

SANHS Historic Buildings Group visit to
Little Wilscombe Farm and Raddington church
on Saturday 18th September 2021

It was a real pleasure for the Historic Buildings group of SANHS to get out into the countryside and look at buildings again. We were very grateful for Chris Chanter, with his many contacts for organising it, as it is located some considerable distance down a rather overgrown track.



Little Wilscombe Farmhouse

Photograph by John Page



Little Wilscombe Farm: The Tithe Map shows the farm in 1840.

The red building is the main farmhouse, and possibly long house. It is interesting to note that the lateral stack is not shown in this map. That does not mean that it was not there – only that it was not on the map. To the right of it are two farm cottages, which at one time were probably used as a cider house. Across on the opposite side – towards the bottom of the map, is the Linhay. The blue patch is the farm pond.

The current owner – Liz Kilbride - has lived in the farm for most of her life. The farm was bought by her father in the 1940s. He struggled hard all his life to make the farm pay for itself – only paying off the mortgage in his late 70s. The impossibility of gaining subsidies made it hard to compete with other farms. Although the farm had a water supply, there was little else. Electricity was provided by a generator which ran for two hours in the evening; all the washing, cleaning, and farming jobs that needed power were done at this time. Electricity finally came to the farm when Liz Kilbride and her siblings inherited the farm in about 2002. Liz Kilbride is an enterprising person and felt that the use of solar power was more appropriate than mains electricity. Although there is now mains power, much of the electricity is still supplied by solar power.

Life on the farm was very hard and everyone had to do their bit. As a school child, Liz had to walk a long distance to catch the bus to Taunton. There was no respite in the evening, as on her return it was one of her many jobs to keep the generator running in the evening.



The Linhay. This traditional farm building was in extremely poor condition a few years ago. The land at the rear of the building was pushing it forward and the whole thing was in danger of collapse. Liz's thoughtful and enterprising son made simple but effective repairs by removing the soil from the rear, and then supporting the building by building a breezeblock wall inside to support the roof. A very cost effective and simple repair. Photo by Lizzie Induni



The photograph on the left shows Liz Kilbride in the linhay. The breezeblock wall which supports the roof is on the right. The supported timber beam has a deep chamfer, plus a plain stop and run-out, which suggests it may be re-used from an earlier building. It is, however, only one of a number of similar beams in these buildings which appear to be 16th century. Liz Kilbride kindly showed us a listing of the former owners of the farm, which verifies its existence since at least that time. That would also be suggested by the lateral stack and the thick walls, some of which are 2' 6" deep.



Photos by Lizzie Induni



The range of buildings above were probably used as farm cottages, though an earlier map shows the buildings used as a cider house. Photo by Lizzie Induni



Liz has very sensibly chosen to create a vegetable garden where there is most sun. Alongside are the solar panels, which double up as storage underneath. Photos by Lizzie Induni

The House

Because of the difficulties of inheritance, the main farmhouse has been split into two parts. We were invited in to look inside – always a real treat for old buildings enthusiasts. Liz and family have done a lot of repair work on the house. Initially the house vitally needed to be rewired and replumbed.



The Rayburn is inserted into the old fireplace. At the top left is the bread oven

In the photograph to the right, the original, probably jointed cruck which can be seen (next to Chris Jessop).





The photograph to the left shows the initials of earlier owners of the building, carved into the plank and muntin screen, which divides the cross passage. The initials are **I** and **H**



The photograph to the left shows an apotropaic burn mark, deliberately burned into the screen, possibly to bring good luck on the house.

Photos by Lizzie Induni



Some of our intrepid members, venturing down to Little Wilscombe Farm.

After lunch at the Bear in Wiveliscombe, we paid a visit to Raddington church, which proved even more difficult to find than the farm. Nonetheless we were able to meet up with Liz Cheadle. Liz had worked on the conservation of the wooden road screen at Raddington and was able to talk to us about the techniques and materials used for the original painting.



Raddington is an unusual church as it is only accessible through a field.

Photos by Lizzie Induni



Liz Cheadle explaining about the conservation of the wallpaintings.

This is an extract from *Bond and Camm Screen Work* in the county of Somerset, 1909:

The rood screen is very interesting being of the earliest perpendicular work. It is of 5 divisions, three of which (ie the door way and the two lights on the north) retain their tracery heads which exhibit arched fenestration set in a rectangular frame work. The southside is nothing but a skeleton, one light being gutted by the reading pew and the other for the pulpit approach. The front of the reading desk is dated 1713, incised like Jacobean work. The rood loft stairs are gone, the recess which once contained them now used for a window to light the pulpit.



The remarkable hinge of the main door at Raddington church. Photo by John Page

The medieval floor tiles at Raddington. Photo by John Page



The excursions to both Raddington church and Little Wilscombe were a great success and enjoyed by all.

It is hoped that (Covid willing) the Historic Buildings Group can have another excursion soon to see some of the fascinating buildings of Somerset.

Lizzie Induni
October 2021