

SOMERSET VERNACULAR BUILDING RESEARCH GROUP

Survey summary for 2006

Documentary research and the recording of buildings for the survey of Combe St Nicholas are nearing completion and work has begun on the proposed publication. This will be the tenth in the series of village surveys begun by SVBRG in 1982. Already preliminary arrangements are underway for the survey of another village. On a smaller scale, a selection of buildings in Blagdon have been recorded at the request of the local history society as a contribution to one of their publications. Although the focus of work has been on Combe St Nicholas, individual buildings in other parts of the county have also been surveyed. For example, the complex and enigmatic Court Farm at Portishead, which has been in the ownership of Bristol Corporation since 1616. As in previous years, the National Trust has asked SVBRG to report on a number of its properties in Somerset. Copies of all SVBRG reports and survey drawings have been deposited in the Somerset County Record Office and the National Monuments Record at Swindon. Once again, SVBRG is indebted to owners and occupiers for allowing access to their homes. The photographs illustrating this article were all taken by John Rickard.

Baltonsborough, Blackberry Farmhouse (formerly Martin Street Farm) ST544347

This is a two-unit central-entry house of one-and-a-half storey with additions on three sides. Originally it was single storey with the rooms open from the ground to the roof of four bays – the southern half being the hall and the northern half the ‘low-end’ service room. On the evidence of the arch-braced jointed-cruck trusses, a date in the 15th century is indicated (based on similar tree-ring-dated structures elsewhere in Somerset). The smoke-blackened roof extends over the northern (service) end and a fascinating detail is

the survival of wind-eyes, which helped to disperse the smoke (Fig. 1).



SVBRG has not previously recorded examples of these in Somerset and three survive here, two having their shutters still on the original pintles. However, the hall roof is not blackened, which indicates that either it was unheated or, more likely, that there had been a fireplace with a stack on the original south gable (since rebuilt). In *circa* 1600 the house was upgraded by the installation of a fireplace and stack in the kitchen, the framed ceiling over the hall, a staircase and first floors. At a later date, perhaps in the 17th century, the east front wall was rebuilt and the ‘workshop’ building added at the south end. Also the

lean-to may have been added on the west side as service rooms. A two-storey addition on the north gable was built in the 18th century.

Barton St David, Park Lane, Wilf’s Cottage ST543322

The plan is comprised of two units, formerly a hall and kitchen with a central cross-passage and an out-shut containing small service rooms. This plan and the details of the beams and the remnants of the earlier roof structure indicate a date in the mid-17th century. It was ‘modernised’ in the 18th century and divided into two dwellings, when the second stair was built and further service rooms added.

Blagdon, Church Street, Gilcombe House ST505586

The house is comprised of a two-storey main part with two one-and-a-half storey lean-to additions on the east and a single storey on the north gable (Fig. 2).



Originally, the house was a two-unit gable entry plan, one room being an unheated service room, dating from the 16th century. The house had an upper floor from the outset and would then have been one-and-a-half storey. In the early/ mid-17th century the

house was upgraded with a room, with an elaborate ceiling and a fireplace with a moulded bressumer (Fig. 3), added at the south end.



However, for reasons that are unclear, the west wall is misaligned with the existing building. The whole house was upgraded in the 18th century. Stairs were inserted and the upper floor was rearranged and the eaves and roof raised. The service rooms on the east side were probably added at this time as a kitchen, perhaps a bakery, and separate access to the servant quarters. (This house was also surveyed by E. H. D. Williams in 1982, who came to slightly different conclusions, but at that time did not have access to the roof.)

Blagdon, Church Street, Hannah More House ST506588

The house is roughly square in plan and originally was one-and-a-half storey with central entry, of two units, hall and kitchen, and at the rear a service room and possible parlour. It was probably built in the early 17th century. During the mid-20th century the house was altered. The roof was raised and new first-floor windows inserted, and the principal entry was moved from the south side to the west end.

Blagdon, Garston Lane, Walnut Tree House ST503593

The house is two storeys, four units with additions (Fig. 4).



It was originally based on a two-unit plan with entry directly into the living room, and two unusually large service rooms. The stair is of solid baulk construction and its position

is uncommon, but known from a few other examples in Somerset (Fig. 5).



The details suggest a date in the 17th century. The north extension was probably a stable built in the 18th century. In the 19th century, the house was divided into two and further alterations and additions made at that time. (This house was also surveyed by E. H. D. Williams in 1990.)

Blagdon, Park Lane, New Inn ST50555895

The building is comprised of three in-line elements, divided by chimney stacks, to which have been added various outbuildings and extensions (Fig. 6).



The original unit at the north end appears to have been a simple one-and-a-half storey dwelling with a single ground-floor room. On the limited evidence it seems to date from the early 17th century. The next part appears to have been built as two storeys from the outset, with two

ground-floor rooms. Although much altered, this appears to date from the mid/late 17th century. The last main part at the southern end was built as a two-storey single-room cottage, probably dating from the 18th century. Owing to so many later changes, it is not entirely clear what the function and interrelation of each unit was.

Blagdon, Park Lane, Park House ST305590

The present two-storey house is a complex amalgam of part of a late-medieval house and, at a lower level, an early 18th-century house with lean-to additions. Details of the fireplace and framed ceiling in one room at the south end indicate that this was probably the hall of a good quality late 15th century house of which nothing else remains. If correct, then the rest of the house would have been aligned east-west parallel to the contour. A two-storey, early 18th century, two-unit, central-entry house, comprising parlour and kitchen, was added at a lower level to the remnant of the earlier building. The tie-beam roof covers the whole building including the late-medieval part. The date 1705 inscribed on the front is likely to be correct. Lean-to extensions on the west side were

added as service rooms in the mid-19th century, and another lean-to at the south end was probably built in the early 20th century.

Blagdon, Park Lane, The Old Saddlery ST50555895

The house has an almost square plan of double-pile form (Fig. 7).



The thickness of the west wall and the slightly wider west range suggests that it is the earlier part, probably of the late 17th or early 18th century. Originally this would have comprised two units divided by a partition. The door opened directly into the living room and the smaller part

would have been an unheated service room. Possibly in the mid-18th century, the east range was added, perhaps replacing a lean-to extension. The date stone of 1727 on the south-west chimney stack cannot be *in situ* as the original building was unheated at that end. It may have been relocated when the house was enlarged.

Blagdon, Station Road, Court Farmhouse ST503592

The house is two storeys with four units in line together with a staircase turret and a part-storied east wing (Fig. 8).



The original house was one-and-a-half storey comprising hall and inner room with two chambers over. The common-rafter roof and the details of framed ceiling, beams, etc. indicate an early 16th century date. This plan form including a central stair turret has been found

elsewhere in north Somerset (Fig. 9).



The northern part, approximately the same size, was added in the mid-17th century. A large kitchen wing, including a curing chamber, was added late in the century, probably to provide extra service for the northern addition. The house is no longer a farm and the farm buildings have been converted into housing.

Buckland St Mary (formerly Combe St Nicholas), Higher Beeton Farm ST278121

Datable evidence is sparse, but the plan form and variations in wall thickness indicate a number of periods of build. Originally, *circa* 1600, the house comprised hall and inner room, probably unheated, with entry in the gable end. The low-end – cross-passage, kitchen and parlour – is unusually long and may have been an addition or re-building and lengthening of an earlier range. Based on the details this is probably 18th century. The house was divided into two (which it remains) in 1804 and internal alterations were made. The roof was clad and service rooms, probably a dairy and cheese-room, added.

Buckland St Mary, Newtown, Cloud Cottage ST276128

In the 18th and 19th centuries, the hamlet of Newtown contained a number of wheelwrights and smiths workshops (recorded in the Somerset Industrial Archaeology Society *Bulletin*, No. 78, August 1998). Cloud Cottage originally comprised a room with room over and a small service room, probably under a lean-to roof. On the evidence of the roof structure it probably dates from *circa* 1800. In the mid-19th century the west end was raised to provide an additional bedroom. The property was in joint ownership with the nearby smithy in the 19th century and its history is described and illustrated in the *SIAS Bulletin*. The smithy is over the parish boundary in Combe St Nicholas (see below).

Buckland St Mary, Newtown, Dunn's Castle ST276130

The plan is three rooms in line with an out-shut at the rear under a lean-to roof. On the evidence of construction details the core of the house dates from the early 17th century (Fig. 10).



At that time there appears to have been no cross-passage or a substantial fireplace for a kitchen, so the house probably comprised a living room, parlour (perhaps unheated) and a stair turret in the out-shut giving access to the chambers over. In the late 18th century, a room

to the north was added with adjoining service rooms. At this time it appears to have been divided into two dwellings.

Clatworthy, White's Farm ST046138

The house is comprised of three rooms in line with a dairy on the north side under a cat-slide roof. Originally it was probably one unit, possibly with a service room on the north side and the details of the beams indicate a mid-17th century date. A further room was added to the west and a farm building to the east in the 18th century. The dairy was added sometime after the Tithe Map was produced in 1837. The house was still thatched in the 1930s. The adjoining farm buildings also date from the 19th century.

Combe St Nicholas, Eleigh Water, Moor Cottage ST332113

The original building probably dates from the early 19th century and was a 'two up two down' dwelling with central entry. Later it was extended with a lean-to addition.

Combe St Nicholas, Ham Farm ST295137

The farmstead is in an isolated location and the property was part of the estates of the Dean and Chapter of Wells Cathedral. The farmhouse, which dates from the early/mid-17th century, originally comprised kitchen, cross-passage, hall and inner room with chambers over including attic rooms. It was probably occupied by someone of yeoman status. The date of 1787 inscribed on the front door indicates that the house was refurbished at that time. Formerly there was a lean-to addition at the rear, probably a service room and dairy/cheese room. The surviving oven is dated 1851, presumably the period when this addition was built. Two major farm buildings survive – a byre and another which may earlier have had a domestic use.

Combe St Nicholas, Newtown, The Old Smithy ST276128

The plan is comprised of two rooms, a living room with direct entry and an unheated service room. A barn (now integral with the house) is attached to the east gable and workshops are attached at the west end. The details of the roof structure suggest a date of *circa* 1800. In the 19th century, the smithy was in joint ownership with nearby Cloud Cottage, Buckland St Mary (see above) and its history is described and illustrated in the Somerset Industrial Archaeology Society *Bulletin*, No. 78, August 1998.

Combe St Nicholas, Pole Rue Farmhouse ST296115

The house is two-storeys, now one main room orientated east-west with substantial two-storey additions on the north and south. The fireplace and stack may be the remnant of a house dating from the 17th century. However, the evidence of the roof structure suggests that by the 18th century it comprised two units – a principal room and an unheated service room. It has since been extensively altered and additions were built in the 20th century.

Combe St Nicholas, Sticklepath, Slades Cross ST304122

The house, of one-and-a-half storeys, is two rooms in line with a modern addition at the west gable. The plan indicates that it was developed in two halves: the first, east unit was probably built at the end of the 18th century and comprised a living-room and service room with bedrooms over. Access was directly into the living room. A second unit was added to the west in the mid 19th century and had a similar plan. The two parts were amalgamated in the 20th century.

Combe St Nicholas, Wadeford, Burnside ST309107

Originally this property was owned by the Dean and Chapter of Wells and sold in 1794. It stands adjacent to Wadeford Mill. The house is two storeys and the oldest part, the north-south range, appears to date from the 18th century (Fig 11).



Whether it was built as a dwelling or part of the mill complex is unclear. It lacks a large kitchen fireplace, but this might have been at the south end, which has been rebuilt. Later in the 18th century the east-west range was added. Part at the rear was probably enlarged in the early 19th

century to incorporate a new flight of stairs – indicated by the gothic style of the window and stair. A further addition at the north-west was made in the late 19th or early 20th century.

Combe St Nicholas, Wadeford, Islebrook Cottage ST312107

A house of two rooms with entry directly into the living room and a small out-shut to the rear was built in the late 18th century. In the late 19th century, a house of identical plan was built adjoining to the west and the two were converted into one in the 20th century.

Combe St Nicholas, Whiteway Lane, Whiteway Cottage ST306112

The plan is essentially a rectangular two-storey building of two rooms to which have added two single-storey constructions. The original symmetrical ‘two up two down’ form appears to date from the late 18th or early 19th century. Documentary evidence for the house first appears in the 1813 Terrier. Later the house was extended to the south and the stairs relocated. It was further enlarged in the 20th century.

Dunster, Dunster Castle Stables ST992435

In his monograph on the *British Stable* (2004) Giles Worsley described Dunster as “Perhaps the earliest ... and most important surviving stables built for George Luttrell by William Arnold ... in about 1617”. However, this early date has been disputed by others. SVBRG were asked by the National Trust to survey this building, which is built of local rubble stone and the entire roof structure is comprised of collar-trusses. The outstanding feature is its complete interior with all the original stalls in place (Fig. 12).



From the survey of the roof, windows and other details it was possible to confirm an early 17th century date.

Dunster, West Street, No. 7 ST990434

The house is one of a terrace with access directly from the street and backing onto the grounds of Dunster Castle. Dating probably from the 17th century, it is comprised of an entrance hall, a second room at the front and a room in the rear wing and a stair turret in the angle between. It is suggested that originally it was two units with entry into a service room, the adjoining hall possibly heated by a fireplace at the front with a lateral stack. The cross-passage gave access to a yard, maybe shared with the adjacent house. The wing may then have been two units, single-storey with a loft over – possibly a separate dwelling or a non-domestic building (e.g. store or stable). The house was extensively altered in the 20th century.

Long Ashton, Bridge Farm ST550700

The house (now divided into two dwellings) is comprised of a principal two-storey range lying east-west and a two-storey wing projecting at the north-west. The original building appears to have consisted of a parlour and kitchen, both heated, an unheated lobby, behind which was a service room. This plan-form is found in houses known to date from the mid-17th century. The large curing chamber is also characteristic of this period. The two-storey wing to the north appears to have been the next adaptation, closely followed by an adjacent single-storey unit. In the early to mid-18th century, the house was extended to the east with a uniform roof constructed over the whole main range. A late 20th century two-storey extension at the east end replaced a lean-to with a dairy or cheese room. The location of the farm close to Lower Court suggests that it might once have been part of the minor manor of Ashton Phillips.

Long Sutton, Upton, Langport Road, Upton Bridge Cottage ST45872630

The house is two storeys and two units, central cross-passage and a lean-to on the west gable. This is an unusual plan-form, very few examples having been found in Somerset. Significant differences in detail between the two halves point to at least two major phases of development. The eastern ‘half’ appears to date from the 16th century. It is likely that it was the hall of a house which included the cross-passage and service end (perhaps then even smaller). In the first half of the 17th century, the whole of the south front was rebuilt or re-fenestrated and included the upgrading of the low-end with a well-appointed kitchen

and service room. The stairs were probably replaced at this time. An out-building was added at the east end in the 18th century, but there is no indication of its purpose.

Portishead, Church Road South, Court Farm ST467760

This is an important and complex house, where historical research is continuing. Interestingly, it was acquired in 1616 by Bristol Corporation who are still the owners. The Corporation revived manorial court sittings in some style in 1624, possibly in this house. The plan is comprised of two main parts, to the east, an L-shaped unit of two storeys (Fig. 13)



and, to the west, a larger unit of two storeys and attic, with a two-storey porch on the

south elevation (Fig. 14).



The eastern unit is almost certainly 15th century, originally perhaps three rooms with a cross-passage and a lateral stack. The absence of smoke-blackening of the decorative arch-braced collar roof

with wind-braces and cornice suggest that the upper floor existed from the outset. Further alterations took place in the 16th and 17th centuries. Regarding the western unit, the style of the roof structure and the details suggest a date in the early 17th century. For example, the use of convergent stops on moulded beams is found in Gloucestershire from the early 17th century, but is not commonly found in Somerset.

The proportions and details of this part, particularly the ceiling heights, suggest that it was not erected as a domestic dwelling. Thus it might be inferred that the builders were Bristol Corporation, who it is recorded had a grand opening in 1624. A hexagonal tower is attached to the south-west corner, built later in the 17th century. The date 1751 below the attic stairs indicates that alterations or repairs took place at that time.

Rimpton, Home Farm Lane, Old Farm House ST60482192

The house is two storeys, three rooms in line with a north-west wing and lean-to additions. It has been substantially altered so that the phased development outlined is subject to conjecture, based on comparison with other Somerset houses of the period. The original house was probably of one-and-a-half storey comprised of three units in line – a heated service room, cross-passage, hall and unheated inner room. The framed ceiling

indicates that it was built *circa* 1500. Probably in the late 17th century, it was upgraded, with the west end being rebuilt. The north-west wing became a dairy with chamber over and the inner room became a parlour. In the early 19th century, the kitchen was converted into a second parlour and the hall became the kitchen. The south front was re-fenestrated. At some time, probably *circa* 1900 the house took its present form, with the lean-to added and further internal alterations.

Stogursey, High Street, No. 28 ST323429

The original house probably comprised a hall and unheated service room, the latter perhaps without an upper floor. The details of beams and the bressumer suggest a date of *circa* 1500. The details of the roof trusses indicate that the house was re-roofed *circa* 1800. At some time in the 19th century, it is said to have become part of the much larger adjoining Stoke House, when the stable in the yard at the rear was built. It is thought to have been occupied by a groom with part being used as a harness and tack room.

Wiveliscombe, Ford, Ford Lodge ST092287

The original house appears to have been based on a two-room plan, with central entry, and rooms and attic above. This dates probably from the mid 18th century. Later in the century, a two-room lean-to was added at the rear, built at a lower level because of the falling ground. The front of the house was extended and completely remodelled in the 1820s to form the symmetrical, plain classical front seen today.