

Building Recording in 2019

Somerset Vernacular Building Research Group

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Errata: page 226, for *The Census of 1841 records that by 40 people read The Census of 1841 records that 40 people*

page 228, for *and is fitted with four-over-four sash read and is fitted with eight-over-eight sash*

BUILDING RECORDING IN 2019

SOMERSET VERNACULAR BUILDING RESEARCH GROUP

In November 2019 SVBRG celebrated 40 years of building studies with an afternoon of short talks at Tintinhull Village Hall followed by refreshments and the cutting of a 'vernacular' cake (shown right). The group has had another interesting year surveying in the county, but specifically in the settlements of Bowlish, Ham and Darshill to the west of Shepton Mallet where we have now surveyed some 20 properties. We continue to survey in the parish of Kingsbury Episcopi, modestly increasing the number of surveyed properties there by three.

These two parishes are very different: the former an industrial one on the steep banks of the tumbling, mill-driving River Sheppey, the latter an agricultural, largely pastoral settlement previously dependent on the River Parrett. Surveys in each will contribute to our understanding of vernacular buildings, their re-use, occupants and settlement evolution in historic Somerset.

Our deskbound activities included assisting university students with their studies, and working with experts in their given field, e.g. the Museum of London Archaeology on 'Witch Bottles'.

The pages of *Vernacular Architecture* (Vol. 50, 2019) included complimentary remarks regarding the group which were well received. Of the eighteen affiliated building recording groups in the county SVBRG was acknowledged as being one of the six most productive and, particularly, because, 'their output ranges from local journals and extended newsletters to ISBN-numbered publications...[also]...that their reports are available and accessible through holdings in local repositories'. The author of the review expresses the concern that, for the work of recording to continue, local groups should be considering succession planning and training. Over the past few years the group has arranged successful training days for members and will continue to include them in the Group's calendar. The Group's members continue to give presentations to local organisations about aspects of vernacular buildings as part of its outreach activity.

The Group, as ever, is indebted to the owners and occupiers of the various properties for their generosity in allowing us into their homes. Copies of the full SVBRG reports and survey drawings have been deposited at the South West Heritage Centre, the more recent ones in digital (.pdf) format. Copies are also available through the SVBRG website, www.svbrg.org.uk where the summaries listed here can also be

viewed. Dates before the mid-16th century quoted in our reports are based on the similarity of stylistic features to Somerset houses previously dated by dendrochronology.



The Vernacular Birthday Cake

Photographs by John Rickard (Figs 1-2, 5-18) and Fergus Dowding (above, Figs 3-4)

1. Curry Rivel, Albany House. ST 38937 25128

The front range of the house comprises two rooms, each with a fireplace. To the rear an originally detached building, constructed at an angle to the front range, now forms part of a three-room wing.

The walling material is coursed lias built as bands of two deep courses followed by two thinner ones of slightly lighter colour (Fig. 1). The window and door openings have square heads constructed from wedge shaped stone blocks. The front door, with a glazed light above, is of four-panel style with flush lower panels. The windows are all modern replacements imitating late 19th-century sashes. The roof is slate clad and there is a brick chimney at each end of the roof.

The house appears to have been originally built as a two-storey dwelling in the first quarter of the 19th century, as indicated by the wall thicknesses and the collar truss roof. Over the front range the king post trusses and prominently banded masonry were probably part of 'extensive alterations' in the 1890s.



Fig. 1 Curry Rivel, Albany House with banded lias façade

2. Huish Episcopi, Wearne, Bay Farm.

ST 42390 28125

Bay Farm has been re-examined after renovations revealed additional features. A three-room and cross-passage plan of one-and-a-half storeys with a lean-to at the rear. Walls are local rubble lias with the front and roof raised. The roof includes two long-tenon jointed crucks and a true cruck that has been cut back to accept an arch brace. All show evidence of smoke blackening. This survey has revealed that the roof originally had a single tier of wind-bracing. A stone recovered during repairs, and now set in a visible place, has the outline of a builder's shoe and the initials 'J.S.' (Fig. 2). The new survey supports the interpretation of the 2002 report that the building originated as a single-storey 15th-century open hall with a solar at the east end.

3. Kingsbury Episcopi, Folly Road, Home Farm.

ST 43238 20864

A substantial, listed, late-18th-century house built on a slight knoll and overlooking the owner's farmstead on the other side of the road (Fig. 3). Built of Hamstone with an ashlar façade, the house is arranged with a central entry, and is two-rooms wide and two-rooms deep. There are two full storeys, tie and collar beam trusses of 8.1m internal span making for a large storage



Fig. 2 Huish Episcopi, Wearne, Bay Farm, Outline of J.S.'s boot

attic space. Typical of the 'long 18th century', when houses continued to be built in traditional style, this house has mullioned windows in preference to sash. An inline extension and throughway built of brick was added before 1830. By 1844 a magnificent stable block was built with Diocletian windows and, beyond, a magnificent sweep of 15-foot high brick garden walls.

4. Kingsbury Episcopi, 1 & 2 Knapp House.

ST 43408 21067

A date stone inscribed 'BUILD 1798' on the west front just below eaves level agrees well with the construction features. Although their records do not seem to have survived, it can be assumed that the Overseers of the Poor of Kingsbury built this as a 'Poor House' on the village green.

This building originally consisted of eight individual dwellings each with a single room measuring 4.2 x 4.6m on three floors. The dwellings were arranged as rows of four, back to back under a single broad roof. Each unit had an external door, a window, a fireplace and a stair to each floor, but no intercommunicating doorways on ground and first floors.

The house is very well built; the external walls are of large and well-dressed coursed Hamstone on all elevations (Fig. 4). Straight joints in the walls show that there were once four doors and four broad windows front and back. The internal partitions are of handmade brick. The roof has plain clay tiles, with three courses of Hamstone roof slates at eaves level. This appears to be the original roof covering. There is also a 19th-century Hamstone lean-to against the north gable, with plain clay tiled roof and brick floor.

The Census of 1841 records that by 40 people occupied the building. It has now been converted into two dwellings with inserted interior doorways and various windows and external doors replaced.



Fig. 3 Kingsbury Episcopi, Folly Road, Home Farm, Front elevation and brick addition



Fig. 4 Kingsbury Episcopi, 1 & 2 Knapp House, Front elevation

5. Kingsbury Episcopi, The Wyndham Arms. ST 43356 20986

This two-storey listed inn has walls of local rubble, though the front is partially faced with Hamstone ashlar (Fig. 5). The front range has uniformly thick walls (0.65m) and a plan of three rooms and a cross passage. The principal room was embellished with handsome cambered and moulded beams; a substantial two-storey

timber-framed partition divided the high end of the house suggesting late-16th-century origins. The added rear wing has features dating it to around 1800, notably the wall thickness and sash windows.

The windows on the front elevation are all stone-mullioned and made in Hamstone, the three on the ground floor being four-light; the upper floor has four three-light windows. Hollow mouldings and quadrant



Fig. 5 Kingsbury Episcopi, The Wyndham Arms, Front elevation

stays suggest that they date from the 17th century; the door frames are also stylistically of that period. The current roofs have shallow pitches and appear to date from the early 20th century. Within living memory a section of the building was used as the village bakery and contained facilities for bread and cake production.

**6. Shepton Mallet, Bowlish, 3 Forum Terrace.
ST 61194 44071**

This three-storey stone building is at the northern end of a listed terrace of three dwellings. It has been extended to the north and now links with an adjacent two-storey building, also of stone (Fig. 6). All the walls are of random rubble construction and are 0.6m thick. The ground- and first-floor windows on the front of the terrace have two stone mullions and a drip mould, whereas the second-floor window has a plain surround and is fitted with a four-over-four sash. The front entrance is a four-panel door with unusually prominent raised panels. The roof, overlain with a new structure using packers against the old timbers, has a covering of pantiles. The principals meet at a notched apex joint and there is a single collar truss situated midway between the gable and the party wall with the adjacent property.

The general layout of 3 Forum Terrace is similar to a number of other three-storey houses in the locality and elsewhere in the county that are believed to have been weavers' workhouses. A construction date of 1800, as suggested by the listing, is probably correct.



Fig. 6 Shepton Mallet, Bowlish, 3 Forum Terrace



Fig. 7 Shepton Mallet, Bowlish, Bowlish Grange, South elevation

**7. Shepton Mallet, Bowlish, Bowlish Grange.
ST 61228 44060**

The main range of this listed house is three-storey under a pitched roof and is built of local limestone rubble and set into the hillside (Fig. 7). The upper south wall and the west gable walls are rendered and colour washed. Window and door openings have Douling stone surrounds, some plain and others moulded with mullions. The windows on the south elevation are mainly sash style of eight-over-eight panes in wooden frames. On the north elevation the windows are a mix of casement, fixed and sash styles in single-, twin- or triple-light frames. The door surround to the main entrance has hollow chamfered jambs and above is a stone hood supported on decorated brackets.

The main roof, pitched between coped gables, is clad with slate on the south flank and with double Roman clay tiles on the north. A full-height wing on the north side has a hipped roof. There are chimney stacks at the west gable, another stack rising through the ridge about two-thirds to the east and a further stack at the north-east corner. Beyond the east gable the accommodation is beneath modern roofs. The traditional layout of principal rooms in line separated by a cross passage is evident, with the service end of the house situated to the east. This locality has a long history of industrial activity and parts of this house were almost certainly workshops originating in the 17th century. The symmetrical frontage of the western end of the south elevation represents the unification of pre-existing structures into a gentrified dwelling in the early 19th century.

**8. Shepton Mallet, Bowlish, Bowlish Villa.
ST 61198 44033**

The house is constructed of local limestone rubble though the east (front) elevation is rendered and has pilasters at either end of the façade (Fig. 8). It is two-and-a-half storeys and the upper two floors have two-light stone mullioned windows, the first floor having a continuous hood moulding over the windows; the ground floor has canted bays with hipped roofs. The rear elevation has a continuous single storey lean-to. All the roofs are slate clad.

The ground floor of the main building comprises two rooms set either side of a stair hall. A lean-to at the rear now forms a single living area incorporating a flat roof addition and connects to an entrance lobby on the north side of the house.

The immediate impression, created by the stone-mullioned windows and the associated hood mould, is of a 17th-century house, as stated in the listing. However, the bead-edged and lipped mid-18th-century form of the window and door architraves and the internal features must put the construction date at least into the later period. This combination of features has been noted in several other houses in the locality.

**9. Shepton Mallet, Bowlish, Coombe House.
ST61252 43959**

The south elevation of this listed house is in the classical style with tall sash windows on ground and first floors and shallower windows above (Fig. 9a). The hipped roof with deeply overhung eaves follows



Fig. 8 Shepton Mallet, Bowlish, Bowlish Villa, Front elevation with continuous hood mould

the Italianate styling often found in polite houses of the early 19th century. Internally, the house has elaborate cornices and friezes together with reed and corner-block architraves to the principal rooms, all characteristic of the period, as is the wide open-tread stair with its slender handrail on stick balusters (Fig. 9b). The house is unusual in that it has a thick, full-height east-west

spine wall and, at the west end north of the wall, is only two-rooms high, probably a dining room and first-floor drawing room, with ceiling heights of 3.6m compared with the consistent 2.5m on the south side. However, at the east end there are heavy, chamfered beams which, taken with historical records, point to the house being converted from a former mill or cloth workshop.



Fig. 9a Shepton Mallet, Bowlish, Coombe House, South elevation



Fig. 9b Shepton Mallet, Bowlish, Coombe House, Detail of handrail at curtail step



Fig. 10a Shepton Mallet, Bowlish, 6 Forum Lane, Little Bowlish, Front elevation

10. Shepton Mallet, Bowlish, 6 Forum Lane, Little Bowlish. ST 61257 44015

The basic plan is of two rooms separated by a stair hall constructed over two storeys and abutting the east gable wall of Old Bowlish House (Fig. 10a). There are two two-storey extensions; one projects to the south with blocked openings at first and attic levels; the second, to the north, has a further, small, gabled extension. All are largely built of local limestone rubble with some infilling; most masonry is exposed.

The exterior walls of the main range are up to 0.75m thick and there are a number of blocked doorways, one with a hood mould. An interior wall has a post-and-timber frame with brick infilling. Maps show that there was a building, perhaps of 17th-century origins, on this site most probably connected with the local milling industry.

The highly decorative deep cornice to a first-floor room (Fig. 10b), foliate decorated cornices and an elliptically arched recess all point to conversion into a domestic dwelling in the early 19th century and complemented by six-panel doors, 0.14m wide door architraves, and eight-over-eight sash windows. The property is listed.

11. Shepton Mallet, Bowlish, Park Farm House. ST 61212 44147

The principal range of this listed property is two-storey and attic construction under a pitched roof and a two-storey rear range under a cat-slide roof (Fig. 11a); a single-storey lean-to abuts the east gable. All are built of local limestone rubble with slate-clad, late-20th-century, roofs. The main range has a two-room and stair hall plan from a single period of build, walls 0.62m thick, which appears to incorporate a relic wall, 0.7m, of an earlier



Fig. 10b Shepton Mallet, Bowlish, 6 Forum Lane, Little Bowlish, Detail of decorated deep ceiling coving

building. A late 18th-century date is suggested by the decorated four-panel doors and 'reeded' architraves, some bead moulding and various hinges.



Fig. 11a Shepton Mallet, Bowlish, Park Farm House, Front elevation



Fig. 11b Shepton Mallet, Bowlish, Park Farm House, Barn with hooded mullioned windows



Fig. 12 Shepton Mallet, Bowlish, Pike Hill, The Old Coach House

To the rear of the house is a barn that is not referred to in the listing (Fig. 11b). It is two-storey rectangular in plan, constructed from local limestone rubble, walls 0.6m thick and now divided into three 'rooms'. A lean-to store abuts the west gable. On the upper floor there are two three-light stone mullioned windows with hood moulds. The presence of a large inglenook fireplace, with a reused floor beam as a lintel, and baking oven suggests an increased demand to accommodate and feed farm workers; the upper floor above may have been occupied by permanent or seasonal labourers. The barn probably dates to the mid-19th century as it is not shown on maps before 1885. A pair of gate posts is the subject of a separate listing.

12. Shepton Mallet, Bowlish, Pike Hill, The Old Coach House. ST 61325 43995

Built of local limestone rubble the house is of two storeys and attic beneath a slate roof (Fig. 12). The main range comprises two rooms and there is a two-storey extension to the rear. The walls, including that between the two rooms, are some 0.5m thick. The fireplace in the main room has a brick-headed segmental arch only 1m high spanning the opening, which is too low for a cooking range so was probably just an open fire. There are several blocked openings at ground- and first-floor level, the function of which were not fully understood but the description of the

building as 'barn and dwelling house' on an estate map of 1853 may provide some explanation of the features.

There is also a trap house some 15m away that features a wide, elliptically headed doorway in the north wall that has a raised and coped gable with a ball finial at the apex.

Neither building is shown on the 1840 Tithe Map so the build date for both must lie in the decade after 1840.

13. Shepton Mallet, Darshill, 21 Back Lane. ST 60763 43944

The house is three storeys high and set into a steep bank (Fig. 13). It comprises two rooms on each of the floors, and the linking stairs are in a turret. Evidence from the 1811 Parish Map indicates a non-domestic or an unfinished structure probably with an industrial function. This is the present ground floor, built as two vaulted rooms or open-fronted workshops, that created a platform-like base on which the later, two-storey house sits. The building of the house included the insertion of ground-floor fireplaces and the enclosing of the vaulted archways to form two rooms. The walls of this building phase are all 0.5m thick. At first-floor level there is a single-storey extension into a formerly open courtyard containing a well. The bead edged Douling stone window frames and fireplace lintels are stylistically associated with the late 18th or early 19th century.



Fig. 13 Shepton Mallet, Darhill, 21 Back Lane, showing vaulted plinth to the house



Fig. 14 Shepton Mallet, Darhill, 30-32 Back Lane, showing original stair and hand rail



Fig. 15a Shepton Mallet, Darhill, Darhill House and teasel-drying house

**14. Shepton Mallet, Darshill, 30-32 Back Lane.
ST 60832 43927**

These local rubble limestone-constructed houses are a terrace of three, set into the steep side of the valley. All are three storeys tall and were originally entered at ground-floor level from a path on the south side, but are now accessed on the north side at first-floor (road) level. Each of these millworkers' houses had a one-room plan and a simple, open-tread stair connecting the floors (Fig. 14).

Exterior walls are 0.55m thick narrowing to 0.45m on the second floor. Original door hinges and the Doulting stone bead-edged fireplace surrounds suggest construction about 1800. All three have single-storey extensions on the south side, and the western house has a two-storey extension on the gable.

**15. Shepton Mallett, Darshill, Darshill House.
ST 60397 43929**

The house is built of local limestone rubble with dressings of Doulting stone and has a symmetrical two-room plan about a modern gabled porch (Fig. 15a). A gabled dormer has a date stone inscribed 'F.B. 1904'. This date marks the remodelling of an earlier property perhaps from the first half of the 18th century with walls 0.65m thick; the 1904 walls are 0.5m. The later building work included raising the eaves' level and incorporating a two-storey lean-to to the rear. Interior features such as fireplaces, doors and coloured window glazing are all from the 1904 date. To the north, but not included in the survey, is an abutting two-storey unit over a semi-basement area.

Adjoining, to the north again, is a purpose-built open-work brick construction of three walls, one a gable wall, on a base of local stone walling (Fig. 15b). The brickwork is a single-skin wall between openwork brick piers. This (listed) structure is a teasel drying house, known locally as a handle house; dried teasel heads were used for raising the knap on woollen cloth. It was probably built in the mid-19th century.

**16. Shepton Mallet, Darshill, 11 Back Lane,
The Mill Masters House. ST 60641 43929**

Although on the listed buildings register, the house is referred to as 'Wing to rear having early C19 door case consisting of triangular pediment on Ionic pilasters. Probably former mill house'. The listing is for the Darshill Juice Mill.

The Mill Masters House is half of a two-storey double-pile construction with corner quoins and rendered walls (Fig. 16). The rear range is constructed against raised ground with an access door at first-floor level to an elevated paved patio area. The front entrance door has a classically inspired surround with a triangular pediment set on plain columns with decorative plinths of a mid-18th-century style and may be original to the property. The windows have modern, plain stone surrounds of Doulting stone.



*Fig. 15b Shepton Mallett, Darshill, Darshill House,
Detail of brick construction of teasel-drying house*

Map and photograph evidence were required to unravel the story of this property, particularly as the front and east gable were an unusual 1.04m thick, the result of a modern stabilising wall being built within the original wall. The complex began as a woollen mill, afterwards becoming a silk mill and, in the mid-20th century, it was an apple mill and then a builder's store, before the 'wing to rear' was finally reconstructed as a pair of semi-detached dwellings.

**17. Somerton, Vicarage Lane, The Old Vicarage.
ST 48996 28645**

Constructed of local lias limestone with Hamstone dressings this listed house comprises four zones: a central, late medieval core, the south wing, a north range and an east wing (Fig. 17).

At ground level the medieval core comprises a cross passage and the principal room of a mid-15th-century house with walls 0.8m thick. The room contains a nine-panel and elaborately moulded framed ceiling and a shallow four-centred arch to the wide fireplace. The room above had been open to the roof. In the passage there is another four-centred arch, with draw-bar recesses. The oak roof has five arch-braced collar trusses with three tiers of trenched purlins and associated decorative wind braces; the assembly marks and chamfers confirm that this was the original length of the roof.

Partly obscured sections of Hamstone window frames had mouldings with deep hollows that closely matched 15th-century window details at Martock Parish Church and in the Abbot's Lodgings at Muchelney Abbey. VCH notes that Muchelney set up a vicarage in Somerton.

A south wing was added in 1787 (as written by the vicar of the day on a piece of paper recently found beneath the floorboards) that provided a drawing room with rooms above. The north and east ranges were built about 1867 to accommodate a larger household.



Fig. 16 Shepton Mallet, Darshill, 11 Back Lane, The Mill Masters House, Front elevation



Fig. 17 Somerton, Vicarage Lane, The Old Vicarage, south-west aspect



Fig. 18 West Pennard, Victoria Farm

**18. West Pennard, Victoria Farm and Farmstead.
ST 55026 37502**

This is an unusually complete example of the type of farmstead which forms the heart of Somerset's agricultural heritage. On a site, which may date back to Saxon times, a date stone 'Victoria House H. G. N. 1898' points to significant rebuilding of a farmstead arranged around an open courtyard. Map evidence indicates that this house is a new building on the site of an earlier, perhaps 17th-century, house and not a remodelling on earlier footings.

The house is two storey and comprises a front range and a full-height wing to the rear with walls, 0.42m thick, of coursed local blue lias limestone and brick quoins (Fig. 18). Door and window openings are brick faced, the windows are sash to the front elevation and casement elsewhere. Within the house the decorative and architectural features and the king post roof are all of the late 19th century with the exception of a 17th-century plank and batten door.

To the west of the house is a one-and-a-half-storey range that was once a cellar/store, the trap house and another store and stable. Part of this range is now domestic

accommodation and dormer windows are inserted in the roof. Iron-stayed roof trusses are used here, and the roof purlins held in iron stirrups. Most buildings are clad with triple wave style clay roof tiles; only the house has decorative ridge tiles and barge boards.

The largest of the barns carries a date stone for 1890 and has three low openings in the south wall and sliding shutters on the inside. This novel arrangement may reflect experimentation in animal husbandry. Another barn connects to it and was used for cow stalls; a later building in the corner between the barns houses a milk-processing unit. A three-sty pig house completes the barns on the west side. To the south is what appears to be the earliest barn containing the earliest roof trusses that may once have been on wooden posts but are now supported on block-work walls and have a newer set of rafters. Adjacent to this barn are the stable units within the west range of the house.

These buildings seem to be created for a dairying enterprise in the late 19th century when improved transport (the railway arrived in Pennard in 1862) encouraged sales of dairy and cheese to new, mass markets.