

BUILDING RECORDING IN 2017

SOMERSET VERNACULAR BUILDING RESEARCH GROUP

SVBRG has had another interesting year surveying in the parish of Kingsbury Episcopi. With help from the 'Kingsbury Time Travellers' we have brought the total of houses surveyed in the parish to 30. As ever, we hope that our surveys within the community will result in another publication in our 'Village Study' series and continue to contribute to the evolving picture of vernacular buildings, their occupants and settlement evolution in historic Somerset. Two houses elsewhere in the county have also been surveyed.

Our activities have included responding to queries from the public, even someone in N. Sweden, and collaborating with Conservation Officers and an Archaeological Company.

In spite of limited surveys this year we have been pleased to report on two houses in particular; one an original open-hall house and the other a former Hundred Court house.

Dates before the mid 16th century quoted in our reports are based on the similarity of stylistic features to Somerset houses previously dated by dendrochronology.

As always, the Group is indebted to the owners and occupiers of the various properties for their generosity in allowing access to their homes. 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 can also be viewed.

All photographs by John Rickard

Joint illustration by Dave Taylor

1. Clevedon, Dowlais Farmhouse. ST 39323 69479

Listed as an 18th-century house with attached outbuildings it had its present name by 1700 (sale of Clevedon Manorial lands). The house comprises two parallel two-storey ranges, each of two rooms. The front, south, range has attic rooms lit by a window at each gable. A single storey rear,



Fig. 1 Clevedon, Dowlais Farm, south frontage

north, wing contains two more rooms, formerly outbuildings, accessed through a rear lobby.

Constructed of rendered and painted local rubble stone (variously pennant sandstone or limestone), the front range walls are 55cm thick, those of the back range 55 to 60cm, whilst those of the wing are 50cm. The front elevation has a symmetrical arrangement of 6 over 6 pane sash windows beside and above a central enclosed porch with a pitched roof. The front door opens into a stair hall.

A survey of 1630 records an "Easthouse" in

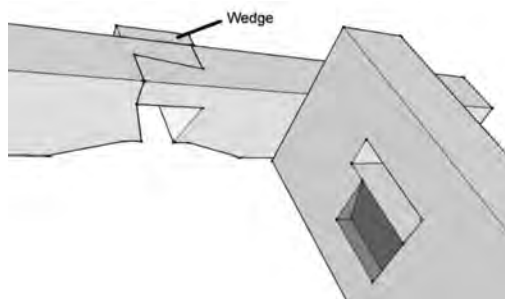


Fig. 2 Clevedon, Dowlais Farm, wedged dovetail tenon joint (drawing, Dave Taylor)

“good condition” on this plot. This is now the rear two-room range. The winder stair and remaining beams, all with chamfers of 10cm and ending in cyma stops, are located here.

Around 1810 the property was enlarged by the addition of the front range. The slate-clad, elm roof with 46° pitch is supported on four collar trusses; the collars are half dovetailed into the principals. The purlins are joined to the trusses with rare wedged dovetail tenons. The design of the stair and door fittings (L and extended T hinges) are appropriate for this date. The first floor was heated. Doors in the rear range were replaced to upgrade it too.

The clay pantile-clad roof over the rear range was probably replaced in the mid 19th century. Softwood tie-beam trusses had marks suggesting the timber was of Baltic origin.

The 1902 OS Map shows the addition of the north wing, by which time it was operating as a bake/wash house.



Fig. 3 Kingsbury Episcopi, East Lambrook, The Old Buffalo Inn from the north-west

2. Kingsbury Episcopi, East Lambrook, Water Street, The Old Buffalo Inn. ST 43230 18585

The Inn ceased to operate in the mid 20th century. It was certainly functioning in 1841 (Census) and the present house retains the name.

The property, two-storey and attic under a pitched, slate clad roof with raised and coped gables, appears to have been cob built. The cob has largely been replaced by local rubble stone, brick

and block. It now comprises three rooms and a stair hall. Its non-rectangular plan appears to have been dictated by a pre-existing long, narrow cottage building on the site (Tithe Map 1844).

Wall thicknesses suggest that it was built in one phase; a cranked purlin was even used to accommodate a change of building width. The roof structure, collar-beam trusses and pegged through-tenons, date from the 19th century; the internal plank and batten doors and their furniture (some extended T-hinges) all point to a construction date in the early 19th century.



Fig. 4 Kingsbury Episcopi, West Lambrook, Mallow Cross, east elevation

3. Kingsbury Episcopi, West Lambrook, Mallow Cross. ST 41476 18685

A two-storey, listed building; L-shaped in plan. The front range is a classic example of a 17th-century three-room, cross-passage house, complete with three-light, hollow chamfered stone-mullioned windows all dressed in Hamstone. An entrance doorway with depressed four-centred head and moulded jambs is linked to the ground floor windows by a continuous hood mould. The coursed rubble walls are 65cm thick. The original entry doorway has hollow-step-cyma mouldings to the jambs and small incised spandrels to the door head. Internally there is nothing left of the early house.

A wing, wall thickness 48-50cm, was added in the 18th century and a two storey turret fills the angle between the ranges.

In the 19th century the whole building was re-roofed, with machine-sawn softwood timber, and slate clad between raised and coped gables indicating previous thatch. This property was one

of eight in Kingsbury belonging to the 300 acre estate of Lord Portman.



Fig. 5 Kingsbury Episcopi, West Lambrook, Tanyard House. Smoke-blackened truss, purlins and windbrace

4. Kingsbury Episcopi, West Lambrook, Tanyard House. ST 41499 18654

A listed building. Detailed as three cottages at the time of the listing it is now two dwellings, both of two storeys with an L-shaped plan.

In the late 15th century a cob built, two bay open-hall house was built for someone of yeoman status as indicated by the three tiers of purlins, wind-bracing and the arch-braced jointed cruck of the central truss. The hearth occupied a central position on the floor, the smoke rising into the roof space and blackening the roof timbers. Either side of the hall single bay rooms provided a service area for the preparation of food and an inner room, a more private space.

Mid to late 16th century a post and truss frame partition was introduced into the hall to create a cross passage and provide structure for a smoke bay or smoke hood enabling the central hearth to be located against this cross-passage wall. A peak-headed doorway remains in this partition. The hall and inner room were ceiled; the supporting beams have 13cm slightly hollow chamfers and rounded step-and-runout stops. A spiral stair was inserted giving access to first floor 'chambers'.

Around 1600 the walls were rebuilt in Hamstone and a new entrance door, depressed four-centred arch head and moulded jambs, inserted. The service room, at the west end, was ceiled and became a proper kitchen with the insertion of an inglenook fireplace, a baking oven, a smaller summer oven and a drying chamber. The other fireplaces may

also have been created at this time; one at the eastern gable and the other the replacement of the smoke bay in the hall.

In the early 18th century the hall was refurbished with panelling and a larger window inserted. The property was subdivided in the mid 19th century. In recent times the house has been re-modelled and some loss of original features has occurred. The house has a wing attached but this and part of the body of the main house are in separate ownership; we hope to gain access in due course.



Fig. 6 Kingsbury Episcopi, Stembridge, Whitegate House, south elevation

5. Kingsbury Episcopi, Stembridge, Whitegate House. ST 42399 20226

An original 17th century, or earlier, house of two-room plan is thought to have been the basis for the present four-room building. It is now two-storey and attic under a thatched, pitched roof. The east gable roof has a small hip and a lean-to abuts the lower part of the east wall.

The Hamstone walls are largely 60-65 cm thick, but the east gable is 50cm and a section of the north wall, at the original west end, is 80cm. This variation suggests a number of building phases: prior to 1824 (Wyndham Estate Map) two more in-line rooms were added. Most of the original building seems to have been destroyed by fire or demolished leaving a small abode by 1844 (Tithe Map). The western end was rebuilt, during a period of local prosperity in the mid 19th century, in a 17th-century style complete with mullioned windows. A new roof was installed at this time, with 18th-century collar and tie beam carpentry. A lean-to extension was added to the east gable and the property was a fully functioning farmhouse by the 1880's.



Fig. 7 Kingsbury Episcopi, Thorney, The Anchorage, west entrance into inglenook

6. Kingsbury Episcopi, Thorney, The Anchorage. ST 42764 22714

This property is listed. A single storey cob-walled house was built here in the early 17th century, two full-height post and truss partitions infilled with wattle and daub divided the space and supported the steeply pitched, thatched roof.

In the early 19th century the house was partially rebuilt in local lias stone and the roof space was brought into use by the insertion of ceilings and bonnet-hooded dormer windows. As there is no evidence of white-wash in the upper areas of the roof there remains the possibility that the building was not occupied as a domestic dwelling.

In the early 20th century metal-framed windows replaced their wooden predecessors and the inglenook fireplace was reduced in width creating space for the insertion of a new entrance in the gable wall and a window in the room above.

7. Kingsbury Episcopi, Manor House. ST 433172

This listed property, formerly Manor Farm House, is two-storey and attic under a pitched, softwood roof. It is of a Flemish-bonded brick construction with walls 35cm thick. The house has a square plan with a central passage linking the entrance to an interconnecting door with the adjacent house and serving a pantry, three other rooms and the stairwell.

The house appears to have been built in the mid

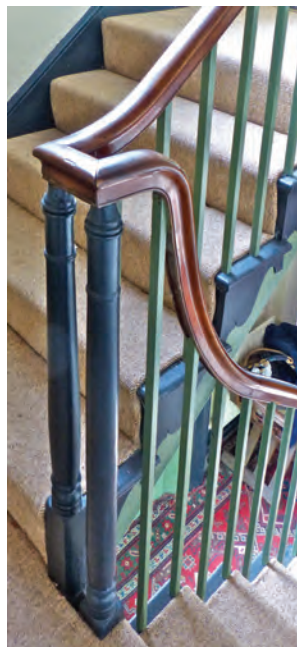


Fig. 8 Kingsbury Episcopi, Manor House. Ramped handrail and decorative brackets to treads

19th century in the elegant style of the late 18th: six-panel doors, an open-tread stair with ramped handrail and the eight over eight sash windows with slim glazing bars and unusually deep shutter boxes feature. Additionally, at least two hob grates suggest a late 18th-century date but are inset in 19th century surrounds.



Fig. 9 Kingsbury Episcopi, Manor House, 18th-century hob grate in 19th-century surround

Map evidence indicates it was built between 1844 and 1884. A brick tax, imposed nationally in 1784 and removed in 1850, may have influenced the choice of building material.

Access to an adjoining building (Manor House Cottage), once connected internally and probably providing the cooking and other domestic services missing from Manor (Farm) House, would be instructive.



Fig. 10 Kingsbury Episcopi, The Retreat, front elevation

8. Kingsbury Episcopi, The Retreat. ST 43390 21117

This house replaced the building shown on the Tithe map and was set further from the road. It was built of local lias stone about 1860 in a square plan with four rooms and presented a symmetrical frontage around an arch-headed front door opening into a through hall. A two-storey addition on the west



Fig. 11 Kingsbury Episcopi, The Retreat, porch canopy on cast iron supports

side resulted in the original gables being removed and a slate clad, hipped roof of softwood timbers installed to unify the appearance. The original roof trusses were moved to achieve this. The west gable wall was removed completely and was replaced with a brick wall complete with new fireplaces and chimneys aligned with the roof hip.



Fig. 12 Stocklinch, Ilford Bridges, front elevation displaying decorative brickwork

9. Stocklinch, Ilford Bridges. ST 3716 1766

A listed property that served as an inn during the 18th and 19th centuries. The one and a half storey front range of the house is roughly 32 metres long and comprises five units in-line with four units in the single-storey, rear outshut. It is constructed of a mix of local Moolham stone and Flemish-bonded brick, showing variations in stone quality and dressing. A low plinth is evident around most of the building. The roof is thatched with raked hoods over the dormer windows. The west gable is coped with a ball finial, the east gable is over-sailed with thatch. The brick walling is 37cm thick, the masonry sections ranging from 70cm to 45cm and indicating different build phases over the years. The windows are mainly two- or three-light in timber frames with lead glazing. Some internal walls are timber framed, infilled with brick, on a plinth. Many internal doors are of plank and batten construction, pintle-hung on strap hinges.

Initially, a mid 16th-century cob and timber-framed thatched building, probably comprising two rooms, one with a smoke bay or smoke hood. The moulded beam and half-beam in this section suggest a house of yeoman status.

In the late 16th or early 17th century the house

was extended towards the east by two rooms. Beams at this end are substantial with characteristic 12cm chamfers and cyma stops. The roof truss here has a plain apex and a lapped dovetail collar joint, above which are rods to support a clay daub filling.

The roof trusses west of this point comprise a group of four (marked I–III) with lapped dovetail collars, typically 17th-century, then a set of three tenoned collar trusses, typically 16th-century followed by a late 19th-century bolted collar truss, all of which reflects the complex way in which the house developed or was repaired.

The house itself appears to have been extended to the west late in the 17th century and to have been re-fronted with brick, including a decorative string course, above a metre-high stone plinth, a clear display of status and wealth. Inset in the ceiling of this extension is a decoration, an elliptical foliate border containing the Speke family crest. The Speke family crest also tops a, now blocked, external doorway into this room. (Sir George Speke was granted the Hundred of Abdick and Bulstone in 1611 and documentary sources imply that the Hundred Court was held here until the second half of the 19th century.)



Fig. 13 Stocklinch, Ilford Bridges. The Speke crest as a ceiling decoration. The pig is shown as a porcupine in another version

SANHS VERNACULAR BUILDING RESEARCH GROUP

INTRODUCTION

In 2013, a group was initiated by the Historic Buildings Committee with the intention of recording buildings in the west of the county which would complement the excellent work carried out by the Somerset Vernacular Building Research Group whose village studies mainly cover the east and south sectors of the County. The start up of the group was financed by grants from Exmoor National Park Authority and the Vernacular Architecture Group.

By way of a launch, a workshop was held at Dunster Tithe Barn followed up by training sessions. In response to a request from Exmoor National Park Authority, the group started surveys at Porlock to support their work on the "Dig Porlock" project in 2014. The following year, a move to work with an enthusiastic new history group at Milverton was encouraged by John Dallimore. The group has been carrying out surveys mostly in these two centres of population. Approximately 60 members are on the mailing list, about half of whom have kindly helped with surveys or research.

A selection of properties surveyed is described here. The group very much appreciates owners' co-operation in allowing access to their homes. Copies of the full surveys are deposited at the Somerset Heritage Centre as are the referenced records by Cdr. Williams and Ron Gilson.

Dunster, 11 West Street. ST 9900 4352

A two wing house with smoke blackened jointed cruck frames and one true cruck. The house comprises four bays parallel with the road and a rear wing of two bays with two more jointed cruck frames. An infill truss indicates the end of the Hall beyond which was an inner room with solar above. At the other side of this are the remains of what appears to have been a true cruck truss, cut off at first floor level at the street elevational wall possibly when a shop front was inserted as indicated by an existing bay window. The truss infill is of wattle and daub and the wall separating the rear wing is of cob. An earlier lateral stack is indicated by herringbone fireplace backing in the street wall and slight surface irregularity externally.



Fig. 1 11 West Street, Dunster: infill truss with evidence of earlier door to solar

At the back of the rear wing is a large bread oven, remaining from what is thought to have been a bakery.

In Dunster there are a number of similarly sized hall houses and Time Team have been carrying out work including dendro-dating* which has returned some early dates. Together with previous records, this suggests that there is more medieval building fabric in Dunster than in almost any other place in England. It is intended to continue with further study on the buildings of Dunster.

**Vernacular Architecture volume 47, pps 73 & 74*

Milverton, Clothiers, North Street. ST1229 2594

A double pile house with an unusual layout which suggests that the garden range was an earlier cross passage house. The frontage like many in North Street is of late 18th century. The porch is the same as one at "St. Mildred's" nearby. Research by Paddy Thompson, who has carried out extensive studies in

Street, shows that Marmaduke Clothier moved here from Street on his marriage. Properties occupied by Quakers at this end of North Street include “The Bank House” next door, occupied by the family of Thomas Young, the polymath (1773–1829), “The Recess” this being occupied by Thomas Pole and the buildings behind it at the corner of North Street and Mill Lane including the Meeting House. A nephew, Thomas Pole M D (1753–1829) was born in America, but returned to England and preached widely in the West Country, keeping a diary and sketching silhouettes of family and friends and of their homes, including one of the original Friends Meeting House at the boundary of Milverton and Wiveliscombe Parish.

The three Quaker families in North Street were inter-related and by the time of the Tithe records “Clothiers” was owned by two sisters of the Young family.

Milverton, Knutsford Cottage. ST1227 2593

A two room and cross passage house of the 17th century with workshop (now garage) beyond. Beside the large Hall fireplace the position of former staircase is indicated by a curved wall at first floor level and a blocked window. The top of the original wall before the eaves were raised is still evident in the first floor as a shelf. The bressumer at the fireplace has mortice cut outs and it has been suggested that this was for joists to support a sleeping platform, an unusual feature. The beam in what was the Hall (inserted when the first floor was added) has a chamfer with step, run out and nick stop.. This feature has been seen in a number of properties in Milverton.



Fig.2 Stop moulding with nick at Knutsford Cottage, Milverton

Milverton, 12 High Street. ST 1197 2595

A house of the late 17th century associated with the neighbouring property in High Street which was known as “Thornes”. It may originally have housed two families as there were two staircases, one beside the stack at each end, one still remaining and one indicated by a trap door in the floor above. A beam has a moulding stop similar to that at Knutsford Cottage. The access to the bread oven, now blocked is on the outside of the present stack and suggests that there was formerly another service room with hearth at the rear of the house. A blocked window used to over look the garden at “Thornes”. In 1842, a gardener lived here with his family. At around 1900, there was a terrace of houses along this (the north) side of High Street, many of these now demolished.

Milverton, “Wilsdon”, Sand Street. ST 1202 2576

The large fireplace with blocked bread oven and backing on to the cross passage suggests a date of the 17th century. The rest of the house has been largely rebuilt with no surviving features but the re-use of a panelled door hung on pintels at first floor level and L-hinges on another door. At the other side of the cross passage were a row of cottages running at right angles to the street. A wide blocked archway with adjacent outbuildings may indicate the location of a former smithy described in the tithe apportionments as having been on this site.

Porlock, Chantry Cottage. SS8865 4668

An exceptionally well-preserved roof consists of 4 jointed cruck frames with cambered collars. Purlins are missing but an empty mortice indicates a bridge mortice joint where the purlin was formerly pegged. A first floor fireplace has pyramid stops and a window has remains of stone cinquefoil head. This was a 3 cell house of 2 storeys. The most visible feature is the early front door frame. A detailed chantry document transcribed by E. Chadwyck Healey, indicates that this building was “erected anew” in the lifetime of Lady Elizabeth Harrington who died in 1471.



Fig. 3 Chantry Cottage, Porlock: First floor window painted by Clare Maryan-Green

away during those works. It was replaced with a large window and an external door at first floor level giving access to a Reading Room, this being reached by an outside staircase, of which traces remain. Below this was a Billiard Room which is still in use. The external steps have now been replaced by a bridge to the garden giving access to the first floor door.

Porlock, Doverly Manor. SS8880 4675

This small building stands in a prominent position in Porlock and is currently a Museum with attached Billiard Room. An archaeological watching brief was made during restoration works in 2005–2006 and found that the south block was of an earlier date than the north block, contrary to the belief of Edmund Buckle and Chadwyck Healey who rescued the building from dereliction in the late 19th century. An early photograph taken before this work showed a chimney stack to the east of the south block and which must have been swept



Fig.5 Doverly Manor, Porlock: Main window facing west. (photo: Catherine Dove)



Fig. 4 Doverly Manor, Porlock: cross sections of the two main blocks

South block: The study of the building confirmed that the south block was earlier having been originally an open hall house with arch-braced cruck trusses, a principal upright of which can still be seen buried in the wall. This block including the roof structure was more heavily restored in 1893 possibly because it was in a worse state or because it was thought to be less important and later than the other block. In the recent renovation works, a link was made at first floor level with the north block in order to extend the Museum. Fireplace, beams and staircase suggest that this range was floored over in the early 17th century.

The **north block** was evidently “built to impress”. By 1893, the large window facing west into Porlock, had been largely covered over, but remaining details were carefully recorded by Edmund Buckle (see “*A History of the part of West Somerset, comprising Luccombe, Selworthy, Stoke Pero, Porlock, Culbone and Oare*”; Chadwyck-Healey, 1901, pps 297-301) and the window accordingly restored. In the ground floor room is a heavily coffered ceiling (ogee and hollow moulding) and a fine fireplace of the late 15th century. The hood on the fireplace has a little damage at the centre where there may have been a crest. The circular stairs rise beside the fireplace and are coeval with it (Ref; *Archaeological Watching Brief*: Andrew Woodcock, 2007). In the first floor chamber is a later fireplace and a fine arch-braced roof springing from elaborately carved wall-plates. A garderobe is adjacent to the staircase. The arch braces are chamfered with run out stops and more original timbers than in the south block (as indicated by the jointing) can be found here.

All the features of this high quality block suggest that it was built all at one time, although thicker walls at the rear could represent rebuild of earlier structures. For most of the 15th century, Porlock Manor was held by Lady Elizabeth Harrington (d.1471), her husband having died abroad in the service of King Henry V. Her heir, Lady Cecily Bonville was said to be the wealthiest woman in England at the time and went on to marry Sir Thomas Gray in 1474. It seems likely that she never visited Porlock but officials would have been needed to manage the estate and it is suggested that the north block was built for that purpose.

The Museum is open from Easter to the end of September and is well worth a visit for its exhibits as well as the building itself.

Chadwyck Healey, C. E. H.: 1901. *The History of the part of West Somerset comprising the parishes of Luccombe, Selworthy, Stoke Pero, Porlock, Culbone and Oare*. London
Dr Andrew Woodcock: 2007 “*A watching brief etc*” (unpublished report – copy at Doverly Museum)

Porlock, Lower Doverhay House. SS8889 4650

An earlier recording by Cdr, Williams exists and suggests that this may have been a longhouse. In 1841 it was a small farm of around 20 acres or so. There are some good features including two early windows (17th century) and remains of another circular stair turret.

Porlock, Myrtle Cottage. SS 8854 4678

This has a three room cross passage plan with former circular stair turret at the back of the cross passage. Details and layout suggest a date of early 17th century and this is borne out by a date stone of 1604 which is probably accurate. There are also two fine fire marks (Phoenix and Royal Insurance companies) on the lateral stack. The inner room was formerly part of a garage and so is much altered. The original roof has been lost in later additions.



Fig. 6 Porlock, fire marks

Porlock, The Old Rose & Crown. SS 8860 4671

This building has been altered extensively over many centuries but retains some fascinating features. The original building survives in small part with a cross passage beside a Hall (both inner room and service room rebuilt), a 70cm wall at the rear and a ceiling in the first floor showing the line of the original roof. A half-beam on corbels at the

inner room end of the Hall is quite distinct from the later inserted beams. The wide span (over 7 metres) suggests that the front wall has been brought forward as well as being raised to give headroom for more letting rooms on the first floor. The beams would have been inserted at this time to support the first floor. They have 11cm chamfers and run out stops with extended scroll moulding typical of the 17th century and were installed at the same time as the lateral stack now within the external wall.

A wing to the north is likely to have contained a service room. It has door frames and also an embedded part window frame with rounded step and ogee moulded frame section all of the 17th century. Another wing immediately beside this one has a window at ground floor level with diamond set mullions and evidence of shutters, re-used for a store room.

Where the block was rebuilt to the west, are two ground floor rooms and a function room above. Many of the former fittings remain intact. The room furthest west was a bakery during the 20th century and there was a door to it from the street at the front, as shown in an old photograph. The road level has increased significantly since that time in order to rebuild the bridge over the stream. (information supplied by Rosemary Buaz).

To the east is Sanctuary Cottage, the subject of a report by Ron Gilson in 1982. From the details,



*Fig. 7 Porlock, ground floor window
(photo; Catherine Dove)*

it was considered to be of early 17th century date. The end part of the block to the east was previously "Cape's Stores". The building has been in the Cape family since 1887 when a major sale of Blathwayt properties was held. The property had already been closed as a public house at that time. The Capes were also corn merchants and couriers and a number of buildings at the rear around a cobbled courtyard are associated with that time.

Porlock, Ye Olde Cottage. SS8882 4680

A small originally open hall house with two jointed cruck frames, the blade of one still in place from about 60cm above the ground floor level. Collar and purlins are missing and the ridge is diagonally set as is common in Porlock. Cob walls indicate the position of the cruck frames and there is an inserted lateral stack with modern window adjacent. The building stood on lands that supported the Harrington Chantry priests. At the time of the tithe records a tailor called Abraham Sparks lived here with his family. This name is found in Porlock's mediaeval records and the property continued in the family until the 1930s.



*Fig. 8 Porlock, Ye Old Cottage: apex of
jointed cruck frame*