessor describes him as a soap-boiler⁴. Other occupations could be quoted, and it is clear that the standard of life often depended on trade and manufacture as well as agriculture. Yeomen are mentioned, as to be expected, in documents relating to the two largest land holdings. The only occupier specified as a husbandman leased the 'moiety of a cottage', where in the late 18th century he was followed by a baker. In a stable community, it is not improbable that the make-up of part farmers, part smallholders-craftsmen-cidermakers extended back to the medieval period. And looking forward to the 19th century, there was again no difference in principle in the occupations recorded in the 1851 census, save for the appearance therein of the servants and the landless labourers.

As an aside, it may be worth adding that the distinctions between classes were not rigid. One surname in an 18th century document is attached to a 'Mr.', in another to a husbandman. The lessee of the largest farm was a yeoman, but his heir bought a large 17th century house with a few acres of land, and became a gentleman. Elsewhere there is reference to a yeoman's daughter marrying a surgeon.

The agrarian background to the community was a single medieval field system — three main and three minor fields — within which the strips of the Ottersey demesne (that of Magdalen is not distinguishable with certainty), and of the glebes, the tenantry and the small freeholders, were so fragmented and mixed that exchange, precedent to general enclosure, was long delayed. There were closes within the fields by the time of the 1792 survey, but nearly a century later the 1:2500 Ordnance Survey (1st ed., 1885) has the text 'allotments' across the areas of the former West, Middle and East Fields. A farmer's wife remembers the enclosure of the hilly Middle and East Fields; and on the higher slopes, lynchets preserve the evidence of former strips. In the West Field, between village and river, many long strips remain unenclosed, with a variety of crops of which one is wheat grown for thatching-reed. Near the houses and between the churches are older enclosures, possibly representing former common, while closes on the periphery correspond with meadows by the river and marginal land on the high ground.

The houses of the two parishes are intermixed almost as much as was the land. There is a tendency for Magdalen houses, including one of those studied, to predominate near the church. In Stoney Lane, to the north-east of the village street, all houses except one are of Magdalen, five of the old houses being among them. But in the village street and in the road leading out to the north-west there are Ottersey houses too; and the only Ottersey concentration is a small one in Owl Street, which leads to the manor-house and church, and also to our sole example of a house in that parish.

II. THE HOUSES IN GENERAL. Our initial interest was in the development of house plan, mainly related to the improvements of the 16th century. This was seen to take a variety of forms, and the only generalisation that can be made is that, as very frequent in Somerset, all of the old houses emerged with cross-passages, of which the fireplace of the main living-room, or hall as it is more convenient to term it, formed one side. Our first examination of some of the houses, however, made us quickly aware of a remarkable concentration of elements of construction, largely new to us in Somerset. Repetition will be saved if we make some general reference to the way in which the houses were first built, and it is convenient to treat some of the 16th century additions at the same time.

a. *Roofs.*

i. Crucks and post-and-truss constructions. All houses except one contain cruck frames, either simple or jointed, extending (so far as observable) down to a rubble plinth or, where a stone wall was original, to a substantial depth in that wall. In one case only, house III iii, a later cruck frame stands on a ceiling beam. These frames are always internal, never at the end of a house⁵, and in most cases are associated with a hall formerly open to the roof. Most of the houses also contain

the construction known as post-and-truss, in which posts carry a tie-beam. The tie-beam in turn is the base for principal rafters, linked higher by a collar. The post-and-truss construction is typically at the end of a house, but may also be internal. Posts tend to lean slightly inwards and may be tapered at the base. As with the cruck frames, they extend to a plinth or to well down in a wall. At the top, the posts are markedly jowled, and since long tenons were possible on this account, there are no braces between post and tie-beam, save in one instance. Tie-beams project slightly beyond the posts and also beyond the bases of the principal rafters. There is a varying number of struts between tie-beam and collar, from none at all to five. Only late trusses not carried on posts have a strut, or struts, above the collar. In all cases which could be seen, rafters are joined at the apex by mortice and tenon. Gables are filled with vertical rods from tie-beam to rafter and collar, and from collar to rafter, the upper end of the rods being inserted in holes and the lower in a long groove. In two observed cases, there is wattling on the rods as a base for daub. Among the plates, which are arranged by reference to the individual buildings, nos. IV to VI are relevant.

ii. Axial timbers. Ridge-pieces are seldom visible. Those seen are square, set diamondwise in notches at the apices of the trusses. Purlins are always trenched. They are frequently in three rows, though sometimes in two, and in either case the upper one is set high and the lower low down, so that wall-plates were unnecessary for the support of common rafters, particularly since there was stone or cob walling between the trusses⁶. All purlins project considerably from the gables, except where there have been later alterations, so that the upper roofs would shelter the protruding end walls to be described below. All joints seen were plain diagonal scarfs, normally at a rafter.

b. *Walls and partitions.*

i. End walls. These are distinguished from side walls because of the very characteristic appearance, where they have survived. The posts-and-trusses were underbuilt with thick cob walls, the posts being almost flush on the inner side, so that the wall may project a foot or more under the gable⁷. In one instance, the application of building regulations involved the destruction of one such wall which had settled so as to slope out a few inches at the top. At the foot, it began in a shallow trench, not on a plinth, but was nevertheless dry; and instead of showing a succession of courses of clay, it contained a mixture of clay and stones, the latter ranging from pebbles to quite considerable lumps of rubble. This demolition gave an opportunity of examining the posts built into the wall for traces of sill-plates, the absence of which had already been noted in the case of exposed trusses, and was now confirmed⁸.

ii. Side walls. At the front, all of the houses are now faced in rubble. In some cases, this is obviously newer than what was there in the first place, but in two houses at least it appeared to be original⁹. At the back, cob survives in several cases. There was no evidence of early timber-framing, though traces of this had been found in a demolished late medieval building not far away¹⁰. On the contrary, such framing in one house, III i, belonged to a later development and is paralleled by discoveries elsewhere¹¹.

iii. Internal partitions. These are usually timber-framed, filled with rod and daub. Stud-and-plank is less common.

c. *Smoke bays, firehoods and chimney stacks.*

i. Smoke bays. In two houses, III iv and v, the original arrangement for voiding smoke was by the construction of a short bay integral with and at the end of the house. In one case this was visibly of post-and-truss construction, the gable above the tie-beam being filled by daub on rods¹². (Plate VI, the studs and present rods being replacements).

ii. Firehoods. Firehoods have been found in a number of areas other than Somerset, and in a variety of forms, ranging from a sort of daubed basket to a carefully framed timber structure, in which the spaces are filled by daub on rods. In Stocklinch, they have been found in every house studied except III vii, and are of the latter type. They are clearly distinguished from smoke bays, since they are superstructures to fireplaces created later than the building of the house. Such fireplaces usually have stone backs and sides (though the inner side may be timber-framed), with a wooden lintel. The starting-point of the hood is above the lintel, and there substantially below tie-beam level. The front of the hood and the side nearest the slope of the roof taper to a square hole at the ridge, above which a modern chimney replaces whatever was the original treatment.

Several examples have come to light elsewhere, mostly within a few miles, and we have ventured to distinguish two types, here designated FH1 and FH2. FH1 has rectangular timber-framing,

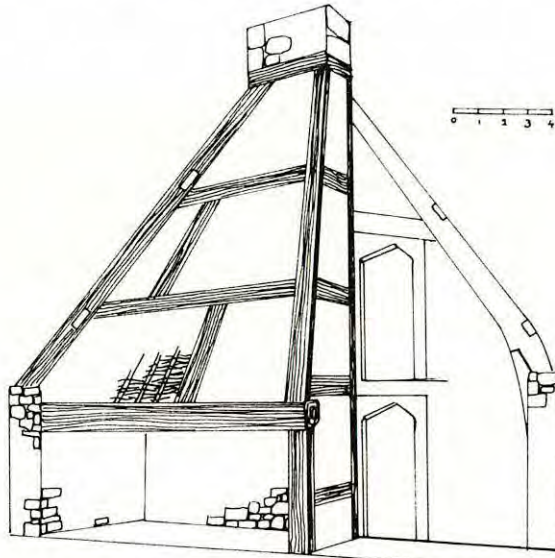


Fig. 1a: Sketch of Firehood FH1.

the panels usually being broader than they are high, with vertical rods as a basis for daubing. The fireplace and the starting-place of the hood are usually wide, occupying half or more of the width of the house. The type appears to be relatively early, and we provisionally propose it as being mid-Elizabethan. FH2 has long converging studs, from lintel level to apex, and in additional timbers the accent is on the vertical; and daubing is on lateral rods. The fireplace tends to be narrower, though it may still occupy up to half of the width of the house. Evidence will be mentioned in relation to particular houses for the type being relatively late, of the later 16th and early 17th century. Two FH2 hoods, in houses III iv and v, were constructed inside earlier smoke bays¹³.

iii. Chimney stacks. The term is limited to rubble and mortar stacks. These, save for one lateral stack in house III ii, always project into a room, being carried on the lintel, sides and back of the fireplace.

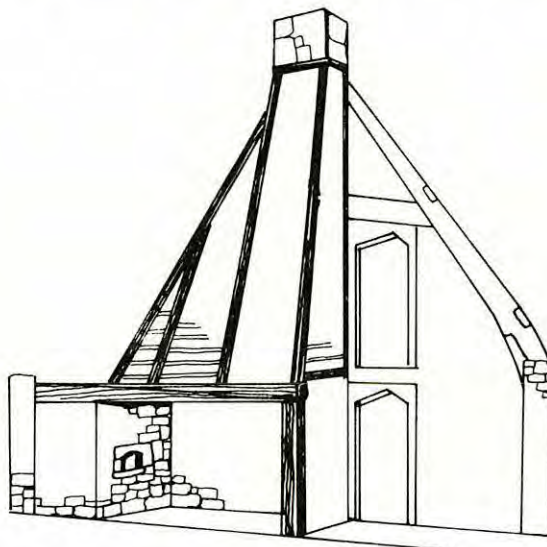


Fig. 1b: Sketch of Firehood FH2.

d. *Stops on beams.*

The dominant form in Somerset is that described in Fox and Raglan's *Monmouthshire Houses* as a 'curve made with a draw knife from the arris to a vertical set-off a quarter or half an inch above the chamfer.' From the building in which they first recognised it, they gave the term 'Wern-hir' and this abbreviation is conveniently used here also. It is found in many other parts of England and Wales, and is generally regarded as of the late 16th century, being succeeded in the 17th by the scroll stop. In Stocklinch, we have been particularly interested in a variation found in two of the houses, III iv and vi, where on ceiling beams, the curve has been drawn off in two planes, for which Fox and Raglan used the term 'keeled'. At house III ii, there are such stops on the jambs of a wooden window frame. This type of stop was already familiar from other houses within a short range of Ilminster, associated with 16th century improvements, so that the existence of a local school of carpentry is possible¹⁴. At house III vi, the stops on a ceiling beam are doubly keeled.

III. THE INDIVIDUAL HOUSES.

i. *Johnson's Acre.* (Plates VIIa, VIIb. Fig. 2 a, b)

The original house was just over 50' long, with 4 bays. It has been modified in every century since it was built, without substantial detriment to the medieval frame. We are much indebted to the present owners, Mr. and Mrs. J. Packham, who have carried out comprehensive restoration, since they have been able to describe some features which have been changed or concealed and others whose significance might not have been readily apparent.

The house was constructed with three internal cruck frames, at slightly irregular intervals; the original east end is of post-and-truss construction, with a thick cob wall below, while the west end has been completely rebuilt recently, but apparently on the site of the original plinth. The cruck frames (and we unite Mr. Packham's observations with our own) are complete, and all blades are entire in principle and are markedly cranked. There are three lines of purlins, the lowest of which are almost directly above the front and back walls. The northern blade of the central truss is narrow at the base, and has been broadened by a splint, rising c.6', where it fits in a notch, dowels holding it in place. The adjacent blade to the west has been flattened as though to receive a similar supplement, but there is no notch and no dowel holes; this blade alone could be seen to extend to ground level, but we were assured that the rest do so. Both blades of this western frame were too short to reach the apex and were extended above the collar¹⁵, with weak joints which have cracked (mortice on blade, tenon on extension). At the east, post-and-truss, end, there are 4 studs between tie-beam and collar, none above.

The central frame is flush with the back of the present hall chimney. If the original end of the living area of the house was at the same place, the hall occupied a bay of just under 14', beyond which was a service room of just over 10'. Above the service room was built a chamber¹⁶, whose floor joists were anchored in the cob wall to the east and jettied out into the hall to give added size (Plate VIIb). The end of the chamber next to the open hall is framed, with rod, wattle and daub filling, and a relevant detail is that after the present owner had rendered and white-washed the area, the saturation of smoke worked through and dark patches can be seen on the hall side.

Half of the house lay west of the hall, giving a length of 20' after allowing for an entry, and whether or not the area was subdivided, we think it likely that the medieval use was much the same as it is today — a storage area for implements, fuel and produce (not least apples), and a workshop. In addition, unless there was an outside building, it would have been the cider cellar; when documentation becomes available, for the early 18th century, a third of the 15 acres or so of land was orchard. As such the building is the nearest which we have seen to a close successor to the long-house, accommodating man and stock. The present doorways may be relevant. They are not on their original site and the frames may be replacements, but, at 5' wide and 7' high, they are not domestic.

In the sixteenth century the hall fireplace was inserted, with a FH1 hood and the hall was ceiled. A formal passage, with a stud-and-plank partition, was made to the west, and the area beyond became a ground-floor room with chamber over. A part of the partition and, above, a wooden 'Tudor' doorway and some mortices for floor joists remain as evidence. There is nothing to show that the room beyond the passage was heated, and it may have continued to be used for storage and semi-domestic work. A wooden newel staircase, in the same line as the fireplace, survived till recently.

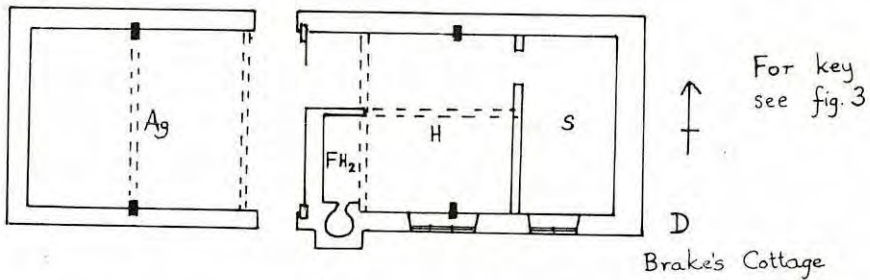
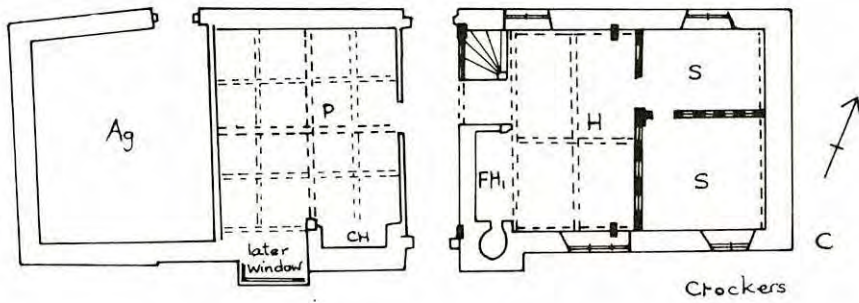
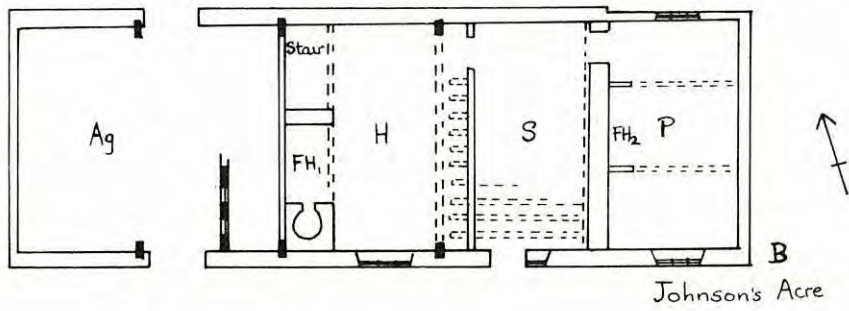
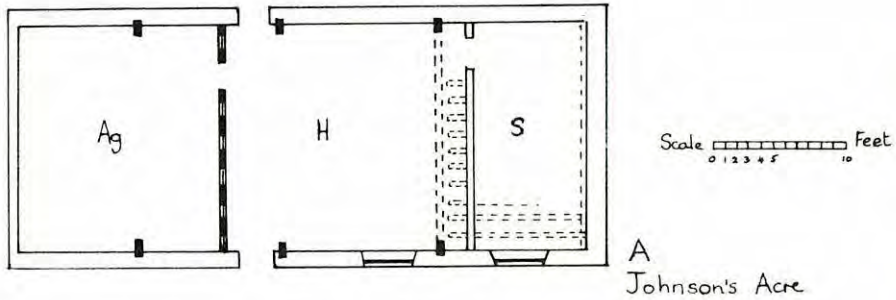


Fig. 2.

In the seventeenth century, the house was extended at the east end. A parlour with fireplace was built, with a FH2 hood (now removed) and a chamber above. Other work helping to date the improvements was the use of beams with scroll stops in the parlour and the insertion of a three-light wooden framed window with ovolo mouldings in the service-room. The new end wall was timber-framed, but in a different manner. A sill-beam bears corner posts and 6 slender studs, the present ones apparently being replacements, since they are halved into the tie-beam. Between tie-beam and collar are 4 studs, and there is one from collar to apex¹⁷. The use of transverse rods as a base for daub is further evidence of late work. The back wall was framed, though it is impossible now to know how; a section has been preserved below a window, showing it to have been some 6" thick, with wattle and daub.

The front of the house is now of rubble, which may belong to this phase of development or may be earlier, the absence of a straight joint not being significant. At a time undetermined, the long distance from the entrance passage to the parlour was found inconvenient, since two-thirds of the service-room window was cut away, with the wall below, and a front door was inserted. The service-room thus became a wide passage, not however with a door to the back. And at the other end of the house, though not necessarily at the same time, the passage partition and end room were unceiled and the whole area became non-domestic.

The 18th century inventory mentioned above refers to this house, and it is reproduced as Appendix A.

ii. *Crockers*. (Plate VIIc. Fig. 2 c)

This was the house for the largest copyhold, its 25 acres representing 30 by Somerset customary measure. The land was scattered, mostly in Stocklinch Magdalen but part in Ottersey, and nearly half, in the 1792 survey, was in the unenclosed fields. When the copyhold fell in, the land was redistributed, and for over a century the property has consisted of only house, garden and a small orchard. The house has been declining over many years, though one of us had the advantage of seeing part of it while it was still a home, with a snug living-room furnished and decorated more after the fashion of the nineteenth century than the twentieth. Cooking was still done over an open fire, by the side of which was a large high settle, placed so as to keep off draughts. The old lady who lived there sat in the fireplace to tend her kettle or pot, hung above a small fire.

The central skeleton of the house has stayed unimpaired, in the form of two jointed cruck trusses, of a type more primitive than we have seen elsewhere. The upright members are deeper and more curved at the head than the usual form, which has a fairly precise transition from upright post to rafter. The first impression, in fact was of a well-cranked entire cruck, until the joints were found beneath thick paint. There are two 13' bays and a longer one, over 16½', to the west. Traces of an earlier post-and-truss frame remain at the west end, in the form of the tie-beam, grooved to receive rods, and holes in the rafters; there are no traces of former studs. As at Johnson's Acre, there were 3 purlins on each side, those of the long bay being much bent in spite of a scantling of 11" by 6".

The principle of the original house plan was evidently the same as at Johnson's Acre, a living area east of the entry, storage to the west. The building being low, it is likely that there was not an original upper room, and that the living part comprised a hall and an inner chamber, both open to the roof. The building is wide enough for the inner part to have been subdivided.

Sixteenth century improvements were so extensive as to suggest a rise in status of the occupier, and also that the theoretically inferior copyhold tenure was no deterrent to the betterment of housing. The hall was developed by means of a fireplace, stone at the back and outer side, timber-framed on the inner side. Above was built a FH1 hood, in which, however, some rods are visibly horizontal. The entrance to the room has a 'Tudor' doorway and is between the fireplace and a wooden newel staircase. The back of the staircase is of stud-and-plank, as are partitions within the hall, forming two small rooms. The partitions are morticed into sill- and head-beams. A 'Tudor' doorway gave access to one inner room, from which a similar doorway led to the other; the entrances were later altered. The ceiling of the hall is framed, with four large compartments. One small back window frame is original, keeled stops identifying its period.

The 'Tudor' outer doorframes are massive and (not the doors) are the only original ones which survive among the group of houses. Across the passage is a wall of rectangular timber framing, filled by horizontal rods and daub. The doorway through this leads to what was a spacious lower-end parlour, more lofty than the hall (Plate VIIc) and occupying the whole, and more, of the original west end of the house. Whatever may have been the filling under the original western truss was removed, to allow the parlour to be extended under the tie-beam for some 4'.

The result was an almost square room, with a coffered ceiling. This has 16 compartments, all with plain, deep chamfers, the central beams being larger, and cambered. On the side nearest the road was built a lateral fireplace, close to the passage, the stonework being integral with that of the outer wall; and the sole light for the room was next to the fireplace, from a window later extended to form a bay. Both front and rear walls were carried on a short distance beyond the end of the parlour, to provide a small store, accessible only from the outside. Between store and parlour is a framed partition, similar to that between parlour and passage. The 1792 survey mentions farm buildings, of which some foundations remain, and, should they have been built in the 16th century, there would be a reason for the reduction of storage space within the house.

No clear conclusion can be reached about the front wall. The whole wall is now of stone, but it would be hard to say whether part is original or the whole belongs to the 16th century improvements. The back wall of the original living end of the house is of cob, while that enclosing the parlour is of stone.

The reduction of standing of the property in the 19th century is reflected in the house. Out-buildings mentioned in the 1792 survey perhaps went first; in any event, an inferior extension was tacked on to the west of the house. This was the area for cider manufacture till 1970. An iron cheese press was used for the purpose and was seen by one of us on a preliminary visit. The fine parlour became a miscellaneous store, a back entrance being cut through the partition. Its chimney was truncated and blocked and, upstairs, was cut into, to provide a window for the room above. In the main house, reduced to its original living length, a door was cut from the hall into the inner service-room, which, provided with a fireplace, became a tiny parlour.

iii. *Brakes Cottage*. (Fig. 2 d)

This building was classified as a house, not a cottage, in the 1792 survey. There is no documentation about its occupants save a name at that date; and all that can be said is that the tenure was copyhold, including an acre of garden and orchard, the same area as now. Remaining structural elements in their original position are few, since the roof was raised when the house was modernised in the late sixteenth or early seventeenth century. At the east end are parts of a framed truss, underbuilt by a thick, presumed cob, wall. The purlins, re-used, project markedly. A fairly long bay, 14', led to a simple cruck frame; the upper parts of the blades had been cut off above the sharpest part of the bend, presumably at the time of modification, steeper principal rafters being attached instead. After another, rather shorter, bay was a post-and-truss construction, and the original house may have ended here, with a door in the end gable¹⁸. More probably, the house continued across an entry, as at Crockers, to a utility and storage area, but no trace remains of an original construction. Within the living part of the house, a framed partition, 8' from the east end, divided a chamber from the hall. The partition is intact, the rectangular spaces being filled by daub. Access to the inner room is by a doorway with a shouldered head¹⁹. The frame is lightly chamfered on the hall side, plain on the other.

The modernisation of the house was relatively late, a FH2 hood over the fireplace being the criterion. The fireplace occupies almost half of the width of the house, one side being the outer stone wall and the back and the other side being of stone. The wooden lintel is unusually high, the underside being almost 7' above the floor and resting on stout posts. The spacing of the studs is such that the rods can only be horizontal. The top coincides with the roof apex, as raised. An axial ceiling beam, chamfered, has a crude form of 'Wern-hir'. The west end of the house was built, or rebuilt, so as to provide a cross-passage, with a partition, not now complete, of stout studs, morticed into sill and head beams, the area between the studs being filled by daub on horizontal rods. Beyond the partition, there is a lateral beam at ceiling height, supporting a jointed cruck frame. Thence to the end of the house is another 9'.

The chamber at the east end is now a service-room, while the whole of the west end is a good sized sitting-room, at first sight suggesting that there was a lower-end parlour as at Crockers. Village memory, however, recalls that there was a wall, of which a little remains, under the ceiling-beam, before recent restoration, and a photograph shows that there was no chimney stack at the end of the house nor any window in this end section, except perhaps at the back. The possibility is, therefore, that there was domestic use next to the passage and non-domestic beyond.

iv. *Mannings*. (Plates VIId, VIIa-d. Fig. 3 a)

The houses discussed above are part of the group in Stoney Lane. In the other two, later work is more dominant, and it is convenient to leave them until after dealing with houses elsewhere in the village. Of these, Mannings is in the main street, just north of Stocklinch Magdalen church,

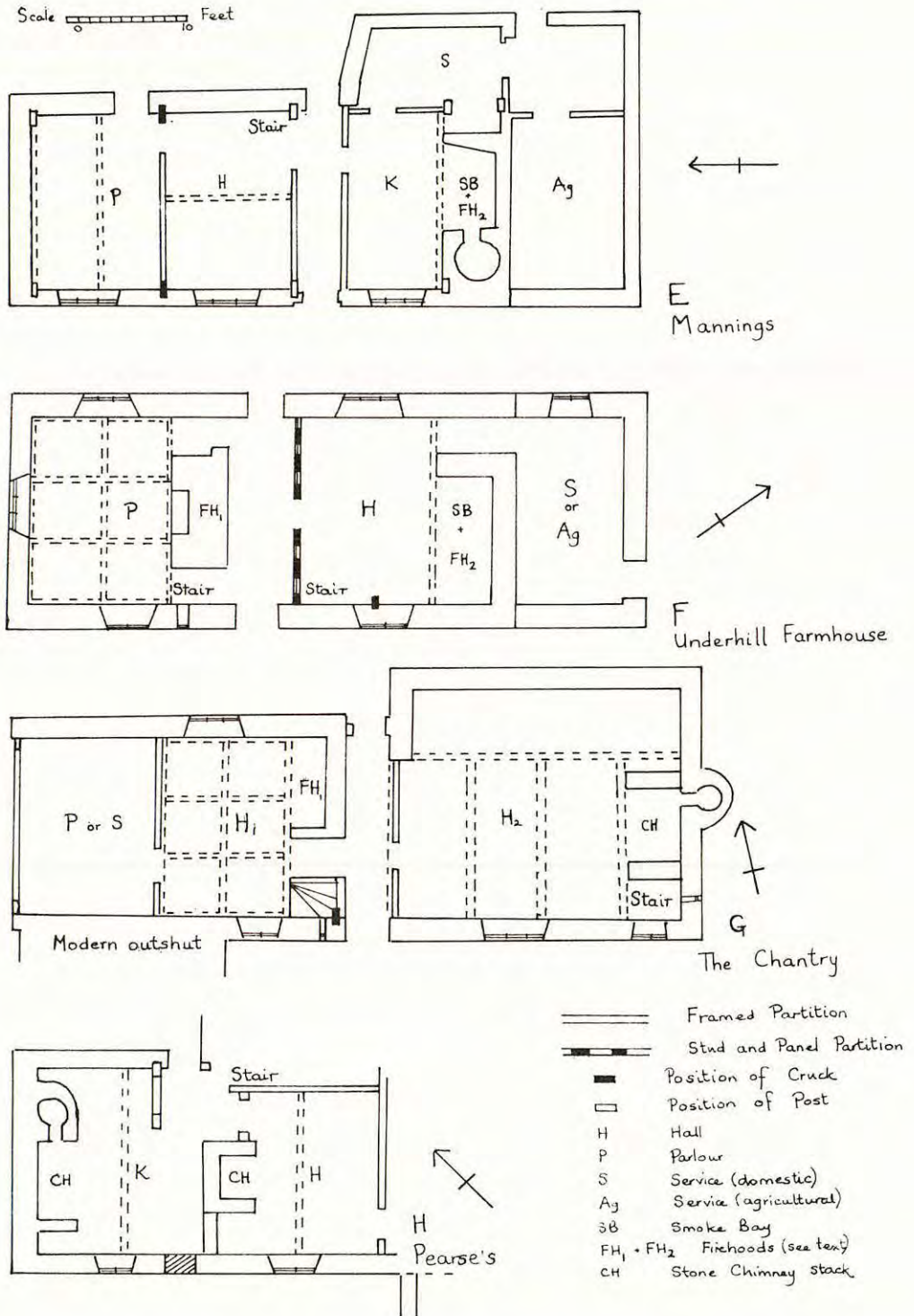


Fig. 3.

and if there was ever a demesne farm, the site is appropriate for the farmhouse. There is no direct evidence, but the farm was occupied in the 18th and 19th centuries by members of the leading families of Magdalen parish; its acreage was larger than others, almost 40 acres, and of these 8 were meadow, to the east of the farmyard. The farmhouse, however, is not significantly different in size from others formerly associated with the Ilchester Almshouse Trust. It was sold in the year after our first examination, and we owe a particular debt to the new owner, Mr. R. J. Prince, for allowing us to share in the discovery of features which lay concealed behind plaster and wallpaper.

The building contains more of the features outlined in part II than any other. The roof construction, so far as traced, is intact. At each end is a characteristic post-and-truss frame, with 5 studs between tie-beam and collar and none above. Each frame was set on the inner side of thick cob walling. The word 'was' arises from the unfortunate necessity to rebuild the north end in stone, but the demolition involved made it possible to establish the precise position of the posts in relation to the end and side walls, as well as the nature of these walls. The front wall is original, of rubble, while the rear one is of cob, on a 18-24" plinth, except where an outshut had been added. On the front, rubble, side, the post was supported by the stone of the wall, beginning rather over a foot above the plinth; and at the rear, the post rested on the plinth. Exploration further along the house showed the same features, while another rear post, in the area where the plinth had been removed, rested on stones. The south end of the house contains an exceptional feature, in the form of curved braces between the posts and the tie-beam. A detail also visible at this point was that the filling between collar and apex of the truss was of vertical rods, with wattling and daub. Purlins are similar to those in other houses, except that there are only two on each side. Again there is no trace of original wallplates. During the demolition referred to, a spur was seen to be fitted to the rear northern post, but this was evidently later.

Internally, there are three bays of approximately 11' 6". The first is marked by a jointed cruck frame, originally open, and the next by a post-and-truss frame, shown by smoke-blackening on the tie-beam also to have been open.²⁰ Another post-and-truss frame is 5' from the end of the house and forms the inner side of a smoke bay (Plate VIIIb). The vertical rods which run from tie-beam to collar and from collar to rafters are not the original ones, which must have been removed to give access; but sufficient daub was removed recently to show the groove on the upper side of the tie-beam which will have received the lower ends of the original rods.

The original plan of the house is not certain. If the front wall is original as is supposed, the front doorway, with another opposed to it at the back of the house, will be in its original site. The area to the north is bisected by the open cruck frame, but was presumably partitioned unequally, as at Brakes Cottage, to provide for an inner chamber. Next to the passage, there has been recent rebuilding, including the construction of a fireplace whose brick flue is applied to the wall, and all that one can say is that it is probable that there was a hearth at the same place, as in other houses. If so, it is likely to have been succeeded by a fireplace of modest size, the main work being done in the kitchen, where the hearth area was large.

Modernisation appears to have been done fairly late in the 16th century, to judge by ceiling beam stops and a firehood inside the smoke bay. This hood came to light dramatically, after a small experimental hole had been made in the plaster of a bedroom wall. More was visible later, after Mr. Prince had made openings at two other points, but space was too confined for close examination to be possible. As far as could be judged, the type was FH2. The south side of the former smoke bay, i.e. against the end wall and gable is heavily encrusted by a tarry deposit, showing that it was in use for a substantial time, but the hood within has retained its clean surface of mud and plaster (Plate VIIc). The hood is carried by the cob wall at the back, while on the kitchen side it springs from a lintel which stretches from one side of the room to the other. The lintel is presumed to rest on a pier against the front wall; a second pier is well over halfway across the room; and the end of the lintel is halved into one of the posts which carried the smoke bay. The sides of the hood rise from near the front wall and from the intermediate pier. The area enclosed is substantially greater than we have noted for other FH2 hoods.

Other work of the period included framed partitions on either side of the entry (now mostly replaced by recent brick, save for the head beams), and another under the jointed cruck. The last is well preserved, and recent removal of the daub and exterior plaster shows that the frame consists of studs morticed into head and sill beams, at convenient intervals for insertion of horizontal rods to carry the daub. There is a doorway between the hall and the inner room, which remained unheated. In the inner room, a ceiling beam runs from side to side of the house, while

one in the hall is axial, carried on the partitions, and a little off centre, as though it were brought to the side of a fireplace. In both rooms the ceiling beams are carefully chamfered, and finished with keeled stops (Plate VIII d). The upper rooms are low, lighted now by dormer windows, and the original light may have come principally from an end window at the north end. This was created by cutting away the filling between two of the studs and inserting a mullion (now gone), the frame thus made being marked by chamfering round the edges. The staircase is modern, but in the site where it would be expected, whether a newel stair or a ladder, parallel with the fireplace.

At the back of the house, at the kitchen end, is an outshut, to which a date cannot be readily assigned. The original wall and plinth were removed, with the curious result of leaving a post of the smoke-bay freestanding. It is now hidden again. The space was filled by a timber-framed partition, and it is possible that this could have been as late as the eighteenth century, when a brick bread-oven was built on a rubble base on the road side of the fireplace. Above the bread-oven, the width of the firehood was reduced by a partition, so that there is a second instance of a clean exterior and an interior heavily covered by tar and smoke. At the other end of the house, the unheated room at some stage went over to farm purposes, there being evidence that at one time it was used as a dairy. At the south end, probably in the nineteenth century, a two-storeyed bay, of inferior construction was added, with a fireplace connected into the kitchen firehood; and this addition, later, fell into partial decay.

v. *Underhill Farmhouse*. (Fig. 3 b)

This is the building mentioned earlier as lying among Ottersey property, along Owl Street. It is so near the manor house and the church that it may have been the predecessor of the present Manor farm house; at any rate, it formed part of the Manor farm property at the time of the 1839 tithe survey. The house is introduced at this point since it has features in common with Mannings and may help towards interpreting part of that building. The axis is almost northeast-southwest, but for ease of description it is treated as though it were north-south.

The original structure was of three bays, or, since the south wall has been completely rebuilt and has none of the characteristics found in other houses, possibly four, the south one having gone. In the visible building the bays are marked, approximately equally, by two jointed-cruck frames. At the end is a timber-framed gable, much hidden by wallpaper, and this is the inner side of a smoke-bay, of similar proportions to that at Mannings. The present cross-passage is almost exactly midway between the two cruck frames, so that, as the house stands, there was a room each side of the entry, all being open to the roof.

In the sixteenth century, the south area was storeyed over, the ceiling being framed, with six compartments, steeply chamfered as at Crockers (III ii) and The Chantry (III vi). A fireplace was built, with back and sides of stone; on these and the lintel, which is concealed, was built a FH1 hood. The front of the fireplace coincides with a cruck frame and the back is on the entry. The doorway from the entry is on the west side of the fireplace, and on the other side were stairs, now removed but shown to have been there by a small loop window cut in a block of stone. The entry was made into a formal passage by a stud-and-plank partition to ceiling height, and most of this remains. In the north room — to be termed kitchen if the counterpart be thought of as hall — no features of note are visible. Upstairs, the tie-beam of the smoke bay has been cut away, and the side of a firehood, constructed within the space, can be seen. From what is visible of long studs at the back and front corners, the impression is of a FH2 hood, but the front is inaccessible, so that it is uncertain whether the construction is basically of framed panels or of converging studs.

On the north side of the house, a single-storey addition was made at a later date. It has a door to the outside at the end of the house, while the narrowing of the smoke bay to a hood left room for a passage to be cut from the kitchen. The door to the outside suggests use which was not primarily domestic and this is so now, since the room houses the village post office.

vi. *The Chantry*. (Fig. 3 c)

The building was the farmhouse of a property whose descent is well documented, back to the time when it was a copyhold over 24 acres (customary measure). Early in the 18th century, without change of occupier, the copyhold was replaced by a 99 year lease, determinable by lives, and this system still continued when the Stocklinch Magdalen tithe survey was made in 1845. The 1792 survey for the Almshouse Trust shows an equivalent area, 20 statute acres. Most of the land was in closes, not strips, but was scattered over the parish, chiefly in Middle, East and Tunway Fields (the last being adjacent to West Field). With the tenure of the property went the

obligation of feeding the representatives of the Bailiff and Burgesses of Ilchester when they visited Stocklinch, with

“a good and sufficient dinner of boyled or roasted flesch and other necessary eatables for the steward and 4 or 5 other men at the most and small beer for them to drink, with stabling and hay for their horses, the sd. Bailiff and Burgesses allowing 10s. for every such dinner and entertainment”²¹.

The size of one of the rooms to be described may account for the attachment of the obligation to this house.

The house is in Stoney Lane, opposite to those already described and higher up, on a flat area in rising ground. The upper end of the house is at the west, and the whole of the original timber structure west of what is now the cross-passage appears to be intact. At the end is a post-and-truss frame, which, instead of being hidden in the wall, has been fully exposed when rebuilding in stone was done within the posts and under the tie-beam. As a result, characteristic features can be seen, from the absence of a sill-beam at the bottom to the jowling of the posts at the top and the projection of the tie-beam beyond the heads of the posts. The next truss, 12' inside the house, is partly visible, and corresponds with that at the end, including the detail of there being two studs from tie-beam to collar and none above. There are carpenters' marks on both trusses. A partition downstairs coincides with the inner truss, and in view of the certain example at Johnson's Acre across the road, it appears probable that this end bay was always of two storeys, service room below and chamber above.

The next bay is unusually long for Somerset, over 16', and ends with a jointed-cruck frame; none of this is visible, except on the south side, for a few feet above and below the joint. The position coincides with the west side of the present cross-passage, much of which is filled by the back of a fireplace. Whether this point was originally within a good-sized hall, or indeed how much further east the house extended, cannot be known, since whatever there may have been was demolished and rebuilt. Purlins in this western part are in the more usual pattern of three on each side, trenched.

New work in the 16th century may have been earlier than in some of the other houses, since above the fireplace built in the hall is a FH1 hood. The front of this has been but away to form an alcove, but it has been preserved above the bedroom ceiling height, and the proportions of the panels at the side can be seen clearly. Under the hood, the back of the fireplace and the side next to the way into the hall are of stone. Beyond the doorway was made a stone newel stair; a few steps remain in a cupboard under the modern replacement. A framed ceiling, with nine compartments, was constructed over the hall, from side to side of the house. The chamfers are deep and the finish good. The stonework of both the front and the back of the house appears to belong to this period, since it incorporates three early timber-framed windows with mullions. One is in the front of the hall, one in the bedroom above, and one in the back of the hall, and all alike have plain chamfers on the frames and mullions. There is also a small loop window, cut in a stone, to light the staircase, and this detail is repeated in the rebuilt area to the east.

The roof of this new area begins surprisingly with a truss only a few inches away from the jointed cruck, and therefore still over the west side of the cross-passage. At this level, the area is divided by a second truss, and a third is in front of a stone chimney stack; none coincides with a ceiling-beam below. All trusses differ in details of framing, save only that all have two collars. They are made of lighter timber than that used in the older part of the house and the studs are relatively close together. In the west truss, two studs form doorposts, to which a 'Tudor' head has been added, and there is a corresponding post and insertion in the adjacent jointed cruck. Two studs of the central truss also provided doorposts. The purlins are much lighter than in the old part of the house, and they continue past the chimney stack to be supported in the stone gable. In this stack, at the upper level, there is a small fireplace, with stone jambs and lintel, the latter somewhat rounded.

A staircase, now removed but marked by the loop window mentioned above, led down by the side of the fireplace to a long room below. In this room, the side next to the cross-passage has been hidden by later work, but is thought to be of stud-and-plank. Two substantial, well-finished ceiling beams divide the length. They are boldly chamfered, slightly convex, and have well-shaped keeled stops. A third lighter beam is flush with the fireplace, and has no distinctive features. The fireplace is wide, occupying all the space available save for the stair area. It is of stone and appears to be integral with the chimney stack and the end wall. In the north-east angle there used to be a later bread-oven, protruding through the end wall. In the gable is a two-light window, now blocked, with characteristic 18th century hollow chamfers. An outshut, on the north side of the room, facing the road, is undatable.

The presence of the bread-oven shows that in the 18th century this was the working kitchen. We have found it difficult to propose a satisfactory reason for the making of so large a room, with high quality details. The farm was not large enough for there to have been many resident employees. The easiest answer is that the size was dictated by the size and make-up of the family at the time of the 16th century modernisation; but the easy may well be wrong.

vii. *Pearses*. (Fig. 3 d)

This building, below Crockers in Stoney Lane, was markedly smaller than the others described, if one disregards later additions. Nevertheless, it was described as a 'house' in the 1792 survey. There was half an acre of garden and a 3 acre field, close by but separated. Earlier 18th century lessees occupied other, Ottersey, land, but not of great extent.

The house has been much changed in the course of modernisation, and without the benefit of recollection and record in the village, we might easily have left it out of the group being described. The plan was difficult to recognise because of outshuts, of the absence of a front door—brought back by an old photograph—and of the presence of a parlour wing, which turned out to have been a carpenter's shop in the recent past. The visible evidence of the original form is sparse, even so, but was reinforced from the experience gained in other houses. At the upper, south-east end is a typical thick wall, disguised, like the gable above it, by weatherboarding, but not enough to hide the projecting purlin ends. Part way along inside the house is to be seen a roof truss with tie-beam, collar and 5 studs between tie-beam and collar as at Mannings. Also, on the ground floor, at the lower end, beyond the entry, is a short section of framed partition; this is different from that at Brakes Cottage in that between the two remaining posts is a middle as well as a head rail, the resultant rectangles being of such dimensions that they must have had vertical rods as a base for the daub filling. If the section of partition, as we suppose, is original, the house, from the beginning, would have consisted of an inner chamber, a rather small hall, an entry and a third, lower, room. The house is low, and while there is no positive evidence, it would probably have been open to the roof.

The post-medieval development of the house included a considerable fireplace in the hall, occupying nearly half the width of the room and backing on to the entry; and a larger one in the third room, with space for a later bread-oven on one side. Both fireplaces have chimney stacks of stone. At the entrance to the hall, there is not room for a staircase as well, but in view of the height of the inserted ceiling in relation to that of the house, the upper floor may have had lofts rather than rooms, access being by ladder. The one ceiling-beam across the hall is of generous size, well chamfered and with doubly keeled stops. One door-frame has survived recent restoration, though it has been moved; it has a 'Tudor' head, and parts of the posts have been cut away at the level appropriate to allowing barrels to pass easily.

APPENDIX

INVENTORY OF ELIZABETH COGGAN, 13TH OCTOBER, 1743

A true and perfect inventory of all and singular the goods and chattells and credits of Elizabeth Coggan late of Stocklinch Magdalen in the county of Somerset widow deceased taken and appraised by John White and Robert Rush the 13th day of October 1743:

| | | |
|--|--|--------|
| <i>In the Kitchen</i> | | |
| One tableboard | | 0 2 6 |
| 13 pewter dishes | | 2 2 0 |
| 13 pewter plates | | 0 10 0 |
| Two brass kettles and a skellatt | | 0 7 0 |
| Two crocks and two pottage crocks | | 0 11 0 |
| Three crocks | | 0 4 0 |
| One clock and lead weights belonging | | 2 10 0 |
| Two joint stools | | 0 3 0 |
| One cupboard | | 0 1 0 |
| One dresser and tax | | 0 5 0 |
| One pesle and mortar and 4 pewter dishes | | 0 5 0 |
| <i>In the Hall</i> | | |
| Three half hogsheads | | 0 12 0 |
| One cheese press and leaden bed | | 0 10 0 |
| Two quarter barrells | | 0 5 0 |
| One buckett, two pails and one hogshead | | 0 15 0 |
| Two half hogsheads | | 0 8 0 |

In the Hall chamber

| | | | |
|--|-----|----|---|
| Two beds and furniture thereunto belonging | 4 | 0 | 0 |
| Four coffers and three boxes | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| Wearing apparrell | 3 | 0 | 0 |
| Two tablecloths — seven napkins | 0 | 15 | 0 |
| One iron press and six pair of cloth shears and other things thereunto belonging | 10 | 0 | 0 |
| Lumber goods and goods forgotten | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| A leasehold estate | 60 | 0 | 0 |
| | £89 | 5 | 6 |

(Either the goods had been assembled from a number of rooms into a few or Mrs. Coggan was only occupying part of the house. From the succeeding lease, granted less than three weeks later, it appears that the new lessee was already in possession).

Abbreviations in the inventory have been expanded.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

References to *Somerset Archaeol. and Natur. Hist.* are abbreviated to *SAS*.

- Somerset Record Office D/B/il, by permission of the Clerk to the Trust. We are also indebted to him for allowing access to two vacant properties.
- Somerset Record Office DD/SP, communicated by Miss T. Munckton.
- For a brief account, Hall, Sir R. de Z., 'Post-medieval land tenure in Preston Plucknett', *SAS*, 105, 1961, at pp. 127-8.
- See note 2.
- Only one cruck frame, visible from the outside, is known in Somerset. This, at Redbridge Cottage, Standerwick (communicated by Commander E. H. D. Williams, O.B.E.), is in the Wiltshire tradition.
- Dr. N. W. Alcock, F.S.A. (verbal communication) knows of Devonshire houses where the lower purlins are similarly placed and there are no wallplates. On a grander scale, the principle is the same in the great jointed-cruck barn at Preston Plucknett, Yeovil; here there are four rows of purlins.
- These thick, projecting end walls have been found elsewhere, but so far in a narrowly confined area. There are several in Barrington, a mile to the north, e.g. Allenbury Cottage and Brownsells; one at Colliers, Isle Abbots, 3 miles NNW (to which we were introduced by Mrs. P. A. Langmaid); and now, faced in stone, at Weylands, West Lambrook, 2 miles WNW.
- R. C. Edmunds, who has restored several medieval Somerset houses, has never seen sill-plates. His present house, Longcroft, Sea, Ilminster, has an upright resting on a stone, and the same was seen to be the case at Allenbury Cottage, Barrington, when the house was stripped before restoration. Other examples have been noted by Commander Williams and ourselves further west in Somerset.
- Examination of Vinces, Barrington, with the builder who was restoring the house, led to the conclusion there that the rubble front wall was original, though the others were of cob.
- Walrond, L. F. J., 'An early jointed cruck building at South Bradon', *SAS*, 114, 1970, 68-73. Also 'Beecham's Cottage, Pitney', *SAS*, 97, 1952, 79-91.
- A timber-framed back wall at Cuffs Orchard, Isle Abbots, and a wing at Weylands, West Lambrook, both with fairly close studding, are considered to be fairly late C16. There is also a timber-framed back wall at Mannings, Stocklinch, but this may be as late as C18.
- Also at Weylands, West Lambrook, where the structure has substantial vertical framing between tie-beam and collar.
- Other structures have been seen:
 - FH1. Knapp House and Vinces, Barrington; Sedgemoor Inn, Westonzoyland, with Commander Williams, who has studied it more fully, and H. D. G. Humphreys, a chimney in whose own house at Othry has, at the least, a timber-framed front.
 - FH2. Allenbury Cottage, Barrington; Tudor House, Broadway; Colliers and Monks Thatch, Isle Abbots; Weylands, West Lambrook (built in a smoke bay).
 We have also had from the owner a report of a former FH2, destroyed by fire, in Haselbury Plucknett; here the basic filling between the horizontal rods was of turves.
- Development in Worcestershire is discussed by Charles, F. W. B., *Mediaeval cruck-building and its derivatives*, 1967, p. 17 and passim.
- Fox and Raglan, *Monmouthshire Houses*, II, 1953, p. 87, also found several houses with 'keeled' stops in one parish. The other known Somerset instances are at Sea Mills Farmhouse, 1 miles SW of Ilminster, and Tudor House, Broadway, 3 miles WNW of Ilminster. In these two cases, there are boldly fielded panels, with similar stops, at the centre of beams.
- A truss at the former Butleigh Court may be compared, *SAS*, 114, 1970, fig. 2 on p. 52.
- Original upper rooms in small houses of this period may turn out not to be very rare. For comparison are Colliers, Isle Abbots (with jettying into the hall) Longcroft, Sea and The Chantry, Stocklinch (neither certain, both probable). Commander Williams has communicated evidence of a jettied room at Hagley Bridge Farm, Ashbrittle.
- For post-medieval timber-framing, above, note 11. A closely parallel end frame is at Farndon Thatch, Puckington 1 mile NW, where there is an interesting detail of a reversed ogee brace from sill to tie-beam.

- ¹⁸ The type is illustrated in Barley, M. W., *The English farmhouse and cottage*, 1961, Plate Xa, and fig. C1 on p. 104. We have seen a number of other houses of, or based on, this plan.
- ¹⁹ A doorway with shouldered head was found by Sir Cyril Fox at Burrow, Wootton Courtney, and is illustrated in *SAS*, **95**, 1950, fig. 1. With Lord Raglan, *Monmouthshire houses*, he proposed a date of *c.*1500. In Devonshire, without such a date being discarded, substantially later ones have been established, see Alcock, N. W., *Trans. Devon Ass.*, **101**, 1969, p. 102 and Jones, S. R., *Ibid.*, **103**, 1971, p. 40. Others known in Somerset are at Vines, Barrington; Orchard Cottage, East Coker (end entrance); Colliers, Isle Abbots (one post); Butleigh, a farm building where it is uncertain whether the door is original or inserted. The Royal Commission for Historical Monuments Inventory for Dorset dates Naish Farmhouse, Holwell, with two such doorways, to the 15th century.
- ²⁰ The central truss of the open hall at South Bradon (note 10) also had a tie-beam resting on posts.
- ²¹ From a lease of 1742 in the Ilchester Almshouse Trust records.
- ²² The trusses have a curious lack of uniformity. The disposition of studs is:

| | Tie-beam to collar | Collar to upper collar | To apex |
|---------|--------------------|------------------------|---------|
| West | 6 | 2 | - |
| Central | 4 | 3 | 2 |
| East | No tie-beam | 4 | - |



Plate VIIa. Stocklinch Houses. Johnson's Acre; exterior.



Plate VIIb. Stocklinch Houses. Johnson's Acre; late ceiling abutting on jettied joists.

Plate VIIc. Stocklinch Houses. Crockers; lower-end parlour.



Plate VIId. Stocklinch Houses. Mannings; exterior-framed gable above cob wall.



Plate VIIIa. Stocklinch Houses. Mannings; detail of post-and-truss construction.



Plate VIIIb. Stocklinch Houses. Mannings; inner frame of smoke-bay (studs later).

Plate VIIIc. Stocklinch Houses. Mannings; FH2 (left) inside smoke-bay.



Plate VIIId. Stocklinch Houses. Mannings; partition with horizontal rods and beam with keeled stops over.

