

# BUILDING RECORDING IN 2018

SOMERSET VERNACULAR BUILDING RESEARCH GROUP

SVBRG has had another interesting year surveying across the county but especially in the parish of Kingsbury Episcopi, increasing the number of surveyed properties there to 33, and in our new venture the settlements of Bowlish, Ham and Darshill to the west of Shepton Mallet where we have surveyed four properties. Both parishes are very different; the former an agricultural settlement partly dependent on the River Parrett and the latter a former industrial one on the banks of the tumbling, mill-driving River Sheppey. We are very grateful to those who 'open doors' in these communities. Both parishes will contribute to our understanding of vernacular buildings, their reuse, occupants and settlement evolution in historic Somerset. We have also ventured far west to examine a spectacular jointed cruck construction at Doniford and into the south east to be delighted by the discovery of a church house at Milborne Port.

Our deskbound activities include responding to queries from as far afield as Canada, assisting university students with their studies, and working with experts in their given field. We are also very pleased to have been able to assist Little Moreton Hall, Cheshire (NT) with the identification of numerous, identical apotropaic marks found there, now known and published as the 'Moreton Web'.

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 South West 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.

*Photographs by John Rickard (Figs 1, 3-5, 8-12, 14-15), Christopher Baggott (Fig. 16), Fergus Dowding (Fig. 13) and Dave Taylor (Figs 2, 7)*

## **1. East Coker, North Coker, Chantry House. ST 53891 13163**

A three-room listed property of two storeys with an attached one-and-a-half-storey unit to the east. A single-storey lean-to on the south elevation contains two further rooms. All are under roofs of double

Roman clay tiles. The walls of local rubble stone, around 0.64m thick, have dressed quoins.

The original build, probably early 17th century, was the two-storey range. A central entry-cum-service room between a kitchen/living room with large inglenook fireplace and oven set against an original east gable wall to the east and a heated parlour to the west. The central service room offered a cool north side for food preparation and storage. Hollow chamfered mullioned windows on the south elevation, beam shape and stops and tie-beam construction in the roof all substantiate this date. The original roof was probably supported on five trusses and replaced by the present three-truss roof in the mid-20th century.

In the mid to late 18th century the unit to the east was added and minor changes made including the reduction of the kitchen fireplace.

In the mid-19th century the lean-to was added, and a Troyte-Bullock coat of arms added to the west gable (Fig. 1), possibly reflecting the building of North Coker House and the acquisition of this property by the same family.

The immediate locality is recorded in censuses as 'Chantry' but there is no evidence that such a building stood on this site; indeed eleven labourers' households are recorded here in 1851.

## **2. Isle Abbots, Pitts Cottage. ST 35686 20793**

A listed building with date stone of 1583. Constructed as a whole in blue lias stone it has a three-unit, cross-passage plan. It was part of the Muchelney Abbey estate until the Dissolution when it passed to the Earl of Hertford; it was acquired by the Duchy of Cornwall in 1862 and is now in private ownership.

Previously recorded in 1974 (Williams) and 1987 (SVBRG), conservation work has revealed more detail:

The elm roof structure is supported on five, long, tenon jointed crucks, sequentially numbered. The trusses at each end are closed (i.e. infilled). The roof has significant smoke blackening, and the collars, at first-floor ceiling height, are slightly cambered.

An early 16th-century date of build for the original open hall house with first-floor solaris at each end is suggested by the location of the smoke blackening and carpentry details. A smoke hood exists against the west gable and possibly dates from this period. There



*Fig. 1 East Coker, North Coker, Chantry House,  
Troyte-Bullock coat of arms on west gable*



*Fig. 2 Isle Abbots, Pitts Cottage,  
Painted decoration on fireplace lintel*

is evidence for a corn drier at the west end, similar to one at Trowell Farmhouse, Chipstable, also owned by Machelney Abbey.

A second phase is likely to accord with the date stone of 1583, the year when a John Pitt was born; it was possibly an investment by his father to mark this occasion. The property was upgraded; the central and a west gable fireplace were inserted as were the framed ceilings, one over the open hall. The central fireplace, backing on to the cross passage, is notable for its original floral painted decoration below a brick-like banded motif (Fig. 2). The painting itself has apotropaic marks scratched into it – the Marian mark ‘VV’ (virgo virginum) and a hexafoil (daisywheel).

### **3. Kingsbury Episcopi, Kingsbury, Doke House. ST 43325 21136**

A listed building with an original two room (kitchen-cum-living room and unheated parlour) and cross passage range plus a single-storey, modern rear extension. It appears on the Wyndham Estate Map of 1824.

Once built of roughly coursed local lias stone, walls 0.6m thick, the front elevation is now Hamstone ashlar on a metre high lias plinth whilst the west gable is entirely of brick (Fig. 3). The roof is of double Roman clay tiles with cockscomb ridge tiles laid between raised and coped gables, indicating former thatch. It is now supported on three reworked elm trusses, two of which were formerly the upper elements of jointed crucks. One is smoke blackened suggesting an original smoke bay at the eastern

gable. Jointed crucks and trenched purlins indicate an original mid-16th-century build.

In the mid-17th century the dwelling was re-fronted in Hamstone and the roof converted to collar trusses. The smoke bay at the east gable was replaced by an inglenook fireplace with Hamstone jambs and an adjacent newel stair, complete with a Hamstone stair light.

Window openings in the rebuilt brick west gable are of a mid-19th-century style and the nine-cell elm framed ceiling in this room may date from this period; the occupant at that time was a carpenter.

In the mid-20th century the stairway was relocated, and a new room constructed internally, taking space from the passage and the parlour. An addition at the rear of the house is shown on the 1903 OS Map.

### **4. Kingsbury Episcopi, New Cross, New Cross Farm. ST 41675 19127**

This classically styled listed house is square in plan, built in brick and clad in Hamstone ashlar with a pillared portico over the front entrance and built to a high standard ‘all of a piece’ (Fig. 4). A broad string-course separates the upper and lower floors, with a decorative cornice and parapet hiding the flat roof. The windows are symmetrically arranged, mainly six over six sashes, many with foldaway shutters. There are blind windows on the east and west walls. The two front ‘family rooms’ are separated by a central entrance hall that leads into the stair hall, two floors high and lit by an oval window in the roof. The other five rooms





*Fig. 3 Kingsbury Episcopi, Kingsbury, Doke House, Front elevation with Hamstone walling on lias plinth*



*Fig. 4 Kingsbury Episcopi, New Cross, New Cross Farm, Classical front elevation and additional wing on west side*

were for servant and domestic use, a back stair served this area and also led to the cellar complex below.

The entire house had been relocated from South Petherton in 1825 when this site became part of the Portman Estate. A local farmer's diary recorded that *'This year Mr Nicolleys, S. Petherton sold E B Portman Esq a NEW House (lately built) for the sum of £700..... Mr Portman took down and built it at New Cross.'* It was occupied by the Portman Estate steward, George Parsons, an entrepreneur in farming mechanisation.

To the west and aligned with the rear of the main building is a narrower, lower two-storey wing added in the mid-19th century. The use of two fine, but unmatched, 17th-century fireplaces and similarly dated two-light stone mullioned windows point to reuse from another building. To the rear a wider ground-floor window has been converted to a double-width door with steps down to the yard level. It is believed that the ground floor in this wing was not for domestic use but rather for farm processing.

At the rear of the house a broad set of external steps lead down from the yard to the extensive cellar.

#### **5. Kingsbury Episcopi, Thorney, Thorney Mill. ST 4286 2262**

The current mill is a listed property on the River Parrett dating from 1823 that continued to operate as a water-powered corn mill until about 1964. The site is likely to have been one of two in Kingsbury mentioned in the Domesday Book.

In 1777 (map evidence) the water wheel was located within in the building and there was also a horse engine house at the east end. The internal waterwheel was replaced in 1866 by a much larger (4.3m diam x 4.3m broad) wheel in an external wheelhouse set across the re-routed watercourse.

The site comprised a large L-shaped farmhouse and an attached barn. The 1843 Tithe apportionment records the site as 'Homestead, Mill, Brickworks and Garden'.

The mill, a rectangular industrial building constructed in coursed lias stone is three-storeys high with an attic floor (Fig. 5). The 34° pitched roof is supported on four tie-beam trusses positioned in line with the main floor beams. The floors were all 'open' and connected by enclosed straight flights of stairs situated against the west gable wall. Details of the mill machinery, provided by Martin Watts, are included in the survey report. In 1875 the mill was described as having 'working four stones'. In 1964 the upper floors of the mill were altered for domestic occupation which included the installation of a water turbine, now removed, to generate electricity.



*Fig. 5 Kingsbury Episcopi, Thorney, Thorney Mill, View across the R. Parrett showing external wheelhouse*

#### **6. Limington, Draycott Farm Barns. ST 55924 21533**

A single-storey range of farm buildings with five phases of build dating from the Agricultural Revolution, c. 1800 (Fig. 6). The two-storey principal barn, in the centre of the range, was built of coursed and squared local lias stone. Tie-beam and collar trusses support the probably half-hipped roof. It would have been variously used for the storage of high value grain and pulses.

By the mid-19th century the ground floor was fitted out with stabling for large cart horses necessitating the erection of another two-storey barn to the south. This is on a 1.2m high lias plinth with handmade brick above, brick being preferred for the storage of grain in sacks. By 1903 (OS Map) a small engine house lean-to was erected against the brick barn's eastern wall. A single-storey cart shed continued the range southwards, and to the north of the original barn lies another extension, shown on the 1887 OS Map, now of concrete block construction. All but the cart shed are under corrugated asbestos roofs.

#### **7. Milborne Port, 14-17 High Street. ST 67615 18612**

This two-storey building now appears as a terrace of four properties under a continuous pitched roof with two 20th-century gabled extensions on the south side. The rubble-built walls are 0.76m thick at waist height, and internally battered.





*Fig. 6 Limington, Draycott Farm Barns, Stone and brick barns viewed from the south west*

The western dwelling (No. 17) has a six-cell framed ceiling comprised of beams which have large flat chamfers; the framing continues into the adjacent property.

The roof, now showing multiple stages of repairs, is constructed of oak arch-braced collar trusses with a pitch of 50° (Fig. 7a). The principals meet with a plain tenon joint at the pierced apex. The trestle-sawn collars are slightly cambered and supported by moulded, open arch braces meeting at the centre of the span. The two tiers of moulded purlins house wind-bracing (Fig. 7b). This is clearly a roof structure that was meant to be seen and is free of smoke blackening, suggesting a purpose-built first floor hall. Jamb stones and the roughly broken doorstep of a blocked first-floor doorway in the south wall identify an earlier external access. The present doors and windows are of modern design and material but a remaining timber window frame with a diagonal chamfer stop of 15th-century style remains. All the current fireplaces are later insertions.

The first phase of building dates from the 15th century or early 16th century. The proximity of this large first-floor hall building to the church and documentary records strongly suggest that this was the church house. Church houses usually had a large first-floor hall with external access; if heated it might be by one or two fireplaces set on the long walls of the building. The ground floor could be used for brewing, storage and often had a private room for meetings (cf No 17). They tended to be located close to the churchyard and were built by a benefactor or by the parishioners and were administered by the Churchwardens. In this instance there is a possibility that the building was paid for by the Commonalty, the local Trades Guild.

#### **8. Pilton, Upper Westholme Farm. ST 57446 40938**

Only the main range of this listed complex was surveyed: three rooms and a former cross passage, plus a two-room rear lean-to that partially encloses a stair turret. The range is of one-and-a-half storeys built of local, uncoursed lias stone now under a roof of double Roman clay tiles (Fig. 8a). Wall thicknesses are about 0.75m, but are 0.8m at the west end where the upper floor and gable are jettied out on stone corbels. All one construction, it is possible that this building was a 'longhouse', a two-unit dwelling (hall and unheated inner room) separated by the passageway from cattle/storage at the unheated end where some windows were unglazed. The lack of an obvious food preparation area suggests a detached kitchen.

Once part of the Glastonbury Abbey estate, the main features of the house, particularly the arch-braced roof and the frame ceilings (Fig. 8b), point to a construction in the second half of the 15th century. The absence of smoke blackening of the roof confirms that it was built with a hall fireplace and chimney. The floor above the hall has a fireplace opening into this chimney and is probably original, heating a room that was open to the roof exposing the arch-braced collar trusses, deep cambered collars and wind braces. Extant detail in the property suggests high status: two framed ceilings, one of nine and the other of twelve panels, both beautifully, but differently, moulded. Doulling stone and Hamstone four-centre headed doorways with security bar slots in the jambs gave entry to the passage and dwelling and the winder stair in the turret was accessed from the hall via a



*Fig. 7a Milborne Port, 14-17 High Street, The west end of the high quality arch- and wind-braced roof*



*Fig. 7b Milborne Port, 14-17 High Street, Detail of the purlins and wind braces, also empty arch-brace mortices*





*Fig. 8a Pilton, Upper Westholme Farm, Stone-jettied west gable*



*Fig. 8b Pilton, Upper Westholme Farm, Roof in the domestic end of the house*



*Fig. 9 Shepton Mallet, Ham, Cleavers, Old and new mullioned windows on west elevation*

four-centred arch wooden doorway.

Alterations in the 18th century may have included the lean-to structures and some re-fenestration. In the 19th century a fireplace and oven was inserted in the unheated inner room, and the first floor at the west end was converted to sleeping accommodation.

#### **9. Shepton Mallet, Ham, Cleavers (formerly in Pilton). ST 60969 44057**

The 1839 Tithe Map shows this listed property, built of local rubble stone with Hamstone dressings, as a non-residential building belonging to Ham Manor Farm.

The property has evolved as a series of in-line elements on a sloping site mostly under a continuous roof from a full height two-storey structure at the south gable, and with changes in ground and first-floor levels to accommodate the slope (Fig. 9). The beams and the carpentry in the southern end of the roof reflect former non-domestic origins and suggest an original build date of late 16th century or early 17th century.

The farm was sold in the 1920s and planning permission for conversion to a dwelling was obtained in 1937. Use of 17th-century style mullioned windows, some original to the period, gives the house its 'old' appearance (Fig. 9).

#### **10. Shepton Mallet, Ham, Ham Manor (formerly in Pilton). ST 6099 4407**

This listed property comprises a two-storey main range (Fig. 10) linked by a single-storey unit to a two-

storey building set at right angles on the western side; there is a single-storey extension at the rear of the main range. All are built of local rubble stone, but the front elevation of the main range has been rendered and lined to create the appearance of ashlar. All roofs are clad with clay pantiles. Four phases of evolution are evident.

The main range, originally two principal rooms separated by a central entrance and service room, was probably built in the mid-17th century. The walls are c. 0.8m thick; the windows have ovolo mullions and hood moulds; the beams have slightly concave chamfers. The double thickness oak planked front door is hung on long strap hinges.

Modernisation occurred in the mid-18th century when panelled rooms and high ceilings became fashionable. The floor of the east room, the parlour, was lowered, sash windows and panelling inserted, and a fireplace, repositioned from the gable, installed with a new stack backing onto (and reducing the width of) the entrance hall. By the early 19th century the rear extension was in place, and later a new roof was constructed with king-post trusses over the main range.

The west range was probably an 18th-century non-domestic, working building cum storage barn. The walls of the south gable have been significantly raised and house a pigeon roost at eaves level with a circular window above. Other windows are an assortment of stone mullioned windows with ovolo or hollow mouldings. The roof is supported on two oak collar trusses with a natural camber to the collar. In the late 19th century the wide hearth was replaced with a small range and a large baking





*Fig. 10 Shepton Mallet, Ham, Ham Manor; South elevation showing the three elements of the house*



*Fig. 11 Shepton Mallet, Ham, Old Manor; left-hand door is 15th century, right-hand door is 19th century Mullioned windows inserted*

oven; a drying chamber, now housing a spiral staircase, remains partially. Linking the two domestic ranges is a former dairy, now the kitchen.

#### **11. Shepton Mallet, Ham, Old Manor (formerly in Pilton). ST 60948 44000**

The house is a listed two-storey property with attics built of local limestone rubble with squared quoins (Fig. 11). It was formerly an unheated non-residential building - a barn. The main part was probably built in the mid-17th century as a barn/storehouse. The four-centred entry doorway may date from the late 16th century. An in-line, adjoining but originally unconnected, building was erected in the late 18th century, and in the mid-19th century there was another addition on the west side. Evidence for late 19th-century conversion to a dwelling can be seen in the stair window, the brick chimney stacks and the roof all creating a dwelling that gave the appearance of an old house with ovolo moulded mullioned windows.

No documentary evidence has yet been found for a 'manor' at Ham but prior to the Dissolution the site was part of the Pilton estate of Glastonbury Abbey, and the boundary walls with four-centred heads to the arched gateways suggest that something of interest was enclosed here. In 1929 a large fire consumed Ivy House;

this had stood within the walled plot only a few metres from the main building. The main building was clearly a dwelling at that time as can be seen in photographs of the burnt ruin, despite it being described as a store in a 1905 sales brochure.

#### **12. Shepton Mallet, Bowlish, Wells Road, Weirside (formerly in Pilton). ST 61019 43957**

This small, listed house backing onto the mill leat comprises a two-room main house (kitchen/living room and an unheated parlour) of two storeys and attic in height (Fig. 12). It is built from local rubble stone with squared quoins, and has two single-storey in-line extensions. Extremely steep newel stairs rise through to the attic.

The front elevation has windows symmetrically arranged and a central entrance door. The upper windows, front and gable, have hood moulds above stone bead-edged surrounds (Fig. 12); the ground floor has sash windows beneath timber lintels. The front door also has a stone bead-edged surround.

The roof construction points to a date in the first half of the 18th century, and other features (bead moulding, the six-panel front door and several hinges and latches) reinforce this date. In the early 19th century a kitchen was added as the first extension, the ground floor mullioned



*Fig. 12 Shepton Mallet, Bowlish, Wells Road, Weirside, Hood moulds over 18<sup>th</sup>-century first-floor windows*





*Fig. 13 South Petherton, 24 Silver Street, Kings Pleasure, House viewed from north east*

windows were changed to sash windows, and a new chimney was inserted at the east gable providing heating to both floors. A rear ground-floor wall adjacent to the mill leat has been reinforced.

Hood moulds are commonly found on 15th- to 17th-century windows but seem to have an extended period of use or recycling along the Sheppey valley. This house is part of the Ham mill complex, and in the 1841 census it was shared between two households, seven people aged between three and 75 years, one family reflecting the occupations of this valley, cloth dying and silk weaving.

### **13. South Petherton, 24 Silver Street, Kings Pleasure. ST 43386 17034**

Formerly known as 24 Jogglers Hill, this is a listed building of two storeys constructed from coursed, well-cut and faced Hamstone and some local marl stone (Fig. 13). The plan is rectangular and suggests a three-unit cross passage build, perhaps of c. 1600, with later rear extensions. However, the walls to the east of the cross passage are thinner, at 0.5m, suggesting a rebuild in c. 1800. An almost completely concealed post by the entry door may be the base of a cruck truss, a surviving remnant of a single-storey medieval open hall house constructed from cob.

Some windows have drip moulds with label returns and concave mullions; others are more recent introductions, perhaps dating from when the now double Roman clay-tiled roof was raised, by some 0.45m, and gable dormers added in the 20th century. There are apotropaic marks in the western jamb of the main entry door e.g. VV for the Virgin Mary.

### **14. Sparkford, Little Weston, The Dairy House. ST 62070 25581**

A listed property of two storeys and attic under a pitched roof of plain clay tiles, built of local lias stone. The ground floor comprises a large living area, once two rooms (heated hall and unheated inner room) and another room with cross way. A rear lean-to was built in three phases.

The original, early 17th-century building was a two-room gable entry house, a quality build as indicated by the regularity of the stonework and chamfered plinth, and internally by the framed ceiling, the chamfering of the attic timbers and a butterfly hinged wall safe. A plank and muntin partition once separated the two ground-floor rooms. Newel stairs rose from the hall through to the attic. The window mullions and entry doorframe are ovolo moulded, and the door hung on spear-headed strap hinges. The inglenook fireplace has



*Fig. 14 Sparkford, Little Weston, The Dairy House, Summer oven within the large inglenook*

a cambered lintel with inscribed initials and a solitary protective burn mark.

Early in the 18th century a single-storey extension was added on the south gable. This became the kitchen with a large fireplace incorporating an oven and a summer oven (Fig. 14); new doorways created a cross way against the original gable wall. A second floor was constructed above this in the late 18th century, part of the lean-to has similar stonework. The present staircase may date from this period. A fourth phase of development occurred in the late 19th century with the introduction of fireplaces on both floors at the north gable.

#### **15. Trull, Dipford, Boxen Hedge. ST 20324 21675**

This listed property has a plan of two rooms either side of an entrance hallway, a further in-line room to the west, two rear wings and a stair turret (Fig. 15). Wall thicknesses vary; some walls are of cob indicating a possible earlier building on site. Walls are rendered and colour-washed beneath a roof of asbestos slates,

possibly previously thatched.

Documents suggest a property on site from perhaps c. 1600; this would account for the cob walling. It was sold to a Taunton silversmith in 1798; the house was economically extended and developed, as the 1805 and 1843 maps show. The census of 1841 records it being a small boarding school.

Regency features can be noted: the Doric portico; the split six-panel entrance door with an elliptical fanlight; ceiling-to-floor sash windows in slender, unreinforced frames on the ground floor; ceilings 2.5m high, reflecting the late 18th-century fashion for high ceilings. Further improvements occurred in the late 19th century, primarily with the raising of the roof to incorporate taller first floor windows. Subsequent changes have been minor.

#### **16. Williton, Doniford, Doniford House. ST 08752 42984**

This irregular (listed) homestead of five ranges set around a central courtyard was previously reported on in 1978 and 1982 by Williams (Ref: DD/V/WIR/28/2), but his interpretations are now questioned because of details that have been exposed during recent refurbishment. Our report is not of a full survey but a re-evaluation of the fabric of the buildings to establish the likely development sequence of the homestead.

The north wing (wall thickness 0.7m) probably dates to the late 13th century or early 14th century. Its roof has evidence of extended cruck construction that is smoke blackened, indicating an open hall of perhaps of four bays. Of a similar date is the west wing, which has a remnant cruck roof truss and also an end cruck still in situ, neither of which are blackened. The upper floor of this building is supported on a low-set axial beam giving limited head room suggesting that the ground floor may have been for storage with sleeping accommodation above. At this period some homesteads were laid out as separate buildings and this may be such a place, with the north wing being the space for daily living and the west wing being a store-cum-chamber block with external stairs to sleeping quarters.

A south wing was added that comprised a hall and a parlour separated by a cross passage that led into the courtyard. The combination of five arch-braced jointed crucks, with posts extending to within 2.3m of the ground, and possibly three tiers of wind-bracing suggests an early 15th-century build for this, the main element of the complex. This date would be appropriate for the style and construction of the oak, four-centred arch head front door and the quatrefoil design on the imposing stone fireplace lintel. The hall was open to the roof whilst the room over the parlour was a private chamber or chapel complete with wagon



roof and accessed by a turret stair (Fig. 16).

In the mid-15th century a small two-storey building between the west and north wings was erected. An upper room with arch-brace trusses and three tiers of wind-braces suggest a high status room such as a guest chamber or private chapel.

The east wing (walls 0.6m thick) was built in the late 15th century or early 16th century; it features four jointed cruck cambered collar trusses with long tenon and flush soffit construction.

In the late 17th century a two-storey single unit was built to the west of the small mid-15th-century building. This was clearly an important addition because the ground floor ceiling was decorated with a plaster frieze identical to a dated frieze (1658) at a house a few miles away.

Since the building of the south wing it seems the cooking was conducted in the north wing and in the 17th century a new large fireplace was inserted there.

The main hall was ceiled probably in the 18th century and in the 19th century a lean-to corridor along the south side of the courtyard allowed direct access to stairs serving the upper floors.

In the 19th century the cooking was moved to the east wing and the north wing modified to non-domestic uses.



*16 Williton, Doniford, Doniford House, Door frame with pierced window at foot of solar stair turret*



*Fig. 15 Trull, Dipford, Boxen Hedge, Regency styling to the front elevation*