



A VIEW FROM THE RAFTERS

July 2020

No. 1



A visit to Grade I listed Acton Court, Iron Acton in 2009 (photo: Alyson Curtis)

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Editorial

A warm welcome to the very first edition of 'A View from the Rafters'. During lockdown a member suggested it would be fun to look back at old WBR newsletters and re-issue a few articles as an extra newsletter. This is to supplement regular members' Newsletters - we have produced 159 to date! Long-standing members, please forgive us if this is just history repeating itself, but we hope it might stir some happy memories. If you are not a WBR member we urge you to consider joining; fees are extremely modest, and your support will help us continue making a solid contribution to this field of study. Please also remember we carry out commissioned surveys for the public and professionals. We are always pleased to hear from anyone wanting to find out about the history of their house. The following articles are on random subjects, in no particular order. We would be delighted to receive your comments and contributions. **Alyson Curtis**

The Man at Barton Farm, Bradford-on-Avon (from no 125, Sept 2011)

Pam Slocombe found this amusing picture in Paul De'Ath's book 'Around Bradford-on-Avon'. (*The WBR AGM earlier in the year had passed through this very gate.*)



Farmer at Barton Farm c.1913. The man is dressed in a traditional West Country smock and is seen standing outside the porch of Barton Farm. The ornate gate is still in place to this day. The sender of the card has written to say that 'he looks like a maid: but he isn't, he is a useful member of society'. In fact he was most probably the milker at the farm and is holding the large bucket used to collect the milk.

- reader's feedback (from no 126, Jan 2012)

The photograph of the dairyman at Barton Farm, Bradford-on-Avon printed in the last issue moved Alan Wadsworth to write the following comment:

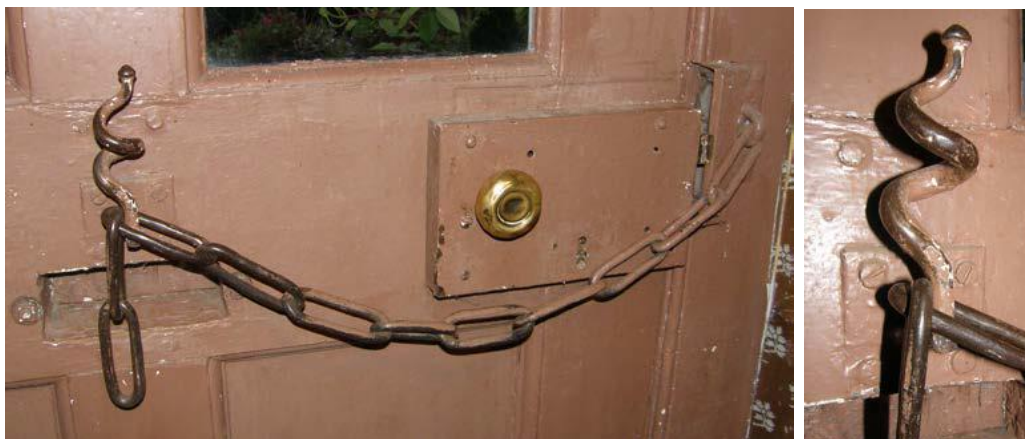
With regard to the "amusing" photograph of the dairyman, I believe that he appears as he does partly as a result of the fact that he is wearing a flat cap - which of course you turn round on your head through 180 degrees when milking cows by hand. This results in the peak of the cap being at the rear and the back of the cap at the front of your head - you can see the cap lining hanging out! Doing this allows you to tuck your head under the cow's rear leg when milking her. And why do you do that? So that the peak does not dig into the cow's

flank and more importantly, if she is going to kick you, you are able to sense the initial movement in her muscles and get out of the way before she makes contact with either you or the piggin (milk-pail) - I know - been there, done that!!

'Photos in 'Barton Farm-The Last Thousand Years' by Margaret Dobson & Gareth Slater, 2016 now suggest this was the farmer's son Ernest Chard, who took over the farm in 1930.'

Doing the 'Twist' (from no 126, Jan 2012)

One of the more unusual features we come across is this spiral pin in a Horningsham farmhouse. The first one we came across was in the old gaol in Bridewell Street, Devizes in October of last year and thought it might have held a torch angled away from the door, but here we find one still in use.



Spiral pin at a farmhouse in Horningsham

Pam Slocombe found mention of a payment made to a blacksmith for a 'twist' for a door in the vestry accounts of Whaddon, Hilperton in the C18.

Wiltshire Bread Ovens (from no 121, Sept 2010)



Bread oven at Castle Cottage, Lockeridge

Recently a dimensional survey was carried out at a cottage in Lockeridge in the upper Kennet Valley, for the current Dendrochronology Project. Included in a relevant gable wall was a bread oven.

On drawing up the survey, I looked through the record of bread ovens which I have surveyed over the years, only to find one of very similar dimensions, designs and materials. This one was at Marston near Potterne. So close was the detailing that I am now wondering if; a) they were built by the same builder who had a 'formula' for their design, or b) different builders used the same 'pattern' design. I have not known of any 'patterns' existing.

They were built entirely of brick, including a somewhat flat dome. They are of an 'egg' plan shape with a semi-circle at the opposite end to the opening, which is 420mm wide x 300 mm high. One had a metal door and frame whereas the other had evidence for one. On the metal door was the trade name 'Carron' - still in existence (kitchen sinks).

Clive Carter

Dendrochronology Project (from no 121, Sept 2010)

Work on the project is proceeding well and we are busy with the recording, report writing and the preparation of drawings for the dendrochronology reports. Clive Carter has demonstrated the full range of his drawing skills in producing some excellent sections, elevations and plans. Sally Thomson has joined us as historical researcher and has already proved herself to be equally competent with the production of two thorough and well-researched reports for two of the buildings.



***Manor Farm Barn,
Kingston Deverill.***

*A late medieval
thatched and timber-
framed barn, with
protective
corrugated covering
and east-facing cart
entrance.*



***Interior of the barn
showing the two
different truss types:***

*base crucks in the
centre
and
post and aisle
trusses at the north
and south ends.*

Staff from English Heritage have been helping us with the considerable task of producing the drawings for the dendro reports on Manor Farm Barn, Kingston Deverill.



Nigel Fradgley & Rebecca Lane of English Heritage, producing truss sections by EDM

This late medieval timber-framed barn appears to have been constructed in a single phase but uses two entirely separate truss types: base crucks and post and aisle, in a similar manner to the former barn at Cherhill, now demolished. The two techniques do, however, suit different agricultural operations within the same building and this is something we will report on further later on in the project. **Avis Lloyd, Project Officer**

Kingston Deverill; extracts from the account for a new barn, 1407-1408 (192/32/vii) (from no 137, Sep 2014)

Wiltshire Buildings Record's dendrochronology project dated this very early barn of mixed-truss construction to 1407-10.



Barn at Kingston Deverill. Photo: Alex Craven

Imagine the satisfaction when Alex Craven, assistant editor of the Wiltshire Victoria County History, discovered a document giving a great deal of detail about materials and where they were sourced from. It gives a fascinating insight into the process of barn-building and what a wide geographical area that men and materials were brought in from.

40 oak trees cut down in Bittele; and 15 more
4 oak trees cut down at Knoel (?Knoll) for the two main braces (crucks)
Stone for the wall under the sill around the grange, freestone from the quarry at Fontell (?Fonthill) for coping the same
4 'gross' of freestone for supporting the four principal braces (crucks) and freestone for the 8 posts within the grange and for the 'Boterasses (buttresses)'. Carriage of this stone from quarries at Penne (present day Penselwood in Somerset) and Fontell
1 mason dressing the 8 stones 8 holes (puteis) for 8 posts within the grange
9 Flint dug from various fields and places for the wall below the sill
2 men digging chalk for burning to make lime
Coal from Menydepe (Mendip) for burning the chalk
21 quarters of chalk stone
Wet sand (zabulo aquat')
Dry sand dug at Maiden Bradley
16,000 (ml) laths
2,000 'brodstone' (probably thin flat stone) extra to the old stone for roofing the grange
Carriage of this stone from Upton
2 sawyers for cutting timber of the lord for 'ovesbordes' (barge boards?)
Moss collected from various places for placing between the stones instead of mortar at harvest time
1 roofer re-using materials from the old grange
Spikynges ...
New tiles bought over and above the old one re-used
Walter Badecok, reeve, for travelling to find carpenters, masons and roofers in Wells, Bruton, Phillips Norton and elsewhere.

Transcription of Latin text by Steve Hobbs, Wiltshire Archive Service

Cargo Marks (from no 130, Jan 2013)

Following on from protective flame marks on fireplace lintels, research is also ongoing on another form of mark found mainly in 19th century softwood timbers.



Cargo marks at Parklands Hotel, Ogbourne St George

An enquiry about marks at 3 Bridge Street, Bideford, Devon, from David Carter prompted further research into what these marks mean.

I have often come across them in 19th century buildings on sawn softwood timbers, mainly in the roof. They are sometimes confused with carpenters marks, but cargo marks are not related to joints, or assembly of a frame. They are put on imported timbers from the Baltic States for identification.



Cargo marks at 3 Bridge Street, Bideford. Photo by David Carter

David Carter received this response from Lee Prosser, curator at Kensington and Kew Palaces:

They are all of the classic form which I see often, including handler numbers and batching marks. The earliest I've seen this type is the former ship magazine in Amsterdam which has been dendro-dated to 1786 and in the Ropery of Chatham docks of 1786-91.

In my experience, the vast majority occur between about 1810 and c.1850 - the latest I have ever seen them is in a dated barn of 1864, after which North American timber displaces the Baltic sources. Definitely no earlier than the later 18th century - earlier markings are much simpler - also many of the numbers have serifs - another 18th/19th century characteristic.

Lee Prosser

Womens' Land Army at Poulton House, Mildenhall (from no 122, Jan 2011)

A Happy New Year to all our members and associates. We are being kept very busy in the office with enquiries, including the one below.

Pam Slocombe identified the house as Poulton House, Mildenhall, but if anyone can help with the human element do please get in contact with me on the above e-mail address or call in.

Dorothy Treasure



*Dear Dorothy, Many thanks for suggesting that my Womens' Land Army photo go in your newsletter. The only information I have about it is that it may be near Marlborough. I also know the name of two of the Land girls in the image. As well as wishing to know the exact location, I would be pleased to know any other facts which might emerge, such as the identity of the women pictured (particularly the woman next to Lady Katherine McNeil) and the nature of the event. **Gracie Hardy***

Joint visit to Iron Acton with the Wilts Archaeological Society, Tues, 28th July (from no 117, Sept 2009)

A handful of WBR members were amongst the 50 people on this visit. The weather was good apart from a heavy shower, typical of this year, at lunch-time. Some of us had to scatter from outside tables at the pub to a function room upstairs.

In the morning we had looked at Iron Acton Church. The promised local guide had had to call off so it was a DIY exploration with the aid of a church booklet. The village is north of Bristol and gains its name from its iron ore bearing dark grey sandstone. As Pennant stone, in fissile layers, it was widely used by the Romans for roof tiles and used again in the 19th century for paving slabs in towns.

Amongst its interesting features the church had many pew ends with linenfold carving and there was a tall, narrow cell in the base of the tower said to have been the village lock-up. In the churchyard was a very fine 15th century market or preaching cross. I was intrigued by a medieval chimney at the end of the south aisle next to what had been a chantry chapel and can only think the building once incorporated accommodation for the chantry priest.



Iron Acton Church with medieval chimney. Photos: Alyson Curtis

At lunch-time the group was joined by our Chairman Kirsty Rodwell. She was the buildings archaeologist involved in the English Heritage rescue of Acton Court in the late 1990s. The house was the main object of our visit. It was described in 1977 as ‘now in an advanced state of decay’ and had been for many years demoted to a farmhouse. The ancient manorial site was rebuilt in the grandest manner by Nicholas Poyntz for a visit by Henry VIII in 1535 in the hope of preferment.



Visit to the mid-16th century Acton Court, Iron Acton

Photo: Alyson Curtis

When we reached the house, Kirsty described the circumstances and process of the rescue while we sat in the garden in sunshine. The surprise for us was to find the house unfurnished. This made the visit more atmospheric as we could imagine the tapestries, panelling and wall painting which had been in the vast rooms at the time of Henry’s visit. Here and there details of the décor remained. Excavations in the moat and gardens at the time of the rescue had uncovered a wealth of objects including an early sundial, Venetian glass and children’s longbows.

I am grateful to WANHS for allowing us to join with the visit. We had all had a most enjoyable and rewarding day. **Pam Slocombe**

Some Interesting Features at May's Farm, Hullavington (from no 118, Jan 2010)

Members may remember that in Newsletter No. 116 of last May I wrote about the poultry house with nest-holes in a stone wall on the end of the barn at Pinkney Court, Sherston.

There is another example at May's Farm in a lean-to building next to the barn porch. The fittings inside may have been of timber as they are gone, but the characteristic external popholes remain. The hens would have climbed a sloping ladder to reach them.



Poultry House (the central door is an alteration)



Pigsty range and interior

Also at May's Farm there is an unusual 18th century pigsty range where the outer run for the pigs is covered over as part of the building. This arrangement is sometimes found when a building with another function is converted to pigsties, but it is the first time I have seen it as an original feature. This building also uses large slabs of stone (the kind used for paving stones) in its partitions between the sties and the runs.

Pam Slocombe

Tour of Salisbury Market Place on 17th September 2011 (from no 126, Jan 2012)

Gerald Steer led a group of 20 members on an absolutely fascinating tour of several key buildings in this historic city. Our tour started at 33 Butcher Row which was inhabited by Thomas Blecher, an ironmonger in 1416, though the present house is thought to date from the first half of the C16 and is close-studded in appearance – a very expensive method of construction. The building was restored by Gerald to its present appearance based on the remaining evidence.

The Hall of John Hall in New Canal now houses a multiplex cinema. The house is probably mid-C15, large, with an elaborate auditorium designed by Frank Matcham in the earlier C20. The tour led us into the original hall, now a foyer, where we viewed a high-quality false hammer-beam roof with rows of cusped windbraces and figurative carved brackets.



Looking at 3 Fish Row. Photo: Eric Peddle

3 Fish Row was built in the late C15, probably as a fishmonger's, and like the other buildings, is jettied. Salisbury was an important market for fish. During the restoration of this building in 1999 a large number of oyster shells were found under the ground floor. 9 Queen Street has a Georgian front which belies its timber-framed origins. This house is exceptionally early and has been traced to William Russel, a wool merchant in 1306. The house was raised in 1314, and this was visible on the first floor of the shop, where several different styles of window were seen. The roof above this is quite unusual – a raised tie-beam truss braced by a moulded, arched framework infilled by cut chalk blocks.

We proceeded to 51 Blue Boar Row, another prominent corner site intersecting with Endless Street. This late C15 building formerly had a very different appearance and was tile-hung on the first floor. It was restored by Gerald, who removed the wall tiles to expose the tension-braced framing. Some new windows were added, remodelled on a surviving trefoil-headed casement. All the framing on the ground floor had to be replaced.

The name Nuggs displayed on the front relates to the family that owned it, and the early date (1268) that they owned it from.

The final call was a café buried deep in Debenhams, also in Blue Boar Row, the remains of an inn referred to as the Blue Boar which occupied the depth of 2 burgage plots. A copy of the original contract of 1444 between William Ludlow, the owner and John Fayrbowe, carpenter, to construct the stone and timber hall still exists in the Records Office.

Dorothy Treasure