

The OXON RECORDER

The Newsletter of Oxfordshire Buildings Record

Issue 58 Spring 2014



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

Chipping Norton Early Fabric The new project with *English Heritage* is well under way.

Recent Recording Cogges Stables left us with some questions.

Leicester VAG Conference Getting down to the details.

18th century Barn Plans Unusual survival of specifications for farm buildings.

Membership reminder Yes, it's that time of year again.

Committee vacancy We need more volunteers to help run the group.

Heather Horner, Newsletter Editor

Editorial

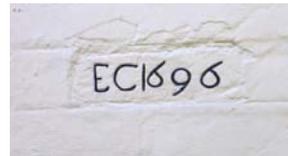
In this issue, I find I have inserted several sets of 'Editor's comments', and contributed a potentially controversial re-interpretation of a building at Cogges. I trust our contributors will not take offence, and that our members find the ideas stimulating; maybe thought-provoking enough to send your own responses.

In addition, I have seen some stimulating sights myself, and would like to share a few snippets with you.



This recent discovery at Sutton is the saddle at the apex of an open cruck frame, in the centre of a 2-bay open hall. It is heavily smoke blackened, as is the thatch around it, particularly to the right, although the truss has later been infilled with wattle and daub, and limewash added over the soot encrustation. It is exciting to encounter 'new' old roofs as unexpected survivals, especially to know that the blackened water reed base coat and hay roll of the thatch above the substantial ridge

purlin grew in fields close to my own home. The cruck blades have inverted pyramid stops, which may suggest a date as early as 14th century.



This dated brick in Benson, was recorded recently as part of the South Oxfordshire Project (of which more

in a later edition, OBR members are heavily involved). There are a couple of EC candidates in probate records. Not spectacular in itself, but inside the building the fireplace bressemer has burn marks. Similar pieces of dated evidence are needed if conclusions are to be drawn about the period of application of a particular type of 'ritual' burning – see Donna Thynne's report on page 4-5 this issue.

And finally, a technique new to me, but apparently fairly common in barns in Worcestershire, where I took this photo last week;



I left the people in for scale. On the left, the split oak is woven into a large panel infill. Incidentally, the lean-to cow stall

where the people are standing is quite similar to that on the plans in John Steane's report on page 5-7 this issue.

All photos this page H, Horner.

Early Fabric in Historic Towns Project

Chipping Norton's Historic Vernacular Buildings



As announced in Issue 57 of *Oxon Recorder* (Winter 2013–4), this collaborative project with support from English Heritage got underway with the new year. A plan of the town has been divided into manageable blocks ready for Level 1 surveys. These entail noting what can be observed about every building from the street, such as window pattern, roof style, and how the rear of the plot is accessed. A trial run was conducted by the Chipping Norton Buildings Record (CNBR) team to test out a standard recording *pro forma*. Subsequently, surveys have been conducted on two days so far, with two more dates in the calendar (below). Steady progress has been made with the help of OBR members. The first session, in February, had all the promise of a truly horrible winter's day, yet the entire block was covered. The second day in March was warm and sunny and restored our faith, and again the whole block was swiftly completed. We are grateful to those who came to support us, we hope you enjoyed yourselves, and learnt something, too. The data from the surveys is now being compiled into a spreadsheet for comparison and analysis.

The Level 1 trial run was conducted by the CNBR team in West Street and the team have been fortunate enough to start some of the Level 2 surveys there. Level 2 surveys entail internal inspection of all spaces within the building, noting layout and structure, and photographing detail where possible. The West Street area has been fascinating due to the comparable features discovered in many properties, such as stone vaulted cellars and winder stairs. Whilst other areas of the town have apparently incurred modernisation and gentrification, this area seems to have strong 17th century architectural features intact in so many buildings. It is early days yet to draw firm conclusions, but only by conducting Level 2 surveys can the necessary degree of detail be discovered.

Invitations to conduct Level 2 surveys are coming in thick and fast, and we are keen to take up every offer. A recent invitation to look around one prominent building proved very rewarding, with the discovery of a 16th century beam with beautifully detailed cavetto mouldings and

unusual triple pyramid stops. A conclusion has been drawn that this beam has been re-used at least three times, and there is a strong possibility that its original use was as part of a prominent timber framed building, although sadly we have no firm evidence of its exact provenance. However, this discovery has enthused the team to consider collating moulding details as a comparison tool to be used as the project progresses.

The project has taken on a momentum of its own, and could quite happily fill every hour of the day for the whole team, including the document analysis. The further we progress with the project the more exciting it becomes.

A big thank you to OBR members who have supported us. We could not have conducted so much work without you all and we very much look forward to your help surveying the rest of the town. Our next Level 1 surveying days are Sunday 11th May and Sunday 29th June, when hopefully there will be less traffic to contend with as we tackle the High Street. We work in small teams with a group leader. No previous experience is necessary, just a willingness to learn, and to observe carefully. If you think you could spare some time and join us on either, or both, of those days please let me know on hubbards4@tesco.net.

Victoria Hubbard, CNBR



Middle Row in the Landscape. A view from the second floor of a High Street building gives a different perspective on how Chipping Norton sits within the hills of the Cotswolds. Such a setting cannot be appreciated whilst walking through the town.

Photo: Victoria Hubbard

Recent OBR recording

Cogges Manor Stables

The buildings at Cogges Manor Farm, near Witney, were renovated in 1980s and 90s, and some detailed archaeological recordings done on parts of the exterior stonework of the house. Although a great deal was learnt about the manor buildings, the farm buildings received less attention. OBR have the opportunity to study all the buildings on the site, using then for training purposes where this is appropriate. This could be a long-term project as there are eight historic farm buildings, as well as the manor house itself. The house has received attention for interpretation and phasing, but the structure itself has never been fully recorded.

Last May, a start was made on recording the stable block to the north of the main house, when details of the exterior elevations were measured and drawn. Then in January, a group of OBR members studied the interior of the block. Although the building has been used as stabling for at least 200 years, this appears to have been a conversion and reuse of a much earlier building.

Close examination of the fabric revealed a row of (blocked) domestic-scale splayed windows along the north elevation. The south elevation showed scars of many changes, although both gable ends appeared more uniform, with a single stone-mullion splayed window high in the east gable, lighting right down to floor level. All the walls are 'battered', *i.e.* broader at the foundations level, tapering up to windowsill level, a distinctly medieval style of construction, although not conclusively so. The farmyard to the east of the building, laid out in 18th century on a slightly different alignment, was excavated to provide a level surface. In the process the stable block foundations were exposed, proving that this building was already standing. The ground level reduction also revealed a large sarsen stone incorporated as the cornerstone of the foundations. Similar stones survive elsewhere in

Oxfordshire, relics of prehistoric markers for boundaries and sighting lines, and it is possible that this stone is the earliest sign of human intervention on the site.

Most of the stables roof was replaced in 18th century, and a hayloft floor was inserted into the western half, reusing timbers which almost certainly came from part of the former manor house, where alterations and demolitions were taking place to convert it to a working farmhouse. OBR members were able to determine the exact sequence of insertion of timbers, as supporting beams, joists, and feeding slots were constructed.

Surviving in the building is a fine array of fixtures & fittings typical of a 19th century stable, including wooden hay racks and mangers, a chaff box, loose boxes for livery horses, and fitted tack cupboards. A distinctive feature is the pitched stone floors, one in each half, with their own drainage channels flowing in opposite directions. These floors, and the partition wall between them, could well be coeval with the walls, as they respect the earlier ground level.

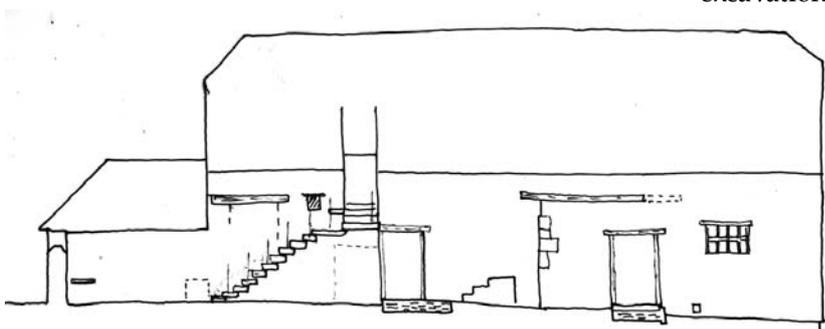


Above : detail of the paving in the eastern stable

(photo H.Horner.)

The exact purpose of the original construction could not be determined on surviving evidence. It is tempting to interpret the building as part of the north service court of the medieval manor house of Cogges, a substantial portion of which survives inside the farmhouse, on the same alignment as the stable block. Gathering further evidence would only be possible by archaeological excavation of the site.

Heather Horner



The south elevation of Cogges Stables, showing relieving timbers for former openings, added stone stairs to an inserted hay loft, and a mounting block for hackney horses. The sarsen stone below the foundations is indicated bottom right.

Attention to Detail

VAG Winter Conference 4th 5th January 2014, University of Leicester.

A grey wet afternoon welcomed us to the Leicester University Halls of Residence campus for the Vernacular Architecture Group (VAG) Winter Conference. The theme this year was *Attention to Detail* and comprised many short presentations covering a wide range of subjects from timber marks, peg holes, doors, shutters, and paint, to taper burn marks. Some specific papers were given about the History of Pennine Bastles and Textile Mills in south-west England. Linda Hall also gave a pre-amble of fixtures and fittings to be seen in buildings at the VAG Spring Conference in Gloucestershire in April.

Three lectures particularly caught my attention; David Clark's opening paper *Attention to Detail*, Lee Prosser's presentation on Baltic timber marks and Nick Hill and John Deane's paper about burn and taper marks.

David Clark's lecture used the OBR building survey of 84 St Aldates, Oxford, to show the range of items and features within a building that can be recorded to provide evidence of construction and phases. This particular building gave a unique research opportunity as it was being deconstructed prior to repair and reconstruction on site. Centuries of alterations were gradually peeled away to reveal the earliest structure. The building survey involved a great deal of detailed recording, including making rafter and joist surveys, recording lath dimensions, phases of paint colours and plaster layers, and different types of nails used, some of which were cast. This information showed changes of use domestic/commercial, changing stair and window positions, reuse of wood that had been moved/repared and so on. The survey benefited from using 'total archaeology', where archaeological evidence, documents (the land had belonged to All Souls), and evidence taken from the standing building all contributed to the final report. David closed by adding, that as a result of detailed survey methods, new research areas are opening up into such things as plaster, nails and forelock bolts.

Lee Prosser's lecture *1730 – 1800 Baltic Timber Marks* introduced another area of developing research. Lee explained the derivation of Baltic timber marks, that is marks on softwood timber, imported from Prussia, from the 18th to the 19th century.

The main timber capture area in Prussia (now Poland) was the Vistula River. The trees were felled in winter, dragged to rivers, and sent downstream as rafts, often carrying other goods, to the Baltic ports for export. The timber was marked usually at each major transaction, for instance, with the port of origin, the destination port, the name of the ship transporting the timber or the name of the exporting merchant. The marks could also include tally marks, dates, initials, stock numbers and can be scribed, painted (Norwegian), pencilled or chalked.



Above: an example of Baltic timber marks recorded by OBR members in Abingdon Long Gallery. This set is on a softwood transverse beam inserted as an 18th century alteration to the ground floor.

(photo H.Horner)

Scribed timbers are thought to come from Prussia. I usually find these inscriptions illegible, but Lee explained that they are often in a form of seraphic script, and when seen *in situ* in a building they are sometimes upside down, or cut in half, (as the timber has later been halved). Lee told us that there are good examples of Baltic marks in the rope walk at Chatham Dock Yard, and that Dan Atkinson's PhD thesis *Shipbuilding and timber management in the Royal Dockyards 1750-1850* <http://research-repository.st-andrews.ac.uk/handle/10023/472> is worth a look. [Editor's note: interesting parallel system, though a study of ship timber marking only]

Nick Hill's presentation was entitled *Burn and Taper Marks, Accidental or Deliberate?* Co-authored by John Deane, they described an exercise in experimental archaeology to try to determine how burn and taper marks were made. Nick and John realised they had to reproduce original types of



Above: another example of timber marks recorded by OBR members in the 15th century Abingdon Long Gallery. Burn marks on a timber post of the ground floor. Note that they have been made after the horizontal rail was removed (empty mortise) indicating that they post-date the original structure.

Photo D.Clark

candles to be able to imitate the marks. This took some experimentation, using different types of

light sources, *i.e.* rush lights, tapers and candles, and different types of animal fat. Once made the light sources were held against pieces of timber and left to burn. Free-standing candles were soon eliminated. Tapers and rush lights were more successful and if a flame was held in position could leave a burn mark 3mm deep after 15 minutes. Nick and John found that a charcoal deposit would build up and act as insulation, limiting the depth and length of the mark. The charcoal had to be scraped out to enable the formation of a deeper mark. They concluded that the marks took time and effort to make and were therefore deliberate. Although Nick wanted to avoid discussing the meaning of these marks, he did wonder whether the actual act of making them had some significance especially as they are left in prominent places. *[The Editor interrupting again: there is still a discussion to be had on dating burn marks, in my opinion, (considerably) post-Reformation to early 18th century.]*

I found the conference very informative and remembered a comment from David Clark's presentation that 'You can only record what you recognise as being important'. The conference certainly expanded my knowledge of what to look for.

Donna Thynne

More committee members needed

Space on our lively committee for more volunteers. We will be looking to elect new members at our AGM in May. In particular, we need an events organiser. After several seasons, Ann Atkinson feels it is time to step back. If any member feels this might be something they could take on, but needs more information, Ann would be happy to outline the role, without commitment. E-mail adenatkinson@aol.com.

Membership Renewal

It does come round fast! If you have a pink Membership Renewal form enclosed with this edition of *The Oxon Recorder*, we have not yet received your subscription for 2014. We need a cheque or direct transfer from you, or better still a direct debit order.

If you have no pink form, then we have your cheque or details to collect your subscription direct from your bank, no further action needed, thank you.

The documentation of a Gloucestershire Barn

Amongst the most important collections of documents to have been acquired or placed on loan in the Oxfordshire County Record Office during the last twenty years have been the Chastleton estate papers. These were kept in the family archives until the house was sold by Mrs Clutton Brock to the National Trust. The Trust

have loaned the material to the Oxfordshire County Record Office, now the Oxfordshire History Centre based in St Luke's, Cowley. The papers have been efficiently catalogued and are available for inspection and study.

Chastleton is in the far north western part of Oxfordshire and the parish sticks out like a tongue into neighbouring Warwickshire and Gloucestershire. It is unsurprising to hear that the landed interest of the estate extended into

neighbouring counties. In 1735 Henry Jones of Chastleton married Elizabeth Hancock, daughter of Charles Hancock who held by copyhold the demesnes of the Manor of Elmstone Hardwick, Gloucestershire. Hardwick Farm with 494 acres was the largest farm of the estate. In 1728, a John Hancock was one of two lives added to the lease, and lived at Chastleton House from April 1761 to his death in 1793.

In the late 1770s it seems that the Hardwick Farm was a sad place and we are told that "the farmer was very sulky about going out but I think it is time for somebody else to come there to keep it in better order than it is now." Among the proposals to improve the buildings was the estimate made by Thomas Brown, carpenter, on January 23 1779 to erect a barn and cow stalls at Hardwick Farm (OHC E24/3/Y/1). Whereas early farm buildings frequently survive in the landscape, it is rare to find them described and costed in this way.

Opposite is a transcription of Thomas Brown's specifications, and on the next page copies of part of the plans which accompanied the proposal.

In other documents within the archive it seems that barns in this area had timber floors.

Octoberth 10 Win Cox 1 day reparing barne floor 0-1-0

*Septth 8 Win Cox teaking up the barne floor 0-1-0
Nailles 2 pairs 0-0-8 and inch Board 23 feet yorsed at the Barne 0-2-10½*

In another paper John Hancock proposes to meet Mr Jones in Cheltenham and reckoned there was no point in buying stone which was very dear "and it is my opinion there is stone to be raised on the premises and till then I cannot settle the price of that commodity!"

In addition there is a plan of the proposed barn and cow stalls, the timbers drawn with parallel lines infilled with light brown colour wash and annotated in black ink.

Naturally the question will be raised - was the barn built? If so, does it survive? A visit to Hardwick is required. So far I have not done this myself; perhaps one of our members will visit the farm and report in a subsequent newsletter.

John Steane

Transcription

Stonework

The foundation to be of stone 1 foot deep and 18 inches wide about 200 foot in length. The floor about 38 feet is of lime stone at 4½th the foot. £6-8-0.

The Bricke Worke

The walls to be Raised 3 feet high with a 14 inch Brick wall and will be about 43 yard which will take about 6,500 of Brick which with Brick lime sand and laying £7-16-0.

The Carpenters Worke

The side & walls, End walls, and the Under Building of the Porch [*presumably the lean-to cow stalls either side of the wagon porch*] and the two Pine Ends to buy Timber 10 foot high will be about 1880 foot which with oak sills, Nails, framing and setting up at 92 ft square will come to £30-5-6.

The roof of the Barn will be about 1761 foot at 32s per square £28-3-2.

The weatherboarding the Barn's Doors with Dry Elm or Deal Boards, Nails and hanging £2-2-0.

For Boarding up to the sill of Each side the floor with Dry inch Elm board will be 126 feet with nails and worke £1-1-0.

The tilling will be about 16 square inch with Tilles lath nails, lime hair and laying at 25s per square £20-0-0.

The hanging and fastening for the Doors £1-8-0
£109-18-2

Editor's comments. The documents reproduced on the next page have been greatly reduced, and no scale appears in the plans. Also, only part of the very large sheet seems to have been copied. The title reads "Tho'. Browns Plans for a Barn and Cows Stalls to be build on Hardwick Farm 23rd Jan'y 1773:"

There are some interesting details in the annotations. Every peg hole is marked. Each timber is dimensioned, *e.g.* the sills are to be 6 by 8 [*inches*], the wallplates 8 by 4, and much of the framing 6 by 4 except the door posts at 6 by 7. Note that the corner posts are jowled, and that there are two sets of through purlins. The tie beam is 10 by 6, the lower collar 7 by 3½, and the upper collar 7 by 4 laid flatways so that the roof can be "Hapid off".

The side bays are each 17 by 20 [*feet*], presumably with earth floors, as there are sills to each side of the threshing floor, which is to be boarded with elm, and a 12 foot square porch.

Either side of the porch are the lean-to cow stalls, with framing on "a Brick wall 1 foot high and 9 Inches thick". Interestingly, these are labelled "The side wall of the sheal". This appears to be a colloquial word; the OED lists *sheil* as a *temporary building, usually of boards, a sheiling, a small house, cottage, hovel*. [ME]. Has anyone met this use of the word locally?

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

OBR events

Sunday 11 May 2014 **Recording day in Chipping Norton. Street/tenement surveys.** Contact Vicky Hubbard, who is coordinating the project. (e-mail hubbards4@tesco.net) to register interest & receive more information about time and place, likely to be 9.30 am start, bring packed lunch, inclement weather alternative in place.

Contact details for **photograph and document** information/volunteers (see Issue 57): Jan Cliffe, e-mail jan@theciffefamily.co.uk, telephone 01608 641057 Adrienne Rosen, e-mail adrienne.rosen@kellogg.ox.ac.uk

Saturday 10 May 2014 **Watlington : OBR AGM, talks, lunch, walking tour and tea.** OBR recorded Watlington Town Hall last year. We will meet in the hall for a short AGM, then explore the upper reaches of the building. After lunch in the hall, we will have a guided tour of the town led by local historian and OBR member Tim Horton and our Secretary David Clark. **FLYER ENCLOSED**

Sunday 29 June 2014 **Recording day in Chipping Norton. Street/tenement surveys.** Contact details above.

Sunday 31 August 2014 **OBR excursion to Checkendon.** Checkendon is a picturesque village set high on the Chilterns in South Oxfordshire surrounded by beechwoods. The village has a cluster of houses dating from the Medieval Period up to the Arts and Crafts era, centred on an 11th century church. Visits will include a 15th century cruck dwelling, a nearby farm with threshing barns and an un-restored medieval farmhouse, and an Arts and Crafts house.

Please register your interest by contacting Ann Atkinson tel 01993 706210 adenatkinson@aol.com Further details and a booking form will appear in the next newsletter.

Saturday 22 November 2014 OBR Presentations Day, venue t.b.c.

Other organisations

OUDCCE weekend and weekly courses. All open to the public. Oxford University Department of Continuing Education, Rewley House, Wellington Street, Oxford. Information and booking 01865 280892 or ppdayweek@conted.ox.ac.uk

24 April 2014 Thursday mornings **Vernacular Architecture of Oxfordshire Towns and Villages**, tutor Paul Clark

Fri 26-28 September 2014 . **Workers Homes: Improvement and Technology** In conjunction with Vernacular Architecture Group. [various other Architectural History courses on offer, see brochures or website]

OAHS (Oxfordshire Architectural & Historical Society) Lectures, Excursions, Oxfordshire Past

OAHS Lectures Rewley House, Wellington Street, Oxford on Tuesdays at 5.30 pm Free, open to all (with an invitation to join OAHS). New season starts October, watch for brochure.

4 November 2014 **OBR Lecture** Speaker & date t.b.c.

Saturday 31 May 2014 **OxfordshirePast.** Round-up of the year's local finds, including OBR. Woodstock Community Centre. 10am – 4pm, OAHS AGM in lunch break. £7 for day, booking necessary. Pay online at <http://oxfordshirepast.org/> or contact Shaun Morley, Tithe Corner, 67 Hill Crescent, Finstock, Chipping Norton, OX7 3BT

OAHS Excursions A full programme this season, see <http://www.oahs.org.uk> , early booking advised.

Saturday 17 May **Ockwells Manor, Maidenhead & Dorney Court, Windsor.**

Saturday 14 June **A Walking Tour in Ewelme** with Simon Townley.

Saturday 19 June **Whittington Court, Andoversford, Nr Cheltenham.**

Saturday 9 August **A Walking Tour in North Oxford** with Peter Howell.

Saturday 13 September **Frogmore Paper Mill, Hemel Hempstead & Piccotts End Artisan's Cottages.**

Copy date and contacts

Copy date for Issue 59 is 1 June 2014. Please send articles, information, letters, reviews, etc. to the editor, Heather Horner, at Windrush Cottage, Station Road, South Leigh, Oxon. OX29 6XN, telephone 01993 773819, e-mail hahwindrush@aol.com

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e-mail secretary@obr.org.uk, or drc@davidrdark.plus.com or david.clark3@which.net

The Events Secretary is Ann Atkinson tel 01993 706210 e-mail adenatkinson@aol.com

Our website is at www.OBR.org.uk, where all the illustrations are in full colour!

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.

