

Building recording in 2016

Somerset Vernacular Building Group

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SVBRG have had an interesting 2016. Besides responding to requests for surveys from individual householders we have been working with the ‘Kingsbury Time Travellers’ at Kingsbury Episcopi and anticipate that this may result in a ‘settlement study’ and publication in our ‘Village Study’ series. Additionally, we have been asked to assist the Bowlish and Darhill Conservation Society in Shepton Mallet with a proposed study of their buildings. The industrial mill & cloth producing Sheppey valley of the latter will provide an interesting contrast to Kingsbury, an agricultural community adjacent to The Levels.

An open afternoon seminar on the topic of barns proved an exciting new venture, enabling us to extend our ‘outreach education’ beyond our familiar publications and our lectures to other Somerset groups. We were encouraged and surprised at the wide interest shown in this subject.

We have also enjoyed discussion with and been able to provide information to both the National Trust and Historic England on a range of buildings.

Dates given in our survey reports for stylistic features before the mid 16th century have been based on their similarity to houses dated by our dendrochronology programmes. With much appreciated funding from SANHS a few years ago we used another procedure, Radio Carbon Dating, when recording three Winscombe properties. The results of that trial encouraged us to use the technique again on a newly found example of a rare form of cruck joint recorded in the 1970s by Gilson and Williams (but not dateable by dendrochronology because it was elm). The date obtained was 1450–1490 and should allow us to re-evaluate some of the earlier surveys.

As always the Group is indebted to the owners and occupiers of the various properties for their generosity in allowing access. Copies of the full SVBRG reports and survey drawings have been deposited at the Somerset Heritage Centre. They are also available through the continuously evolving SVBRG website, www.svbrg.org.uk, where the summaries listed here and our activities in general can also be viewed.

All photographs by John Rickard



Fig. 1 Burrington. Rickford, Brook House from NE

1. Burrington. Rickford, Brook House. ST4857 5952

A listed property. The house is two storey with attic under a pitched, slate clad roof. The ground floor comprises four rooms in-line with a stair hall separating pairs of rooms. There are single room, single storey structures on the east gable and the south, rear, side. A Doric porch protects the six-panel front door that opens into the stair hall. Built of local rubble the exterior is rendered and painted. Wall thicknesses vary from 75cm to 49cm indicating several phases of build.

The shallow pitched roof is carried on softwood timbers. This over-sails and is supported by an earlier roof: six elm tie beam trusses linked by a single tier of off-set purlins, fixed into the principals with tusk tenoned joints, typical of late 18th-century construction.

Remnants of a small 17th-century house, walls of 75cm thickness, containing a large inglenook fireplace with an orthostatic jamb stone at one side and a large recess abutting the wall at the other formed the core of this property. In the late 18th century the house was enlarged and upgraded using large, eight over eight sash windows with boxed

shutters, paneled doors and hob grates at first floor level. This range was extended at both gables to provide further accommodation or work space in the mid 19th century.

In 1930 the property was divided into two dwellings incurring further internal restructuring; it has now been returned to a single dwelling.



Fig. 2 Donyatt, Chard Rd, Thatchers Pond Frame FIII and truss with masonry replacing a possible fire hood of wattle and daub

2. Donyatt, Chard Rd, Thatchers Pond. ST3401 1359

A listed property. The house is a one and a half storey range under a thatched roof with a single storey outshut on the south elevation and a thatched porch. Now constructed of the local Moolham stone, some of it fine ashlar, it originated as a cob-built, 3 unit and cross passage dwelling in the 16th century. The Hall, the principal living room, has a cambered, moulded (two ogees and a step) 6-panel framed ceiling. Peg hole evidence and smoke blackening on frame FIII suggest an original timber smoke hood. This hood was replaced by a depressed four-centred arched Hamstone fire surround with incised spandrels and hollow chamfers with step and ogee framed jambs.

The main roof is supported on elm structures; the major part by timber frames. Frame FIII, part infilled by stone, is a tie beam truss supported on jowl posts that form part of the plank and muntin partition in the cross passage below. The tapered principals are fixed to the tie and there are two tiers of in-line trenched purlins. The ridge is set diagonally on a raised and offset nailed yoke.

At FII the frame is based on a long tenon jointed cruck; the principals meet at a plain tenoned apex, and a high collar is tenoned into them. The ridge

piece is set diagonally in a V-notch. FI is now replaced by a stone wall. Frames at FII and FIII remain partially infilled with wattle & daub. The single stair is a 'winder' from the Hall.

An up-grade in the 18th century involved re-fenestration, raising the eaves and rebuilding the north and east elevations in stone. A large inglenook and baking oven were built into the new east gable. In the late 18th century or early 19th century the outshut was built on the south elevation enclosing the remaining original cob wall.

3. Doulting, King's Rd, Hurlingpot Farmhouse. ST6462 4407

A listed property. The house is almost square in plan, built of local rubble stone with dressed quoins. The symmetrical south front is faced with ashlar and a stone canopy porch sits on consoles over the front door. There are two rooms either side of a full height central stair-hall. Three further rooms range across the rear. Abutting the west elevation is a single storey lean-to, housing a well, and a conservatory. The windows are of local Doulting



Fig. 3 Doulting, King's Rd, Hurlingpot Farmhouse, the roof trusses and the shallow hoist truss

freestone, square headed and three-light with stone mullions, edged with a bead moulding.

The slate clad roof is built of substantial oak timbers to a high quality and is hipped at the front and side elevations with an infill pitched roof above the stair hall. It is supported on four collar and tie beam trusses. Within the roof space, over a north rear room, are two shallow softwood trusses with an iron rod kingpost, probably part of a cheese hoist.

The house seems to date from the second half of the 18th century, although the roof construction and 63cm wall thickness imply an earlier date. It appears as a 'U' plan form on the 1840 Tithe Map but upgrading resulted in the enclosing of the shape, with a wall of 48cm, and the re-siting of the fireplaces in the two front rooms, now backing on to and intruding into the stair-hall

4. Kingsbury Episcopi, Burrow Hill, Troth Cottage. ST4137 1995

The house is one and a half storey under a thatched roof; a three-unit range with modern single storey extensions. A masonry base supports cob walls 53cm thick that are rendered and painted. The living space is divided by rod and daub partitions, the central unit being an unheated service room, now the location of a central stair.

The roof is supported on four collar beam trusses, however the west pair are of heavier section, the collars fitted to the east face and the purlins are



Fig. 4 Kingsbury Episcopi, Burrow Hill, Troth Cottage, north elevation

aligned. The east pair are lighter, have staggered purlins and collars on the west face.

The roof carpentry, the use of cob, the wall thickness, and the rod & daub partitions suggest the house was built in the mid 18th century. In the early 19th century it was divided into two dwellings.



Fig. 5 Kingsbury Episcopi, East Lambrook, Townsend Cottage, south elevation

5. Kingsbury Episcopi, East Lambrook, Townsend Cottage. ST4311 1904

A listed property. The house is one and a half storey, four rooms in-line, under a thatched roof. It is largely built of brick laid in Flemish Bond some 40cm thick, but sections of masonry walling, 45-50cm thick, and cob are evident. A thatched bonnet porch protects the front door.

The roof over three of the rooms is supported on two elm collar trusses meeting at notched and tenoned apex joints. The ridge piece sits diagonally in a V-notch at the apex. There are two tiers of off-set purlins, peg-fixed through the extended tenon. The Tithe map and apportionment record the property as being in dual occupation. Local memories suggest part was used to stable horses and numerous blocked doors/windows reflect its varied history.

It is possible that an earlier cob building had existed on this site but evidence from the present fabric suggests a late 18th-century construction.

6. Kingsbury Episcopi, Mid Lambrook, The White House. ST4228 1853

A listed property. The main range is two-storey with attic under a pitched, plain tile clad roof. A full width two storey lean-to on the north face contains



Fig. 6 Kingsbury Episcopi, Mid Lambrook, The White House, south-east elevation

the stairs and other rooms; beyond is another small extension. An extensive cellar is situated under the eastern part of the house with both internal and road level access. Further stairs extend to the attic.

The house is brick built (Flemish Bond). The 40cm thick walls are rendered and painted on all elevations. The distinctive windows of the front elevation have a raised surrounds and keystone decorations. The roof is supported on four collar trusses. The principals meet at the apex in a notched tenon joint, a single tier of staggered purlins are fixed with tusk tenon joints. Stylistic evidence suggests that the house dates from the late 18th century or early 19th century.

7. Kingsbury Episcopi, Thorney, The Old Rising Sun. ST4271 2278

A listed property. Once a public house and recorded as a Beerhouse in 1851, it is 'L' shaped and comprises two units. Initially it was a cob-built, one and a half storey two-room range under a thatched roof with gable end abutting the road and dating from the mid 17th century. The gable end is now built of brick in Flemish Bond on a masonry plinth. The cob walls



Fig. 7 Kingsbury Episcopi, Thorney, The Old Rising Sun, south-west elevation

are 60 – 70cm thick but, following flooding in 2014, it was reconstructed with a concrete core so is not original. The roof is supported on two elm collar trusses which meet at a notched tenon apex. A narrow, steep flight of stairs rise from beside the gable inglenook. The half beam against the front of this fireplace has a slightly hollow chamfer and terminates in a deep, rounded step and run-out stop.

At right angles at the back of the cob building is a late 19th century enlargement containing no independent cooking facilities. This is two storey and brick built in English Bond; a range of three-rooms under a slate clad roof. The walls are 30cm thick and erected on a masonry plinth. The roof is supported on two softwood king post trusses. On T4 is pasted a newspaper dated to June 1887. The main, 19th-century style, stairs rise within this range. All the walls except those constructed of masonry are painted.

8. Pawlett, 14 Gaunts Rd, Doidges House. ST2990 4277

The house comprises a three room front range of one and a half storeys, with a single storey attached barn at the eastern end. At the rear is a single storey, two room range and a further domestic room under a catslide roof. A single stairway, behind the entry lobby, accesses the first floor. The elevations are rough rendered and painted with the exception of the local lias stone barn. The roofs are clad with double roman clay tiles and the front range has cocks-comb ridge tiles. A gabled porch protects the front door.

The walls vary considerably in measured thickness, some sections being internally clad but a short length was 75cm thick masonry possibly



Fig. 8 Pawlett, 14 Gaunts Rd, Doidges House, south elevation

dating from the 16th century. Earl of Shaftesbury Estate maps of 1658 and 1780 were reviewed; on the earlier one a seemingly smaller property exists, perhaps two rooms with a central chimney.

Subsequently the house was enlarged, the wall thicknesses suggest during the 18th century. Certainly by the 1780 Map the house is shown to be larger, perhaps a three room cross passage yeoman property. The barn was built on the east gable. In the mid to late 19th century the walls were raised by 80cm allowing taller windows and more headroom on the first floor. Fireplaces and chimneys were built and new stairs introduced.

9. Selworthy, Crossacres. ST9188 4672

A listed property. The listing includes Crossacres and The Old Rectory (not surveyed), all originally the rectory house. The listing also refers to a model of the property, probably from early 19th century, that is in the keeping of the occupants of The Old Rectory. The two houses, the west and south wings of an L shaped building, are of two-storey under pitched roofs. The combined property was run as a hotel and a convalescent home in the 20th century.

Crossacres is constructed from local mixed Devonian rubble, visible on the west gable, otherwise obscured by painted render. The long walls of this rectangular building and the west gable are 100cm thick, possibly dating from as early as the 14th century. The model shows a storied porch that may have dated from the 15th century. In the late 18th century the building was repaired and the current roof is of that period having five



Fig. 9 Selworthy, Crossacres the early 19th-century model of the house seen from the north

tie-beam softwood trusses containing principals of reused timber. The principals are notched, tenoned and pegged at the apex. The two tiers of staggered purlins are held with tusk tenon joints.

An octagonal addition on the east gable probably dates from the 1830s when Sir Thomas Acland, much influenced by John Harford's creation of Blaise Hamlet, rebuilt Selworthy Green.



Fig. 10 Stogursey, 26, Lime St, west elevation

10. Stogursey, 26, Lime St. ST2032 4303

The main house is two-storey under a pitched roof. There is an in-line single storey former work-shop on the south gable and to the rear are rooms within a lean-to structure. The house is built of local rubble, rendered and painted. The roof is clad with double roman tiles capped with cocks-comb ridge tiles. There is a blocked doorway in the street wall of the single storey building.

The house appears to have originally been a two-

roomed house (kitchen/living room and an unheated service room) of one and a half storeys with a gable entry, built in the mid 17th century. The half beam against the fireplace has a step and runout stop of that period. A stair by the entrance door gave access to the inter-connected upper rooms.

Around the end of the 18th century the house, like several others in the town, was refronted. Eaves were raised, a new roof installed and the roadside elevation improved with a new entry door and larger symmetrically placed windows, including the windows to the first floor. A parlour with small fireplace was created within the original service room. A workshop was added to the south gable.

A large oven installed at the back of the main fireplace may indicate that the workshop served as a bakery in the 19th century.

11. Walton in Gordano, The Manor House. ST4354 1681

A listed property. The main range of the house is two-storey with attics under a pitched roof; the ground floor comprises three rooms with a cellar below the eastern end. Abutting the rear of this range is a corridor, containing an open-well stair,



Fig. 11 Walton in Gordano, The Manor House, octagonal glazing and parapet cornice

connecting to a two-storey north wing comprising a large single room. On the west side is a two-storey complex of irregularly shaped rooms, connected to the corridor, under separate hipped roofs. A narrow triangular extension of two-storeys under lean-to roofs abuts the eastern end, filling the space between the house and the road.

The house is largely built of local pennant sandstone with some ferriferous conglomerates. The masonry is exposed on the south and west elevations. A classic, but recent, Doric pillared porch protects the front entrance, complementing the symmetrical façade. The roofs are slate clad with chimney stacks in intermediate and gable locations. A plain string course lies above the lower window lintels; above the upper windows the wall rises to a shallow parapet with a cyma corniced coping.

Estate records of 1780 and 1783 show the house with a three-gabled façade, a style found locally and in south Gloucestershire in the early 17th century. The original stair rose from the central room and continued anticlockwise through to the attic. With no evidence of a 'cooking' fireplace it is possible that there was a detached kitchen in the north wing. Around 1785 the house was fashionably upgraded; the front elevation enjoyed re-fenestration with larger windows and the parapet was introduced at the eaves. The reconstructions provided first floor fireplaces and more fashionable forms to other fireplaces, an impressive stair and a cellar.

Domestic activities were relocated to the new western extension of the house in the late 18th century or early 19th century and may have coincided with a reworking of the main roof and the introduction of the decorative glazings of the front windows. The range of domestic buildings at the west end shown on the Tithe map was significantly reduced in the mid 20th century.

12. Wambrook, Beechwood. ST2764 0809

This house, formerly in Dorset, is made up of three elements, a one and a half storey section under thatch, a converted barn of one and a half storeys and a linking section under a flat roof.

The house is constructed of local Chert rubble, rendered and painted on the south elevation. This original late 18th century house was two rooms comprising an unheated parlour and a kitchen/living room divided by a central stair. The walls of the original building are 52cm thick and the inglenook fireplace contains a brick lined baking



Fig. 12 Wambrook, Beechwood, rounded and stepped stack at first floor level

oven. To the north of the kitchen an extension, possibly a dairy or wash house was added.

Across the west gable another wing was added extending to the north providing further workspace for the running of a smallholding. Both these extensions are one and a half story and lie under the thatched roof the main section of which is supported on three collar trusses, the principals being of hand-sawn elm. The extensions have thinner walls (about 45cm) than the original house; the longer wing probably dates to the mid 19th century.

On the first floor the stack is rounded with stepped construction; this feature seems to be associated with the absence of regular shaped stone and has been noted in Mendip and Blackdown houses.

13. DEVON. Tytherleigh, Chard Rd, Penny Cottage & 2, Pinney Cottage. ST3185 0331

These two Tytherleigh Estate properties were sold off in 1928. The main range of one and a half storeys now comprises four units in-line. An original two-room house comprising a kitchen/living room and an unheated parlour had a single storey lean-to on the north wall providing a service area; all these walls were 55cm thick and together with the roof carpentry suggest a mid 18th-century date.



Fig. 13 Devon, Tytherleigh, Chard Rd, Penny Cottage & 2, Pinney Cottage, the halved and pegged truss apex

The main roof, half-hipped at the western end, is clad in bands of plain and fish-scale clay tiles. The primarily ash-timbered roof of the western two units is carried on four collar trusses, the halved and extended principals are pegged at the apex and carry the ridge. A single tier of trenched purlins supports the common rafters.

In the mid 19th century the kitchen fireplace was altered to provide a baking oven and a small fireplace was built into the back of the main fireplace to heat the parlour.

The addition of a third room on the eastern end, with a wall thickness of 46cm, during the 19th century made it possible for division of the property and dual occupation, with a first floor flying freehold. This involved the construction of new doorways and additional stairs.

A further extension at the eastern end of concrete block construction provides the fourth unit of the current building. A modern common rafter roof extends over the two eastern units.