

VERNACULAR ARCHITECTURE NOTES 1989

HISTORIC BUILDINGS COMMITTEE

These notes present a small sample of the most valuable and interesting houses recorded by members of the Society throughout the year. Full accounts of the buildings recorded are deposited both with the Somerset Record Office and with the RCHM. The Society covers the area of the historic county of Somerset and thus includes the southern part of the county of Avon. Records of buildings in Avon are also deposited with R. Iles of the Avon County Planning Department. Members of the Society who have a special interest in recording early buildings, but are not members of the Committee, are nevertheless very welcome to submit interesting examples for inclusion in this annual report. The Committee will particularly welcome contact with members who have a specialised interest such as early churches, malting kilns not previously recorded etc. The Historic Buildings Committee will also be glad to hear from anyone about the location of vernacular buildings which have so far not been examined and recorded.

NOTES SUBMITTED BY E.H.D. WILLIAMS

Bicknoller, 8 Church Lane (Fig. 1)

This house, and Gatchell's below, are further examples of houses of unusual medieval plan, previously described in *SANHS* 131 and 132 in the parishes of Bicknoller, Brushford, Halse and Lydeard St. Lawrence.

The overall length is exceptional at c. 70', but the internal width is the typical 16', and most of the rubble walls are 29" thick with internal batter. The entrance now is into a side lobby abreast two back-to-back fireplaces: a rarity in Somerset, which in other known instances is the result of a room being added beyond an original gable fireplace, and heated by an added fireplace behind the original. Scroll stops to plain-chamfered ceiling beams date this addition to the C17th; it is an added parlour with its own stair S2.

The rest of the house, c. 51' long, is of two-room plan on a downward slope away from the parlour, divided by a substantial wall; the lower second room is 28' long. By analogy with the other similar houses mentioned, it can be assumed there was a cross-passage entry immediately below the cross wall, although rendering and plaster hide blocked doors. Smaller square-sided windows in both rooms were probably doors when the house was divided into cottages. The back wall is still only one and a half storeys high, though the front wall has been raised to two storeys.

All the fireplaces are undatable having been extensively rebuilt, but ceiling beams in room 1 have step and run out stops to wide hollow chamfers, as has the axial beam in room 2, and are thus not later than the C16th. The transverse beam at mid length of room 2 is large and square without datable details; the others have scroll stops to moderate chamfers and are thus C17th. A door at the back of room 1

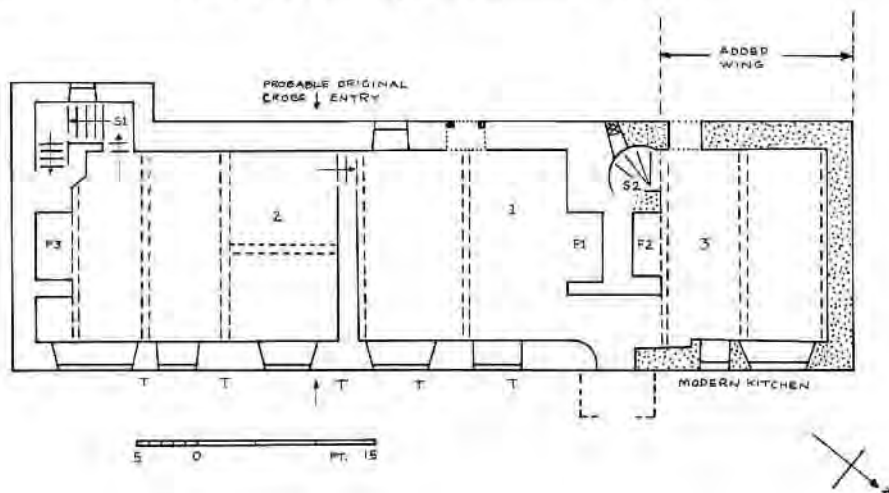


Fig. 1 No. 8 Church Lane, Bicknoller.

has a plain chamfered wooden frame with a slightly peaked lintel mason-mitred to the sides, thus also C17th.

Exact date of origin of the house is unknown, the roof having been extensively rebuilt, but the thick battered walls are typically late medieval; the plan was a hall(1) and cross passage and byre,(2) a longhouse without an inner room.

Bicknoller, Gatchell's

A house of similar two-roomed plan has front and back doors adjacent to a thick cross wall on its downhill side; both rooms are heated by large gable fireplaces. The cross entry and low-end room occupy c.35' of the total length of 61'; the plan is thus very similar to No. 8 Church Lane; the upper floor is almost entirely in the roof space. The doors now enter a 6' 6" wide entrance lobby partitioned out of the low-end room in which are late stairs, a typical C17th modification. To one side of the upper-end fireplace is a chamber projecting beyond the house walls, a corn kiln. The house thus resembles Meadowsweet, Bicknoller described in *SANHS* 131, 243. The roof has been rebuilt after a fire; due to lack of surviving datable details the date of origin is uncertain, but the plan was clearly that of a late-medieval longhouse comprising hall, cross passage and byre without an inner room.

Bicknoller, Another House (Fig. 2)

The extent of surviving early structure in this house is remarkable. A three-room and cross-passage house of the late C15th with a tenon-jointed cruck roof, half-hipped at the outer room gable, has an added (originally non-domestic) room, also with tenon-jointed cruck roof, of C16th beyond its inner room gable; in the latter are modern stairs and fireplace. It is still open to the roof, whose cruck posts rise from ground level, though near the house gable there has been some reroofing. Wide doors, now windows, suggest it was a barn.

The lateral fireplace of the hall is an insertion, the roof being smoke-blackened. Between the hall and cross passage is a heavy stud and plank screen, the studs mason-mitred to the head beam and with 45° flat stops to plain chamfers; the screen is within a cruck truss, the upper part of which to collar level has large timber-framed wattle and daub panels. The hall/inner room partition consists of

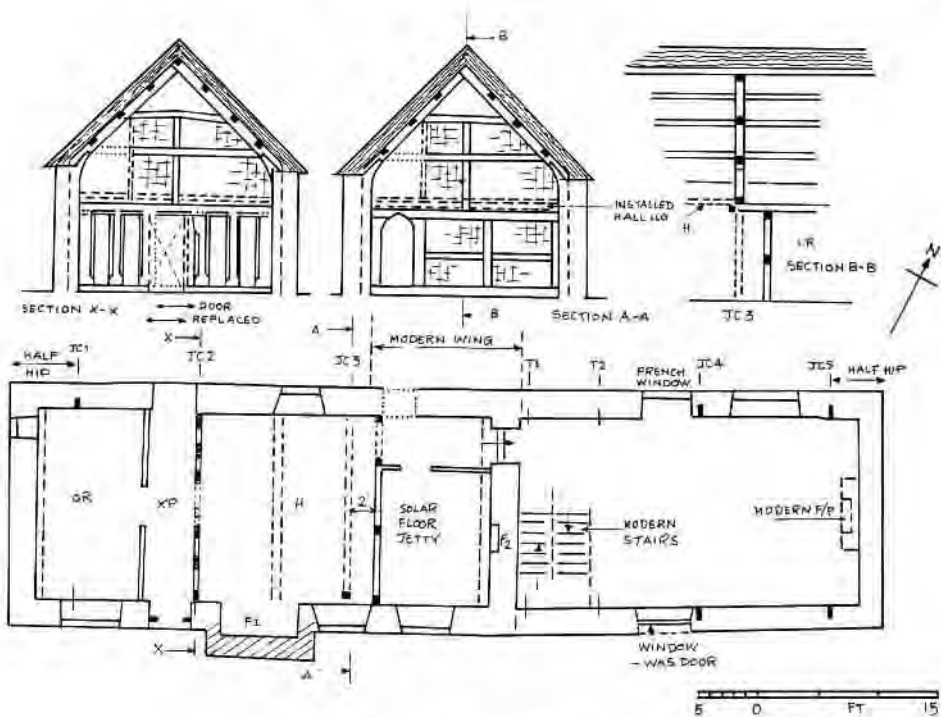


Fig. 2 Another House, Bicknoller.

two large timber-framed wattle and daub panels with a mid rail; at one end is a four-centred wooden door frame; the head beam supports the projecting ends of large joists of an upper floor over the inner room, which formed a jetty into the open hall; the hall was ceiled at a higher level in the C17th, its beams having scroll stops. The upper (solar) floor over the inner room is supported at the gable on a massive beam over 12" deep, with step and run out stops to plain chamfer. The solar/hall partition within a cruck truss at the end of the jetty is similarly framed to the partition over the stud and plank screen. The upper floor over the outer room is at a lower level than in the hall and has a large beam at the gable similar to that in the inner room; thus both ends of the house were two-storeyed whilst the hall was open to the roof. (Miss M.W. Stokes assisted with this record.)

Bicknoller, Wayville

This originally three-room and cross-passage house is of above average size; the internal width is 18'; the 30" thick rubble walls are indicative of a medieval origin, but extensive alterations and additions have left little early detail. Of special interest is a lateral fireplace to the inner room as well as the hall, an extremely rare feature in Somerset though several have been noted in Devon.

Bicknoller, Bicknoller Inn

A picturesque, thatched, low two-storey building, but extensive rebuilding has left little other than a section of 29" thick wall and a large gable fireplace; to one side of the latter was a curing chamber, to the other is an oven; the latter is within an extensive blank area of the full height of the building, suggesting a former kiln.

Several other houses have been recorded in this parish, which retains an exceptional number of early houses.

Cheddon Fitzpaine, No. 91 (Fig. 3)

This low two-storey cottage, the upper floor almost entirely in the roof space, is the surviving kitchen and cross passage of a house of not later than the C16th; to which was added a rear lean-to in the C17th, when the back wall was replaced by a timber-framed rod and daub partition; the daub has been removed leaving the framing as a perfect example of this type of structure (see also *SANHS* 131, 245).

A 16" deep wooden lintel of the fireplace extends the full width of the kitchen; on the right of the hearth an oven has been built within a former curing chamber, to the left is now a blanked-off area which projects beyond the side wall for a length of 9' rising to the wall top. The space enclosed within this is now entered from an adjoining cottage added beyond the gable of the C16th house; it was a corn kiln (K) of the latter.

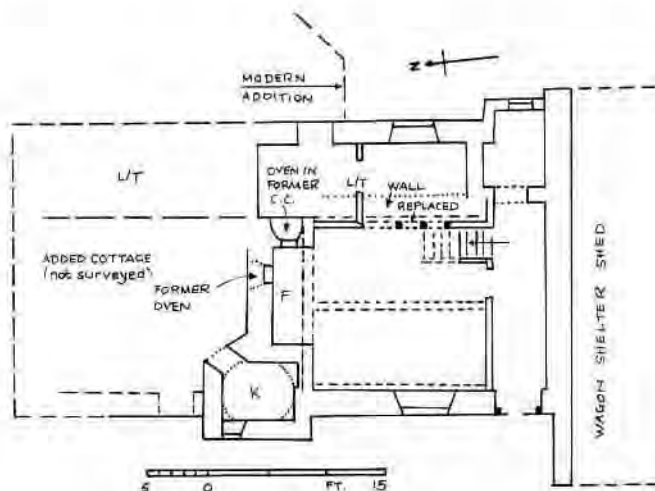


Fig. 3 No. 91, Cheddon Fitzpaine.

Combe Florey, Manor Gatehouse (Fig. 4) (with J. and J. Penoyre).

A central tower block over the arched entrance is flanked by two-storeyed ranges; the tower has had a third storey removed and been reroofed, but still stands high above the wings. The height of the beamed ceiling inside the arches is c.17' and of the room over 10' 6", above which is an attic to which the stairs still rise. The second storey of the right-hand wing is largely within the roof space. The left-hand wing is a separate dwelling; much rebuilt internally and not surveyed.

The other dwelling comprises rooms in the tower block as well as the right-hand wing. They are entered through a depressed four-centred stone doorway with 17" deep lintel D1; a passage past the foot of spiral stairs gives access to a small room in the tower block (the modern kitchen) and the wing; a recess at the front of the former in a projection rising the height of the tower was a two-storeyed garderobe. Outer walls of the tower are 3' thick as are those of the RH wing. The latter has recently been restored to domestic use after C19th use as stables. The door D2 into these rooms 2, 3 and 4 is similar to D1. Ceiling beams at above average height have

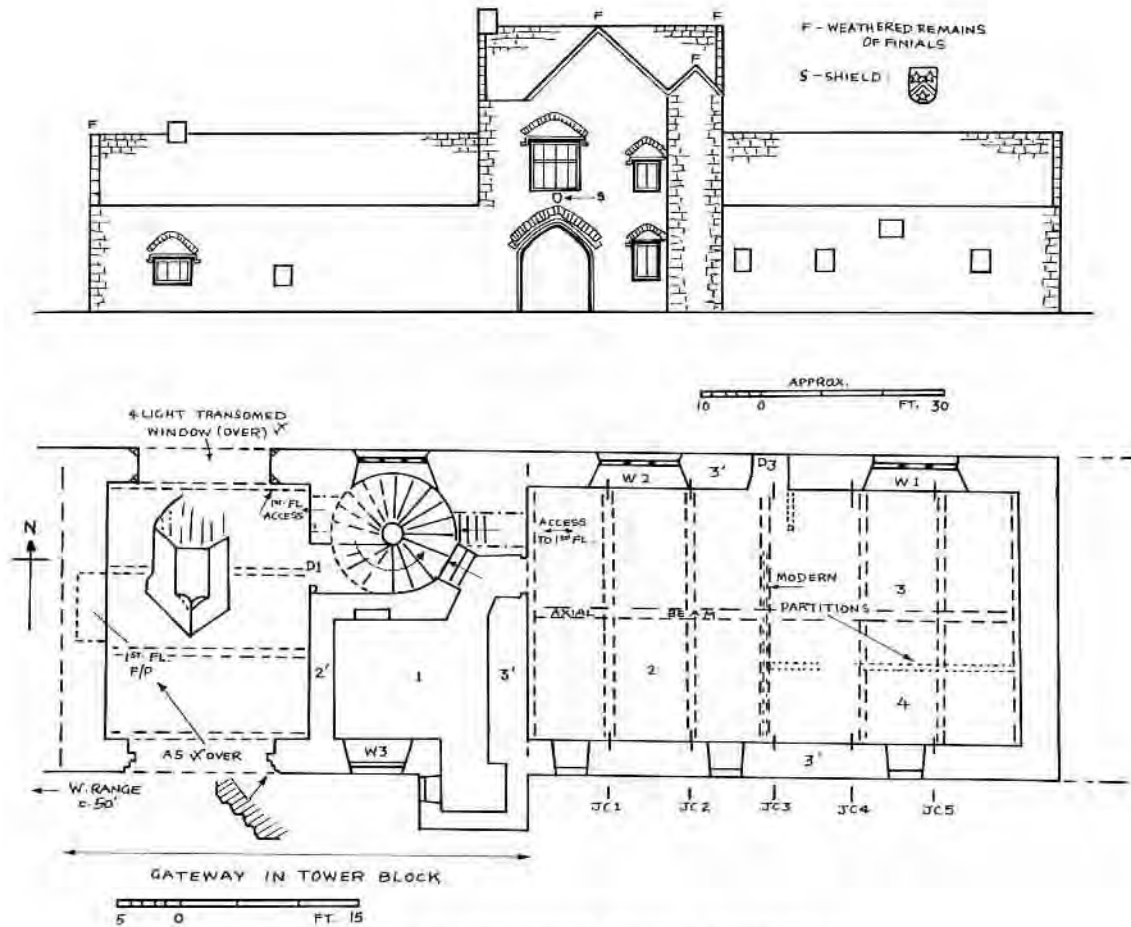


Fig. 4(a) Manor Gatehouse (south elevation), Combe Florey
4(b) Manor Gatehouse, Combe Florey.

shallow step and run out stops to wide plain chamfers of not later than the C16th; they are supported by a modern axial girder, the overall width being 28'. Front windows are featureless, set high in the wall, relics of the stables; windows W1 and W2 at the back, like W3 in room 1 and those on the stairs and in the room over the entrance, are in stone frames with bulbous ovolo moulding probably dating from 1593 (see below); the door D3, of the same date, has been heightened when it became the stable entrance.

The six-bay roof has five tenon-jointed cruck trusses, purlins are trenched and the ridge is in a V notch in a flush-tenoned apex; there are no windbraces. Cambered collars are tenoned. The upper floor is lit by a window at the front and one in the gable, probably originally loading doors to a hay loft over the stables; in the gable are three narrow ventilation slits. The lack of early upper windows suggests an original open ground-floor hall.

The spacious spiral stone stairs rise one and a half complete turns to the room over the entrance archway; at 90° below the top they also give access to the upper floor of the right-hand wing. The ashlar newel is 18" in diameter. They are lit by two ovolo-moulded, three-light, stone-framed windows. The upper room in the tower, known as 'the Tudor Room', is lit by four-light transomed, ovolo-moulded, stone-framed windows at front and back, and heated by a fireplace with a depressed four-centred stone lintel with double reversed ogee moulding, which has indented flask stops down the sides; the hearth is flanked by semi-circular pilasters – a mantel shelf with moulding of c. 1500 continues round the caps of the pilasters. (The outer arch of the entrance has the same reversed ogee moulding, the fireplace thus being coeval with it. The gates are harr hung, iron pivots rest in hollowed stones.)

An ornate overmantel has a central framed panel with strapwork cartouche and achievement of arms and bunches of fruit; at each side a pair of terms on moulded pedestals carrying fruit, all in high relief. Over it is inscribed 'John Francis, Esquire 1593'. Coeval with it is a plaster ceiling of thin ribbed geometric pattern with Tudor roses, and a frieze with running scroll pattern, all typical of this period in Somerset and Devon. Adjoining this room is a chamber with garderobe.

The building is a late-C15th gatehouse to a former courtyard manor house now demolished, which was replaced by the present house on the hill to the north in c.1675 and refronted in 1730, (Pevsner, N., *Buildings of England – South and West Somerset*, 1958, 129). The gatehouse was modified (not built, as stated by Pevsner) in 1593 when John Francis added the plasterwork and fitted the ovolo-moulded windows; the only other known C16th examples of the latter are at Bishop's Hull Manor (1586) and possibly Wigborough Manor (1585); the majority of this type are C17th.

Drayton, Linsey Cottage

Now one of a pair of cottages dated 1737, it is in origin the modified hall and inner room of a three-room and cross-passage house, of which the other cottage comprises the cross passage and outer room. Both have been rebuilt in brick with additions at the back of rooms of half the width of the front (original) rooms, raised to two storeys and attics and under a single span roof. The later dog-legged stairs are in the addition, but still abreast the hall fireplace as would have been the original. They thus resemble Ashford Farm, Ilton (1703) and nearby Broughton's Farm (1710); the rebuilding of the latter was however in stone, showing that brick was by no means universally used at this period.

Fitzhead, Dean Farmyard (Fig. 5)

A complex group of buildings enclosing the yard on the E and N sides; to the S of the yard is a large mill pond. Immediately E of the latter are (C18th?) workhorse

stables(1) which have been extended to include most of open-sided shelter sheds. Housed in an added building at their S end is an undershot water wheel. To the W of the stables alongside the pond is a shelter shed for bullocks, and an enclosed area for sick animals and a tack room. Belt drive from the water wheel was transmitted through shafting to a chaff cutter in the loft over the stables; much of the belt and shaft drive is missing, but its full extent can be traced with the help of information supplied by Mr Shapland, the owner. The shaft continued at a high level across the yard to a fly wheel at the end of the upper floor of a bank barn(2), from which further belts and shafting drove a corn grinder and an oat roller, or when required a sheep shearer. Through a further series of shafts and belts, the drive continued into the upper floor of a two-storey building behind the barn to a cake crusher and

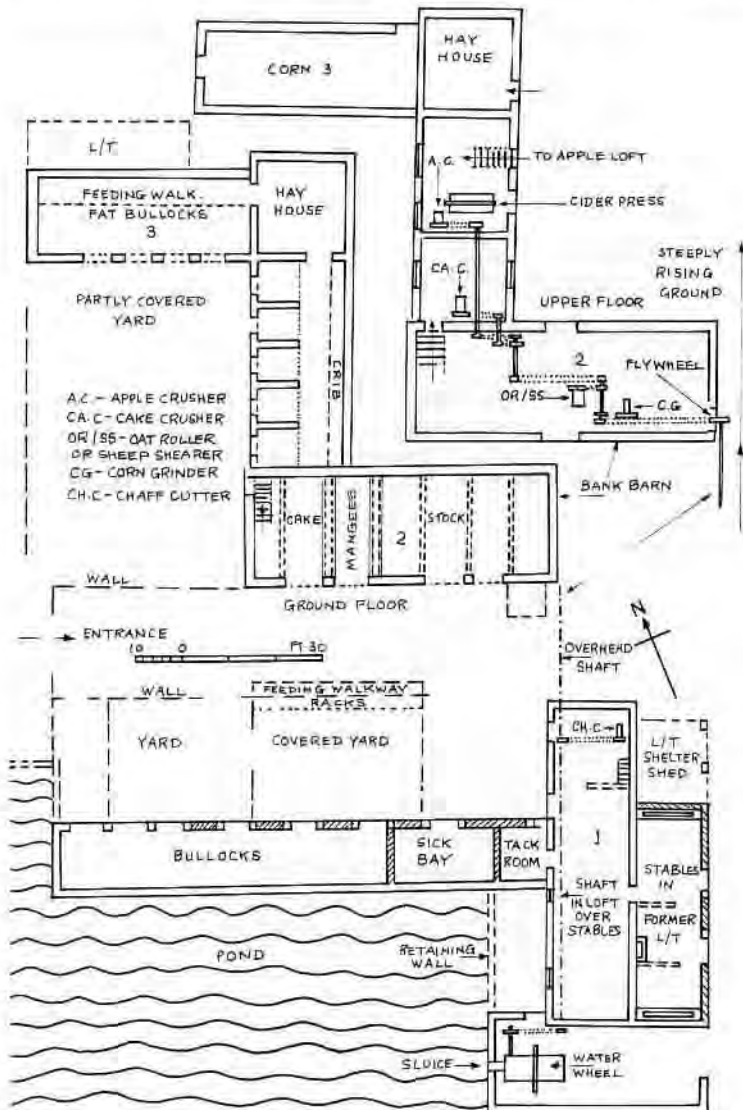


Fig. 5 Dean Farmyard, Fitzhead.

finally the apple crusher near the cider press; above the latter is the apple loft. The upper floor of this building is entered from the higher ground to the N of the barn, as is the upper floor of the barn(2). The ground floor of the barn, at yard level, housed stock and was used for storage. The function of the ground floor of the rear building, (which is later than the C18th barn), is uncertain. Five vaulted compartments have narrow entrances and a walkway along the back; in this there is now a 'crib' (feeding trough), but this seems likely to be an addition on change of function of the building. In the floor of the cider house is a hole into the lower part, which may have been the cider cellar for storage. At the N end of this range is a hay house open for the full two-storey height with an entrance at the high level; ground floor doors give access to a feeding walk in a C19th bank barn(3) to the W, and into the building between the barns. The upper floor of bank barn 3 was used for corn storage. From each of the five operating positions a system of chains and bell cranks led back to the sluice at the water wheel, providing remote control of the latter.

North Curry, Greenway Farmhouse

A two-roomed, cob-walled, one and a half storeyed, thatched cottage, the larger room heated by a gable fireplace, probably dating from c. 1600, has been refaced in C18th brick. At this same date a brick-walled third room was added together with a brick-walled kitchen wing, and a lean-to in the angle of the resulting L-plan; the kitchen gable fireplace is of rubble, as are further lean-tos beside the wing and behind the original fireplace. These were used as a cider cellar.

Old Cleeve, Barn Croft (Fig. 6)

This is a good example of the not infrequent sub-division of a three-room and cross-passage house of not later than c. 1600 into a row of cottages. Barn Croft comprises the outer room and cross passage, the remainder being Nos. 1 and 2 Myrtle Cottages. By resiting the partition, part of the outer room has been combined with the passage to give a two-room plan, and a new entrance has been made at their junction. The large gable fireplace with a heavy wooden lintel extending the full width of the room survives intact; to the L are spiral stairs in a turret, and to the R is a 6' square chamber protruding beyond the gable and rising to the wall top, which was a corn kiln or large curing chamber; its ground floor is now a larder, entered from an added rear wing, and the upper part a bathroom. The second room is heated by a small modern grate inserted into the back of the hall stack, the door into the hall (now Myrtle Cottage) being blocked.

Old Cleeve, Bilbrook, River Cottage (Fig. 7)

An apparent C17th one and a half storey two-roomed cottage with thatched roof is in fact the surviving outer room and cross passage of a C15th house, of which the hall has been rebuilt and the inner room lost. Proof of its medieval origin are two smoke-blackened tenon-jointed crucks. The entrance is still into the cross passage, whose backdoor is now a window. The partition from the outer room has been removed from under the beam B1: mortices and stake holes in the latter show it comprised two large rectangular wattle and daub panels and a door at the front; this beam, like the others in the room and the lintel of the fireplace (F), has C16th step and run out stops to plain chamfers, the date of insertion of the fireplace. Coeval with the latter is an outshut at the back, the roof over which continues in the slope of the house roof as a catslide. At the sides of the hearth are an oven and spiral stairs, and at the back a small hearth window, a not uncommon feature in the SW of the county. The hall, until recently a garage, has been restored to domestic use, the rebuilt wall from the passage partially blocking a formerly wider door. This cottage

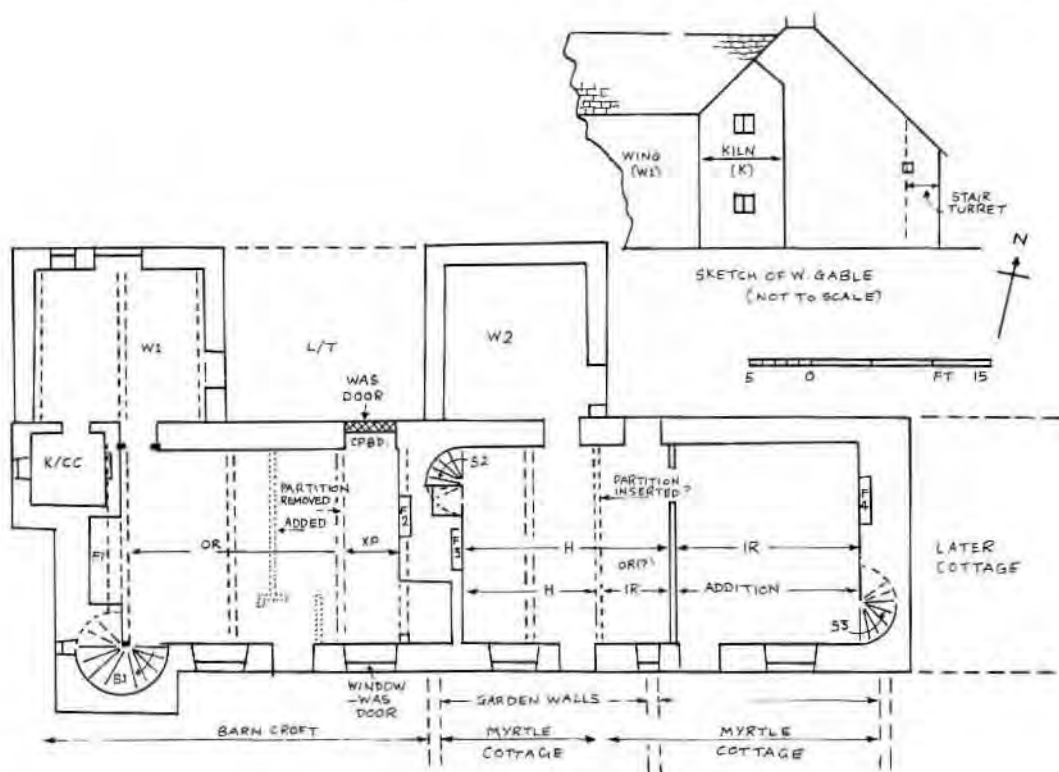


Fig. 6 Barn Croft and 1 and 2 Myrtle Cottages, Bilbrook, Old Cleeve.

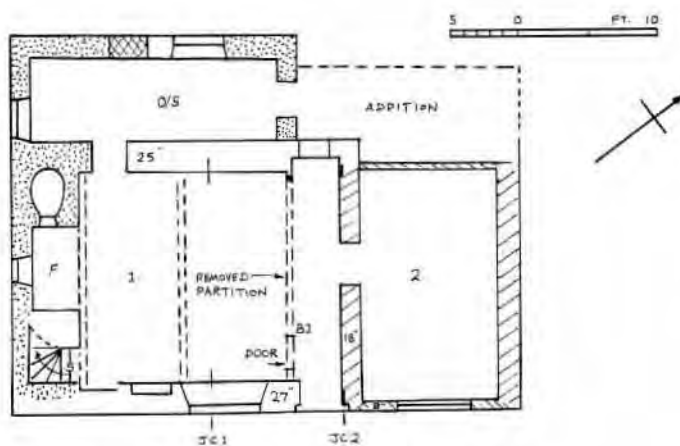


Fig. 7 River Cottage, Bilbrook, Old Cleeve.

exemplifies the misconception of date of origin so frequently given by external appearance alone, as does Lavender Cottage, below.

Sampford Brett, Lavender Cottage (Fig. 8)

Externally, this low two-storey house with upper windows in gabled dormers differs little from an adjacent row of C19th cottages, other than in its greater length of three rooms in line. However, its smoke-blackened roof over the centre room with two tenon-jointed cruck trusses shows it to be of C15th origin. The entrance (D1) is now into the centre room, extensive rebuilding of walls at both ends having obliterated evidence for an original door behind the stack of the fireplace (F1) heating the centre room, the hall (H) of a three-room and cross-entry house; at the back the blocked door of this entry is seen in the original 27" thick back wall. The hall has a magnificent framed ceiling, four panels being subdivided into smaller panels by lesser beams, cambered across the house and moulded with a series of hollows and rolls of C16th date, when the fireplace was inserted into an open hall. Rebuilding has left the inner and outer rooms (IR and OR) featureless, but the modern stairs (S), partly in a brick turret entered from the hall, are a rebuild of original stairs to the solar over the inner room, typically sited at one end of the hall/inner room partition, as for example at Meadow Croft, Capton, Stogumber (below), also at The Oval, Dunster and Meadow Gate, Fitzhead, amongst others.

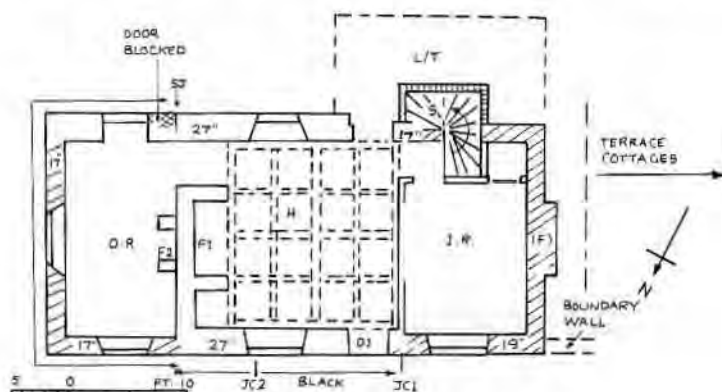


Fig. 8 Lavender Cottage, Sampford Brett.

Skilgate, Haddon End Farm

A rubble-walled building enclosing one side of the farmyard, now a calf shed with feeding walk along one side, was the medieval farm house of longhouse plan, i.e. a combined house and byre. The present house and two cottages of later date stand higher up the hill side. This isolated group is on the 850' contour on a southern slope of the Brendons, near the source of a stream and is still dependent on this water supply.

The original house has 30" thick walls and was of three-room and cross-passage plan, its outer room (the byre) at the downhill end. When the stock became separately housed, and the outer room acquired domestic status, windows were inserted on the S side but on the N side the narrow slit openings of the byre remained, as also seen at West Nethercot, Winsford in the Exe valley. A Tudor fireplace was inserted in the hall, between which and the inner room was a stud and

plank screen of which only the head beam survives. A frame ceiling was inserted in the inner room, the upper floor being almost entirely in the roof space. The roof has been replaced, so exact date of origin is uncertain.

Stocklinch, Brake's Cottage (Fig. 9)

Re-examination of this house, briefly described by Sir R. de Z. Hall and C. Austin ('The Medieval Houses of Stocklinch', *SANHS* 116, 93) has revealed further features of note. The heavy lintel and posts of the hall fireplace, now encased in a stone-sided hearth, are the surviving remnants of the base of the firehood seen intact on the upper floor. There is no doubt that the cross passage and outer room are part of the original house. The large rectangular panels of the partition between them are typically not later than the C16th, and the cruck over the outer wall room is

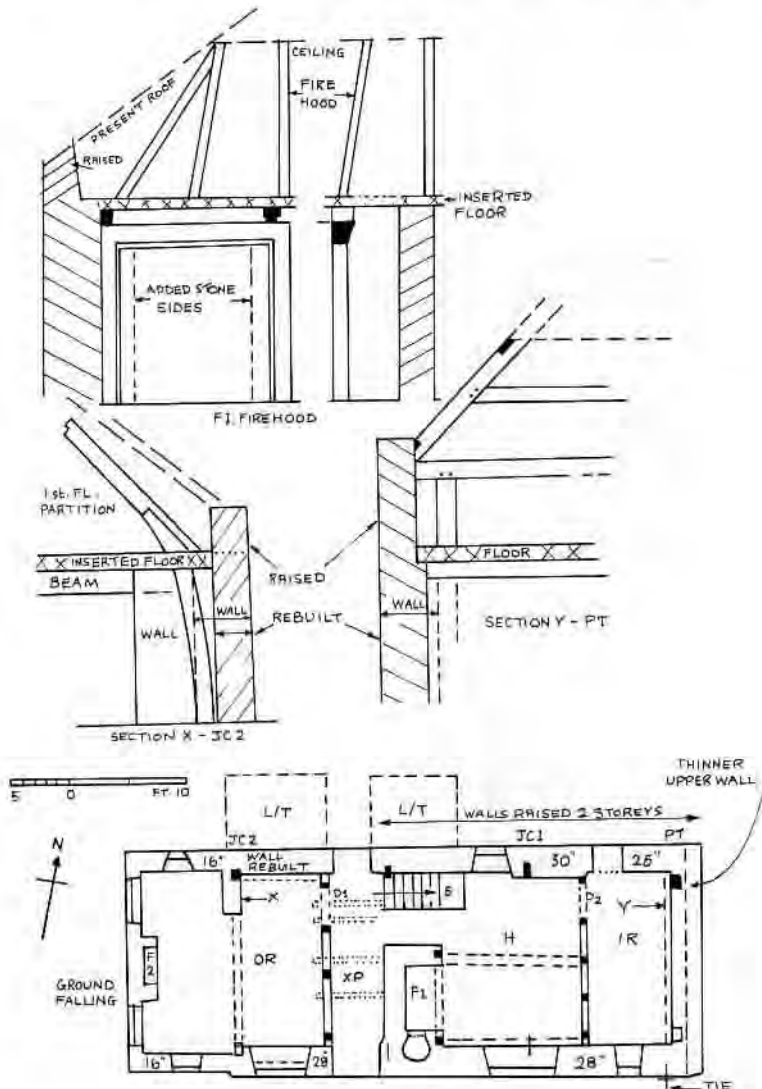


Fig. 9 Brake's Cottage, Stocklinch.

similarly jointed at the same height as that over the hall; it does not rest on the beam at ceiling height, as stated, but rises from ground level. It differs from the usual Somerset crucks however, in that its upright is not vertical but curves inwards from the base.

Stogumber, Capton, Meadow Croft (Fig. 10)

The principal members of a medieval roof over the hall and inner room of this three-roomed and cross-passage house remain under the later roof on raised walls. Of two tenon-jointed cruck trusses, one between the hall and inner room, rising from just above upper floor level, is infilled to the apex by large, rectangular, timber-framed panels of wattle and daub. Over the hall all the timbers are smoke-blackened, but over the inner room they are clean; thus there was a first-floor solar over the inner room, whilst the hall was open to the roof and heated by an open hearth on the floor.

A tie beam of the truss extended only as far as a vertical strut under the end of the collar at one side, leaving an open triangular space through which (ladder ?) stairs from the hall gave access to the solar; modern stairs (S2) have replaced the original, and the tie has been further shortened to allow a first-floor axial passage to be made. (cf. Lavender Cottage, Sampford Brett, above.)

When the hall was ceiled and the fireplace (F2) inserted, spiral stairs (S) were built in the C16/17th, which have now been removed. Beside the outer room fireplace (F1) is a large recess (K) which was a corn kiln projecting beyond the side wall; on the other side spacious stairs (S1) rise over a cupboard. These all occupy a space 8' deep, suggesting an original smoke bay at the gable.

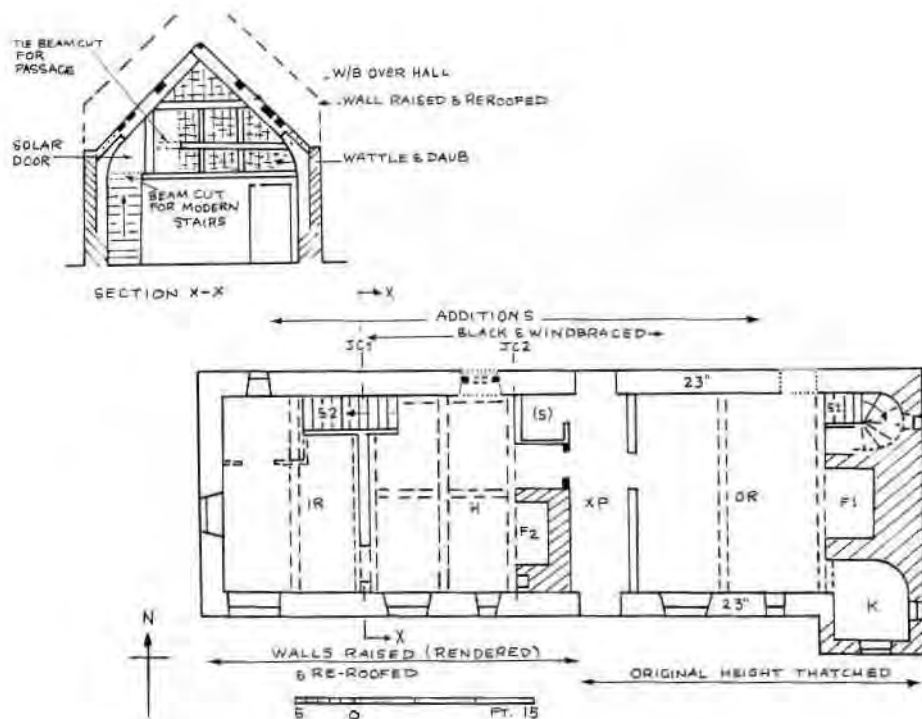


Fig. 10 Meadow Croft, Capton, Stogumber.

Taunton, Hamilton Road, St. Margaret's (Fig. 11)

Today the building is the offices of The Somerset Rural Community Council who have published *The History of St. Margaret's*; this summarises the Rev. T. Hugo's *History of the Hospital of St. Margaret's*, documents in Somerset Record Office, and research by T.J. Hunt based on documents at Longleat published in *SANHS* 105. The building was in the parish of West Monkton until taken into the Borough of Taunton in 1933; it belonged to Taunton Priory and was founded by 1174. After destruction by fire it was rebuilt by Abbot Beere of Glastonbury; a very weathered sculpture in the wall has the initials 'R B' below an abbot's mitre, more clearly shown in a photograph of 1874 by Hugo. None of the earlier building survives today.

The present building, which dates between 1493 and 1524, had a chapel at the E end which was sold in 1549 for 53s 4d, but the hospital continued to house six poor lazar people till 1874, according to Hugo; each inmate had a sitting room with fireplace and cooking facilities, with a small bedroom over.

An application by Taunton Borough Council in 1937 to demolish the building was refused and it was agreed that the Rural Community Council could modify the interior for use as offices but should preserve the exterior. Work started in 1939 as recorded on a stone plaque. At the time there is reference to accommodation for seven whereas Hugo referred to six occupants.

The interior has been extensively modified, especially at the E end where there is a recent fireplace, and the gable without a plinth is partly in brick. This end is now one long room open to the roof except for an inserted gallery at the gable. At approximately mid length is a cross passage whose back door is now a window; the

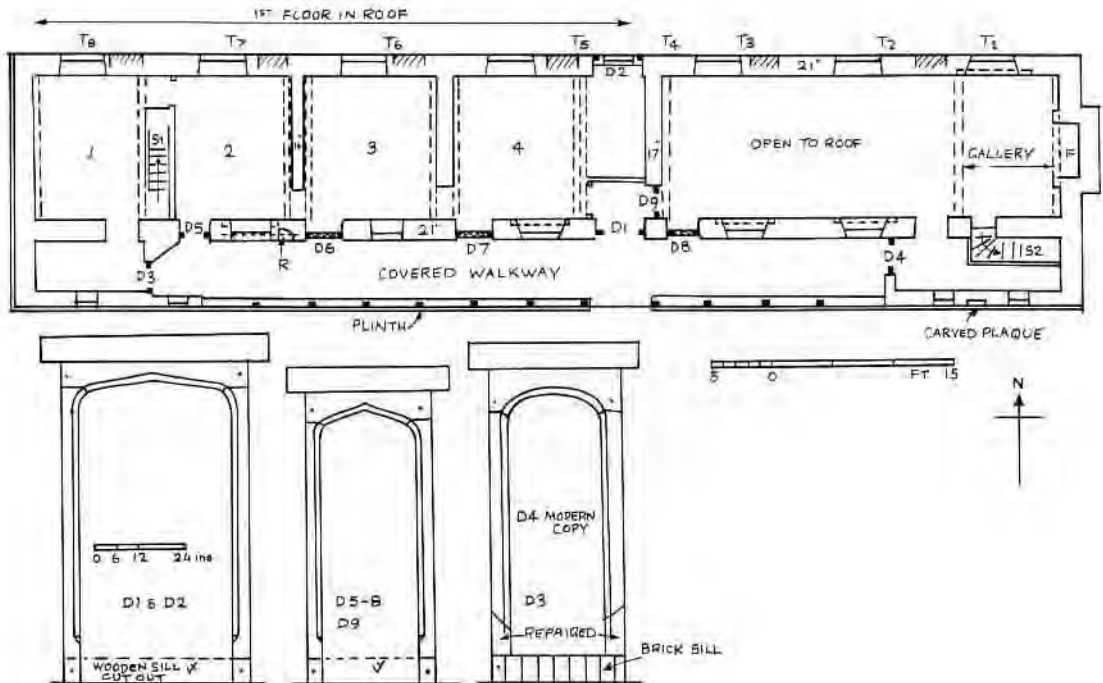


Fig. 11 St. Margaret's Hospital, Hamilton Road, Taunton.

front door has a depressed four-centred head and 45° flat stops to a plain-chamfered wooden frame. The passage presumably led to a rear courtyard or garden.

W of the passage four rooms remain, but without fireplaces; at the back of each is a modern window and a blocked door in a rubble wall without a plinth. At the front, doors similar to but smaller than those of the passage, enter each room from a covered walkway; windows are modern but mostly in original openings. The walkway is open fronted, the roof on wooden pillars above a low wall, which like the W gable is on a plinth. Small rooms at each end of the walkway appear to be later additions. Ceiling beams in the rooms have shallow step and run out stops to plain chamfers, there being an attic over the W rooms approached by modern stairs. Roof trusses have cranked tenoned collars, trenched purlins and ridge in a V notch in a tenoned apex; they rest on heavy wall-plates.

SOUTH AVON

Kenn, Lake Farmhouse

A large farmhouse of 19' internal width with 29" thick rubble walls is c. 89' overall length, of which the cross passage and outer room, the latter now subdivided, occupy 47' on a slightly downhill site. Originally of single storey, it was raised to two storeys in the C17th, when a porch was added together with a parlour wing at the upper end and a dairy wing at the other. Despite these extensive alterations, solid baulk stairs remain at the junction of hall and inner room, a surprising survival from the medieval period, when they gave access from the open hall to the solar over the inner room. Further, they are the only recorded solid baulk stairs rising in a straight flight, all others being in spiral form. Originally the house was a longhouse, a combined house and byre.

Kewstoke, The Newtons

A C17th two-storey and attic house of L plan with an entrance lobby between the two front rooms has a date stone of 1710, at which time a spacious open-well stair was added in the angle of the L, and the front was refenestrated with two-light transomed windows in frames set flush in the outer face of the wall; the off-centre front door in a bolection-moulded frame is of double plank construction hung on pintels, being an earlier door reset in a new frame. This and the lack of symmetry are indicative of the earlier house being refaced. Later in the C18th, or early C19th, a new kitchen was added at the back. The house thus exemplifies the several stages by which an early house has developed in plan and appearance to that which we see today. A further feature of special interest is that the three gabled dormers in the roof are not glazed windows but slatted openings to ventilate cheese storage in the attics, a feature common in N. Avon, as noted by Linda Hall in *The Rural Houses of N. Avon and S. Gloucestershire*, (1983), but not previously seen in Somerset.

* * * *

CURING CHAMBERS have been referred to frequently in these accounts of Somerset houses, and the following recipes for curing ham and bacon (which have been found by Mrs. B. Ridgley and Mrs. P. Flower Smith) would presumably be applicable to curing in a chamber, although they both refer to hanging the meat in a chimney: the advantage of a chamber would be the ability to burn the chosen fuel irrespective of that being used on the hearth.

Sides of bacon or ham, being previously pickled for one month, are taken out, dried and smoked in the following manner:-

1. hang the ham in a large chimney;
 2. put a layer of dry straw on the hearth;
 3. upon this a layer of mixed wood shavings;
 4. next a layer of mixed sawdust;
 5. a good handful of juniper berries;
 6. and over this a mantle of wet straw or litter, which makes the fire to smoulder and emit such smoke without burning too rapidly.
- N.B. This smoking must be repeated several times until the hams are quite dry, when they must be placed in the warm kitchen on shelves near the fire and turned twice weekly.

The other recipe is:-

Take a quarter of a peck of salt, a quarter of a pound of saltpepper, 2 pounds of coarse brown sugar, 23 pints of water, boil it all together and scum it clear, set it by till it is cold then put in the hams and let them lie 3 weeks turning them every day, then hang them up in the chimney where they may be well smoked for 3 weeks, then keep them papered from the flies or else covered over in malt dust.

NOTES SUBMITTED BY B.C.M. HALE

Baltonsborough, Ham Street, Tilham House

An early C16th longhouse which has been modernised. The roof is entirely new, but the house retains the fireplace and the stair space (now with modern straight stairs) backing onto the cross passage, the hall and a large inner room with identical framed ceilings with plain deep chamfers. At the side of the inner room is a small service (?) room with chamfered beams with step and runout stops. The outer room has a rebuilt fireplace and a large masonry blocked area beside it, which could have been a curing chamber/kiln. The walls are 27"-29" thick.

Baltonsborough, Ham Street Farms

Another C16th longhouse very similar to Tilham House, with a large inner room, a wide (7') cross passage and a typical C17th inserted fireplace with a visible but inaccessible curing chamber in the outer room. The hall and inner room have framed ceilings of very similar character to those at Tilham House. Unusually, the winder stair in the hall backing onto the cross passage is situated against the S wall rather than the N one. Roof details are not visible.

Batcombe, Westcombe, Summerleaze Cottage

A small house with every appearance of a late C17th central-entry, two-room balanced façade, with stacks in the gables, which has been modernized with a lower roofed extension to E. Appearances can be deceptive, and in spite of quoins between the C17th part and the lower extension and at least two rebuildings, the plan shows that the house started as a three-room cross-passage house with 28" thick walls. Probably C16th.

Frome, 13 Bridge Street (Fig. 12)

This house was used as the Market House for Frome cattle market, which it adjoins, during the C19th. This may account for some of its peculiarities. The S front is an elegant balanced façade with two sash windows on each side of a door and five sashes above these. The windows have moulded architraves and open

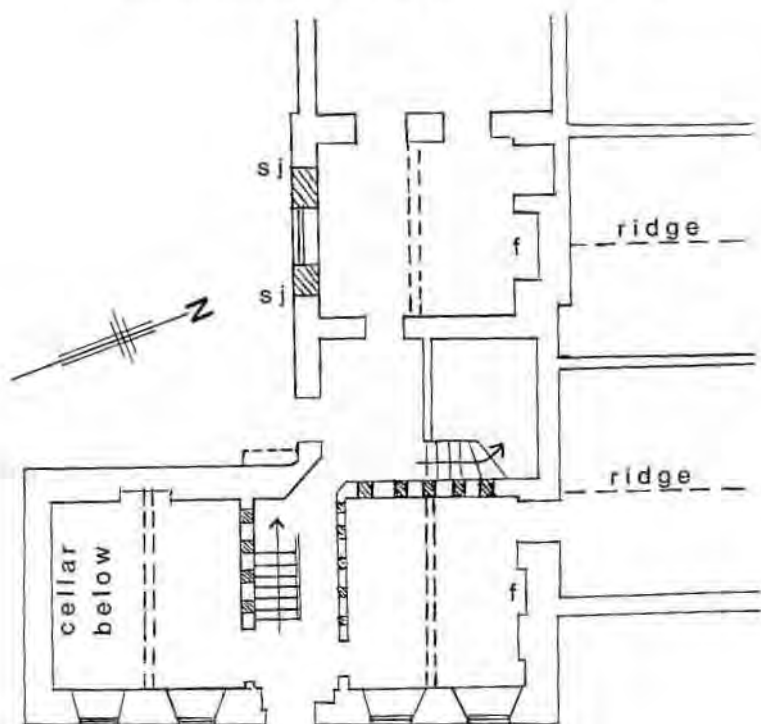


Fig. 12 No. 13, Bridge Street, Frome.

pediments over pulvinated friezes; the door has Ionic pillars supporting a steep broken pediment clasping a blank cartouche and is in an eared, moulded frame. A moulded cornice on modillions supports a low parapet. The front rooms separated by stairs and a narrow passage, both timber-framed with lath and plaster walls, are only 12' square. One room has a fireplace on the rear wall, the other a gable fireplace. The rear wall of this latter room is made from a substantial timber frame which rises to the eaves. The insubstantial timber frame between this room and the narrow passage way contains the studded frame of an archway, which is inexplicable, as it is adjacent to the door to the entrance and passage way. The rear wing has late modifications, but at one time had an entrance large enough for a vehicle in the W wall and now has a handsome bolection-moulded fireplace moved down from the room above. The upper windows of the rear wing have battered ogee mouldings. Possibly a mid-C17th house which was remodelled in the early C18th.

East Pennard, Boxbush Farm

Originally a one-roomed house, thatched, with the ridge rising from the stack in the W gable to match the higher ridge of a later extension to N. The main fireplace block is large, with a bread oven opening into a C19th addition to W of the W gable, but blocked by a C19th fireplace. It has opposed entrances and unequal windows each side of the door. Little detail remains but it was probably a single-roomed cottage of the early-C17th with only lofted accommodation.

Wells, 8 Tucker Street

A central entry and opposed exit separate the two halves of this small house. The

half on the W has a large stone-framed fireplace with worn mouldings on W gable in N corner, and a stone winder stair in N wall near the corner. There are one axial and two boundary beams all chamfered with stop and runout stops; the ceiling joists are laid flat and run in opposing directions on each side of the transverse beam. The other half has a square transverse beam at a slightly higher level which was once the head beam of a wattle screen. It is now a fish and chip shop.

Wells, 4 Chamberlain Street, Saltyre House

Saltyre House is part of the Georgian terrace on the N side of Chamberlain Street. The front is standard Georgian and the interior has copious contemporary detail. One of the two rear wings has a 32" thick wall and above this the roof has three upper crucks marked 1, 11 & 111. They have tenoned apices with open slots for the ridge and chamfered windbraces. Most of the rest of the roof is obscured but one empty archbrace mortice can be traced.

Wells, 44 & 48 St. Thomas Street (Fig. 13)

Now divided into two cottages but originally a two- or possibly three-roomed house with opposed entry in the service room. This entry is now a through passage way to houses at the rear and shows a mud mortared wall with a blocked entrance beside the fireplace in the hall to W. A chamfered half beam with step and runout stops and downward hooked end runs on the mud mortared wall. The entrance to the passage way has ovolo-moulded sides and head but the relieving arch is two-centred medieval. The walls are 28" thick and the origin must be c. 1500.

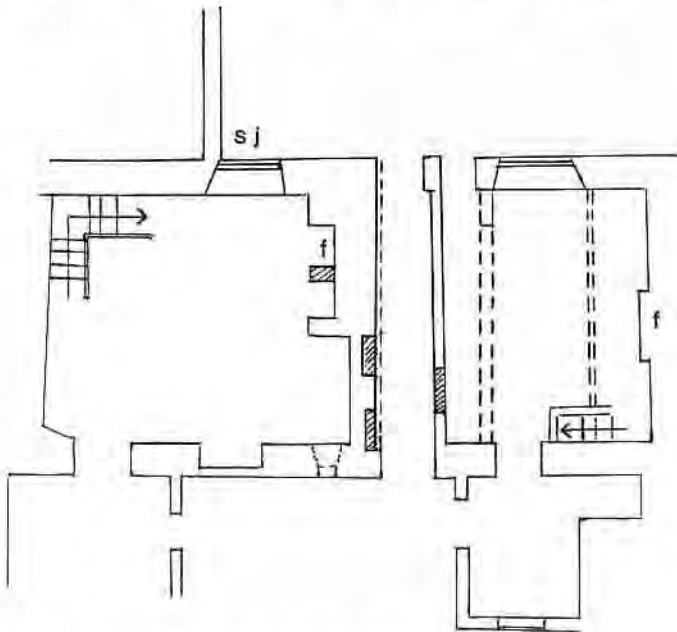


Fig. 13 Nos. 44 and 48 St. Thomas' Street, Wells.

West Lydford, Bridge Farm

A large, handsome, three-room cross-passage house with the outer room converted to a wing in C18th and with later C19th extensions. The front was refaced in the

C19th with an elegant moulded stone door frame. An unusual feature is a large winder staircase, upper flights are original; this is in a turret on the outer side of a passage. An extended collar truss ends at the top of the stairs. A small, crude, datestone in the back of the hall fireplace reads '1637', which is probably a little after the start of the house.

West Lydford, Farm complex at Bridge Farm

Immediately behind Bridge Farm is a C19th complex of farm buildings on three sides of a quadrangle. The S range of the quadrangle consists of a two-bay shelter shed in line with and the same height as a barn about 90' x 23'. This barn is built in medieval style complete with two-storey buttress having moulded copings and ashlar slit windows ending in chamfered circular recessed ashlar stones. On N side is a typical medieval entrance porch. The roof consists of king post trusses; the roof over the N-S range is collared but the carpenter's marks are not in sequence and have repetitions showing that they are re-used.

West Pennard, Cyprus Cottage

A small, one and half storey, double pile house which is built in a soft deep red 2½" brick, four courses covering 11"; only the NE corner is built of rubble. There is copious C18th detail inside and one chamfered half beam stopped with step and runouts with a nock. The two roofs are similar but not identical; the house was probably started about 1700. There are few brick-built houses in this area and one of this date is very rare.

West Pennard, Sunnyside

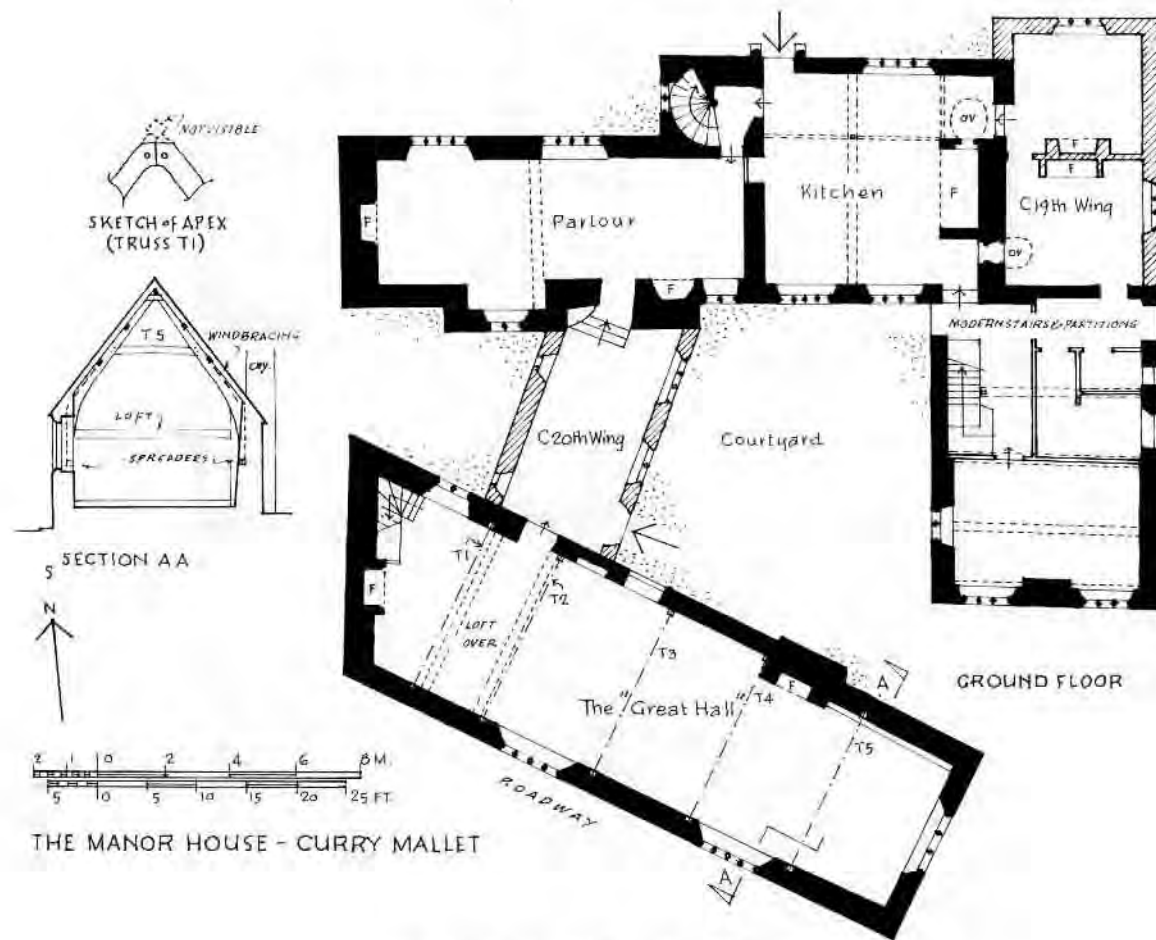
An undistinguished rubble-built house with a nearly central entry into an unheated area having opposed exit. The rooms on each side have gable fireplaces giving the appearance of a mid C17th transitional form. However, the boundary beams of the framed ceiling show that the original walls were 29" thick. The roof has four trusses; two are late, and one is rebuilt from a horizontal member with a doorhead in its soffit. These three trusses are clean. The fourth truss is a smoke-blackened upper cruck with feet clasped and tenoned into the tops of the principals; smoke-blackened purlins are chamfered top and bottom and stopped with 45° flat stops. One empty archbrace mortice could be felt in the soffit of the collar. The rest of the principals and windbraces, if any, are concealed. The upper cruck is very steeply pitched. The original plan (three-room, cross-passage ?) is lost in the almost total rebuilding of the C17th. There is plenty of room beyond the W gable for a third room. From the wall thickness, the upper cruck and the smoke blackening, the house must have originated in the early/mid-C15th at the latest.

NOTES SUBMITTED BY SOMERSET & SOUTH AVON VERNACULAR BUILDING RESEARCH GROUP

Currey Mallet, the Manor House (Fig. 14)

The Manor House comprises two main elements; a two-storey L-shaped house and, at an angle to it and originally detached, a 6-bay single storey uni-cellular building known as the Great Hall. There are no visible remains of the medieval castle referred to as 'the strong castle of Curry Mallet' in an early-C13th document.

The Great Hall is of the late-C14th or early-C15th and has a raised true cruck roof structure with one tier of windbracing and no apparent smoke blackening. It



THE MANOR HOUSE - CURRY MALLET

Fig. 14 The Manor House, Curry Mallet.

seems originally to have been a service range or possibly a retainers' hall. It is far too plain and simple ever to have been a lord's hall. It has a lateral chimney of indeterminate date and a C17th first floor added at one end.

The house is only a fragment of a much larger C16th building and may comprise what is left of a gatehouse and guest wing. It has a large stone spiral staircase, a very narrow parlour range (3.8m/12' 6"), a much wider room with a C17th kitchen fireplace added and a later wing at right angles. It is the larger room which could originally have been the entrance-way, with the present parlour the guest wing. The house was called 'the Gatehouse' in an C18th deed.

Drayton, East Street, Farmhouse (Fig. 15)

This three-unit cross-passage house dates from c.1500, as indicated by the smoke-blackened jointed crucks and the false four-centred surround to doorway D1. Originally the house was of 4 bays with an open hall and a two-storey inner room jettied into the hall. It was possibly timber-framed. At this earliest phase the lower end may have been non-domestic.

In the mid-C16th, stacks, curing chamber and framed ceiling were inserted. Further up-grading occurred in the mid-C17th and involved rebuilding and extension of the upper (inner room) end and included two sets of the unusual heart-shaped beam-stops. Another phase of improvement in the C19th involved a second staircase rising from the kitchen, and an additional service room probably for use as a dairy.

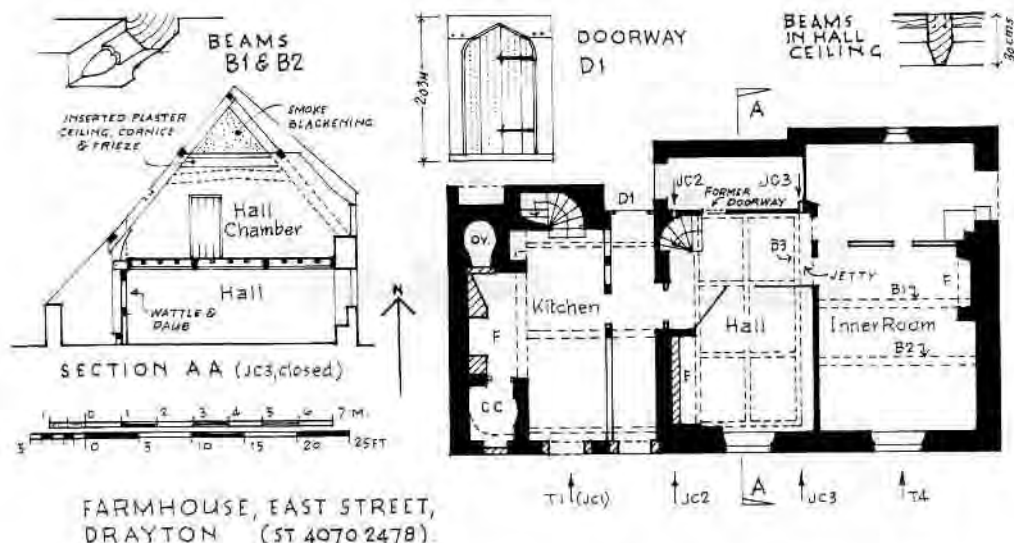


Fig. 15 Farmhouse, East Street, Drayton.

Witham Friary, Bellerica Farm (Fig. 16)

This ancient farmhouse lies near the Upton Noble parish boundary. Bellerica was owned by the Carthusian Priory at Witham and was leased to lay tenants from 1349 to 1538 (MacGarvie, M., *Bellerica Farm*, Frome Society 1974). The massively thick walls of the hall and service room (80–108cms/32"–43" thick) and their irregular

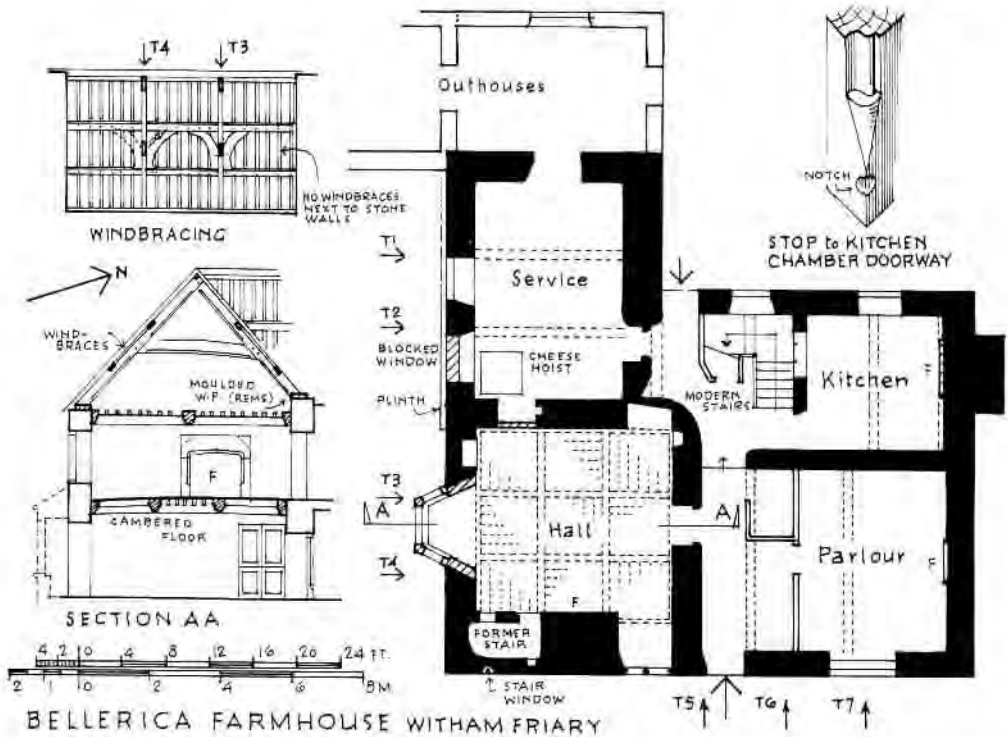


Fig. 16 Bellerica Farmhouse, Witham Friary.

shape indicate the remains of a medieval house. Only the service room has an external plinth and it has the thicker walls, so may represent an original single-unit house, the hall added perhaps in the C15th. The roof has fragments of a moulded wall-plate and some early windbraces surviving, but is generally of a mid-C16th date with chamfered principals and cambered collars. A kitchen, new fireplaces and heavy framed hall ceiling were introduced in the C16th; and a parlour wing was added in the late-C17th.