

THE OXON RECORDER

Issue 28

Autumn 2006



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

Fixtures and Fittings in Period Houses: Tuesday 17th October, see events p8

Recording Day at Kirtlington: Saturday 11th November 2006 Flyer enclosed

OBR Members' Presentation Day: Sunday 26th November at **Steeple Aston** Flyer enclosed

Recording work at Kelmscott A report on members' efforts so far

Rats and Pigeons...and Dogs and Ducks...and Flying Flocks Managing the environment

Inns and Taverns A review of the recent Vernacular Architecture Group annual meeting in Oxford

Drawing Tutorial Plans for a members' workshop on scale drawing from your measurements

Insurance A summary of OBR liability cover

VCH Vol XV A new 'Big Red Book' launch, and special offer to OBR members – Flyer enclosed

Heather Horner, newsletter editor

KELMSCOTT 2006

At the request the Kelmscott Environment and Landscape Project (KELP), OBR members have been helping to record and interpret some of the buildings in the parish. This is part of a wider project to investigate the history and development of the village and the surrounding landscape and will result in the publication of a book. We held 3 recording days in May, June and September, with a total of 22 members attending one or more days. As a result we have investigated and recorded 13 agricultural buildings. These include barns, dovecotes, stables, granaries and cart sheds, ranging in date from the 17th to 19th centuries.

Our first day was spent at Kelmscott Manor, the former home of William Morris and now owned by the Society of Antiquaries. Here we looked at the Great Barn, Lesser Barn, Brick Barn and Dovecote. These had been preserved and modified by the Society, which in some cases made interpretation a challenge. The north end of the Great Barn was a typical Cotswold barn; however the south end was 3 stories with a gabled extension. Whilst the lower floor was possibly a stable, the original purpose of the upper floors was not clear. The architecture is domestic in nature.



Great Barn at Kelmscott Manor



Lesser Barn at Kelmscott Manor

The Lesser Barn had been converted into a tearoom but again showed its original use as a barn with stables to the north end. This also had an extension at the southern end of unknown use. The third building on the Manor had been converted to the visitors shop and was referred to as the Brick Barn. Close investigation confirmed this was originally an open cart shed with a granary on the upper floor approached by external stairs built in 1832. On the southern elevation an open cattle shelter had been added with surviving stone slate feeding troughs.



Granary and cart shed, Kelmscott Manor



Stone slate feeding troughs

The last building on the Manor site was the dovecote; the lower floor of this building had been converted by William Morris into stables to hold his Icelandic pony. The upper floor was still occupied by pigeons.

On our second visit a similar dovecote, this time still in its original state, was recorded at Manor Farm. Whilst not in use, all the nesting holes were present starting from above a smooth plinth, suggesting it was built after the introduction of brown rats in 1730. Adjacent to the dovecote was a range of dog kennels that had been reputed to house ducks at some point.



Dovecote at Kelmscott Manor



Dovecote at Manor Farm, Kelmscott

At Manor Farm we recorded a threshing barn which still retained a stone flagged threshing floor and had many interesting tally marks, graffiti and apotropeic marks on the door jambs to the main doors. We were given permission to cut off the lock of the upstairs store room of an open fronted 3 bay cart shed, which had been used as a store and had not been opened for about 20 years. Inside, hiding behind a mountain of junk, we found a granary with its bulk grain storage bins and grain shoot still

intact. This building was similar to the Brick Barn/Granary on the Manor and must have been how this was built as a granary before being converted into a visitors shop.



Threshing barn on Manor Farm



Interior of Manor Farm granary

The other farm we recorded was Bradshaw's Farm, where a series of 3 barns are located across the farm yard. These are all built of rubble limestone with stone slate roofs. Dating these and interpreting the order of build is still under investigation but the central barn has an inscription with a date of 1760.



South barn at Bradshaw's Farm



Central barn at Bradshaw's dated 1760

There is still another day's recording work needed to complete the records. Watch for news in *Oxon Recorder*.....

David Hughes, Kelmscott co-ordinator

Of Rats and Pigeons

One of the tasks on the second Kelmscott recording day was to add further details to an earlier survey of the dovecote at Manor Farm. The rows of nesting holes inside the dovecote begin about 50cm above the floor and over lunch Heather mentioned an article which suggested this indicated the dovecote was built after 1730 when brown rats arrived in England from Scandinavia. The smooth lower wall was to prevent rats reaching the nesting holes to steal eggs or attack squabs. We assumed that the reason this protection was unnecessary previously was that black rats, which had been present since pre-Roman times, were poor climbers. We wondered if similar dating logic applied to staddle stones under granaries.

Subsequent research into rat behaviour revealed that far from being poor climbers black rats are better climbers than brown. The reason dovecotes before 1730 could have nesting holes to the floor was that black rats are vegetarian, which also explains the need for staddle stones under pre-eighteenth century granaries.

....and Dogs and Ducks

The information on rats and dovecotes came mainly from an article by John McCann which is available on-line at the address below. The article also mentioned that dogs were often kennelled near the doors of dovecotes as further defence against rats. There is a row of four “duck houses” adjacent to the dovecote at Manor Farm, now used as dog kennels; maybe this was their purpose all along.

The John McCann article can be accessed at

http://www.johnmccann.info/texts_folder/The%20Truth%20about%20Dovecotes2.htm

Brian Clarke

....and Flying Flocks

Although there were no sheep in evidence on the June day when I was recording at Kelmscott, the local farmers apparently have several flocks which are rented out as living lawnmowers whenever a landowner needs some grass reducing. These are known locally as ‘Flying Flocks’. Thanks to member Mary Castell for this snippet.

Ed.

Insurance whilst recording buildings

With a fair proportion of our members involved in building recording, it seems timely to review the cover offered by our insurers.

Members of the OBR are covered by our insurance policy in two main areas of hazard – damage to other people’s property and injury while recording a building. There are, however, a number of conditions which we must observe in order to maintain cover.

First, there must be no more than 20 people at a recording event on any one day. This means in practice that if any corporate member society wants to do some recording on a day when the OBR has also arranged a recording day (and of course we would hope this never happens), they need to contact us to ensure the total number stays within the limit.

Secondly, the age limit for cover is 76. Possibly this may be discriminatory under the new legislation, but we shall monitor this. Meanwhile we must inform senior members of this exclusion and ask them to record at their own risk.

As members will know, we aim to ensure that all recording is done safely. Risks are assessed before the day, and members are briefed about these before work starts. The aim is to ensure that accidents do not happen – the insurance is a back-stop.

David Clark

Drawing Tutorial

Some members, having recorded the measurements, have asked for help in drawing up their buildings. As an experiment, we have arranged a day at Ewert House (the OUDCE building in Summertown, Oxford) at which John Steane and David Clark will be on hand to guide students through the drawing process. At the workshop arranged for 27 January 2007 there will be 12 places, and the idea is to start at 10.30 am, using measurements which participants have made – either at an OBR day or of any building – the garden shed might be a start, or even a telephone box. The format will be flexible and in the booking form we will be asking you to say what you would like to get out of this so the programme can be arranged accordingly. We have a room for most of the day (till 3.30pm anyway). There will be a flyer with Issue 29 (due out before New Year), but do feel free to register your interest with the secretary before then.

Inns, Taverns and Public Houses

Notes from the Vernacular Architecture Group weekend school held at Oxford University Department for Continuing Education, Remley House, Wellington Square, Oxford, 29 September – 1 October 2006.

As ever, this conference – in the Department's annual series of weekends with a 'vernacular' theme – was a feast of buildings, discoveries and insights. Social historians also added a different dimension, and much new work was tabled. With more effort, I might have been able to summarise conclusions and draw out themes and agendas for future work, but this is being written in some haste before the term starts and so must stand duty for that elusive over-arching summary. The weekend was also notable for being Malcolm Airs' 'swansong' as Professor of Historic Conservation. His successor, Paul Barnwell, is now in post and presented him with a cake in the shape of a medieval hall house made by OBR member Clare Abbott and a card (also made by Clare) signed by all present.

The weekend began with Julian Munby on the inns and taverns of medieval Oxford. We are lucky to have a wealth of documentary and some surviving structures from the period, but have been even better served by a number of historians from H E Salter (who related the documents to the buildings and mapped them), to W A Pantin (whose paper on medieval inns was an early archaeological study of the building type) and to Julian himself, who has studied most of the standing buildings, and in particular the New Inn (behind 26-28 Cornmarket). He concluded that the vaulted undercrofts in High Street and elsewhere were probably at one time all wine taverns, and speculated as to whether this applied elsewhere (Chipping Norton, Burford). Inns were places providing accommodation and often food, but do not appear in the records until after 1350, yet by 1400 there were 21 named inns in the city. The wealden house in St Thomas's seems to have been an inn and it had been suggested that this house type might have usually been associated with inns where it is found outside Kent and Sussex. Later discussion suggested that the lack of named inns before the Black Death was possibly due to there being a tradition of people staying with friends or indeed having town houses of their own before that disaster struck.

Edward Roberts spoke on Hampshire inns, where recent dendrochronology had confirmed the 1347 building date of the Paradise Tavern in Winchester. Pantin had studied the building contract for the Angel in Andover, unaware that much of the building had survived beneath later fabric. This has now also been studied, and has cast doubt on the validity of Pantin's 'courtyard' and 'gatehouse' typology. Galleries were often a feature of the medieval inn, but probably not a defining one. The galleried lodging range of the George at Alton had latrines over a stream, and a suite of two rooms. Does enough fabric remain visible in other Oxfordshire examples for more of these to be found? An interesting suggestion was that the George in Dorchester was built as an inn for the pilgrims visiting the shrine of St Birinus.

Moving to the early modern period, James Brown spoke on the inns of Southampton, noting that alehouses were small houses for poorer people, but also had beds. Taverns had more rooms, were for wealthy customers, served wine and food, but had no lodgings, while inns had the most rooms and offered lodging, stabling and served meals and drinks. Many of the rooms in inns were for services – eg storage of linen, smoking pipes, bread, wine, cooking and so on. The need for extra-mural inns (such as the Pheasant in Oxford) was explained by the need for somewhere to stay after the town gates had been closed for the night. In Southampton, as probably elsewhere, these establishments provided a 'moral geography' of the town, where different groups such as sailors, or the French could find entertainment, legal or otherwise.

Nat Alcock looked at Warwickshire, with examples of medieval undercroft taverns in Coventry (St Mary's Guildhall survives), an alehouse in one of the cruck rows in Stoneleigh, and a wealden of 1449

in Tanworth, although there was no evidence that this was built as an inn. Recent work by the local history society in Alcester has produced a large amount of evidence for inns.

Janet Pennington concluded the regional studies by discussing the inns of Sussex, with examples from Chichester, Horsham, Midhurst, Arundel and elsewhere, both from building and documentary evidence. This drew out some useful information about bed-sharing (you were put where the landlord told you), the provision of chamber-pots, landlords with multiple occupations (very common in the 17th century) and the fact that there seems to have been a George, Crown and Swan in every town in the county, with the George always facing the main road in from London.

Amanda Flather, a social historian, produced evidence from ecclesiastical depositions to show that women were found using taverns in the 17th century more often than some writers have suggested, although they were not there usually to socialise, but as workers, or buying ale for home use, and so on. Beat Kumin used documentary evidence from Bavaria and Bern to contrast practice in Europe with that in England. A more rigid licensing regime on the continent for the professional production of beer (in Bavaria) and wine (in Bern) meant far fewer drinking places than in England, where home-brewed ale dominated. Licences here went with an individual, so moved with the publican, while in Europe the house itself was licensed. The buildings were, however, in room use and layout quite similar on both sides of the Channel.

Carl Lounsbury had the Saturday evening slot for a report of the 'Ordinaries' or common taverns of colonial America which were at the heart of the community, especially when the court came to town.

On Sunday, Bob Meeson reported on the archaeological examination of the fire-damaged Fleece at Bretforton, now fully restored by the National Trust. The fire had allowed an investigation which showed how a two-bay farmhouse of ca. 1450 with an open hall had morphed into a long structure with animal accommodation closely associated with the human dwelling and then, probably in the late 17th century when some of the agricultural use was converted to domestic and became an inn, with a later brewhouse annex. This was an exemplary report on a building recording, but one which had had the benefit of some modern technology to produce the phased drawings for each of the stages.

Back to Oxfordshire, our member Catherine Murray reported on her on-going research on the coaching trade in Benson. This has shown that Benson was not only a staging post on one of the two main London-Oxford routes, but was a major centre for coach repair and maintenance. The different pace of the single traveller and the coach were contrasted, the latter managing to change horses in one minute! This work may mean a re-think about the way the 'coaching inn' worked and suggests why stabling was more important than provision of food and drink for these travellers.



The weekend ended with a valedictory by Geoff Brandwood on the 'Traditional English Pub'. Sadly, out of some 60,000 with closures reported daily, there are only some 250 survivals of historic interiors, and some features such as pubs with no counter or 'bar' as few as 14 examples remain. It strikes me that a recording programme in Oxfordshire's remaining good pubs might have a great attraction for OBR members!

David Clark 1.10.06

Left; the gallery of the Kings Arms, Henley, which we visited after the AGM in 2005

New Volume from the Victoria County History: *VCH Oxfordshire XV (Carterton, Minster Lovell, and Environs)* Note: I didn't want to edit Simon's article, hence small typeface to squeeze everything in. *Ed.*

The latest Victoria County History volume – covering eight parishes west of Witney – was published in September, and by the time the *Oxon Recorder* goes to press should be available in local libraries and (for the wealthy) in bookshops. As always the volume covers a wide range of subjects – encompassing settlement (several deserted medieval villages are newly identified), farming, rural industry, religious history, and social history. There is, in addition, much to interest those primarily focussed on buildings, from vernacular farmhouses and cottages, agricultural buildings, and (in Carterton) corrugated-iron bungalows, through to major architectural landmarks such as Minster Lovell Hall or Asthall Manor.

The most unusual place in the volume is, of course, Carterton, established as a colony of smallholders by William Carter in 1900. Early settlers, some of whom came from as far away as Scotland and continental Europe, mostly built their own houses, which ranged from prefabricated bungalows through to more substantial buildings of stone and brick. Some of the corrugated-iron structures were supplied by specialist firms such as John Harrison and Co. of London, which delivered Carterton's first Methodist chapel to the station in 1907, presumably in sections awaiting assembly. Most such buildings were mounted on a timber frame, and were lined internally with match boarding; the bungalows also usually had a brick chimney stack. When research for this volume began in the 1990s quite a few examples still survived, dotted amongst the modern infill. A few still do – though it is salutary and extremely depressing to note how many have been torn down since 1998. The volume also covers Charterville, a not dissimilar venture instigated by the Chartist leader Feargus O'Connor some 60 years earlier. There, however, model cottages of uniform design were supplied from the outset.

Most of the area's early vernacular buildings are constructed, unsurprisingly, of local limestone rubble. Quarrying was the most widespread non-agricultural activity in the area, recorded in every parish except Clanfield; the best-quality stone, however, was limited to Brize Norton, which provided building stone in the Middle Ages and had nine quarries in 1880. Even so, quarrying remained small-scale and only ever employed small numbers, real high-quality building stone coming from further afield at Taynton and Burford. Brick was occasionally used for dressings or façades from the 19th century, for example at Worsham Mill and on cottages in Alvescot, Fordwells, and Asthall Leigh, while a Nonconformist chapel at Black Bourton was built of local brick from Aston (near Bampton). A few isolated examples of timber-framing also survive, most notably the 16th-century cross wing of the Swan Inn in Minster Lovell, though these are exceptional.

Most larger domestic buildings originated as farmhouses or small gentry houses, built in the late 16th or early 17th century or later. Some, like the Plough Inn and Tudor House at Clanfield, feature the attic gables and hollow-chamfered mullioned windows typical of many Cotswolds houses, though others were more fashionably classical or baroque – a good 18th-century example is Kencot House, built probably for the attorney William Stephens, with its fine detailing and rows of regular segmental-headed windows. The building of up-to-date and sometimes quite sophisticated houses for wealthy gentleman farmers continued in the 19th century. High House in Clanfield, built in 1856 for a leading farmer, combines fashionable Ruskinian Gothic with conservative symmetry and proportions, while the medieval Manor Farm at Black Bourton was extended in similar Ruskinian style in 1861-3 to designs by W.C.C. Bramwell of Oxford, incorporating sophisticated detailing which recalls Bramwell's work at the University Museum. Bramwell also designed new model labourers' cottages at Black Bourton, where the duke of Marlborough was accused of letting labourers' cottages fall into dereliction. A few farmhouses still retain traces of their 18th- and 19th-century farmyard layouts, though inevitably many agricultural buildings have been converted to other uses, with varying degrees of sensitivity.

By far the largest and most important domestic building is the now-ruined manor house at Minster Lovell, rebuilt in the 15th century for the powerful Lovel family. Its quadrangular courtyard plan has much in common with the broadly contemporary manor house at Stanton Harcourt, which was discussed in an earlier VCH volume (Volume XII, 1990). Other larger manor houses include Asthall Manor, rebuilt on a medieval site by the Jones family in the early 17th century, and Brize Norton Manor House, which contains a mid 16th-century core, while Grange Farm in Brize Norton incorporates re-used medieval fragments brought probably from Bampton Castle. The area's parish churches are relatively small and not of especially outstanding quality, though Asthall church contains remains of an elaborate 14th-century arch-and-gable tomb associated with a local chantry, and Black Bourton has a notable cycle of 13th-century wall paintings.

Most 20th-century building in the villages was confined to small-scale council housing, private developments, and conversion of agricultural buildings, though Alvescot Lodge, on the edge of the village, was extended in Arts-and-Crafts-style for a private owner in 1926. The greatest focus of new building, inevitably, was Carterton, whose rapid development from the Second World War was often at the expense of architectural style or quality. Nevertheless, new planning initiatives since the 1980s have made a palpable impression, to the extent that in the early 21st century one new housing development on Carterton's north-eastern edge (actually in Brize Norton parish) was influenced by planning principles established on the Prince of Wales's estate at Poundbury in Dorset.

For this and more.... see VCH Vol XV! Full reference overleaf.

Simon Townley

Reference from previous page *VCH Oxfordshire XV (Carterton, Minster Lovell and Environs)* is out now, published by Boydell & Brewer; ISBN 1 904356 06 0. See enclosed flyer offering special discount to OBR members. Also available in Oxfordshire Studies (Oxford Central Library, Westgate), Oxfordshire Record Office, and through local branch libraries.

Parallelogram Plan Form in Vernacular Buildings

We have received a request from an MSc student for views on the thesis that in some areas of Britain vernacular buildings were often deliberately constructed as parallelograms rather than rectangles. If any member feels they would like to contribute to the research debate, the Secretary has copies of a questionnaire which should take 30 minutes to complete, replies requested by 3rd November.

Corrigenda Ashbury Manor

On page 6 of Issue 27, the drawing of the staircase is of a 17th C wooden one. The stone stairs mentioned in the text are at the other end of the building.

Forthcoming Events

October 2006 **Undergraduate Certificate in Vernacular Architecture**. OUDCE, part-time, Thursday evenings for 2 years. Note that this may be the last intake for this course, at least in its present form, so if you were dithering, it is decision time..... Further enquiries to David Clark (below)

Tuesday 17th October 2006 **Fixtures and Fittings in Period Houses** by Linda Hall, leading authority with new book just published. OAHs lecture in conjunction with OBR, at Rewley House, Wellington Square, Oxford 5.30pm. No charge, open to non-members.

Saturday 28th October **Deddington Castle** Recent survey work, speaker Mark Bowden, part of CBA South Midlands Group AGM at Windmill Community Centre, 2-5pm. Editor (below) has more details.

Saturday 11th November 2006 **Recording Day** at Kirtlington. Flyer enclosed

Sunday 26th November 2006 **OBR Members' Presentation Day** at Steeple Aston. The day when OBR members present the results of the year's recording to all interested, members and non-members. Flyer enclosed with this edition.

Saturday 27 January 2007 **Drawing to Scale**. OBR members' workshop at Ewert House (the OUDCE building in Summertown, Oxford) at which John Steane and David Clark will show you how to turn the recorded dimensions on your rough sketch into a scale drawing.

April 2007 Tuesday mornings 10 weeks **Small Towns of Oxfordshire**. Tutor Trevor Rowley, at Ewert House and visits, featuring Bicester, Burford, Faringdon, Thame, Wallingford. Information and booking ppdayweek@conted.ox.ac.uk

Copy date and contacts

Copy date for Issue 29 is 1st December 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 drc@davidrclark.plus.com or david.clark3@which.net

The OBR are extremely grateful to *The Oxford 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

