

An archaeological survey of Broad Lane farmhouse, North Curry, Somerset

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BROAD LANE FARM, NORTH CURRY: THE DEVELOPMENT OF A SIXTEENTH-CENTURY FARMHOUSE

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INTRODUCTION

In 2006 Exeter Archaeology carried out an archaeological building survey at Broad Lane Farmhouse, North Curry, Somerset, a Grade II Listed Building north-east of the village (ST 3293 2561). The record was commissioned by the then owner, Mr Richard Ware, in advance of the complete refurbishment and extension of the house, which had long been in a state of dilapidation and was, in places, close to collapse. The survey followed an initial investigation of the building by the Somerset Vernacular Building Research Group (Dallimore 2006).

THE BUILDING SURVEY

Exterior

The farmhouse is a two-storey structure of cob and stone, patched with brick and render; the roof is partly thatched and partly covered with a variety of different types of 19th-century pantiles. The original core of the house is rectangular, aligned north-west to south-east; a small 19th-century chimney rises from each of its gables. The original structure is so completely obscured by lean-to buildings or outshuts, of a variety of dates, that the first impression of the house from Broad Lane is of a mound of roofing materials rather than a substantial historic farmhouse. A two-storey rear-wing projects from the western corner of the original building and may represent an early extension to the house.

The main entrance lies in the centre of its north-eastern elevation between two lean-to structures; a woodshed and a kitchen, which extend the eaves line down to first-floor level. A later lean-to extends further still beyond this, with a lower pitched roof and brick walls. The south-eastern gable is partly obscured by a lean-to pigsty and a small shippon,

and is largely of late 19th- or early 20th-century brick. More recent outbuildings, of 20th-century date and concrete block construction, lie against the north-western gable. An earlier 20th-century lean-to lies against the north-western wall of the rear-wing.

The south-western elevation of the house is its principal façade (Fig. 1a); this has a central doorway to the cross-passage, flanked by ground- and first-floor windows, the latter under eyebrow dormers in the thatch and offset to the south-east. A large concrete raking buttress supports the south-eastern end of the main house, which is collapsing. A single-storey porch masks the doorway and the window of the central room, and provides a covered passage to the rear-wing. This wing has long been alienated from the domestic accommodation, and has few windows. Much of its south-western wall has been demolished and rebuilt in concrete blocks, and its south-eastern wall is also collapsing. No historic farm buildings survive near the main house; its sheds and outbuildings are of 20th-century date.

Plan

Ground floor

The rectangular plan is divided by a central cross-passage defined by timber partitions (Fig. 3). That on the south-east side is a full partition rising to the apex of the roof, whereas that to the north-west rises only to first-floor level. South-east of the passage is a large room, heated by a massive cob chimney stack in the gable wall and lit by a window in the south-western wall. This probably represents the original 'hall', the main room of the house. To the south-west of the chimney-stack is a large cupboard, closed by a later door, which clearly represents the site of a former staircase, since the scars of several steps are visible in the side of the stack.



Fig. 1 Broad Lane Farmhouse. (a) From the lane to the north, showing the extent to which the early house is concealed by later outshuts and extensions. (b) From the south-east, showing the gable end rebuilt in brick (photos: Gary Young)



Fig. 2 View of the south-western (rear) elevation, with the rear-wing (left) and the modern buttress supporting the collapsing south-west wall (photo: Gary Young)

To the north-west of the passage is a central room lit by a window in the south-west wall. This room has no surviving fireplace and has been encroached upon both by a late 19th-century staircase and by a further partition forming a passage to the north-western room. A closed truss rising into the apex of the roof divides this space from a smaller room at the north-western end of the house, heated by a late 19th- or early 20th-century fireplace in the gable wall and separated from the rear-wing by a further timber partition. The rear-wing had a single large room on the ground floor with no evidence of internal divisions.

The house thus conforms to the usual vernacular plan of three rooms and a cross-passage, with the rear-wing containing further accommodation at one end. This plan is varied by the provision of lean-to extensions or outshuts against the entire north-eastern elevation. These provided a small chamber which communicated with the hall fireplace by a large opening and may therefore have been a smoking chamber, and service rooms opening off

the hall and the central room, now the wood shed and the kitchen.

The outshuts have low, stone-built walls and seem to be additions to the original building. This is particularly evident in the eastern outshut or 'woodshed', where the timber partition dividing the service room from the ground- and first-floor rooms can clearly be seen to have been constructed alongside an earlier cob wall which must surely represent the original front wall of the house (Fig. 4). This relationship is also visible on the first floor, where part of one of the partitions has recently been demolished and the junction of this cob wall and the roof structure is revealed (Fig. 5). Only the section of this wall surrounding the original front door of the house now remains; the rest of the wall has been demolished and timber partitions substituted.

First floor

The first floor of the house is divided into three chambers, with a further chamber (the floor of which has now been removed) occupying the

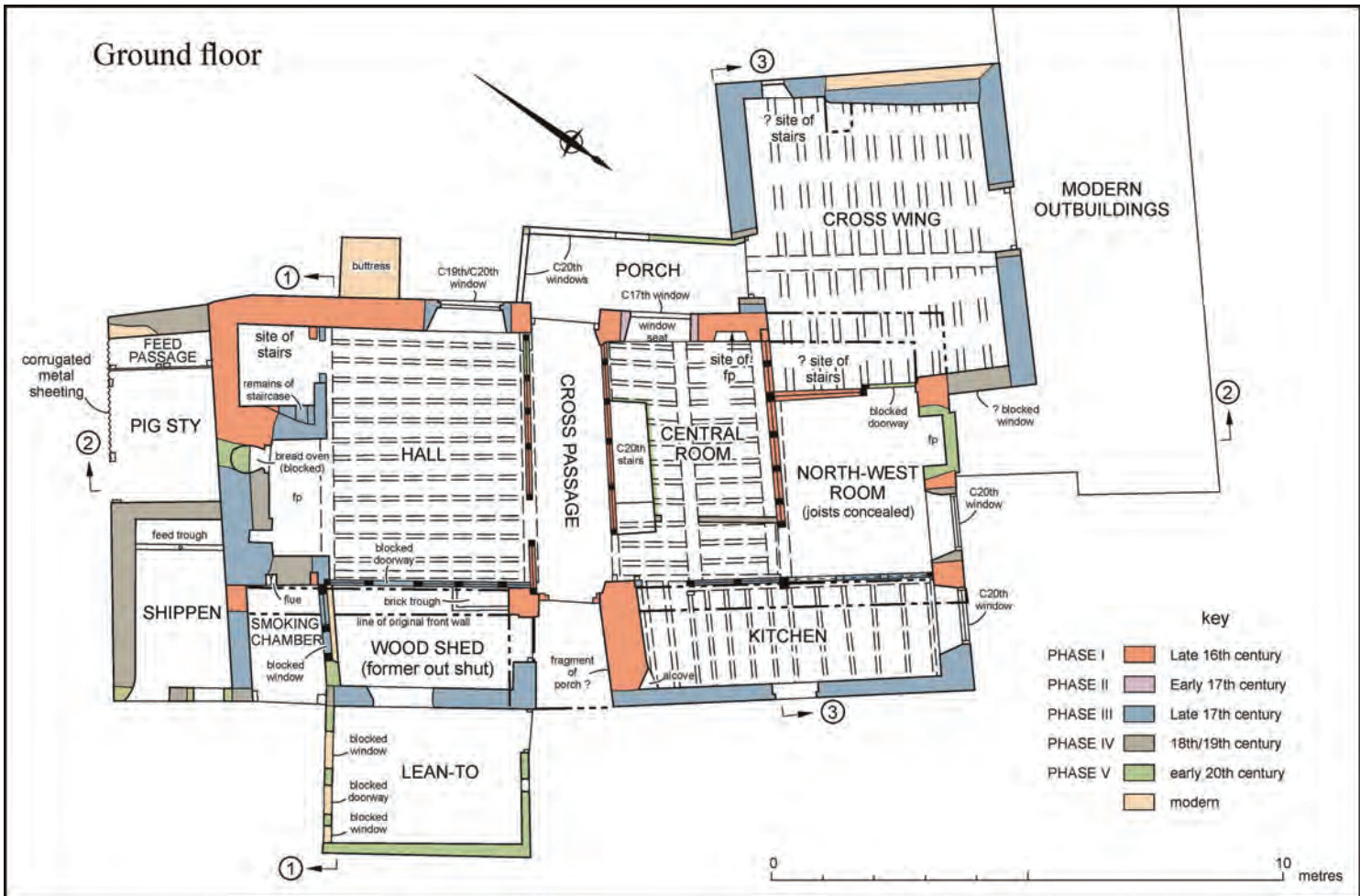


Fig. 3 Ground-floor plan showing suggested phasing (graphic: Tony Ives)

entire first floor of the rear-wing. The stairs in the southern corner of the hall have been removed and replaced with a 19th- or 20th-century staircase rising from the central room. There is at present no communication between the first floor of the main house and the former upper storey of the rear-wing; it is probable that a further staircase was formerly accommodated in the rear-wing.

their surfaces, in other areas the plaster was applied over both studs and panels to give a smooth plaster surface. All the partitions now show evidence of many subsequent layers of whitewash, wallpaper and decorative finishes. Many of these partitions survive intact, but others show areas of decay or distortion, and some panels have been broken by later doorways. Although it is unlikely that all these



Fig. 4. View within the lean-to 'wood shed', looking west, showing the remains of the early cob front wall and the later timber partitions to the west (photo: Gary Young)



Fig. 5. View within the central first-floor room, showing the relationship of the roof and the original front wall, revealed by the demolition of the later timber partition to the outshut (photo: Gary Young)

The main rooms and the outshuts are divided by timber partitions formed of studwork infilled with plaster panels. The sides of the vertical studs are drilled with small holes, into which dowels are passed to form an armature for the cob plaster panels. The original decorative treatment of the partitions varied; in some cases the studs were originally displayed with the plaster flush with

partitions are primary (see below) they all utilise similar constructional methods, and although some may represent modifications, it is likely that these were made relatively early in the existence of the house.

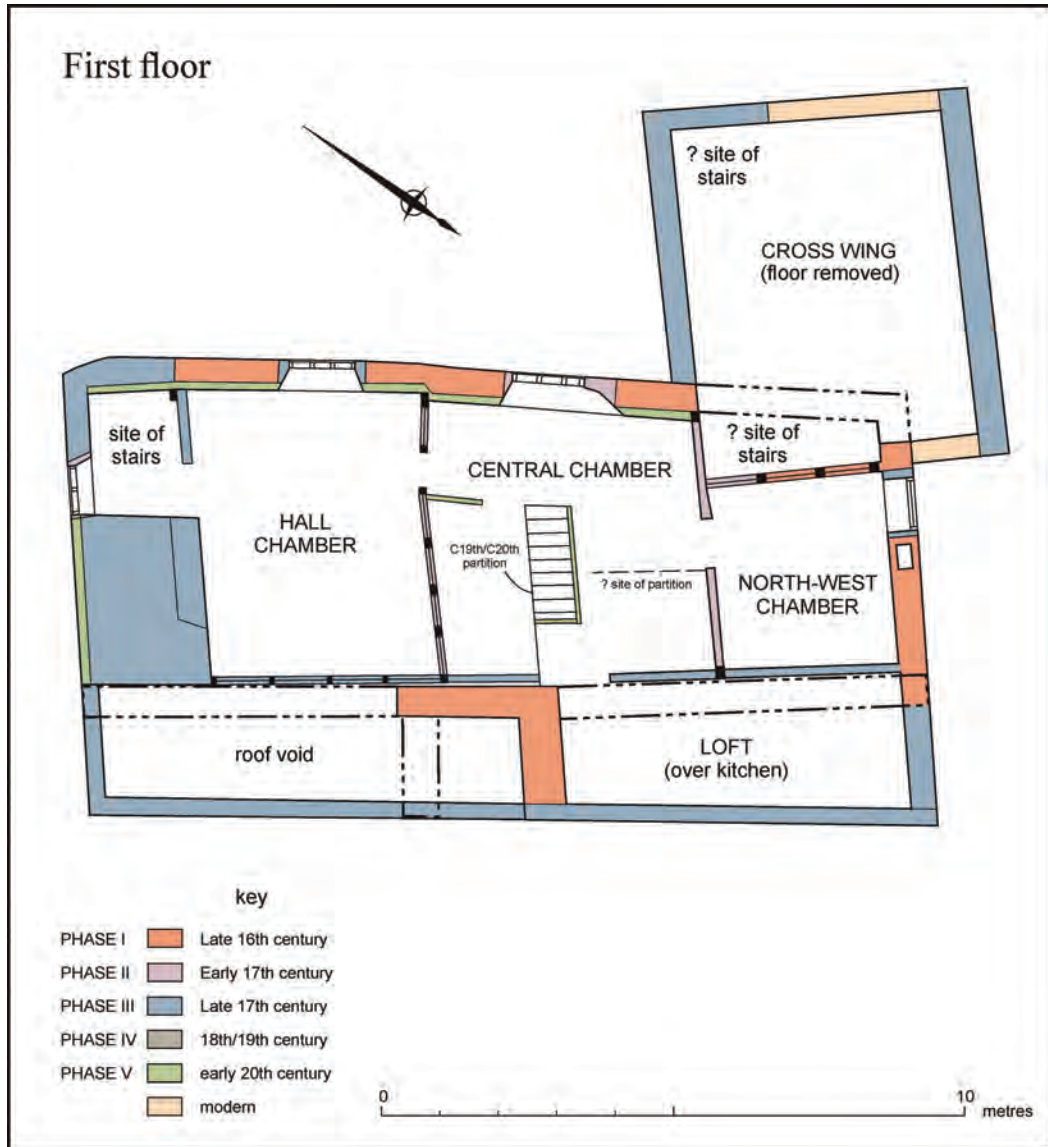


Fig. 6 First-floor plan showing suggested phasing (graphic: Tony Ives).

Interior

Cross-passage

The main entrance to the house is through the cross-passage, the outer part of which lies between the two outshuts against the north-east wall of the original house, the wood shed and the kitchen. The south-eastern side of the outer passage is formed by a stone wall, part of the eastern outshut or

woodshed. This has a doorway with an unmoulded timber frame and a three-plank door hung on a strap hinge with an expanded end. The other hinge is missing. On the opposite side of the passage is a massive cob wall, much thicker than the other walls of the northern outshut or kitchen. The wall is presumably earlier than the outshut and may be part of the primary building but it was not possible

to establish a definite relationship between this wall and the remains of the original front wall of the house. It seems likely that the cob wall survives from a projecting structure on the front of the original house, such as a stair turret or chimney, or perhaps part of a porch. The existence of a porch may well have contributed to the survival of the remaining section of the original front wall, which would otherwise be difficult to explain in the context of the demolition of almost the entire length of the wall when the outshuts were constructed.

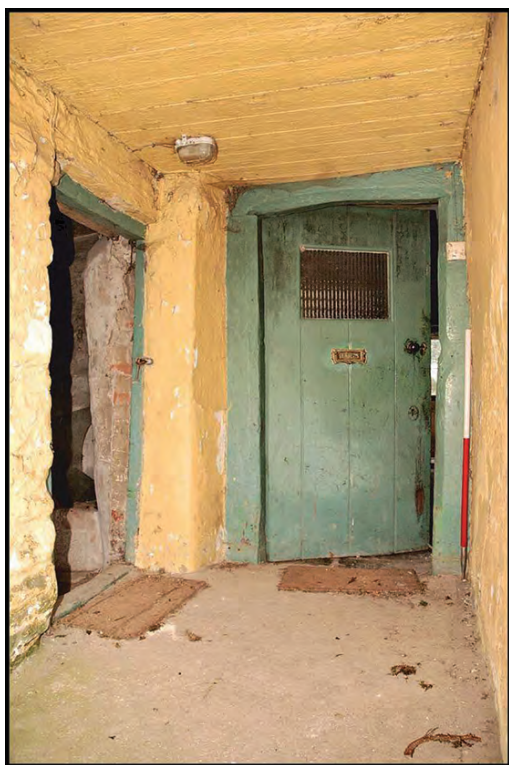


Fig. 7 The door frame of the main doorway within the cross-passage, showing the crude character of the early joinery (photo: Gary Young)

The main doorway to the inner part of the cross-passage, lying within the original front wall of the house, has a timber door frame with a triangular arched head and chamfered jambs with straight cut stops (Fig. 7). Unusually, the chamfer between the jambs and the arched head is not continuous; the arch has curved run-out stops which do not respect the chamfers of the jambs. This device gives the

impression of a curved four-centred arch without actually involving any curves. The front door is relatively modern.

The cross-passage is stone-flagged and has a flat ceiling concealing the first-floor joists. The walls to right and left are formed by timber partitions of vertical studs and plaster panels which appear originally to have had exposed studs with flush panels. Immediately within the main front doorway an opening in the north-western partition opened into the central room, and now gives upon a short passage. This doorway has been altered; evidence of peg-holes in the western jambs suggests that there was originally a lower door head which has been removed to increase the height of the door. It is possible that this door originally had an arched or shaped head similar to that of the main doorway to the house. The lower part of the western jamb of the doorway has been cut away to a curving profile as though to allow the passage of large spherical or cylindrical objects such as barrels. Judging by the date of the newspapers packed behind the applied fillets which are nailed to the jambs, the door head and the eastern jamb were removed and the doorway enlarged c. 1946–50.

The rest of this partition appears to have at least four to five panels divided by vertical studs under a head beam. The partition does not extend higher than first-floor level; the head beam supports both the ends of the joists over the inner room and those of the passage, which seem to be separate timbers despite their short span. The reason for this is not known; it is conceivable that the cross-passage was formerly open to the hall and that its ceiling and the partition with the hall are later insertions – hence the clumsy arrangement of the joists. The original building may have had only low partitions separating the hall, passage and service room.

The partition on the south-eastern side of the passage separates the cross-passage and the hall, infilling one of the jointed cruck trusses supporting the roof. This partition is of similar timber-framed construction, its outer studs being formed by the cruck posts. There are four surviving panels of cob plaster infill at ground-floor level, the fifth panel, to the south-west, having been replaced with late 19th- or early 20th-century brick. This probably represents an attempt to repair a panel damaged by the structural failure of the house. The doorway to the hall is offset to the south-west of that to the service room so that the doorways do not correspond directly. The doorway formerly had a head at a lower level than at present, as evidence of peg-holes

in the jambs shows; this may also have been shaped or arched head similar to that of the front doorway. The face of the partition towards the hall showed evidence of flush plaster panels, leaving the vertical studs exposed. One panel retained graffiti incised into the hard surface plaster, including two very peculiar beasts or birds with spurred feet, lowered heads and ?feathers, which may have been intended to represent cocks or chickens (Parker *et al.* 2006, Fig. 9). More graffiti may yet remain undiscovered beneath later wallpaper.

The head beam of this partition appeared to project to form a chamfered cornice on both sides of the partition. Above this, the partition extends vertically for the full height of the building. The relationship between the upper and lower sections of the partition could not be established with confidence.

The hall and hall chamber

The hall is a large room with a flagged floor and a very large fireplace in its south-eastern wall; it is lit by a three-light 19th- or 20th-century casement window overlooking the garden. This has a massive timber lintel supported by vertical timber jambs concealed within the cob, plaster and later brick blocking on either side of the opening.

Following the removal of a mid 20th-century tiled fireplace and its brickwork, the chimney was found to be almost entirely of cob. Only its north-eastern side was of brick and stone, and this appeared to be later infilling of a large opening into the adjoining outshut. The opening had a timber lintel at a high level and must surely represent a smoking or curing chamber integral with the chimney. Two later features were cut into the back of the chimney; to the south-western side of the main hearth was the arched opening of a small 19th-century oven with a brick dome, now truncated by the external pig sty against the house gable. At the north-eastern side was a brick feature, apparently with its own brick grate and with a vertical flue cut into the cob. These features were introduced after the abandonment of the smoking chamber; they presumably represent provision for baking and boiling added during the 19th century.

The north-east wall of the hall is formed by a timber partition, continuous above the ceiling into the first floor, with perhaps as many as four vertical studs and a large rail or beam at ceiling level supporting the end of the principal ceiling beams. As has been suggested above, the partition appears to have been inserted to replace an earlier

cob wall, only part of which remains. In its centre is a doorway to the adjoining outshut, the jambs of which are rebated to receive a door opening into the outshut. The doorway has later been blocked with cob plaster held in place by laths nailed to the timbers. The partition must have been constructed when the outshut was added to the front of the earlier building. As the smoking chamber within the outshut appears to be integral with the fireplace, it seems likely that the fireplace was also added at the same time.

The hall has a plaster ceiling, entirely concealing the first-floor joists and supported on a base of straw, presumably fixed against the underside of the joists by laths or battens. Removal of the floorboards in the room above revealed that the joists were large squared timbers with a scantling of 0.09 x 0.09m. They had formerly been exposed, since in the vicinity of the fireplace they were smoke-blackened; the underside of the floorboards were not blackened in the same way and it is therefore probable that the boards have been renewed since the erection of the present ceiling. Only the principal beams of the ceiling are now exposed. The beam across the centre of the room has massive chamfers and stepped straight-cut stops at both ends. The beam against the fireplace has similar stops, but is only a half-beam resting against the front of the chimney breast. The ceiling beams were almost certainly inserted with the partition to the outshut to create a hall chamber on the first floor. It seems certain that the hall was originally open to the roof.

The roof structure at the south-western end of the farmhouse is supported on two massive cruck posts with curved, jowled heads (Fig. 8). The cruck posts extend almost to the ground, the north-eastern one in the end truss being slightly raised by means of a short length of timber scarfed and pegged onto its foot. This has now almost entirely perished. The opposite post formerly had a similar arrangement but the extra timber scarfed to its foot has vanished, and the truss has consequently dropped by as much as 1m. The building is now astonishingly crooked and the south-western corner of the room is collapsing. The ceiling beams were fortunately not fixed to the cruck posts (perhaps because they were inserted and are not part of the primary structure) and therefore they did not move with the collapsing truss. If this had been the case the result would have been even more disastrous for the house. Nonetheless neither beam end has any real bearing in the south-western wall, and the central beam has had to be propped with an additional post.

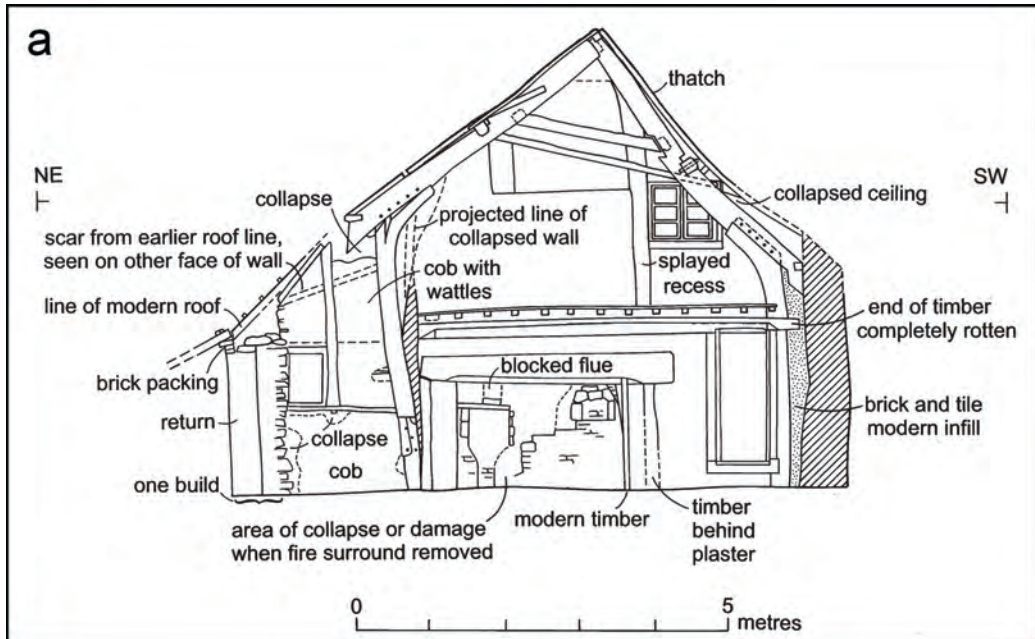


Fig. 8 (a) Section I: the south-eastern end of the house, showing the character of the roof truss over the hall, the inserted fireplace behind it and the extent to which the roof has sagged (based on hand-measured survey by Exeter Archaeology). (b). View at first-floor level (photo: Gary Young)

The cruck posts seem originally to have been buried in or butted against the cob walls of the house; the ends of the eastern principal rafter can be seen within the former smoking chamber extending beyond the rear face of the cruck post, reflecting the former thickness of the demolished wall. In both the south-eastern and north-western walls of the smoking chamber, at a low level, the remains of truncated rubble walls can be seen. These almost certainly represent the remains of the stone footings on which the cob wall of the house was raised, cut through by the opening to the smoking chamber.

The outer face of the north-eastern cruck post has been drilled with holes relating to the infill panels of the partition dividing the smoking chamber and the outshot. These holes cross the joints of the timbers and seem certain to be secondary.

At first-floor level the construction of the roof is exposed. The cruck posts are jointed to the principal rafters by mortice-and-tenon joints secured by four pegs, some of which have been left protruding.

The principal rafters are massive, with a scantling of 0.3 x 0.15m, measured just above the joint with the wall post. The collar beam is applied to the south-eastern side of the truss and has a complex notched lap joint secured with split metal pins rather than with pegs. The purlins are crudely chamfered and have a scantling of 0.16 x 0.18m. They are trenched into the tops of the principal rafters and secured from above by large pegs.

Many of the common rafters seem to respect the thickness of the demolished north-eastern wall of the house; they may therefore be original. The roof shows signs of repeated alterations, including the trimming of the rafters in the area of the windows on the south-western side. This may reflect both the continuing tendency of the roof to sag, and the fact that the present eyebrow dormers are inserted; the original building had no windows at this level. Brick infilling between the top of the cob walls and the ceilings may date from the late 19th or early 20th century, possibly representing a repair following the near-collapse of the roof.

Examination of the upper part of the partition between the hall chamber and the central room on the first floor shows that this infills a jointed cruck truss similar to the south-eastern truss. The crucks, the principal rafters and the collar are assembled in the same way, but the soffits and sides of the timbers are all drilled with a series of holes to support the rod-and-daub panels of the partition. Whether these holes are primary or secondary is uncertain. Given the similarity of construction

of the two trusses, and the anomaly (discussed above) of the discontinuous joists in the ceiling of the cross-passage, it is possible that this was also originally an open truss crossing an unfloored part of the building. If so, it must have been infilled with the present partition at a relatively early date.

The panels in the upper part of the partition were originally plastered flush with the studs and the timbers were exposed. The partition is neatly plastered and whitewashed right up to the apex of the roof, leaving the roof timbers and the thatch unplastered. This shows that the roof was not originally ceiled; the thatch and roof timbers were all formerly visible from the ground and were never plastered over. The existing ceilings at the level of the collars are all insertions. The doorway between the hall chamber and the central first-floor room is clearly an alteration. There appears to be no provision for an earlier door in the partition, which suggests that the full-height partition was inserted prior to the insertion of the floor in the hall (a doorway would be unnecessary if there were no floor). The door is planked and has strap hinges with expanded ends which have been reused from an earlier door.

Neither the thatch, nor the primary roof timbers, nor the timbers and panels of the partition, are smoke-blackened. This is of considerable interest since it rules out the existence of an open hearth in the hall. It is evident that the existing chimney is an insertion and therefore smoke-blackening from an open hearth might be expected. It is highly unlikely that the hall would have been unheated; there must either have been an earlier chimney in the gable wall prior to the insertion of the present chimney or, conceivably, a timber smoke-hood channelling the smoke away and out of the building. A structure of this kind might well explain the narrow bay in the roof at the south-eastern end of the building, which could have been designed to accommodate a smoke-hood.

The position of the windows lighting the original open hall cannot be determined; however the surviving section of cob wall around the original main doorway terminates at a flat surface facing south-east, which might represent the jamb of a tall opening. It is possible that this was the location of a tall hall window, of which nothing else now remains. No evidence of a corresponding window in the opposite wall is visible but this may be concealed behind the render. Following the insertion of the floor within the hall, the present window opening in the south-west wall of the building must have

been created to light the hall chamber. There cannot have been windows on the north-east side, due to the roofs of the lean-to. The hall chamber is at present lit by a modern three-light window and appears always to have been unheated.

Central room and chamber

The central room on the ground floor to the north-west of the cross-passage has been subdivided and cut up to create a new staircase and a passage, but the quality of its surviving features suggests that this room was formerly one of the principal rooms in the house (Fig. 9). It has a ceiling with joists independent of the ceiling of the cross-passage, supported by a very fine chamfered beam across the centre of the room with stepped straight-cut stops, similar in type but more delicate than the stops of the inserted ceiling over the hall. A second beam, with a similar bold chamfer, terminates the ceiling to the north-west. These details suggest that the room was an important one. There is no corresponding beam to the south-east, however; the joists simply rest on the head beam of the partition with the cross-passage. The ceiling is still partly

unceiled, exposing the boards of the first floor, and there is no evidence that it has ever been fully plastered. This may be because the room declined in status very early in the life of the house.

The room is lit by a three-light mullioned window in its south-western wall. (shown in Fig. 10). This has moulded mullions with very flat and shallow mouldings, and may date from the 17th century. Each light had a wooden dowel rising up the centre, and an external rebate so that the casements could open outwards. The window had a wide window seat, though it is possible that this has been cut into an earlier window sill.

Adjoining the window is a disturbance in the wall resembling a recess with tapering sides which has been fitted with a shelf (shown in Fig. 10). The nature of this feature is not clear; superficially it resembles the tapering flue of a truncated chimney but it is relatively small, and there is no apparent projection for a lateral chimney stack externally. It remains possible that the chimney projected into the room, but has been truncated back flush with the wall. An area of the ceiling above this disturbance has been plastered, which might



*Fig. 9 The central room looking east, showing partition and well-made joists
(photo: Gary Young)*

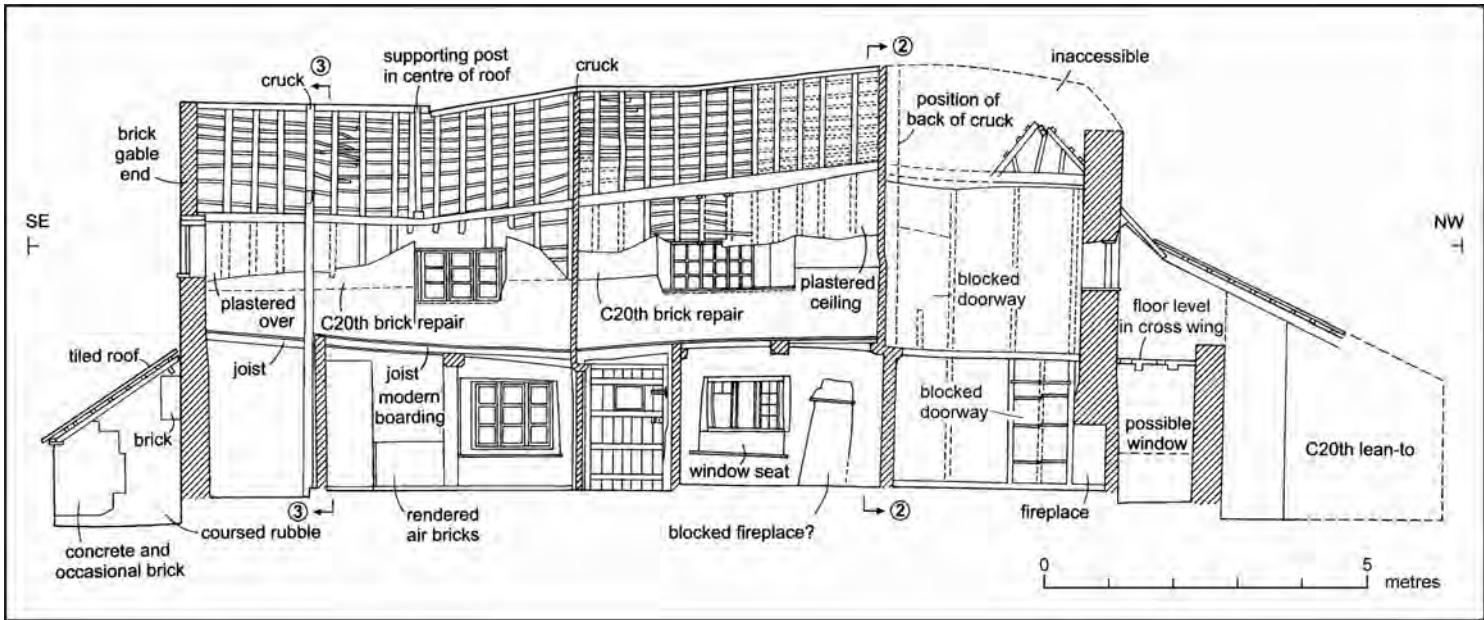


Fig. 10 Section 2: Long section through the house, looking south-west (based on hand-measured survey by Exeter Archaeology)

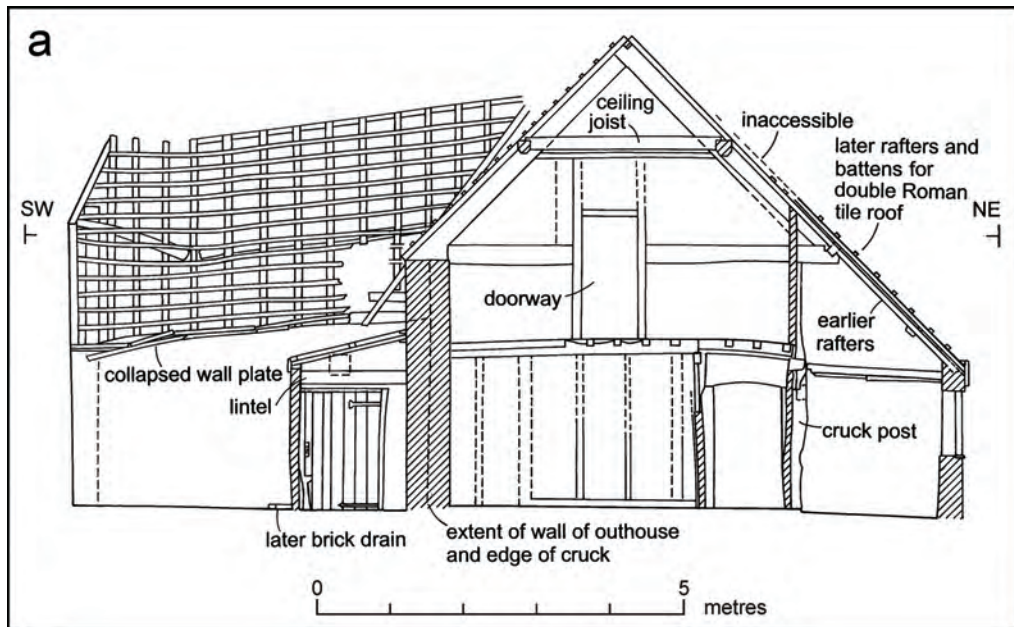


Fig. 11(a) Section 3, through the north-western end of the house, cut through the central room, showing the structure of the timber-framed partition defining the end room and the south-eastern elevation of the rear-wing (based on hand-measured survey by Exeter Archaeology).
 (b) View of the partition at first-floor level (photo: Gary Young)

have been occasioned by the removal of such a projecting structure. Unfortunately the lack of any other evidence of a chimney in this position prevents a confident identification of this feature. An alternative position for a fireplace might be the opposite wall, where a lateral stack would have formed an impressive feature on the entrance façade. This wall, however, was entirely demolished when the outshut was constructed and no evidence of a stack now remains. It is possible that the room was originally unheated; further evidence may yet come to light during alterations.

The north-western wall of the central room is a further timber-framed wall (Fig. 11). This is also contrived between the legs of one of the trusses supporting the roof. In this case, however, the truss is not a jointed cruck like those to the south-east; instead, the wall-posts rise on either side and support a horizontal tie (now interrupted by a doorway) crossing the building at eaves level, from which the principal rafters spring. The lower and upper parts of this partition are not exactly aligned vertically, the upper part being offset slightly to the south-east, resting on the chamfered beam terminating the ceiling joists. The lower part of the partition appears to contain six rather closely-spaced vertical studs of rather irregular sizes forming six panels. The thickest of these studs in fact relates to a partition in the adjoining room, which explains its larger size. The upper part of the partition appears to have larger panels; however it is possible that the studs are simply concealed by plaster.

At the north-eastern end of the lower part of the partition is a doorway communicating with the north-western room. It has a triangular arched head like that of the main doorway to the house; its jambs have been truncated to widen the opening, but were presumably formerly chamfered. The lower part of the north-eastern jamb has been truncated away completely, revealing a series of drill holes in the foot of the cruck post supporting the north-western end of the roof. The opposite jamb also has a series of such holes, and it is tempting to argue that the doorway is in fact an insertion and that the partition was originally closed. The rod-and-daub panel to the south-west of the doorway seems, however, to be intact and there is no other opening in the partition. This would render the north-western room inaccessible without using an external entrance or taking a circuitous route through one of the later lean-to structures or outshuts, which seems unlikely. An alternative explanation is that the foot

of the truss was drilled with holes in expectation of use, but that the holes were never utilised because the doorway was placed in this position. The holes in the opposite jamb are perhaps a product of the excessive truncation of the jamb of the doorway, which has revealed the ends of the holes receiving the rods of the adjoining panel. This interpretation allows the doorway in this partition to be primary and connects the north-western room with the rest of house. Alternatively, the holes may be evidence of an earlier closed truss (with a doorway in a different position) which does not survive; this may have been removed and the present partition constructed during alterations to this end of the house, perhaps in the context of the addition of the rear-wing.

The north-eastern wall of the central room is formed by a further timber rod-and-daub partition which is evidently far too weak to bear the weight of the ceiling beams, and is bellying inwards into the room disturbingly. The stops of the main ceiling beam are obscured by the head beam of this partition and it is therefore unlikely that the beam and the partition are contemporary. The beam may well have originally been supported in the original north-eastern wall of the house. The present timber partition was constructed against this wall, utilising the foot of the north-western wall post as one of its vertical studs and bearing the main ceiling beam upon its top rail. The earlier wall was then demolished. The partition has a doorway rebated to open into the outshut; its jambs also have been cut away to admit barrels, showing that this area was used for storage.

The north-eastern part of the central room has been annexed to form a short passage connecting the cross-passage to the north-western room. The partition is constructed of timber studs infilled with red bricks of the late 19th or early 20th century, and has an open 'clerestory' or ventilation grille built in below the ceiling. This clearly shows that the room was in use by the late 19th-century as a service room rather than part of the main domestic accommodation; it may have been a scullery or dairy. The room has a floor of stone flags and the passage has a brick floor; both seem likely to be contemporary with the partition. A hole in the ceiling created by the removal of a joist seems to have provided a trapdoor to the floor above, since infilled. The purpose of this opening is unclear.

The central chamber on the first floor has been subdivided by a late partition to form a box room adjoining the staircase and overlying the



Fig. 12 Detail of the window lighting the central chamber on the first floor (photo: Gary Young)

cross-passage. Traces of a further partition visible in the floor and in the banister rails suggest that this was formerly subdivided laterally into two further rooms, one of which must have been unlit; the partition has since been removed. Like all the first-floor rooms, this was unheated. It is lit by a three-light window in the south-west wall with bold, chamfered mullions and run-out stops (Fig. 12). A doorway in the north-western wall leads through into the adjoining room; this doorway seems to cut through the tie in the closed truss and may be an alteration made following the insertion of floors into the central part of the house. The door retains good strap hinges with spear-headed ends.

A further doorway in the north-eastern wall leads through into the loft over the outshut. This has a square, rebated frame and splendid large strap hinges with expanded ends and flaring bases and a lock housed in a timber box. This is one of the earliest doors to survive in the house but it has been badly damaged.

North-western room and chamber over

The north-western room on the ground floor is smaller than the other rooms and does not extend

the full width of the house. A partition forming the south-western side of the room divides this room from that in the rear-wing, which is square, effectively annexing part of the corner of the original house (Fig. 3). The partition appears continuous above first-floor level into the north-western chamber. This partition aligns with the thicker vertical stud in the closed truss and it seems certain that both partitions are contemporary. At the north-eastern end of this partition at ground-floor level is a doorway, now blocked, which formerly opened into the rear-wing. This has chamfered jambs and stepped run-out stops, rather unusually positioned at the top, (rather than the bottom) of the frame.

The door head is featureless and may have been altered. Although the materials blocking the door seem ancient it is likely that they are reused, as a worn path can be traced to this doorway in the brick floor of the room; the doorway can only have been blocked since the late 19th- or early 20th century.

In the north wall of the room is a small fireplace with brick jambs, which has clearly been cut into the cob. This formerly had a small late 19th- early 20th-century chimneypiece, now loose in the building.

A splayed window adjoins the fireplace, with a timber lintel and a modern frame and casement. Running the width of this wall, but not, apparently beyond it into the area annexed by the rear-wing is a massive chamfered ceiling beam. A corresponding beam, also discontinuous beyond the south-western wall can be seen supporting the south-eastern part of the ceiling, this has a massive run-out stop at its north-eastern end. The upper surface of this beam, revealed by the removal of boards at first-floor level, showed evidence of redundant sockets, suggesting that there was an earlier partition in this position rising into the roof, aligned vertically with the partition on the ground-floor.

The ceiling is plastered, but in places the plaster has been removed and examination of the joists was possible. The north-western beam retains very large mortices for square joists, with diminished shoulders but no tenons. In these areas the original joists had been removed and replaced with flimsier and less regular timbers.

The north-east wall of this room was formed by a timber-framed partition, but this was so severely decayed that it has been removed. Only a single vertical stud remains, showing the holes for the rods supporting the panels. The partition is clearly secondary, since its head beam cuts into the base of the north-western beam supporting the ceiling joists, immediately beneath one of the original joist sockets, reducing the depth of the beam and prejudicing the bearing of the joist. At the opposite end it is tenoned into the cruck post, and also cuts into the earlier beam supporting the ceiling joists, reducing its bearing. There were four vertical studs in this partition, for which the mortices survive in the head beam. One butted against the side of the wall post, which suggests that it was part of a door frame rather than a panel; the rods would otherwise have been drilled directly into the wall post, as elsewhere in the building. The partition was constructed when the outshut was added and the original north-east wall of the house was demolished.

The north-western chamber is a small bedroom with no visible evidence either of a fireplace or of a door into the upper storey of the rear-wing. The ceiling above this room is collapsing, because the valley beam at the junction of the main roof and the roof of the rear-wing has fractured and is now resting upon it. This area could not, unfortunately, be inspected more closely, and the relationship of the roof of the rear-wing to that of the rest of the house could not be established. It seems likely that

the room, and other elements of the northern end of the house, would have to have been substantially reconstructed when the rear-wing was added. The room has a 19th-century two-light window but no visible features of earlier date.

Rear-wing

The ground floor of the rear-wing is occupied by a single large room, lately occupied as a workshop or agricultural building, but originally part of the domestic accommodation. The wing was originally entered by a doorway from the north-western room, but this is now blocked in rough, red, unfrogged bricks laid in a white mortar containing large flecks of lime and coal. The blocking is probably of late 19th- or early 20th-century date, perhaps reusing older materials.

There are doorways in the south-eastern and north-western walls of the rear-wing, but no surviving windows of a size suitable for lighting so large a room. A disturbance in the north-eastern wall may represent a blocked window, but this could not be established with certainty. A large part of the south-western wall has been demolished to a low level and built up again in concrete blocks (Figs 2 (right side), 13). This may possibly represent the removal of a redundant chimney stack. The upstanding remains of the wall appear to have been thicker than the other walls, as though it projected into the room in the form of a chimney breast. No other evidence of a fireplace is visible in this room, and this is the most likely location for such a feature. The short surviving stretch of the original wall to the south east has a small, rectangular window with its sill approximately 1.25m above the estimated floor level. This is perhaps rather high in relation to the original ceiling, and it is possible that the window formerly lit a staircase alongside the chimney stack, comparable with the arrangement at the south-eastern end of the hall. There does not seem to have been any other provision for access to the first floor of this wing.

The first-floor joists have been removed; however the beams survive and are decorated with chamfers and elaborate double-notched stops which, although badly preserved, suggest that the room was of relatively high status. The central beam of the ceiling is still in place, though no longer bearing in the wall at its south-eastern end; it has been propped with a number of poles. The beam against the partition with the north-western room is of great interest, since it is only a half beam laid against the surface of the partition. The plaster

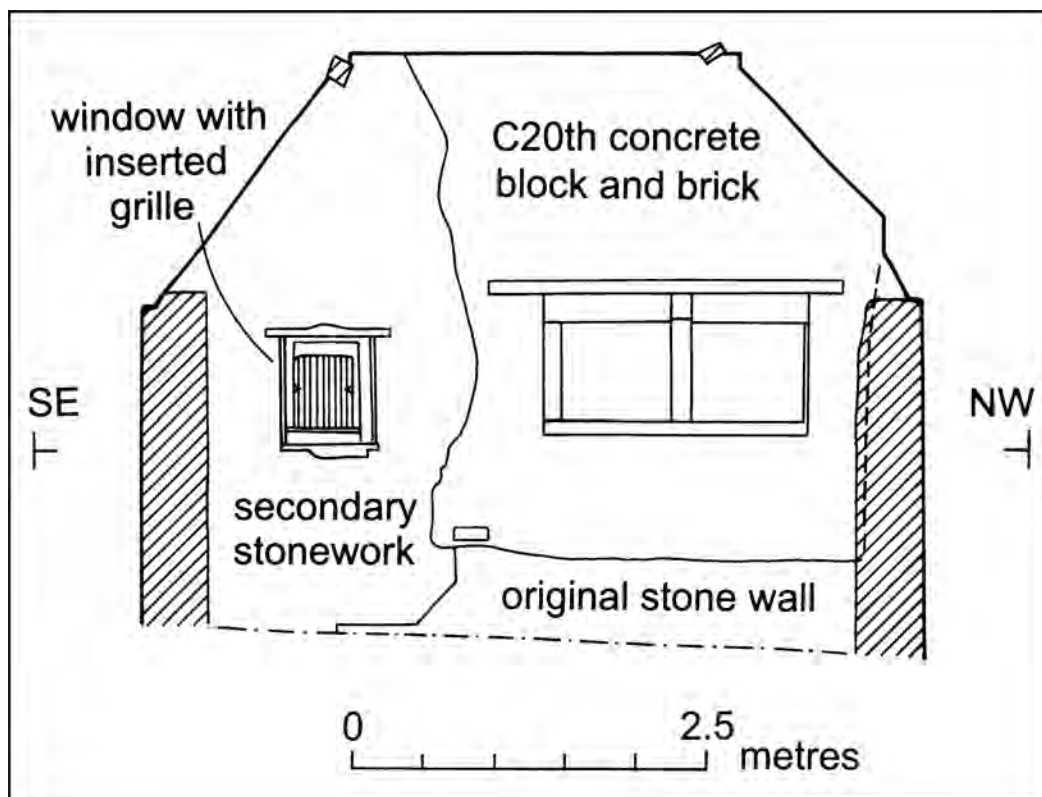


Fig. 13 Elevation of the south-western wall of the rear-wing, showing the rebuilt section of wall, which may represent the site of a demolished chimney (based on hand-measured survey by Exeter Archaeology)

surface of the partition continues unbroken behind it and the partition is continuous from ground- to first-floor level. The beam is clearly secondary and therefore, prior to the insertion of the ceiling of the rear-wing, the partition must have defined a void area two storeys high. This partition is demonstrably contemporary with that closing the lower part of the closed truss in the north-eastern part of the house (see above), and seems to respect the earlier ceiling beams in the north-west room. Assuming the earlier house to have been rectangular prior to the addition of the rear-wing, it is possible that this two-storey partition and void area betray the location of the original stair case or stair ladder prior to the addition of the rear-wing. A blocked doorway, or evidence of an opening at the head of the ladder may conceivably be concealed beneath the existing plaster at first-floor level.

There are no windows or other openings at

first-floor level in the rear-wing, though an area of concrete blocks in the north-eastern wall may represent the blocking of such an opening. Also in the north-eastern wall, a massive baulk of cob can be seen projecting into the room; this may represent the end of the gable wall of the original building, truncated at the construction of the rear-wing.

The roof of the rear-wing is of three bays supported by two rather crude 'A'-frame trusses, now in a dreadful state of disrepair (Fig. 14). The southern principal rafter of the easternmost truss has wholly vanished and the truss has had to be propped upon softwood poles. The corresponding principal rafter in the adjoining truss has completely fractured at its junction with the collar beam; this has also been braced by an additional timber applied to the north-eastern side of the truss, the foot of which is now pushing the south-eastern wall over at the eaves. Both trusses have slender

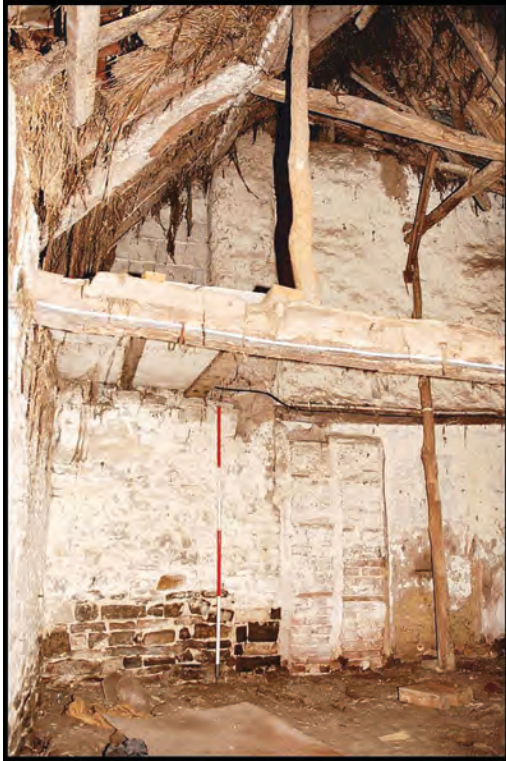


Fig. 14 Interior of the rear-wing, showing the blocked doorway to the house, the north-eastern truss and the baulk of cob beyond it which may represent the truncated primary gable of the original house (photo: Gary Young)

timber principal rafters, only crudely squared. The collars are applied and secured to each principal rafter by a form of notched lap or dovetail joint the nature of which is difficult to determine without close examination. There is a diagonally-set ridge and a single set of purlins to each side of the roof, massive and only crudely squared. Some of the rafters and purlins bear traces of white staining, which suggests that the roof was formerly ceiled up to the collar level and that the first-floor room also formed part of the domestic accommodation, though it is uncertain how the room was lit.

Outshuts

The outshuts added along the north-east side of the original house are divided into three areas, the smoking chamber, the wood shed and the kitchen. All of these structures seem to be of stone

construction, the rubble masonry being bonded with a very white lime mortar. There is no visible evidence that the south-eastern and north-western outshuts were constructed in different phases and it seems likely that both were added at the same time.

At the south-western end of the outshut the smoking chamber was divided from the wood shed by a timber partition of the type previously described, the dowels supporting the plaster panels being inserted into drill holes made in the back of the cruck post supporting the roof over the hall. A horizontal rail was inserted to bridge the remains of the stone footings of the demolished wall of the original house, and the vertical studs of the partition were tenoned into this. Similar drill holes are visible in the side face of the cruck post, for the panels of the partition dividing the outshut from the hall. These holes run across the joint of the cruck post and the principal rafter and seem certain to be secondary. The smoking chamber had a ceiling supported by three joists, the sockets for which remain in the flank of the cob chimney with the scar of the ceiling. The chamber thus took the form of a large recess with plastered walls and ceiling open to and adjoining the main fireplace, where meat might be hung to cure.

The opening to the smoking chamber was blocked, probably in the 19th century, with a stone wall bonded with white lime mortar and a new opening was made in the outer wall of the outshut so that the former smoking chamber became a shed with an external doorway. The jambs of the new opening were made good in stonework bonded with a white mortar containing large charcoal flecks, similar to the mortar bonding of the blocking in the opening to the fireplace. This fabric also appears in the adjoining lean-to shippon against the gable of the house, which may have been added at the same time. A small rectangular flue at a low level within the blocking showed that the chamber was fitted with a hearth, perhaps for a washing copper. A window was made in the partition with the adjoining woodshed and the south eastern wall was rebuilt in brick.

The woodshed has an extremely rough internal finish, which reflects long use as a service room or outhouse rather than as part of the main living accommodation. Although there are traces of plaster on the walls, most of the stonework is bare. The room had a large window in the north-east wall which might have had as many as three or four lights; the room was therefore well lit prior to the addition of the still later lean-to structure to the

north-east which blocked the light to this window. The window frame has been removed and the jambs are now collapsing. The room shows no trace of ever having been ceiled with a flat ceiling and if the roof was ever ceiled below the rafters no trace of this remains, perhaps as a result of later re-roofing. The wood shed formerly communicated with the hall though a doorway in the timber partition, and with the outer cross-passage through a door which has already been described. The original function of this room could not be determined.

The kitchen, lying to the north-east of the central and north-western rooms, is a similar lean-to structure. It was approached by doorways from both of these rooms, one of which survives, and also appears to have been unheated. The room is lit by windows in the north-eastern and north-western walls, neither of which preserve any historic joinery. The south-eastern wall is of cob and more massive than the other walls; it may survive from an earlier structure (see above). The ceiling of the kitchen is an insertion and it is clear from the structure that, like the wood shed, the kitchen was originally open to the roof. The existing ceiling is currently supported on lateral beams bracketed off the wall post supporting the closed truss, but these timbers are simply laid against the face of the earlier timber-framed partitions dividing the kitchen from the rooms in the body of the house, with the plaster continuing up behind them. One of the beams (to the north-west) has a chamfer and double-notched chamfered stops; the other has no stops, but features square sockets which are too large for the existing joists. It is possible that both of these beams are reused from another part of the house; the character of their detail cannot therefore be used to date the insertion of the ceiling. As the double-notched stops of the beams match those of the floor in the rear-wing, it is possible that the beams were reused and the present ceiling inserted after the first floor in the rear-wing was removed.

DISCUSSION

Phase I: the primary building, ?late 16th century (Fig. 15a)

It is likely that the house in its original form had a simple rectangular plan and thick mass walls of cob and stone on all four sides. There may have been a porch, of which a small fragment remains incorporated into one of the later outshuts. The cross-passage lay at the centre of the building and

the plan of the rest of the interior was determined by the position of the three roof trusses, which divided the roof into four unequal bays. The narrowest bay at the south-eastern end of the house is an unusual feature, but may perhaps have been intended to accommodate a timber smoke hood in the position of the existing chimney. Although one remains open and the other is closed by a partition the two southernmost trusses are both of identical form, of jointed cruck construction with high collar beams. Both may originally have been open trusses, since it is likely that the central truss would have been of a different form if it had been intended from the beginning to frame a partition.

There is clear evidence that the first-floor structure within the hall is inserted, and this may also be true of that of the central room; the original form of the house may therefore be reconstructed with the central room, hall and cross-passage open to the roof, defined by low screens. As the roof is not smoke-blackened some provision must have been made for heating in the hall; the other rooms may conceivably have been unheated. Although there are traces of a possible fireplace in the central room on the ground floor, this may have been inserted at the same time as the ceiling of the room.

The third truss at the north end of the house is of completely different type, with a horizontal tie at eaves level. This truss may always have been closed by a partition, and it is possible that this end of the building was the only part of the primary building with a first floor. The stair to the first-floor room may have lain in the westernmost corner of the house, where a void area two storeys high, defined by timber-framed partitions, seems to have existed prior to the construction of the rear-wing.

The house in its original form thus seems to have been a relatively simple building of the usual medieval type with a cross-passage and three rooms, most of which were open to the roof under jointed cruck trusses. Unlike many surviving houses of this type, however, there appears not to have been a central hearth; the roof timbers are not blackened by smoke. None of the existing chimneys are primary, and it is clear that there must have been some alternative provision for the dispersal of the smoke. This observation leads to the conclusion that the house is a later example of its type, erected at a time when a smoky interior had become unacceptable at this level of society.

The treatment of the collar beams in the primary roof trusses, which are applied to the sides of the rafters and have complex notched-lap joints, may

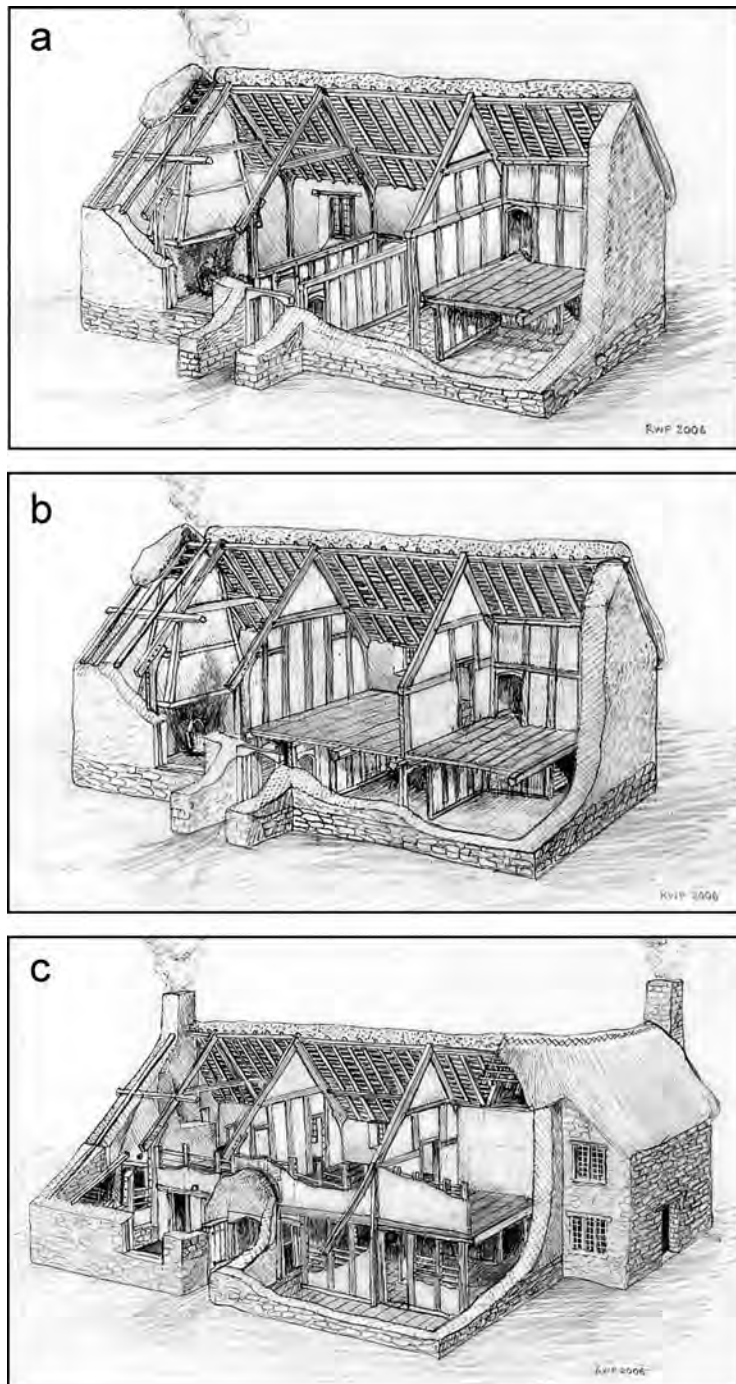


Fig. 15 Reconstructions of the probable form of the house. (a) As first constructed in the late 16th century. (b) Following alterations in the early 17th century. (c) The fully developed house in the late 17th century (drawn by R.W. Parker)

suggest a 17th-century date for the house, since notched joints of a similar type appear in roofs of that period in Devon. The rather crude character of the trusses, which are not chamfered, or braced with arch braces, also suggest that the house was constructed at a time when standards of roof carpentry were declining, perhaps due to the increasing popularity of plaster ceilings. An almost entirely unstoreyed house would surely have been very old-fashioned by the 17th century, however, and the house may perhaps be assigned to the late 16th century. The metal split pins securing the joints of the collars would be surprising at this date, but might be explained as later additions replacing wooden pegs which had failed or broken due to the distortion of the building.

Phase II alterations, ?early 17th century

(Fig. 15b)

The insertion of the floor over the central room and the cross-passage was perhaps the first major alteration to the building. This floor may have been inserted in the late 16th or early 17th century to extend the accommodation at first-floor level. The floor was supported on the head of the partition to the cross-passage, on a central, deeply chamfered beam and on a further beam laid against the head beam of the partition with the north-western room. The joists were well squared and seem never to have been ceiled over. It is likely that the north-western end of the house was also rebuilt; the present partition above first-floor level is supported entirely on the later beam relating to the inserted ceiling, and evidence of redundant sockets in the upper surface of the head beam of the earlier partition suggests that the upper part of the present partition was realigned to the south-east at this time. The doorway at first-floor level in the north-western closed truss may have been made at this stage to provide access to the new first-floor chamber, chopping through the earlier tie at eaves level.

It is likely that the central truss may also have been infilled with a partition of studs and panels at this time but, as the hall remained open to the roof at this stage, there was no doorway in this partition at first-floor level. The central room seems to have been well appointed and of high status; it has a three-light window with moulded mullions and may also have had a fireplace, though this does not survive.

Phase III rebuilding, ?late 17th century

(Fig. 15c)

The next phase of alterations was the most drastic and effectively created the house in its present form. The alterations involved the provision of new lean-to structures along the north-eastern side of the house and the conversion of the entire house to a storeyed building. The original north-east wall was replaced by a timber-framed wall two storeys high. The timber-framed wall was constructed against the inside of the earlier wall, which was subsequently demolished to maximise the available space within the new extensions. Only a small area of the original wall survives, surrounding the earlier front door and incorporating part of the possible porch.

The new timber wall picked up the ceiling beam across the central room (obscuring the stops on the end of the beam) but cut through the earlier beams at the north-western end of the house (the relationship of the ceiling and the partition is particularly clear in this area). The wall also provided bearing for new beams supporting a floor inserted within the former hall, creating a hall chamber on the first floor. The partition to the central room may have been breached at first-floor level at this time to link the new hall chamber with the other first-floor rooms.

A new chimney, smoking chamber and staircase were built at the same time as the outshuts within the narrow bay at the south-eastern end of the building. The chimney is largely of cob, whereas the stair turret and the outshuts are of stone construction. It is possible that areas of the exterior of the house may have been refaced in stone at the same time. The staircase presumably replaced the original stairs at the opposite end of the house and the present window openings lighting the hall and the hall chamber must also have been added, though unfortunately the original window frames do not survive. The new outshuts were provided with access doorways from each of the earlier rooms and may well have been used as service rooms or stores. One of these rooms was lit by a very large window, but the wooden frame has perished and the character of the window cannot now be known. The doorways to the outshuts had square frames with undecorated heads and unmoulded jambs, this plain treatment may suggest a date for these alterations in the later 17th century.

A further major alteration which may have been undertaken at the same time was the construction of the rear-wing adjoining the westernmost corner

of the house. The original corner of the building (which it is possible contained the original staircase or ladder) was completely demolished and the void of the putative stairwell was thrown into a large new rear-wing. This wing contained large rooms on both the ground and first floor. The new building seems to have been a substantial structure; it is of stone construction and the large ground-floor room was formerly well appointed, with elaborate double-notched stops on the ceiling beams, which can be seen to rest against the plaster of the earlier partitions forming the putative stair well. The ornate character of the stops on the ceiling beams would be compatible with a date in the 1660s or 1670s. The rear-wing may have had a chimney and its own separate staircase probably in the south-western wall. There may have been a dormitory for servants or labourers on the first floor, as this area was not directly connected to the main house; any earlier openings to the first floor of the main house have been blocked and their positions are not visible under the later plaster.

Phase IV: alterations in the 18th and 19th centuries

During the 18th- and 19th centuries further lean-to structures, including the shippen and the pigsties, were added to the gable end of the house. The opening into the smoking chamber from the chimney was blocked and a new doorway was made through the wall of the outshut so that the chamber was approached from outside. The chamber appears to have housed a washing copper or boiler. A domed brick bread oven and a boiler were constructed within the rear of the chimney. During this period the central room declined in importance, and was eventually reduced to the level of a service room. Its chimney (if one existed) had been removed and its ceiling was never plastered over. Perhaps because of its decline in status the window in this room was fortunately not replaced with a new one; the window sill appears to have been cut down to make a seat, the original casements were removed and glazing bars were inserted into the holes formerly occupied by the saddle bars and stanchions, but the mullions were preserved *in situ*. Late in the 19th or early 20th century a partition was created across the central room to form a corridor from the cross-passage to the north-western room.

The rear-wing seems also to have declined at this period and was eventually converted to an agricultural building. All the windows in this range, and the doorway to the main house, were blocked.

It may have functioned as a pound house with a loft over; the lack of any windows creating good storage conditions on the upper floor. Eventually even this floor was removed, leaving only the main beams in place, perhaps supporting part of the press. Parts of the redundant beams from the rear-wing may have been reused in the outshut to create a ceiling over the kitchen and a loft floor over, within the former roof space. Parts of the thatched roof were repaired in pan tiles, and many of the windows in the south-western façade were renewed. The window of the chamber over the central room is a particularly fine one with interesting chamfered mullions and bold run-out stops.

Phase V: collapse and reconstruction, ?early 20th-century

Early in the 20th century considerable rebuilding work was undertaken which may conceivably have been prompted by the near collapse of the house. It is, of course, possible that this movement happened gradually; however the nature and extent of the subsequent rebuilding suggests that the collapse was a single, disastrous event to which the owners or tenants of the house responded by a consistent campaign of repairs.

The foot of the most southerly cruck post, which was formed by a separate timber scarfed to the foot of the post, seems to have completely disintegrated, causing the leg of the truss to drop by around a metre. The roof and the ceilings in the upper rooms have thus descended to a crazy angle. Fortunately for the house, the ceiling beams in the hall were not connected with the cruck posts and the first-floor structure remained (broadly) horizontal. If this had not been the case it is likely that much of the house would have had to be demolished. The decision seems to have been taken to repair the house as it stood rather than trying to correct the distortion. The south-eastern gable end was thus rebuilt in red-orange bricks, and a new chimney in the same material was inserted into the north-western gable, with a small cast iron fireplace of early 20th-century type. Similar red bricks were utilised as 'beam filling' along the wall tops on the south-western side of the house, perhaps in the belief that this would stabilise the roof. The staircase adjoining the hall chimney may have been rendered useless due to the lowered ceiling levels; it seems to have been abandoned and the stair turret converted into a cupboard. A new staircase was inserted within the central room, cutting through the ceiling and the chamber above seems to have

been partitioned into separate rooms, perhaps a landing and a store or bathroom.

Phase VI: later alterations (*modern*)

In the later 20th century the south-west wall of the rear-wing, which may have included a chimney, was demolished and rebuilt in concrete. A raking buttress was added at the southern corner of the building, which had continued to move outwards, and many props were added to support the floors and roof timbers throughout the building. Despite these precautions, the structural integrity of the building has continued to deteriorate and parts of the building are even now on the point of collapse.

CONCLUSION

Broad Lane Farmhouse was first constructed as a three-room and cross-passage house, probably in the late 16th century. The house was perhaps a little old-fashioned for its date, in that much of the interior was open to the roof and only a small part of the building was storeyed. The absence of smoke-blackening in the roof may also point to a later rather than an earlier date for the existing structure, though the precise arrangements for heating the house remain uncertain and evidence of hearths, perhaps relating to earlier houses on the same site, may survive beneath the floor of the hall.

Floors appear to have been inserted into the central part of the building by the early 17th century, creating a well-appointed room, probably a parlour, with a chamber over it. This was defined by the insertion of a partition infilling one of the earlier open trusses, utilising constructional methods very similar to those of the original builders. The most extensive alterations, however, were probably carried out in the late 17th century when the house was extended by the addition of lean-to structures, and much of the original cob and stone structure was demolished and replaced with timber-framed internal partitions. The rear-wing probably dates from this period also and the building was fully storeyed from this point. Despite many later alterations and the near collapse of the house, the

building remains substantially as it was in the late 17th century. Beneath the modern decorative finishes many of the original surfaces remain intact and, in addition to the known survival of some incised graffiti, evidence of early decorative treatments may be preserved.

The house has a complex structural history, the interpretation of which is complicated further by the persistent use of certain building techniques, such as the rod and panel partitions, in all the main periods of its construction and alteration. Subsequent additions have tended only to conceal the substantial interest of this house.

The site archive

The site archive (Exeter Archaeology Project 5795) has been deposited at the Devon Heritage Centre, Great Moor House, Sowton, Exeter.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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