

# 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](http://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,

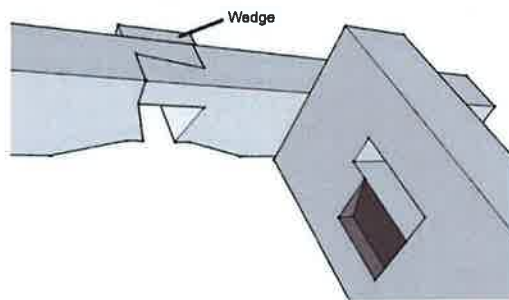


*Fig. 1 Clevedon, Dowlais Farm, south frontage*

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 outshot. 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*