

THE OXON RECORDER

Issue 25

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Reminder of the contents of this issue, so you can come back later for more information

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Heather Horner, newsletter editor

Diffusion and Invention: Vernacular Building in England and the New World

In September 2004, 35 members of the Vernacular Architecture Group had convened in Concord, Massachusetts for a tour of New England, The Delaware Valley and The Chesapeake. The Conference, ‘Diffusion and Invention’ held over the weekend of 28th – 30th October 2005 at Rewley House in Oxford in association with the Vernacular Architecture Group (VAG), was in effect the second half of an ‘exchange visit’, the American speakers having acted as organisers and guides for the VAG group when they were visiting the US in 2004. The Conference aimed to ‘bridge the ocean’ by looking at two themes: first, the ways in which European settlers in the New World adapted their building traditions when faced with a different and challenging environment and second, examining English housing during a period that encompassed major innovations and changing construction techniques.

Carl Lounsbury, in the opening lecture, gave an overview of the study of Early American architecture and argued out that, while many of the same issues – for example, diffusion of building techniques and evolution of plan types – exercised the minds of both English and American historians, within a short period of time in the seventeenth century, building forms in the New World diverged from those in Britain due to the different environmental and cultural circumstances that the settlers found on their arrival in the new colonies. Other American speakers developed this theme in lectures on ‘First Period Houses of the Delaware Valley’, ‘House Plans in the American Colonies in the 17th century’ and ‘The Georgian Townhouse in the New American Nation’ and also emphasised that, while the immigrants wish to replicate the buildings that they remembered from ‘home’, different vernacular traditions emerged as solutions to differing social conditions.

Contributions from speakers on this side of the ‘pond’ included discussions of diffusion in the English Vernacular Building traditions, Plans and Frames in East Anglia in the 17th century (highlighting the rapid change in carpentry techniques during that period), lectures on Domestic Interiors and Furniture and a comparison between English and American fixtures and fittings of

(Tight layout this issue! Continued on p.7)

Although the main interest of many OBR members may be the observation and recording of standing buildings, we should never forget that the buildings we study have been modified by real people to suit their personal changing circumstances. This major piece of research by member Bridget Rudge adds another dimension to answering the questions of 'who, why, where and when' that arise when studying any building. Ed.

The Occupants of No.12 Ock Street, Abingdon

Readers of the Oxon Recorder Issue 19 may recall Gillian Harrison's article on an Abingdon roof which excited the curiosity of members of the Abingdon Buildings Record. We have now received information from Christ's Hospital which has enabled us to add to our knowledge of the occupants of No.12 Ock Street, possibly the oldest surviving medieval building on the south side of the street.

The Amyce Survey of 1554 stated that the Master and Governors of Christ's Hospital owned "one tenement freehold, in the tenure of George Moore" on the south side of Ock Street at a rent of 6s.8d. paid to the Hospital. This was the property now known as No.12 Ock Street. To the west was "one tenement freehold, called the sign of the Bear," held by the Vicar of Blewbury, and in the tenure of John Hethe. To the east James Braybrooke owned a freehold tenement in the tenure of John Frauncis, later known as The Chequers. Looking through the registers of St Helen's Church, Abingdon, I found that George Mowe, a shoemaker, was buried on 7 July 1557, Margaret More, widow, was buried on 3 November 1558 and that George More was baptised on 30 March 1540 and George Mowe, the son of George and Margaret, was buried on 5 September 1544. The spelling of names could vary considerably at this time!

According to the Christ's Hospital list of tenants, No.12 Ock Street was leased to Thomas Orpwood in the 4th year of Elizabeth's reign, 1561-2. This was probably the Thomas Orpwood who was created a Burgess in Abingdon's Charter of 1555, served as Mayor three times, 1562-3, 1569-70 and 1575-6, and was Master of Christ's Hospital 1570-1. He was described as a baker in 1549 but as innholder of The Bear by 1562. St Helen's records the burial of Thomas Orpwood, High Burgess and of Christ's Hospital, on 11 December 1580. As lessee of The Bear and No.12 he may well have sublet the latter, but we have no further information until the middle of the next century.

Both the Bear and No.12 came into the possession of the Wrigglesworth Charity set up under the will of Richard Wrigglesworth dated 7th February 1647. He left £800 "to purchase land for the maintenance of a lecture at a public meeting place in Marcham in the summer season, and at the great meeting place in Abingdon in the winter season". The lecturer was to be Mr Pendarvis while he "abode in Abingdon"[1]. John Pendarvis was appointed vicar of St Helen's while the town was occupied by the Presbyterian, Major-General Browne, during the Civil War. But he left St Helen's with many of his followers to minister to a strong Baptist community in Abingdon [2]. The residue from the rents of the considerable property held by the Charity, much of it in Ock Street and leased to nonconformists at a time of religious persecution, was to be paid to the poor of Abingdon.

The Christ's Hospital records show that Alice Wise leased No.12 in 1653 and again in 1667-8 (19 Charles II). She may have been the widow of Thomas Wise who married Alice Batson in 1625 and was buried in 1652. The Wrigglesworth Charity records contain leases [3] of the Bear Inn plus a close of pasture adjacent "late in the occupation of Thomas Wild deceased" (Should this be Thomas Wise?), to William Dickinson in 1662, and to his son, also William, a nonconformist, in 1700. It could be that Alice continued to occupy No.12 after the death of her husband who had held both properties.

In 1681 William Jarrett, "Trumpetter" of the City of Oxford, was the lessee. "Jarrard, the trumpeter," renewed his lease in Bocardo Lane (now St Michael Street), Oxford, in 1673, but was also called "William Jarrett of Abingdon, yeoman," in the City Lease Book. In this case 'yeoman' may not mean 'farmer'; it may possibly have the alternative meaning of 'attendant' or 'official'. This seems to have been the same man who owned the lease of No.12 Ock Street; it is interesting to note that a Simon Riglisworth was his neighbour in Oxford. Jarrett may have been one of the Oxford Waits, who were required by the local authorities to play to order on special public occasions. Certainly the Northgate area of Oxford was a centre for musical studies in the 17th century.

Records show that the Jarrett or Gerrard family, with various spellings, was well established in Abingdon at this time. Titus Jarrett, a boatbuilder, made the great table for the Council Chamber for Christ's Hospital Perhaps the trumpeter in old age returned to his birthplace. The repetition of first names is confusing when looking at the registers but it is possible that William was baptised in 1609. Margaret, the wife of William, died in 1690, and William in 1691.

Christ's Hospital lists the next lessee as Andrew ETTY who signed leases in 1693 and 1703. A borough lease of 1695 describes Andrew ETTY as a barber and the name also appears in a 1694 list of innkeepers. Like the Jarretts, there are numerous ETTYS with the same first names, Andrew and Charles being particularly frequent, in the registers, which makes it difficult to be sure of individuals. Andrew and Jane had five sons baptised from 1683-9, one of whom, Charles, may have been the carpenter who worked on the Brick Alley Almshouses 1718-20 and the Great Council Chamber in 1731 [4]. Charles, a bachelor, was buried in 1738.

It seems likely that the building alterations that we noted at the house, the higher tiled roof over the two front gables, the staircase and the extra attic room, were undertaken in the early 18th century, perhaps by Charles ETTY. Serious fires in Ock Street in 1706 and 1734 caused borough leases to require thatch to be replaced with tiles and stone chimneys to be built [5] and other properties would have been similarly treated. The staircase closely resembles that in my house which has a chimney date 1718. The attic room was created by inserting a ceiling over the first floor rooms and raising the roof level. "Appledore Cottage" and the extension at the back linking it to the main house may also date from the early or mid 18th century as the leases start to refer to the property divided into three tenements.

In 1735 Benjamin Tomkins the younger, son of the Benjamin Tomkins who had built the nearby Clock House, one of Abingdon's grandest houses in 1728 on ground also owned by the Wrigglesworth Charity, acquired the lease of the Bear Inn [3]. The Tomkins were wealthy maltsters and leading benefactors of the Abingdon Baptists. They held the leases of much property in Ock Street and elsewhere in Abingdon where they conducted their business or which was sublet until the death of John Tomkins in 1845.

No.12 is specifically mentioned in the lease of 1754 to Thomas Cowslade and Harding Tomkins "of a capital messuage now in the occupation of Benjamin Leader [formerly The Bear] and a messuage divided into three tenements now in the several occupations of John Pink, William Tyrell the Younger, and Joan Green widow" [3]. The 1822 lease to John Tomkins included "a messuage divided into three tenements now Martha Lassar, Abraham Poole and Ann Hohnden". Most of these names are those of Baptist families who would have been known to the Tomkins. Later census returns also show three separate tenancies at No.12.

Pigot's Directory of 1842 has John Burry jun. Boot and shoemaker practising his trade in Ock Street, presumably the son of John Bury who was following the same occupation in East St Helen

Street in 1823-4 [8]. The census of 1851 shows John Burry 46, a shoemaker employing five men, living at No.12 with his wife Elizabeth 47, his errand boy nephew and a servant. There were also two properties at the back occupied by Jane Giles 75, a widow, and Richard Rose 81, a pauper shopkeeper, and his wife Harriet 74.

By 1861 the business was taken over by Samuel Gardiner 39, a master shoemaker from Tetbury, employing 6 men and 2 women, with his wife Ann 48, born in Abingdon, a son and a daughter. At the back lived Martha Holinder 69 unmarried, a late dressmaker. Samuel, his wife and daughter were still there in 1871 with two brothers, James 27 and Charles 25 Buckle, each with a wife and infant, living at the back. In 1881 Samuel and Ann had John Burry's widow, Elizabeth, as a boarder. In the yard was the family of a painter, ...? Steane, aged 29 and a widow, Hannah ...?, whose names are difficult to read.

By 1891 the Gardiners had gone and the property was leased to Robert Gawler 34, a plumber, glazier and painter, born in Wantage, his wife Jane 32, a confectioner, and 7 month old son Alfred. In the yard were Alfred Turner 35, a bricklayer's labourer, his wife, Mary Jane, a seamstress, and two small daughters, and, in the other dwelling, Adam Couldrey 26, single, who was employed as an insurance agent and organ blower.

In 1901 the property had changed hands again and was held by Thomas E. Bonner 29, a coal merchant born in Shepherd's Bush, his wife Mary 31, two daughters 2 and 3, and his mother-in-law, Elizabeth Cole 58, born in Burford. There is no mention of properties in the yard. The lease is confirmed by an entry in "Endowed Charities", "A dwelling-house, garden and premises, No. 12 Ock St. let to T.E.Bonner for 21 years from Midsummer 1902 at a yearly rent of £25" [6]. An undated photo of No.12 held by Oxfordshire Museum Services shows a carrier's cart, T.Bonner, Oxford and Abingdon, outside the premises of "BONNER Refreshment Rooms". Mr Bonner may have carried on his coal merchant's business elsewhere or have changed his occupation.

The next door property on the corner of St Edmund's Lane, formerly "The Chequers", was also leased to the Tomkins family between 1722 and 1837 and sublet to various shopkeepers. The 1871 census lists the occupant as Martin Mulcock [?] 25, a butcher. In 1880 the tenant was S.Tarry, but in 1888 a note in the Christ's Hospital Account Ledger records: "Tenant insolvent with no assets. Butcher's shop closed, premises being dilapidated and unfit for business. House continues to be occupied as a cottage". Three years later another note states: "a new house and premises built on these sites" [7]. The tenant, Alfred Albright 33, a draper and outfitter, born in Hungerford, appears in the 1901 census with his wife, daughter, an assistant and a servant.

Bridget Rudge
November 2005

References

1. "Endowed Charities of the County of Berks. The Parishes of Abingdon St Helen and Abingdon St Nicholas". HM Stationary Office 1908. pp.33-4.
2. "Abingdon 1556-1702, Peace and War" by Mienieke Cox, pp.115 and 128. See also "The Story of Abingdon Baptist Church" by Michael Hambleton, pp.4-8.
3. I am indebted to Jackie Smith, Abingdon Town Council Archivist, for information on the Wigglesworth Charity leases which I have not seen myself.
4. "Abingdon, An Eighteenth Century Country Town" by Mienieke Cox, pp.62 and 76.
5. "Abingdon, An Eighteenth Century Country Town" by Mienieke Cox. p.80.
6. "Endowed Charities" as above. p.71.
7. "Inns and Alehouses of Abingdon 1550-1978" by Jacqueline Smith and John Carter, 2nd edition 1989. p.71.
8. Trade directories in Abingdon Public Library.

Thanks are due to Christ's Hospital, David Sturdy and to members of the Abingdon Buildings Record for additional information and comments.

Recent Investigations:- Sundial House, Great Haseley, Oxfordshire

This building is situated in the middle of the village; to the west are timber-framed buildings and to the east of it are mainly stone built structures around the church, manor and rectory. To the north was an extensive limestone quarry, shown on the 1881 25inch to 1 mile Ordnance Survey map.

The house, on close examination by John Steane and James Ayres, was revealed as being of four main phases. The front elevation, judging from the fireplaces and interior panelling of the two ground floor rooms was of early 18th century date. However, it had been refaced in the mid to late 19th century, with enlarged windows and the addition of a Doric porch. The early house had a basement kitchen with larder attached and a well. During the mid 18th century a wing was added at the rear and the kitchen moved to the ground floor: the fine fireplace with bread oven and spit rack remains (below, left).



To connect the two a dog leg staircase in “Chinese

Chippendale” style was added (below, right). Chinoiserie was introduced into this county in the 18th century and became very fashionable thanks to Sir William Chambers’ “Designs of Chinese Buildings, Furniture, Dresses etc” of 1757.

The sundial, consisting of a square limestone slab with lines radiating out from the central gnomon to inscribed Roman numerals may well be of early 20th century date. It is

attached to the south gable above the 20th century addition to the house, a single storey sun lounge.

In general this house is a mixture of rural and urban elements. The large 18th century kitchen with spit rack and bread oven, and the doors in the attic area would not be out of place in an Oxfordshire Farmhouse; but the formal front might well have been found in central Oxford.



John Steane

OBR Presentation Day; a “new boy’s” perspective.

As a new member of the OBR group I enjoyed my first newsletter, Issue 24, and was immediately tempted by the invitation to join the Presentation Day on the 26th November, especially as the venue was Burford, which I have explored from time to time, albeit with an uninformed and less than observant eye.

During the morning, as part of the Burford Tenement Survey, I was attached to a group led by experienced recorder Jessica Brod, with a brief to tackle some buildings in Sheep Street. This was particularly pleasing to me as it has several buildings I have often wondered about. It is also quieter than the High street and offers less chance of being mowed down when standing back to look at an upper storey or roof. The paperwork compiled by David Clark from previous OBR surveys and VCH (Victoria County History) research was thorough, and it was a relief to find that a lot of detailed work had already been achieved on our buildings, leaving us with the problems raised by our predecessors as the main target. A rather daunting grid required some boxes to be filled in which Jessica’s neat recording with frozen fingertips achieved with precision and clear accompanying sketches.

It soon became clear, even to my experienced companions, that close scrutiny of a building without access to an interior or documentary evidence of its early phases raises more questions than answers. The temptation to hypothesize without documentary records was difficult to resist, especially as the excellent Kelly’s Directory could only help us with the (mostly) 19thC changes of occupancy, which are certainly useful when trying to work out later modifications to the building. Luckily David arrived on his rounds at one of our speculations and gently reminded us to record and stick to the facts before even thinking about a hypothesis. Even when an “answer” was provided by an owner, (and we were fortunate enough to be speculating about their gables when the owners returned), it seemed churlish to ask for the proof of their assertion regarding dates, but at some stage I imagine it is required. Close observation is an interesting pastime in itself, and we did not feel defeated in failing to provide definitive answers, as it was a least possible to agree on the relative sequence of some external alterations in our buildings; a sort of stratigraphy of the fabric, as it were.

Having warmed up over sandwiches and an appropriate choice from the bar back in “The Bull”, we adjourned to the Friends’ Meeting House in Pytts Lane. This is an interesting building in its own right, as indicated by a welcome hand-out provided by David Clark, outlining the architectural and religious history of the house, and we were privileged to be able to climb up to a room inserted in the roof space, where we could examine the structure of the 1708 roof. In a feedback session on the morning’s recording, it was reassuring to hear that other groups had similar problems, raising important questions about their buildings. Some of these questions were pungently and concisely answered by the Reverend Raymond Moody, whose scholarship is incisive. When he says “I don’t know the answer” I suspect it will be difficult to find one.

The rest of the afternoon was filled with interesting presentations about recording work undertaken by OBR members, followed by a generous tea and more presentations. I was struck throughout by the hard and painstaking work which is done by members, and which has resulted in funding in at least two cases. Heritage Lottery funding for the Burford project in particular is a tribute to the VCH editors Simon Townley and Robert Peberdy, and their new colleague Antonia Catchpole, even though the paperwork and quarterly straitjacket adds to their load. I am sure we will all look forward to the publication of “People and Buildings of Burford” when it appears in 2008, by which time I hope to have attended a few more events of the OBR group. I must add my personal thanks to David for his excellent administration of a complex day, and the friendly welcome he offered to this novice.

David Fielding

Caption Competition Issue 24

Members' response to the photograph on the front of last issue was most encouraging, and several times over the following weeks I burst out loud with laughter as another caption arrived. The original photograph was taken by Simon Townley on 31st July 2005 during the Training Day led by James Davies, enthusiastic professional photographer with English Heritage. (And there is still time to join the Burford Tenement Photography Project, with a follow-up training and feedback session with James planned for Sunday 26th February 2006. Contact David Clark for more information, contact details p.8)

Below are a selection of captions, though I've chickened out of picking a winner, you'll have to choose your own favourite.

- | | |
|---|------------------|
| "Would you like a cup of tea while you're in there, Mr Steane?" | Gillian Harrison |
| "Will he really manage to get in again?" | Mirabel Hadfield |
| "I knew this project would be the death of me" | Rosemary Howden |
| "OBR weapon inspectors check allegations of anti-SPAB terrorist activity"
(Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings) | Peter Ledwith |
| "I didn't know that this was what was meant by a 'Down to Earth Course
in Photography" | Michael Howden |
| "I shall get to the bottom of this if it kills me" | Rosemary Howden |
| "Of course he's lying down - the sun won't be in the right position for this
shot until 7.32 a.m. on the 17th September 2007!" | Simon Townley |
| "Are you there, mother?" | Keith Chandler |
| "But James! you DID say move anything that spoils the photograph" | Michael Howden |
| "This is a job for Buffy, the Vampire Slayer" | Anon. |



Diffusion and Invention *continued from p.1*

the 17th and 18th century. It was pointed out that the cultural influences were not all travelling from east to west since Benjamin Franklin, who lived in London for many years, had imported an American stove to the UK in the 1840s.

The linked themes of the Conference provided an excellent context for the weekend but if there has to be one very minor criticism, it was that there was almost *too* much of a good thing on the Saturday when we heard from eight different speakers. By the end of the day, the packed programme meant that it was becoming difficult to maintain concentration. However, overall, this was a fascinating and stimulating Conference with a good balance and integration of topics between the lecturers from both sides of the Atlantic

Catherine Lorigan

Period House Fixtures and Fittings 1300-1900

There's a new book out by Linda Hall that might be set to become the 'Burford Bible'. It's an expanded version of "Fixtures and Fittings in Dated Houses 1567-1763" (Practical Handbook in Archaeology 11, published by The Council for British Archaeology, 1994), which contained a series of plates with line drawings of dated features, one feature per plate, but with little explanatory text. The new volume, "Period House Fixtures and Fittings 1300-1900", is a greatly expanded version, with more than three times the number of pages. Extending into the Victorian era means that it may be possible to answer some queries on the lines of "is it original or a reintroduction?" There is a comprehensive text outlining the technical and fashionable developments of each feature, and some useful drawings of archetypal features, fully labelled. There are many photographed examples, as well as some of the line drawings reproduced from the earlier volume, albeit without the original scale bars. In fact, there is so much information here that at times the layout looks a little cluttered, with some figures and photographs reproduced at such a small scale that it is difficult to make out the detail. There is a bit of a bias towards examples from S. England, probably reflecting the recorders rather than the survival of features, and it's horrifying to be handed a sheet of errata with the book that should have been corrected before publication. However, apart from these small criticisms, this is a hugely important volume for the building historian, and thanks are due to Linda Hall for a lifetime's dedicated recording. It is published by Countryside Books in their England's Living History series, price £12.99. It is available through bookshops, or from their website less a 10% discount, though you do have to pay postage. <<http://www.countrysidebooks.co.uk/index.html>>

Heather Horner

Forthcoming Events

Monday 16th January 2006 for 10 weeks **John Steane – Vernacular Building: Southern Britain** 7.30 – 9.30pm Ewert House, Summertown. An OUDCE course with 10 CATS points. Contact ppdayweek@conted.ox.ac.uk

Tuesday 17th January 2006 **John Letts - The History of Thatching and the Conservation of Historic Thatch** OAHS public lectures 5.30pm Rewley House, Wellington Street, Oxford.

Sunday 26th February **OBR Photographic Training Day** in Burford. See p.7 this issue

Saturday 29 & Sunday 30 April 2006 **Early English Shire Towns : The Physical Impact of County Government** A weekend school at OUDCE Rewley House. Programme from Prof. Richard Sharpe, email richard.sharpe@history.oxford.ac.uk. Booking ppdayweek@conted.ox.ac.uk

Saturday 6th May 2006 **OBR AGM and Members' Event** based in Banbury. More details next issue.

Saturday 3rd June 2006 **Oxfordshire Past**, the annual review of archaeology in Oxfordshire, will be held this year in The Courtyard Centre, Bicester. Details available after March, watch for fliers or contact Tony Dodd at OAHS. This is usually a pre-book event, and as there is no charge, it can be oversubscribed.

Copy date and contacts

Copy date for Issue 26 is 1st March 2006. Please send articles, information, letters, reviews, etc. to me, Heather Horner, at Windrush Cottage, Station Road, South Leigh, Oxon. OX29 6XN, telephone 01993 773819, or e-mail hahwindrush@aol.com

The Secretary is David Clark, 21 Walton Street, Oxford OX1 2HQ, telephone 01865 516414 e-mail david.clark3@which.net

The OBR are extremely grateful to the *Oxfordshire Preservation Trust* for their generosity in supporting the production of *The Oxon Recorder* and to *Awards for All* in supporting our work to record the built heritage of Oxfordshire