
BUILDING RECORDING IN 2004

SOMERSET VERNACULAR BUILDING RESEARCH GROUP

This has been another busy and productive year for members of the SVBRG. The detailed survey of the history and buildings of the parish of Compton Dundon has been published and work has begun on the next village survey, Combe St Nicholas in the south-west of the county. In addition, surveys have been undertaken of a range of individual buildings in other parts of Somerset. The Group is extremely grateful for the co-operation of owners, but it must be stressed that the houses recorded are private and not open to the public. Copies of the full reports and survey drawings have been deposited in the Somerset County Record Office and the National Monuments Record at Swindon. An important on-going venture initiated in 1996 is the Somerset Dendrochronology Project undertaken by Oxford Dendrochronology Laboratory and overseen by the SVBRG. Progress reports have been published in *Vernacular Architecture* and fuller details will be published in the next *Proceedings*. The results derived from the timber samples have informed some of the conclusions given in the brief accounts below. Finally at the end of the year work began on a detailed survey of Lytes Cary, Charlton Mackrell, now in the care of the National Trust. This will be an important project for the coming year.

Ash, Milton Fauconbridge, Courtfield House ST 468213

Structural evidence and documentation (*Victoria History of the County of Somerset*, IV (1978), 91) confirm that the building was originally a chapel built in the late 13th century. In the 15th century the eastern half of the building was converted to domestic use by the creation of a hall with chambers over. However, service rooms do not appear to have been provided, so the accommodation must have

been closely associated with the nearby manor house (now gone). The building was further divided in the 16th century and stairs were inserted, perhaps in the 17th century. At that time, there was still no provision for a kitchen or service rooms. The house was considerably remodelled in the late 19th or early 20th century.

Beckington, Church Hill, No. 3 ST 801517

The house has been much altered over the centuries so that its development is uncertain. The surviving evidence suggests that it dates from the mid-17th century and was two storeys with gables at each end and probably comprised an inner room, hall, cross-passage, kitchen and service room. A two-storey wing was added later in the 17th century including a new kitchen and the original kitchen was converted into a parlour. In the late 19th century a two-storey store was added.

Bridgwater, West Street, Nos 118 & 120 ST 296365

Surviving documentary evidence indicates that the house (No. 118) was built at the end of the 16th century and probably comprised a central entry with a room either side. In the late 17th century the walls and roof were raised to create two full storeys. From c. 1682 to 1857 the property was owned by the Mayor and Aldermen of the Borough of Bridgwater and in the 17th and 18th centuries leased to individuals of some standing, including a goldsmith, Doctor of Physik, a yeoman and a freeman of the town. In the mid-18th century No. 120 was added to the west as a separate house. In the early 19th century the original house was modernised and later in the century communicating doors were created on each floor between the two houses and additions were built at the back. Until the 1950s when West Street

was redeveloped there were similar adjoining properties.

Chilthorne Domer, Home Farm ST 524193

The integrated farmstead has access directly from Main Street in the centre of the village. The earliest phase of the farmhouse appears to date from the late medieval period. Based on evidence of the roof construction, partition and a framed ceiling in what is now the north-west wing, this appears to be the original hall and inner room. The remainder of the house at that time probably comprised a cross-passage and service room/kitchen. These elements were demolished in the late 17th century and a 'new' house added, aligned north-south and including a parlour, service room and kitchen. A lean-to dairy was added at the same time with access to the attics, which were probably used for cheese storage (as there is no indication that they were used for accommodation). The house was further upgraded in the 18th century when the south cross-wing was added with a new parlour and first-floor rooms. The exterior was given uniform ogee-moulded timber casement windows. The roof over the dairy was raised to give loft space. Also the north-west wing was converted into a wring-house and cider cellar. The ceiling over the original inner room was removed to accommodate a cider press and stone barrel racks. The farmstead includes a timber barn (Fig. 1) with central threshing floor, a stone stable (with no surviving interior fittings) and a much altered timber implement and shelter shed.



Fig. 1 Barn at Hill Farm, Chilthorne Domer; photograph John Rickard

Combe Florey, Gwynne Cottage ST 148311

The surviving evidence indicates that this house was originally single storey with an open hall, service room and inner room, probably dating from the 15th/16th century. In the 16th century, upper chambers were created over the rooms either side of the hall,

which remained open. A fireplace with associated oven and probably a curing chamber was added at this time. The hall was floored with a chamber over in the early 17th century. Unfortunately a fire in the 1940s destroyed the roof and thatch resulting in the rebuilding of the first floor with nothing of the original roof structure surviving to provide a more accurate date.

Hinton St George, West Street, Church Cottage ST 417125

A remnant of smoke-blackened timber could indicate that the house had late-medieval origins (an open-hall house) but there is no other evidence to support this hypothesis. The earliest surviving details date from the late 17th century when the house was of one-and-one-half storeys and comprised two ground-floor rooms. At a later date, possibly in the 19th century, the walls and roof were raised and the house extended to the west with lean-to additions at the rear.

Kingsbury Episcopi, Church Street, The Old Post Office ST 434211

The remains of one jointed-cruck truss with an associated partition and a fire-hood suggest that the east end of the house may date from *c.* 1500. However, there is insufficient evidence to reconstruct its plan at that time. In about 1600 the house was enlarged to create a cross-passage with stack backing onto it and two additional rooms with chambers over. Also the integral outshut was built with service rooms – a relatively rare plan-form in Somerset. A new stack at the west end was added in the mid-17th century. Further alterations took place in the 19th century including the installation of large baking ovens.

Langford Budville, Stancombe Farmhouse ST 310225

This farmstead was recorded in 2003 and appeared in last year's report. However, renovation work in late 2004 has revealed more information. The surmise that the 14th-century hall was originally open is confirmed by the discovery that the true cruck is smoke blackened. However, the extent of the house at that time cannot be determined as it was substantially rebuilt in the early 17th century as a traditional three-unit and cross-passage plan. The kitchen fireplace then included a large curing chamber or corn-drying kiln later converted into an oven. The later developments are as previously reported with additions and remodelling principally

in the mid-17th century, the 18th century and the late 19th century.

Lydeard St Lawrence, Coursley, Coursley Cottage ST 142331

The present house is only a part of the original, but on the evidence of the smoke-blackened cruck trusses and the form of the apex of the roof appears to date from the early 14th century. At that time it comprised a single storey building with an open hall and presumably with service rooms and possibly a solar chamber. The Tithe Map of 1839 shows that the house extended further to the east and it appears to have had a cross wing. A house of that size is likely to have been of significant status. It was upgraded in the mid-16th century when the walls were raised to add a first floor together with a fireplace and lateral stack. The north wing may also have been added at the same date. At some time in the mid-19th century part of the cross wing was demolished and the remainder divided into two. The east cottage was lost after 1887, reputedly as the result of a fire.

Pitney, Stowey Road, East End Farmhouse ST 452284

The remnants of the smoke-blackened roof indicate that the house originally comprised a one-storey open hall and probably dates from earlier than the mid-16th century. The house was upgraded *c.* 1600 by the insertion of upper floors and fireplaces with curing chambers and an oven. The plan was then an inner room, hall, cross-passage and kitchen. A two-storey wing was added at the rear, probably in the late 18th century, when dairying and cheese-making was on the increase. A service room with linhay-type open loft over was added after the date of the Tithe Map of 1876. At the time of the survey, an unusual feature in the room above the kitchen was noted, which further research has revealed was part of a mechanised spit-jack, probably dating from the 17th century. It appears to be a previously unknown type with the pulley system extending into the room above the kitchen fireplace and with weights externally to provide a longer rotation time.

Tatworth & Forton, South Chard, Post Office Lane, Springfield ST 329053

The evidence of the jointed-cruck trusses (now clad, but recorded in 1982) with a smoke-blackened roof indicates that the house originally comprised a two-bay open hall with cross entry, an inner room, a solar chamber jettied over the high end of the hall and a

service room at the low end. The wattle undercladding of the original thatch survives. Tree-ring dating of the roof timbers (carried out by Nottingham University on behalf of English Heritage) has given a felling date of 1445, which is the likely date of the building. A fireplace with fire hood was inserted in the 16th century together with an upper floor forming a chamber above the hall. In the early 17th century the low end was rebuilt with a large fireplace incorporating an oven and curing chamber. A dairy wing was added in the mid 18th century and in the mid 19th century the house was divided to accommodate two families.

Wambrook, Higher Wambrook, Bartletts House ST 295085 (Fig. 2)

The jointed-cruck truss and smoke blackening indicate that originally there was an open two-bay hall extending from the south end to the present stack. Presumably there would have been a service room or rooms, probably sited in the area subsequently occupied by the fireplace, stack and cross-passage. Based on similar jointed-cruck trusses in Somerset dated by dendrochronology, a date in the 15th century is suggested for the original phase. The house was extended and upgraded in the late 16th century to provide a hall, cross-passage, kitchen, outshut and fireplaces, including a curing chamber. A stair turret to the upper floor was added and the hall and hall chamber provided with mullion windows.



Fig. 2 Bartletts House, Wambrook; photograph John Rickard

Wambrook, Weston Farmhouse, Dairy Cottage & Chapel Cottage ST 292091

Until 1982 this estate comprising the former Manor House, farmstead and adjoining cottages was part of Combe St Nicholas parish. Immediately to the north are the earthworks of a deserted medieval

village inhabited in 1327 and probably deserted in the 16th century. The two-storey north wing probably dates from 1583 and was part of a high status house, most of which has now gone. Its impressive plasterwork (Figs 3, 4) is illustrated in *Decorative Plasterwork in the Houses of Somerset 1500-1700* by John & Jane Penoyre (1994). The main range was built or rebuilt c. 1614 and comprised a hall, cross-passage, inner room and kitchen and service stairs rising to the attics. The house was remodelled with the addition of second-floor bedrooms served by a turret stair and the full-height porch dated 1672. Elaborate surviving door surrounds (Fig. 5), doors and door fittings throughout were probably installed at this time. Weston Farm was still thatched when it was recorded in *Country Life* in September 1949. The attached Dairy Cottage probably dates from the early/mid-17th century and the nearby Chapel Cottage (Fig. 6) was originally the late-medieval chapel to the manor house.



Fig. 3 Weston Farm, Wambrook, ceiling of first floor chamber; photograph John Rickard



Fig. 4 Weston Farm, Wambrook, one of four ceiling panels in ground floor room; photograph John Rickard



Fig. 5 Weston Farm, Wambrook, door jamb; photograph John Rickard



Fig. 6 Chapel Cottage, Weston Farm, Wambrook, ceiling; photograph John Rickard

Williton, Long Street, No. 33, Arden Cottage ST 079412 (Fig. 7)

The surviving evidence indicates that this was a single-storey open-hall house, as there is smoke blackening of the presumed true-cruck roof and as this is earlier than the west end a date in the 14th/15th century is suggested. The jointed-cruck truss at the west end can be dated to the 15th/16th century by comparison with similar examples which have been subject to tree-ring dating. The limited amount of smoke blackening in the roof suggested that this part was added, perhaps as a byre, while the hall remained open. The details of the beams indicate that the upper floors were inserted in the early 17th century. At the same time a large fireplace at the west end was installed with a corn-drying kiln and oven. The north wing was added in the 18th century and a large oven was inserted in the former kiln. Its size indicates that this was for a commercial bakery, which necessitated the re-positioning of the kitchen in the north wing. Major work was undertaken in the early 19th century and a further rear extension added in the 1920s.



Fig. 7 Arden Cottage, Long Street, Williton; photograph Paul Upton

The following buildings in the parish of Combe St Nicholas have been recorded and will be published in more detail in due course. The surveying of other houses in the parish will continue in the coming year.

Clayhanger, The Old Farmhouse ST 317114

Datable evidence is sparse, but it is conjectured that the house was built in two main phases. In the early 17th century the front range comprised a kitchen, cross-passage, hall and inner room. Traces of decorative plasterwork of *c.* 1610 survive in the chamber over the inner room. The front walls and

roof were raised and a wing added in the late 17th or early 18th century.

Clayhanger Farmhouse ST 318113

Fragmentary surviving evidence suggests that the earliest phase may have been a late-medieval open hall, but the absence of smoke blackening on the jointed cruck and other details indicate a mid/late 16th century date for the south range. The house then comprised the hall, inner room, cross-passage and kitchen/service room. It was remodelled in the 17th century when the walls and roof were raised and the north-west wing (probably a parlour with chamber over) added. The roof, formerly thatched, was rebuilt and clad in slate in the 19th century and the north-west wing added, probably as a dairy.

Combe Head, Smithy Croft ST 299115

The details of the beams and the wall thickness indicate a mid-17th century date. It appears to be of one build, comprised of a hall, inner room and kitchen, and the lobby-entry plan-form is unusual for Somerset.

Combe Head, Smithy Croft Cottage ST 299115

The limited evidence suggests that the house was built *c.* 1800 as two rooms in line, with a modern extension to the south

The Green, The Post Office ST 302113

The 1885 Ordnance Survey map indicates that then there was a long undivided building on the site. The present roof structure and the plan make it likely that the pre-1885 house was demolished and the present block with the adjoining house was built *c.* 1900.

Higher Wadeford, The Haymaker Public House ST 313105

The house was built in the early 19th century as a two-room central-entry plan. In the mid-19th century the roof was raised and the building extended to the east incorporating a barn. It has been an inn at least since 1841, as recorded in the census returns.

Higher Wadeford, Inshalla (formerly Rackstyle House) ST 312105

The 1885 Ordnance Survey map shows that the house was then in two parts: one house of two rooms and the other was a single unit. As a result of extensive alterations, no features of particular note survive.

Pudleigh, Ile Cottage ST 317107 (Fig. 8)

The limited evidence suggests a cob-built two-unit house dating from the late 16th or early 17th century. The house was extended in brick in the early 19th century.



Fig. 8 Ile Cottage, Combe St Nicholas, moulded beam removed during the raising of the ceiling height; photograph John Rickard

School Corner Cottage ST 302112

The house probably dates from the 16th century and originally comprised two units, hall and inner room, with an entry in the gable. Perhaps in the late 17th century the adjoining house, Brookside (not surveyed), was added and a new entry created. An oven and curing chamber may have been inserted at that time.

Wadeford, Court Mill Lane, Court Mill ST 312105

Originally built as a corn mill in the early 19th century, it was converted into a house in the 1960s. The mill leat was fed from the River Isle and the water wheel was sited alongside the east gable end.

Wadeford, Court Mill Lane, Court Mill House ST 312105

The house adjoins Court Mill and was built in the 18th century. A two-storey double-pile plan, originally it comprised a living-room/kitchen, parlour, storeroom and scullery.

Wadeford, Court Mill Lane, Mill Cottage ST 313106

The house is part of the complex of buildings associated with Court Mill. The roof structure and the plan-form make it likely that originally this was two houses dating from the 18th century. The larger house comprised a kitchen and parlour with a central entry. The smaller dwelling comprised a living-room/kitchen and service room. The house was still two properties at the time of the 1885 Ordnance Survey map.

Wadeford, Fforden ST 309106

The house dates from the mid-16th century, based on the details of beams and jointed-cruck trusses and the absence of smoke blackening. The original plan comprised an inner room, hall, cross-passage and two service rooms, probably buttery and dairy. Early in the 17th century the inner room was upgraded to become a parlour and the service rooms may have been converted into a kitchen with a large fireplace and stack. Later in the 17th century the house was extended to provide a bake-house with a large oven of commercial size. A wrought-iron mechanised spit-jack is attached to the bressumer in the hall.

Wadeford, Manor House ST 309105

The surviving features show that the development of this house is particularly complex. The first phase appears to date from the late 16th century on the evidence of the jointed-cruck trusses and absence of smoke blackening. Probably it comprised an inner room, hall, cross-passage and service room. The outshut may also date from this period. The house was upgraded c. 1600, which included the addition of the gabled front, the rebuilding of the service end, the provision of an improved kitchen with oven and curing chamber, the addition of a stair turret and the west wing (perhaps as a dairy and cheese room with cheese lofts over). In the mid-17th century the house was further remodelled. Renovation in the 1940s resulted in the removal of the stair turret and the installation of the present flight.

Wadeford, Mill Cottage ST 308106

The house was built probably c. 1800 and comprised a living room and small parlour with rooms over and a service outshut. Entry was directly into the living room.

Weston Farmhouse ST 292091

See above under Wambrook parish.

Willhayne House ST 311107

The variations in the roof details and the misalignment of the two 'halves' indicate that there are two periods of build, but it is not possible to determine whether the south end was built as an extension of the north or as a separate dwelling. The northern part was originally a two-bay open hall with an inner room. The jointed cruck truss in the southern part may date from the 16th/17th century, but could have been reused from elsewhere. Until the late 19th century the two halves were separate dwellings.