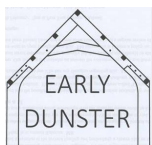


# SANHS Building Research Group (West Somerset)



## Newsletter 12 – Summer 2019



### Early Dunster Project

#### Buildings investigation progress

We have now completed reports on five houses, surveyed another eight properties and the Castle Gatehouse, which has taken up more resources than we anticipated. Every property has early (pre 1700) fabric in it and every property has been complicated by the fact of uneven and battered walls, no right angles especially where old boundaries are being followed and various later alterations and divisions of property. A lot of properties seem to have been hall houses with a similar layout to each other, but information from the probate inventories tells us that many of these had been divided up by the late 1600s.

As well as surveys identifying early fabric, researchers are finding a great deal of history associated with particular properties like the Old George Inn in High Street, the old workhouse in Mill Lane and even eighteenth-century plans of the Castle Gatehouse. Prominent families are also being looked at. There is a great deal to keep volunteers interested. For others, we have two exhibitions at present, one being in the Museum which will be enhanced by the model hall house, hopefully in September 2019. The other is in the north aisle of St. George's Church, Dunster and will be moved to Exmoor National Park Centre in September. In view of the high number of relevant properties we are applying for an extension of time but still intend to hold a major event in Dunster in September 2019.

Many thanks are due to our talented volunteers for their efforts over the last few months and also to owners who have allowed us to crawl (sometimes literally!) all over their property.



#### Ghost in the Gatehouse?

Volunteers (above) take a break from measuring up in Dunster Castle's Tenants Hall to pose with a swashbuckling character from the castle's colourful past. Former architectural technician Andy Blanks (on the left) was on hand to help fellow volunteers struggling to record the tricky spiral staircases and their Victorian reconstructions in the castle gatehouse (below).





Our volunteers bring a multitude of talents and skills to the project. Rosemary Boaz has a background in education and ecology, but she is also a qualified archivist - an expertise currently on display in the solar of Porlock's Doverly Manor Museum. With help from her husband, as well as a number of Porlock residents, she has drawn together a wealth of information on Cape House (the old Rose and Crown - above). She was asked to do this research by museum curator Lita Strampp, who used to buy her animal feed from the house when it was Capes Stores.

Museum opening hours and further information can be found on its website at [www.doverlymanormuseum.org](http://www.doverlymanormuseum.org)

Doverly Museum (below) is also an interesting historic building and dates back to 1450, although it was built on the site of a much earlier dwelling. A single original jointed cruck survives in the south wing, but the ostentatious north block was added later. There were alterations in the seventeenth century and a major overhaul in Victorian times.



Look out for Exmoor's Historic Building Festival: A series of events looking at the historic buildings across Exmoor: 16th-22nd September: walks, talks and practical demonstrations of traditional building techniques. See the Exmoor National Park website and social media.



Surveys have been carried out at Millstream Cottages, once Dunster's workhouse. We assumed that the small house in the garden (left) was a wash house; but according to the Victoria Somerset County History, one of the conditions of establishing a poorhouse there in the eighteenth century was that it should have 'a sick room with a chimney'.

The project's Early Dunster exhibition has moved to a new home, this time in the Priory Church of St George, which is open to visitors every day. Also on display is a fine model of the church, with a tribute to St George and his dragon-slaying skills.





## 12 and 14 High Street

In 1463, when Dunster High Street was known as Market Street, a burgage known as 'The George' was the subject of a feoffment. Victoria County History refers to the George as a pub in 1665, but by 1749 its grant of lease was calling it an 'old decayed dwelling or inn'. Forty years later, nonetheless - while still described as 'ancient and decayed' - it passed from Dunster clothier John Leigh to Uffculme gentleman Charles Leigh, along with The Horse and Crooks Inn in High Street, a messuage in West Street, The Three Mariners in High Street, The George Inn and Loxhole Mead.

Earlier in the century there had been around twenty pubs in Dunster, but by 1789 there were just nine, a further seven of which had ceased trading by 1901. In 1800, Charles Leigh engaged a carpenter to work on The George, but by 1815 it was in a poor state of repair again.

By 1842 ownership had passed to one Nicholas Pearse, lessee under Pincombes [sic] Charity, and Dunster-born Elizabeth Wood was the innkeeper. In 1859 Ms Wood was declared bankrupt, and by 1861 she was living in Dunster High Street with her son-in-law, although it is not known whether she was at number 14. It was another ten years before The George was recorded as an inn once more, this time with a Charles Long (or Lang) as the landlord. Two years later, however, according to the Victoria County History, 'it was partly demolished' and what remained was converted into two domestic dwellings, these being numbers 12 and 14 High Street.

*~ Historical research by Barbara Hoffbauer*

Although now much altered, 12 and 14 High Street were together a 3-room cross passage house. The screen which separated off the hall is still largely intact, together with a very heavy wooden door frame to the former cross passage. Above the Hall are two remaining fine arch braced trusses with cranked collar and yoked apex. One of the trusses has been dendro-dated to 1323.

In the hall is an exceptionally large ceiling beam with step and run out stop at one end and a half beam against the earlier inner room. On this half beam, were written the words "We are all worm's meat. Remember death shall be the end. God save our noble Queen Elizabeth. Amen." The words were scarcely visible when a previous recording was made in 1982 and cannot now be seen.



Above: Dunster Castle during a springtime survey

Left: Looking up from Church Street. Photo Tony Harding

## Shops, Trades and Occupations in Milverton

More than 200 people climbed the hill to St Michael's church in Milverton to visit the village history group's joint display with Mary Ewing on "The Shops, Trades and Occupations in Milverton".

From the seventeenth to the twenty-first century, Milverton has gone from having everything a villager could need to only one shop, a hairdresser's and a post office (open 3 mornings a week). Chairs were made in the village and there was a choice of butchers and bakers. Deliveries were made by bicycle or horse and cart. A nurse bought you into the world and the carpenter made your coffin. Doctors visited you on horseback until the village clubbed together to buy the first car in the village. The Victoria Rooms, built in 1887, provided newspapers to subscribers in the Reading Rooms where today the history group holds its meetings.

Displayed in the Archaeology section - alongside military buttons, clay pipes and some flints - were trade tokens found locally from the only two traders to produce one: Giles King (woollen merchant) and John Newton (apothecary).

*~ Maggie Dinning, Milverton History Group*

### SANHS Dates for your Diary

7th September, 2pm: A visit to the Castle Gatehouse

Starting in October, near Wellington: a series of monthly evening talks on the Fabric of West Country Historic Buildings. Details to follow.



Every timber tells a story! Some of the timbers discovered during our surveys date back to Dunster's earliest days.

The Yorkshire Vernacular Buildings Study Group has produced some guidelines with forms and templates for recording vernacular buildings. Early Dunster volunteer surveyors might find it useful. "Their practice may not be just the same as ours, e.g. drawn elevations," Mary says, "but the principles are the same."

See their website for more details:

[www.yvbsg.org.uk](http://www.yvbsg.org.uk)



### HISTORIC PORLOCK

An opportunity to visit sites of historical interest and explore hidden parts of the village's past.

A series of guided walks, led by Barbara Bennett, looking at the old houses in Porlock.

10:15 – 12.00 noon

Leaving from  
Porlock Visitor Centre  
on August 20  
and September 24.

### ***SANHS - Championing Somerset's Heritage since 1849***

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