BUILDING RECORDING IN 2003

SOMERSET VERNACULAR BUILDING RESEARCH GROUP

Members of the SVBRG have undertaken surveys of individual buildings in various parts of the county during 2003 and in addition have completed two special projects. The main project has been the detailed recording of buildings in the parish of Compton Dundon, which is due for publication in 2004 as the ninth in the group's village survey series. At Brompton Ralph surveys of 23 buildings were completed (ten recorded in 2003) and a synopsis passed to the Brompton Ralph Village Hall Committee for inclusion in their forthcoming publication. Perhaps the most important building recorded during the year is Court Farm at Spaxton, listed grade II* by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport. However, at least two other houses, which are not listed, are revealed as significant discoveries. Copies of the full reports and survey drawings have been deposited in the Somerset County Record Office and the National Monuments Record at Swindon.

The following is a selection of the buildings recorded.

Brompton Ralph, Hele Farmhouse ST 069319

The extent of the original house is uncertain owing to later changes, but evidence suggests that the hall is the earliest surviving part dating from the mid 16th century. Similar wall thicknesses suggest that the kitchen and cross-passage may also be of this period (although this would give a relatively rare plan form). In the late 17th/early 18th century the kitchen was extended and another room added alongside. Sometime later, perhaps in the 19th century, the walls and roof were raised. The Tithe Map of 1842 shows that by then the present plan of the house had evolved. A comparison of the Tithe Map with the 1888 Ordnance Survey map indicates that some of the buildings of the farmstead were in existence by 1842 and probably included a threshing barn with horse-engine, linhay and stables. However, all have been converted to domestic use in recent years.

Brompton Ralph, Lower Wedcombe Farm ST 090333

The farmstead is situated in a deep valley on the edge of the Brendon Hills and in the hamlet of Rook's Nest. Documentary evidence indicates that a farm may have existed on this site in the 14th century. The smoke-blackened roof of jointed crucks indicates that originally the house had an open hall, probably dating from *c*. 1400. The house was upgraded *c*. 1600 with the insertion of upper floors, two stairs and fireplaces. The elaborate complex of corn-drying kiln, oven and adjacent chamber of uncertain use probably dates from the same time. However, the plan-form then created of two-units and central cross-passage is unusual for this period (although two similar, contemporary houses have been recorded at Long Sutton and Corfe). A

two-storey extension at the east end possibly for accommodation or storage was added. A service room, possibly a bake-house, was added in an outshut at the rear, probably in the 18th century. A cart and implement shed and a bank-barn – the lower part for housing stock and the upper floor for storage and the threshing of grain – probably date from the early 19th century, as they appear on the Tithe Map of 1842. Attached to the bank-barn, a lean-to has been added, the ground floor for cows and the upper floor a hay loft, and adjacent to the other end is a cider house. These date from later in the 19th century.

Chipstable, Raddington, Little Wilscombe Farm ST033270

The farmstead stands in an isolated position in a small hollow of the Brendon Hills. On the limited evidence of the remnants of jointed crucks, a date in the 16th century is suggested. The farmhouse then comprised the entrance passage (rising ground at the rear precluded a cross-passage), kitchen, hall with lateral stack and unheated inner room. In the mid 17th century the hall ceiling was raised and the inner room transformed with the insertion of a fireplace, elaborate panelling and a decorative plaster ceiling. In the 18th century the walls and roof were raised and an unheated room with chamber over was added at the west end. The dairy/cheese room with cheese loft over at the east end may have been added at the same time. In the early 18th century the farm comprised 46 acres, increased to 109 acres before 1785 and in 1846 was a mixed arable and grazing holding of 141 acres. The house is elevated to give an overview of the farmstead. The buildings for housing cattle and horses mostly face south, the pigsties (now gone) were close to the dairy/cheese room, the threshing floor of the barn is aligned south-west (the direction of the prevailing wind) and the cart-shed and linhay face north-east. The 1889 Ordnance Survey map shows that there were two horse-gins, one serving the shippon and the other the threshing barn. Remains of what appear to be jointed-cruck trusses are to be seen in the wall of the shippon suggesting that it is probably contemporary with the house. The other farm buildings probably date from the 18th century when the acreage increased.

Churchstanton, Churchinford, Fairhouse Farm ST219123

The property stands in an isolated position south-east of the village adjoining what historically had been the Fair Field. The house has four rooms in line with a cross-passage. The roof is supported by five jointed-cruck trusses and the whole, apart from the later west end, appears to be smoke blackened. Dating from the 14th/15th century, originally it comprised the cross-passage, hall with open hearth, inner room with solar over, and a 'low-end' service room. In the 16th century, fireplaces, stacks, upper floors and first-floor windows were installed and the hall was provided with a framed ceiling. An extension to the west end in the early 17th century included a heated first-floor room with a service room, perhaps a cellar or buttery, below. The service room at the east end has an unusual lateral stack. In the mid/late 17th century a north wing was added as a dairy or cheese room with cheese loft over. Later this was converted into a kitchen, which enabled the earlier kitchen to be used as a parlour. The farmstead also comprised a barn, cow shed, dairy and pigsty – all now converted to domestic use.

Langford Budville, Stancombe Farmhouse ST 310225

The farmstead stands in an isolated position at the centre of a mixed holding of nearly 100 acres. The survival of a cruck truss possibly indicates a 14th-century date for the earliest phase of the farmhouse. The hall may then have been open, but as the roof is now inaccessible, it is not possible to confirm the details of the apex construction or if it is smoke blackened.

Substantial rebuilding *c*. 1600 resulted in the creation of a traditional three-unit and cross-passage plan comprising kitchen, hall and inner room. At the same time the walls and roof were raised to provide an upper storey, probably with access via a turret stair. A two-storey wing, probably a parlour with chamber over, was added in the mid-17th century. In the 18th century a lean-to extension was built to the rear. Further alterations, including the rebuilding of the west gable wall and the conversion of the parlour into a dairy, were undertaken in the 19th century. The cider house may date from the mid-17th century. Among the farm buildings are a barn, stables, cow shed and linhay.

Shepton Beauchamp, Rockbarton ST 403168

The smoke-blackening of the two surviving jointed crucks indicates that this was originally a modest open hall of three-unit and cross-passage plan. The jointed crucks suggest a date in the 15th century. There is also evidence for the former existence of wind-braces. In the 16th century a floor and smoke hood were inserted in the hall and on the upper floor surviving partitions of rod and daub were inserted in the roof trusses. The roof was raised, possibly in the 19th century, to accommodate dormer windows, perhaps at the time when the property was divided into two dwellings. Recently it has reverted to being one house.

Spaxton, Court Farm ST 226371

The farmstead adjoins the churchyard and comprises three main buildings, all originally domestic, although two are now in agricultural use. The *Victoria County History*, Vol. VI (1992) indicates that Court Farm was the centre of a manorial complex. The present farmhouse dates from the late 14th/early 15th century and is longer than the standard plan form, as there is evidence that originally it extended further to the south. The roof comprises four A-frame trusses, the north end smoke-blackened, and six jointed-cruck trusses, all smoke-blackened, but with more intense sooting above the hall. Parts of the roof have been reinforced with high-quality cusped wind-braces, which are not blackened. A stair turret at the rear may be an addition, although it is possible that originally it was a small chapel (an oratory is recorded in 1408). The projecting lateral stack may also be a late medieval addition built when an upper floor was created over the open hall. Further modifications and alterations were made in the 16th and 17th centuries. Attached at right-angles is another range, originally domestic, with six jointed-cruck trusses and associated intermediate trusses, probably dating from the 15th century. Detached to the east is a third building that formerly had five jointed-cruck trusses with curved wind braces. The *Victoria County History* suggests that these two buildings are the remains of ranges of chambers built for the estate officials in the later 15th century. However, it is also plausible that the two adjacent ranges at right-angles were components of a unit system, that is two similar status, related and contemporary households. Altogether Court Farm is a highly important complex.

West Lydford, Fair View ST 569373

The house originally comprised a hall, cross-passage and kitchen, probably dating from the end of the 16th century. This plan form of two units with the hall stack backing onto the cross-passage is relatively rare in Somerset. The house was modified at least twice before the late 18th century when the walls were raised, a new roof built and new taller windows installed. Interestingly, this was the home of John Cannon, whose diary of the years 1684 to 1744 is to be published shortly. Born and educated at West Lydford, Cannon became an Excise officer, latterly based at Bridgwater, and returned to his home village *c*. 1723.

Yeovil Without, Carents Farmhouse ST 647187

The house of one-and-one-half storeys from the start probably originated in the 15th century and the quality of the details suggests that it was of superior status. Unusually it appears to have had an entry into the gable end. Early in the seventeenth century it was extended to the west and a north wing dated 1674 was added. The main range was raised in height in the early 18th century when new windows and a central entrance doorway were inserted. At the rear a lean-to was built as service rooms, perhaps a dairy/cheese room with cheese loft over, possibly replacing an earlier wing. With the expansion of dairying in the second half of the 19th century a new dairy was added at the east end with a two-storey cheese house. The detached granary may date from the same period.

The other buildings recorded in 2003 are as follows:

Ashill, Radigan Lane, Stewley Farmhouse ST 315186
Baltonsborough, Newtown Farmhouse ST 537353
Brompton Ralph, Bowden Farm ST 066314
Brompton Ralph, Middle Stone Farm ST 091312
Brompton Ralph, Moor Mill Cottage ST 110303
Brompton Ralph, Moor Mill Farmhouse ST109301
Brompton Ralph, The Old Forge ST 086322
Brompton Ralph, Pitsford Hill, Brendon End ST 010306
Brompton Ralph, Pitsford Hill, Carpenters Cottage ST 010306
Brompton Ralph, Rock Cottage ST 085322
Charlton Musgrove, Barrow Corner Farmhouse ST 728324
Combe St Nicholas, Court Mill Lane, Jasmine Cottage ST 312108
Tintinhull, 13 Queen Street ST 499199
Tintinhull, 24 St Margaret's Road, The Old Dairy House ST499195
Wells, 8A St Thomas Street, Goat Cottage ST 554460
Wincanton, 51 High Street, Uncle Tom's Cabin P.H. ST 716287