

A FURTHER CATALOGUE OF SOMERSET CRUCKS

BY SIR ROBERT DE ZOUCHE HALL, K.C.M.G., F.S.A.

The preliminary catalogue of 1970¹ listed 84 instances of crucks in 82 buildings. About half of these represented gradual collection of information over some 20 years by earlier enquirers, who did not also intercommunicate. At the time of publication, there was no idea whether many or few remained to be found, though the density in certain areas had already reached a similar degree to that found in Dorset. In the event another 103 have been added to the list, inclusive of two earlier items which it was necessary to re-classify. Of the new list, there are four cases where two forms appear in one building, and the full total becomes 185 instances in 179 buildings. A terminal date has been set at the end of April, 1973, and further information will be placed in the Somerset Record Office. During much of the period, the emphasis has been far more on fuller recording than on reconnaissance, and the extent to which crucks turn up without being looked for indicates that there may be many relevant buildings to be recorded. Those who have been concerned have been Mrs. C. Austin, working most of the time with the author, Commander E. H. D. Williams, O.B.E., and latterly, M. C. Batt and R. G. Gilson.

The former list was prefaced by a distribution map, which showed that the area of discovery was mainly in central and south Somerset. To repeat this on a cumulative basis would merely add weight to what was already known, and a clearer picture may be obtained by stating totals by areas, roughly from west to east. The result is:

	<i>Preliminary</i>	<i>Further list</i>	<i>Total (by buildings)</i>
Dulverton	—	3	3
Williton-Minehead	6	2	8
Wellington	5	14	19
Taunton	14	15	29
Bridgwater	11	9	20
Chard-Crewkerne	4	22	26
Langport-Somerton	20	25	45
Yeovil	7	6	13
Wincanton	4	—	4
Axbridge-Wells-Glastonbury	4	1	5
Shepton Mallet-Frome	4	1	inc. 2 base crucks 5
North Somerset	1	1	inc. 3 base crucks 2
	80	99	179

Undoubtedly, more discoveries have been made where it was easiest for investigators to explore, but the absence of discovery in the north and east of the county reinforces what was written in the former article, namely that there may not be much to discover. This belief has been fortified by the publication of volumes III and IV of the Dorset inventory by the Royal Commission on Historical Monuments. In these appears a fair scattering of cruck roofs in north central Dorset up to the River Stour, but rapid tailing off further east. And as for Wiltshire, a MS list has been seen, compiled by R. P. de B. Nicholson, which shows a blank for that part of the country which borders on south-east Somerset, but a noticeable group in the area west of Devizes.

Towards the Devon border, a substantial number of Somerset discoveries has been made, from Chard right through to the Taunton-Dulverton road, A361, and a search by Commander Williams near Dulverton itself was immediately productive. These suggest that there may still be more to come from the western part of Somerset, from the Brendon Hills and on both slopes of Exmoor through to the Devon border.

The widest distribution has come from the brief list of true crucks (the terminology is discussed below). To the west, an earlier report of a jointed cruck in Selworthy has turned out to relate to a true one; while to the east, an instance has been found within a few hundred yards of the Wiltshire boundary (Plate I). To the north, a barn demolished some years ago was so near the Gloucestershire border that it was classified as being in that county; and in central-south Somerset, the density has increased from fresh instances. The extent of jointed crucks² has

widened dramatically to the edge of northern Somerset, from the discovery in Axbridge by M. C. Batt of a small outbuilding, in which was the added satisfaction that one of two trusses was jointed, the other not.³ Such a coincidence had already been found in North Cadbury⁴ and Commander Williams has placed on record similar discoveries at Strangman's, Heale, Curry Rivel, and at Brick House, Drayton.⁵

Abundant evidence has also been found of the practice of improvement, rather than rebuilding, in the 16th and early 17th centuries, by the insertion of floors in open halls and other parts of a building. All too often the earlier work above has been concealed by the ceiling of bedrooms, but modern opening up, often initially for the sake of introducing pipes for hot-water systems, or for distribution of electric wires, has brought to light smoke-blackened timbers, often accompanied by arch- and wind-bracing. The first such building to be recorded was at Chicks Cottages, Fitzhead, where R. F. Taylor made a sectional drawing before its demolition.⁶ Of later discoveries, the most spectacular has been at The Priory (a nineteenth century name for a farmhouse) in Barrington. Here jointed cruck trusses are associated with arch-braces and very narrow bays, in which wind-braces cross one another. It appears to be a much earlier building than others which have come to light, save those with base-crucks, but dating will be a matter for review of the evidence in due course by someone with comparative knowledge.

The classification adopted in the preliminary catalogue is now reduced to three headings:

I. *True crucks*, to conform to the terminology of a national classification, though there is no implication adverse to other forms. In the restricted sense, the term applies to crucks where the blades are made from single pieces of timber, but for present purposes covers instances where more than one piece is used, producing a result which in silhouette is indistinguishable.

II. *Jointed crucks*.

III. *Base-crucks*.

Some amendments are required to the former list, in order to bring it into conformity with that which follows, *viz.*,

- I. No. 2. *Delete* entry, which appears re-classified in the new list.
3. *Delete* 'St. Magdalen'. The names of civil parishes are now being used
5. *Add* D for demolished. (The roof was lost by fire.)
- II. No. 21. *Preface* with Spaxton, the civil parish.
23. *Preface* with Selworthy, the civil parish.
- 27 and 28, *Add* D.
42. House renamed Longcroft.
56. (Note on p. 58.) For 'fireplace' read 'wall'.
63. *Delete* entry, which appears, re-classified in the new list.
68. *Delete* 'St. Magdalen'.
70. *Preface* with Chard, the civil parish.
75. *Correct* grid ref. to 182203.
77. *Substitute* Old Cleeve for Washford.
- 10b. (p. 61). *Correct* grid ref. to 550306.

III. There are no additions to the 1970 list. The form is the subject of an article by N. W. Alcock and M. W. Barley, 'Medieval roofs with base-crucks and short principals,' *Antiq. J.*, 52, 1972. Somerset examples are catalogued on pp. 160-1. The authors discuss the possibility of base crucks arising from modification of true crucks on p. 150, and a building referred to is their no. 59, the Englishcombe tithe barn. Full examination by Commander Williams, confirming a reconnaissance by the present author, shows that further modification of the description of the barn may have to be made.

I. TRUE CRUCKS

<i>Parish</i>	<i>OS Grid Ref.</i>	<i>Name or Location</i>
1. Axbridge	ST432545	Manor Ho. outbdg (see also II, 6)
2. Bathealton	056251	Hurstone Farmho.
3. Berkley	823508	Redbridge Cott., Standerwick

4. Curry Rivel	382257	Strangman's, Heale (see also II, 31)
5. Drayton	407247	Brick Ho., wing (see also II, 36)
6. Huish Episcopi	411264	Pound Cott.
7. Selworthy	SS927462	East Lynch Cott.
8. Stocklinch	ST384174	Brakes Cott. (see also II, 84)
9. Weston, Bath	729662	Manor Farm barn. D.

Notes or fuller records relating to nos. 1-7 have been deposited in the Somerset Record Office, while no. 8 is discussed in the course of an article by Mrs. C. Austin and Sir R. de Z. Hall, 'The medieval houses of Stocklinch' in *SAS*, 116, 1972. Five of the eight buildings which still stand do not appear in the statutory lists of buildings of architectural or historic importance, for reasons touched on in the commentary below, list II.

Notes

1. *Axbridge*. The importance of this building (discovered by M. C. Batt), from the point of view of distribution, has been mentioned in the introduction. It is small, with only two trusses, and the presence of archbraces suggests that it is medieval.
2. *Bathealton*. Only stubs of trusses remain, but the structure was described to Commander E. H. D. Williams by a village ancient as made of '6 whole trees cut out of the wood' and not jointed.
3. *Berkley*. This building is the only instance in Somerset known so far, where a cruck truss forms the end of a building and is visible from the outside (see Plate 00). It belongs to a group of cruck buildings, the other examples being in Wiltshire, extending towards Chippenham and Devizes. It was brought to Commander Williams' notice by a District Nurse.
6. *Huish Episcopi*. This building provides the opportunity to mention a national scheme of classification, based on the treatment at the apex of trusses. Most Somerset instances have a mortice-and-tenon, but at Pound Cottage the two trusses show two other forms of treatment, while at no. 4, Curry Rivel, there is yet another form.

Instances have been collected and are on deposit at the Somerset Record Office.

II. JOINTED CRUCKS

<i>Parish</i>	<i>OS Grid Ref.</i> (ST unless stated otherwise)	<i>Name or Location</i>
1. Ashbrittle	046226	Waldrons Farmho.
2. "	054238	Hagley Bridge Farmho.
3. "	056228	Tucks (former) Farmho.
4. "	056228	Tucks outbdg.
5. Ashill	344163	Rowlands outbdg, former house
6. Axbridge	432545	Manor Ho. outbdg (see also I, 1)
7. Barrington	387183	The Priory
8. "	391181	Rose Cott.
9. "	391181	Vinces
10. "	392181	The Knapp
11. Bathealton	056242	Surridge Farmho.
12. Bradford	173227	Risdons
13. Broadway	318154	Porch Ho.
14. "	321154	Manor Ho. Roof D.
15. Brushford	SS889259	Beer Farmho.
16. "	SS893246	Lower Sowerhill Farmho.
17. Buckland St. Mary	280148	Dommett Farmho.
18. Cannington	245387	Blackmoor Farmho.
19. "	256397	Almshouses. Roof D.
20. Chaffcombe	354102	The Old Rectory
21. Chard	327056	Lakehays, Tatworth
22. Charlinch	256377	Gothelney Ho.
23. Charlton Mackrell	526282	Unnamed ho. (formerly Greystones)
24. Chipstable	048261	Trowell Farmho.
25. "	051242	Severidges Farmho.
26. Combe Florey	151318	A house
27. " "	156314	Sholers
28. Crewkerne	442098	23 Market Square
29. "	443098	Candle Cott.
30. Crowcombe	120371	Quark Hill Farmho.

<i>Parish</i>	<i>OS Grid Ref.</i> (ST unless stated otherwise)	<i>Name or Location</i>
31. Curry Mallet	324219	The Old Bakery
32. Curry Rivel	382257	Strangmans, Heale (see also I, 4)
33. Dinnington	403128	Parsonage Farmho.
34. Dowlish Wake	375127	Cider Mills
35. " "	376126	Higher Farmho.
36. Drayton	405247	Duck Cott.
37. " "	407247	Brick Ho., wing (see also I, 5)
38. " "	407247	Brick Ho., barn
39. Dulverton	SS919279	Woodliving
40. Fivehead	337239	Lower Listoke Farm Cott.
41. " "	342228	Cathanger Farm barn
42. Halse	139277	Manor Farm barn
43. " "	145288	Stoford Cott. (The 'barn')
44. " "	145288	Stoford
45. Haselbury Plucknett	472111	Thatchcombe
46. " "	473111	Brook Farmho.
47. " "	475107	Clay Castle Farmho.
48. High Ham	429323	Henley Farmho., Henley
49. " "	434295	Dobbins, Low Ham (formerly Laburnum Ho.)
50. Hinton St. George	422126	Fosseway
51. Ilminster	246128	Sea Mills Farmho.
52. Ilton	354174	Wayside
53. " "	356170	The Gables (formerly Skillings)
54. " "	365176	The Old Cider Ho., Ilford
55. Isle Abbotts	351208	Colliers
56. " "	352208	Brooms Farmho.
57. Kingsbury Episcopi	432186	Manor Ho., East Lambrook
58. Long Sutton	483251	Mill Cott., Knole
59. Lydeard St. Lawrence	115339	Keepers Cott., Coleford Water
60. Marston Magna	595224	Kingsland Ho. Roof D.
61. Montacute	496172	The Gables, Bishopston
62. Muchelney	428248	Abbey, Abbot's Kitchen
63. " "	430235	The Pottery
64. North Curry	320254	The Old Vicarage
65. North Petherton	299307	Former Inn, North Newton, D.
66. " "	299307	Former Ho., North Newton, D.
67. " "	300294	Hedging Barton, North Newton
68. North Fitzwarren	200270	Farthings, Langford
69. Pitminster	187191	Lower Coombe Farmho.
70. Puckington	375182	Manor Farm barn
71. Somerton	489285	Unicorn Hotel
72. " "	490285	White Hart Hotel
73. South Petherton	435165	25 South Street
74. Spaxton	190356	Holcombe, Aisholt. Roof D, by fire
75. Stawley	058229	Bennett
76. " "	062212	Tracebridge Mill (former ho.)
77. " "	063218	Hill Farmho.
78. " "	072215	Everlongs outbdg (former ho.)
79. " "	085213	Cothay Manor outbdg
80. Stocklinch	382173	Elwell Ho.
81. " "	382173	Elwell Ho., barn. D.
82. " "	383172	Mannings Old Farmho.
83. " "	383174	Crookers
84. " "	384174	Brakes Cott. (see also I, 7)
85. " "	388170	Underhill Farmho.

<i>Parish</i>	<i>OS Grid Ref.</i> (ST unless stated otherwise)	<i>Name or Location</i>
86. Taunton	226258	The Cott., Greenway Drive. D.
87. Trull	188195	Budleigh Farmho.
88. "	198221	Chilliswood Farmho.
89. "	198221	Chilliswood Farm outbdg
90. Wambrook	293085	Bartletts
91. Wembdon	277377	A house
92. West Hatch	287211	A house
93. Westonzoyland	352348	Sedgemoor Inn
94. Williton	077407	Old End, 23 Bridge Street

Accounts relating to the large majority of the houses listed above have been deposited in the Somerset Record Office, while a number of the Stocklinch houses has been discussed in the article to which a reference was given above. In these circumstances, notes on individual buildings have been reduced to a minimum. A general point, even more striking than the comment on the brief list of true crucks, is that two-thirds of the houses do not appear on the statutory lists of houses of architectural or historic importance, for the reasons that investigators were carrying out a major task under pressure of time, and in any event without powers of entry. Even under favourable circumstances, they could not have been expected to find what is usually concealed by an unexciting, even if picturesque, exterior.

Notes

- 3 and 4. *Ashbrittle*. Commander Williams, who discovered these and many other instances, comments that the shape of the trusses in each building suggests a transitional stage from the true to the jointed cruck. Fig. 1 is based on one sketch of his.
5. *Ashill*. The outbuilding is in fact the predecessor of the Elizabethan mansion, very close at hand and recently restored.
6. *Axbridge*. See note above, under section I.
7. *Barrington*. The Priory is a house of major importance, both for plan and for structure. The roof of the main building has an alternation of major and minor trusses, and curved and crossed windbraces between them and the purlins. A suggestion has been made that the building may date to the late 14th century, and it would, in this context, belong to a very small group of early houses in the lesser secular category; other prominent examples are Long Sutton Court House, also with major and minor trusses, and the Tudor Rose Restaurant in Fore Street, Taunton.
19. Cannington, published in this volume, pp. 00.
33. *Dinnington*. Of the jointed cruck buildings in Somerset, some 170 in all, this is the only one known where the timbers are not united by a long tenon on the upright and corresponding mortice on the rafter, pegs being driven laterally. Here, the two members are joined by pegs on the face of the upright going through to the rafter, a system which is common in Dorset and is known in a few Devon houses. In addition (and also known elsewhere) there is a slip tenon between the two members, pegged on the side. Fig. 2 is a generalised sketch of the form.
40. *Fivehead*. This represents the re-discovery of the last of a list compiled by L. F. J. Walrond in 1952.
56. *Isle Abbots*. A late upper cruck matches a date on the porch of the house, 1627.
62. *Muchelney*. It may be arguable whether originally the weight of this roof was transmitted to the tops of the walls or through arched principals which stand on corbels in the walls. The roof has now been restored. One reason for including this item is that it has the rare feature whereby the rafter elements clasp a small cruck which stands on the collar. Two instances are known in Dorset, at Newell House barn, Sherborne and Poxwell Manor House barn, while in Somerset the superstructure is exemplified in Dr. J. D. Reid's house in Chamberlain Street, Wells, though what lies below is still unknown.

In conclusion, those who have been concerned with the discovery of crucks in Somerset will unite in offering their thanks for interest and friendly reception to a host of house-owners, who have made recording a constant pleasure. Further thanks are due from Somerset members of the Vernacular Architecture Group; to the County Archivist, Mr. I. P. Collis, for agreeing to receive a very varied collection of records, ranging from a few lines to full reports on houses, together with files on general subjects as they emerge; and the majority of these have cruck roofs as an element.

1. *Somerset Archaeol. Natur. Hist.*, 114, 1970, 48-63. The familiar abbreviation *SAS* is used hereafter.
2. For the form of these, see *SAS*, 114, 1970, Plate 12.
3. Sections in Somerset Record Office.
4. Austin, C. and Hall, Sir R. de Z., 'A cruck-roofed house in North Cadbury . . .', *SAS*, 114, 1970, 63-8. They have also seen the combination of a formerly open collar-beam roof, with jointed crucks beyond at Ashford Old Farmho., Isle Abbots (Langport Rural District).
5. Records, and of that referred to in note 4, in Somerset Record Office.
6. *SAS*, 114, 1970, p. 62-3.

CANNINGTON ALMSHOUSES

J. F. LAWRENCE, M.A., M.Litt. AND CDR. E. H. D. WILLIAMS, O.B.E., R.N.

The almshouse lies in the main street of Cannington, about 300 yards north of the parish church (O.S. Grid ref. ST 256397). It comprises a main range lying east-west, parallel to the street, with a smaller range at right angles to it in the rear, adjoining the east end. Before recent alteration the building was of stone rubble construction with tiled roof; both ranges were of two storeys, access to the upper floor of the main range being by a stone stair on the south wall of the main range. The external walls were thinly rendered and colour-washed. There was little of architectural interest visible other than an inscription stating that the almshouses had been founded under the will of Henry Rogers dated 1672, and a bell-turret on the roof capped by a weather vane inscribed 'H.R. 1699'.

By will dated 8 May 1672 Henry Rogers of Cannington gave to the parish the sum of £600.¹ By Chancery decree dated July 1688 £573 6s. 8d. was to be devoted to the purchase of land to provide an income to maintain the poor; the remainder was to be given to the churchwardens and overseers 'for and towards the repairing and fitting-up of the church-house of Cannington . . . for a workhouse for setting the poor to work in the same, being a convenient house for that purpose'. The appropriation of the church-house was agreed by the parish.

There is no documentary evidence to show how the building was used immediately before the death of Henry Rogers, though it was still called the church-house as late as 1773, a reminder of its original parochial function.² It seems clear that it was not used permanently as a workhouse, since a proposal to establish one was agreed to at a vestry meeting in overseers as parish paupers but from 1714 given money by the Rogers Charity trustees.⁴ In 1773 five of the six women then in residence died within a few days of each other from fever contracted in Taunton Gaol.⁵ They were tended by a nurse employed by the overseers, but only one of them received money from the same source,⁶ the others presumably being supported by the Rogers Charity.⁷

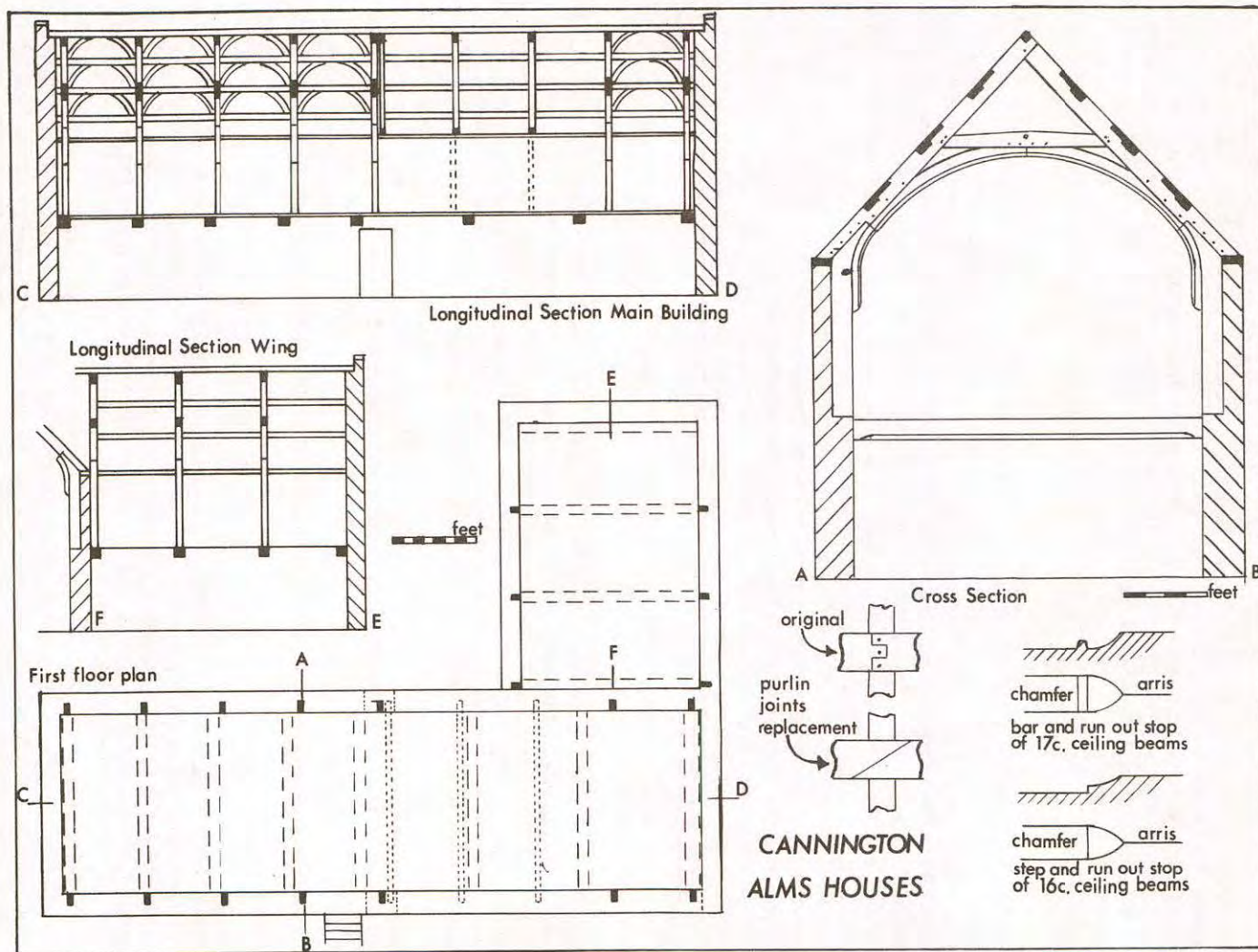
For the next few years the overseers used the house first for a male pauper and, in 1779, for man who was held under lock and key and watched over by a guard.⁸ These temporary inmates would not have used much of the building, and it is likely that poor women continued to be housed there independently of the overseers. The house, which was said about 1790 to have been 'capable of holding 24 persons',⁹ held nine aged women in 1825.¹⁰ As far back as people can now remember there were four flats in the main range, two upstairs and two downstairs, housing eight people. A fifth flat was held in reserve upstairs in the wing. The room downstairs in the wing was a kind of common room. The building as reconstructed in 1971-2 contains five living units with accommodation for ten people.

Like church-houses in Devon, the Cannington house was also the home of the parish school in the 18th and early 19th century.¹¹ In 1732 the vestry agreed to pay a master to teach 8 children. The overseers paid for repairs and furnishings in the 'school house chamber', involving the provision of a new floor, a new door, and stone stairs, as well as a dais for the master and desks and benches. The total cost was £14 11s.¹² The school continued there until 1836, though the Almshouse was described as 'school house and garden' in 1839.¹³

* * * *

The Almshouse was condemned in 1968 and planning permission for alterations was given. There was, however, no warning of demolition, and not until November 1971, when work had already started, was attention drawn to the building. Examination and recording were thus carried out under most adverse conditions, but it was immediately apparent that the 17th-century date stone recorded alterations to a late-medieval building comprising the main range initially open to the roof, into which an upper floor had been inserted at the west end in the 16th century and at the east end in the 17th century.

The original roof was supported on nine open arch-braced jointed crucks at 7' 6" spacing, tenoned at the apex and extending down to the level of the later ground-floor ceiling beams. The ridge was set diagonally, and on each side of the roof were three sets of purlins, slotted in the tops of the crucks, their joints tongued, slotted and pegged to the crucks. Between the purlins were three rows of curved windbraces. The common rafters were pegged. The straight tenoned collars of the crucks had slightly cambered upper surfaces, and the purlins and the



soffits of the arch braces had small plain chamfers. Fragments of a curved wooden frieze were recovered from the top of the south wall at the east end, carved with a series of quatrefoils, with a square en fusil and a leaf motif at the centre of each. It was of a high standard of workmanship and bore a striking resemblance to the frieze in the parish church. A date of c. 1500 is suggested.

The sixth and seventh crucks from the west and their associated purlins were replaced in antiquity by three tie-beam trusses, their purlins having long sloping cuts to give an overlapping joint resting unpegged in the slots. The windbraces were not replaced.

The ceiling beams in the main range were of two types and dates. The four western ones, at 7' spacing, originally had stepped, run out stops to plain chamfers similar to the 'Wern-Hir' type,¹⁴ though two had later been repaired and had straight right-angled stops. The date-range of the 'Wern-Hir' type is considerable, but is typical of the 16th century in Somerset. The four eastern beams, at 10' 8" spacing, had bar and run out stops to plain chamfers, and are attributed to the 17th century, thus probably here to be associated with the conversion from church-house to almshouse. Removal of plaster showed that the holes made to receive all the beams' ends had been packed up with wood; the beams were thus insertions at two dates, later than the construction of the walls. The wooden lintels of the ground-floor windows on the south side appear to form a continuous line along the whole length of the wall, except where cut out by the entrance. There is no evidence of similar work in the north wall, so the possibility of original upper timber walling must remain open.

The roof of the rear wing was carried on three jointed crucks, at 8' 2" spacing, with angled tenoned collars and tenoned apices, the feet of the crucks resting on, though not tenoned into, the ceiling beams of the ground floor. The wing was thus always of two storeys. Rebates for windbraces were visible in some purlins, but none seem to have been fitted, and the purlins must therefore have been re-used from elsewhere. The ceiling beams had plain chamfers and run out stops.

The relationship of the main range with the rear wing is obscure. There is no visible straight joint at the junction of gable wall and wing, whilst the gable and front wall at the south-east corner do not seem to be bonded together. Removal of plaster revealed a jagged masonry face and the possible remains of an upper doorway. In the east gable are two openings on the ground floor and one at upper-floor level, all blocked when a fireplace was inserted, to accommodate the stack of which the end cruck was cut. It thus seems that the gable may have been rebuilt when the wing was added, perhaps in the late 17th century, with possibly an external stair to the newly-completed upper floor of the main range. When the fireplace was added, possibly in the early 19th century, the entrance stairs were moved to the centre of the south wall where, as revealed by their demolition, they blocked an earlier window. The inserted smaller fireplace at the west end also probably dates from this period.

Other internal alterations could not be traced owing to the advanced state of demolition and the absence of any original doors or windows, although some occupied modified original openings; at least one window in the upper floor was an insertion, a cruck having been cut to accommodate it.

All that now remains of this late-medieval church-house are the walls, the legs of the jointed crucks, and a few ceiling beams.

¹ *Fifteenth Report of the Charity Commissioners* (1826), p. 383.

² Cannington, register of burials, *sub anno* 1773.

³ Cannington, churchwardens' accounts, 1706-52.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ Cannington, register of burials, *sub anno* 1773; overseers' accounts, 1763-86.

⁶ Cannington, overseers' accounts, 1763-86.

⁷ There were separate charity accounts which have not been found: overseers' accounts, *sub anno* 1786.

⁸ Cannington, overseers' accounts, 1763-86, *sub annis* 1774-5, 1779.

⁹ J. Collinson, *History of Somerset*, i. 237.

¹⁰ *Fifteenth Report of the Charity Commissioners*, p. 383.

¹¹ R. R. Sellman, *Devon Village Schools in the Nineteenth Century*, 19, 27.

¹² Cannington, churchwardens' accounts, 1706-52; overseers' accounts, 1704-63.

¹³ Somerset Record Office, tithe award; Education Committee files, 1903.

¹⁴ Sir Cyril Fox and Lord Raglan, *Monmouthshire Houses*, ii. 24 and note 2.