

The OXON RECORDER

The Newsletter of Oxfordshire Buildings Record

Issue 52 Autumn 2012



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

Recording Day at Ewelme Saturday 13 October Old Mill House *Flyer distributed via e-mail, see p7.*

Recording Day at Watlington Sunday 18 November The Town Hall *Flyer enclosed.*

OBR Annual Presentations Day, Ewelme Saturday 24 November. Catch up with the OBR year *Flyer enclosed.*

Scotch Notches A different interpretation.

OBR visit to Gloucester A report on a most enjoyable day out.

More Lost Buildings We need an identification.

Recent Recording The deconstruction of the rear range of 84 St Aldates, Oxford.

Volume XVII VCH launch With special offer flyer to OBR members enclosed.

Heather Horner, newsletter editor

'Scotch' notches – a different interpretation.

In Edition 51 of *The Oxon Recorder* we carried a report of the OBR visit to Dorchester-on-Thames, which included a photo of a 'scotch' in the timbers of *The George Inn* courtyard lodging range.



(Photo H.Horner)

OBR member Ken Hume writes to point out that scotch notches have nothing to do with the original raising of the building. Instead, they relate directly to later repairs - generally to lift and support the frame so that a repair can be undertaken, e.g. replacement of a rotten sill or underbuilding in brick. This technique is the

medieval equivalent of using an Acrow prop. So where you see scotch notches, you should be looking down and not up!

I trust an OBR member will check this out in Dorchester, and give us some feed-back Ed.



*Above : The spectacular scissor-braced roof of about 1250 in Blackfriars Priory, Gloucester, visited by OBR in June. See report next page
Photo H.Horner.*

OBR Gloucester Visit Saturday 30 June 2012

Blackfriars Priory

We gathered in Blackfriars Priory to be met by Phil Moss and Julie Hodcroft who introduced us to the priory history and buildings. The Dominican order was founded in France at the beginning of the 13th C. They came to Britain in 1222, the first order was established in Oxford and the next in London. The Gloucester order began in 1239 and was sponsored by Henry III who donated land and timber from the Forest of Dean. The buildings were completed in 1270. It is thought that the priory stood originally in the outer bailey of Henry's castle (now the site of Gloucester goal). The priory is possibly the best preserved Dominican priory in Britain. This is mainly due to the enterprising Thomas Bell, a clothier and sometime Alderman of Gloucester who bought the priory in 1539 after the Dissolution and kept most of it intact. He turned the church into his house and the buildings of the quadrangle into a woollen factory and warehouse. During this time some of the church was demolished and now only parts of the chancel and nave remain. Nevertheless the magnificent 13th C scissor brace roof is still *in situ* (see cover photo and below). Thomas Bell used the east end of the nave as a banqueting hall and the west end was divided into two floors and used as a parlour and great chamber.

In the quadrangle we first visited the east range. The ground floor was once the Prior's lodging. One room had the remains of a 14th-15th C wall painting imitating brocade wall hangings. Adjacent was Thomas Bell's kitchen, the large kitchen fireplace had a smaller internal hearth, and the chimney had been strengthened with an internal transverse brick or stone arch.



Looking up the chimney

On the first floor of this range is the monk's dormitory, a large open room with an impressive scissor-braced roof as in the nave.

The south range comprised a 'buttery' on the ground floor and a scriptorium above. The 'buttery' was thought to be for storing food as well as butts of drink. Each truss had a very large tie beam supporting numerous joists for the floor above. The amount of timber in the ceiling seemed well over specification, but when we considered that the scriptorium was a library, it is not so surprising considering the weight of books. Some of the tie beams were supported by posts set onto stone corbels, each had a tenoned brace from the beam to the post (*below*).



The scriptorium is thought to be the oldest library building in Britain. It consists of a large open space with 29 carrels on the north and south walls, each with its own window, a carrel being a scribe's place. Each carrel was separated by a pier and would have had an extended partition and curtains. The windows have a splayed reveal on one side only, to project light onto the scribe's desk.



Carrels in the scriptorium. (photo H.Horner)

Again the roof had the same scissor brace construction as in the church and dormitory.



Another scissor-braced roof. The Dormitory was the only heated space (photo H.Horner)

The west range mainly consists of two early 19th C semi-industrial buildings.

Thomas Bell died in 1556 and from then on until the 20th C the priory continued to be used as an industrial building. The buildings now belong to English Heritage who undertook conservation work in the 1960's; management has been passed to Gloucester City Council and it is used as a cultural centre.

Personally I thought this was an exceptional group of buildings, the scissor brace roofs and the scriptorium were worth the visit alone. The buildings still maintain the scale and atmosphere of the original priory. This is mainly due to the sympathetic restoration, where the modern insertions and glass walls don't distract or take your eye away from the medieval ranges.

Lunch at the New Inn

The New Inn is a galleried inn dating from



the 15th C; it once provided accommodation for pilgrims to Edward II's shrine in St Peter's Abbey (now the Cathedral) and is definitely worth a visit. Constructed in oak and chestnut, the jetty and decorated jetty brackets in the side alley gave an indication of the status of the building. (photo below left)

City Tour

We divided into several small groups and were escorted by Gloucester Civic Trust Guides for individual tours of the city and Greyfriars Priory. My main impression of the city was that many early buildings were hidden behind later 18th and 19th C facades, including a fine medieval shop and other medieval inns which were also associated with monastic houses in the city. Some, as Robert Raikes's House, have been restored to reveal timber-framed frontages, featuring 3 bays, 3 storeys and 3 jetties.



Frontage of Robert Raikes's House (photo H.Horner)

Greyfriars Priory

Greyfriars Priory has fared much worse than Blackfriars. The original priory was built in 1231 on land given by Thomas Lord Berkeley and was also sponsored by Henry III. The Berkeleys provided funds to rebuild the priory church in 1518 in the perpendicular gothic style. The new building was unfortunately short lived, when in 1538 at the Dissolution it was sold and turned into a brewery. The building was badly damaged in the Civil War during the Siege of Gloucester in 1643, when it was used as the headquarters for Cromwell's general, General Edward Massie. It was later divided into houses, then shops (our guide remembered visiting the shops). In the 1960s, much neglected and run down, the roof was sold and it was declared a monument and is now owned by English Heritage. The roofless nave and north aisles are the only parts remaining.



The Cathedral from the cloisters (photo H.Horner)

Our tour ended at the Cathedral, where we had a chance to admire some of the restored



stonework before dispersing. By coincidence, we had visited all the monastic houses in Gloucester sponsored by Henry III, (he also sponsored the Abbey, now the Cathedral). Luckily these buildings are still standing and in (relatively) good heart after more than 700 years. For me this was a very satisfying day, I would definitely recommend a visit, especially to the Blackfriars Priory. The tour guides were excellent, and thanks go to Ann Atkinson for organising a memorable day.

Donna Thynne

(All photos D.Thynne except where stated)

Oxfordshire's lost buildings



Since we have not had many offers of photos of lost buildings, we thought we would ask you to try to identify some unlabelled photographs which have recently come to light in the archives of Vale of White Horse. They could be anywhere, not just VWH, and they may or may not be 'lost', they could well still be standing. Here is the first one of quite a bundle. If you recognise this farmhouse, please e-mail or write to the Secretary or Editor (contact details back page)

Heather.Horner

Gift Aid Members should shortly receive a communication from our treasurer, either by e-mail or snail-mail, concerning gift-aiding your subscription. We encourage you to respond promptly and positively.

The recording of the rear wing at 84 St Aldate's Oxford



The rear wing of 84 St Aldate's was in a sorry state, having been roofless and tarpaulined for 30 years.

This recording project was a new venture for OBR in many ways. Although we have always been reluctant to work in areas more properly the province of professional recorders, we accepted the chance to carry out a full recording of this building while it was being demolished because of the experience we would gain. It was indeed a remarkable effort and very worthwhile, even though the report and drawings will take some more weeks yet to complete.

The owner of the building had permission to take it down, have it conserved and then rebuilt within a modern shell on the same site. As the contract was won by Dan Miles, we had no hesitation in working with him to ensure that the building was restored to the best possible state, and the recording played an important role in providing him with drawings which were used to number all the timbers as they were removed and taken to his yard at Mapledurham.

Recording took place from 29 February to 14 August 2012, with a number of OBR members involved at various times. Those who helped with recording were: Victor Allison, David Clark, Paul Clark, Barbara Creed, Keri Dearmer, John Hine, Heather Horner, Chris Howlett, David Hughes, Ann Lloyd, Jacquie Martinez, Colin Smith, Sally Stradling, Jenny Vince and Martin Whitworth. We also had help from Julian Munby (Oxford Archaeology), Norma Aubertin-Potter and Gaye Morgan (All Souls College), John Steane, Julian Reid (Corpus Christi College), Jean Hodges (a descendant of a previous owner) and the Oxfordshire Probate Group. The work was governed by an archaeological recording brief prepared by David Radford, City Archaeologist.

The key tasks were to make measured drawings of the trusses, the roof and wall frames, the joists and floors. These were done on site using large sheets of graph paper and scale rules to convert the measurements directly to a scale of 1:20. These were then traced on to draughting film and photocopied as necessary. The wall frames were drawn as long sections using individual drawings made of the first floor and roof frames for each bay. This allowed teams to work independently on separate parts of the building, as for much of the time it was not possible to measure the full length of the structure at one time due to internal partitions.

During this work, we were greatly helped by the use of a laser level provided by Graham, Dan's foreman on the task. This is a piece of kit the OBR would be wise to acquire for future recording jobs.

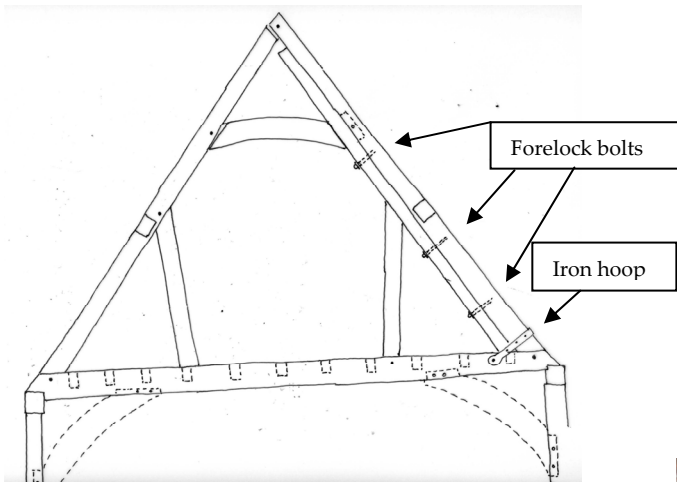
The rear building at 84 St Aldate's consisted of a stone wall along the northern boundary of the site on to which was built a timber framed structure supported to the east by the house fronting the street (*photo top left*). There was a stone chimneystack against the north wall, later extended upwards in yellow brick. The only later external additions to the building were two late 20th C brick outshuts at the west end. The roof covering had been removed and replaced by plastic sheeting, but we found evidence that both Stonesfield slates and plain red tiles had been used earlier.

Despite some missing and rotten timbers, the timber frame had much to tell about the design and construction of the building. To the north, a sill-plate rested on what was undoubtedly a pre-existing stone wall, and the first floor structure was built on that. To the south the frame sill beam seems to have rested on the ground, with no obvious foundation, and the ground floor frame was constructed first so that the first floor could act as a platform from which the next stage of the walls could be built so avoiding the use of scaffolding. This was confirmed by the fact that the pegs in both wall frames at first floor level had been driven in from the inside of the building. Above first floor level the frame consisted of five bays delineated by six trusses, each comprising a pair of principal rafters tenoned into a tie-beam and a pair of queen-posts tenoned into the principals at the height of the purlins. The principals were joined near the apex by collars. The bays were of different widths – 1, 2 and 5 had eight common rafters, 3 and 4 had six. Trusses 1-5

were fair-faced to the east; the fair west face of truss 6 defined the western end and this was confirmed by the purlin tenons, which here filled the full length of the mortice, rather than only half of it as was the case in the other bays.

The roof frames were characterised by separate butt-purlins in each bay, set with a shoulder slightly into the principal. The common rafters were in two separate parts, but shared a mortice within the purlin. Only the upper rafter was pegged to the purlin (from the exterior). The feet of the common rafters were set into shallow mortices in the wall-plate. There was no ridge, all the rafters being fixed at the apex by mortice-and-tenon joints. Most of the rafters had assembly marks, deeply chiselled Roman numerals, in a mirror-image layout so that the numbers read 'normally' down the rafter from the apex.

One of the roof trusses is shown below. This had a pine $\frac{3}{4}$ -tree trunk attached to the principal rafter by three iron forelock bolts, and at the foot both timbers were clasped to the tie-beam by an iron hoop fixed with a bolt. The collar had been removed, sawn down and re-fixed by nails to the inserted timber.



Upper part of T4 from east

There was a 17th C three-light window in bay 1 but the wall-plate had stave mortices in the soffit – two of which were visible above the window lintel. There was a corresponding groove in the rail below suggesting that the panel was closed before the window was inserted.

Dan Miles also took core samples for tree-ring dating. These showed that the primary frame was built from timber felled over a period of years up to and including the winter of 1636/7, and hence the structure was probably built in the early months of 1637. The property was at that time owned by All Souls College, and their lessee was Thomas Seymour, Manciple of Corpus Christi. We

have so far been unable to discover the original purpose of the building. A structure on the site was later described as a malthouse, and the central two-bay open first floor may have been used for this, but there was no evidence for a kiln. Seymour may have had a sideline business of some sort, or he may have wanted to set up a trade for his son. However, the building seems to have had a chimneystack from the start, and the eastern bays appear to have had a domestic purpose ancillary to the house on St Aldate's.

In 1643, Seymour gave houseroom to the Elliotts, royal servants who needed to be close to the king at Christ Church. This family would have needed at least three rooms for a mother, son and two daughters. The visitors may have been put up in the rear building or, more likely the Seymours may have been expected to give up their main property for important visitors. This may have provided the motivation for a new staircase in the rear building which allowed the spaces to be used independently of those in the house in front, and for the installation of new windows to light the accommodation.

Later tenants were maltsters but when All Souls sold the property in around 1800 a baker was living there. A college servant owned it in the mid 19th C and it was a restaurant in 1881. By the end of the century it was an ironmonger's shop. In the 20th C there was a saddler and a greengrocer, with T G West, motor engineers in the rear building from 1927. In the second half of the century the upper floor of the rear building was for many years the kitchen of the Restaurant Elizabeth, which operated at first floor level using rooms in nos.82, 83 and 84.

David Clark



(photo K Chandler, who says I look like a ghost)

And to fill a little space, one of your intrepid recorders in full working gear (it was by turns cold/hot, dark/bright, and always dirty). Come to Presentation Day on 24 November at Ewelme to hear the full story, with lots more illustrations.

Latest Victoria County History volume now available

Volume 17 of the Oxfordshire Victoria County History (subtitled Broadwell, Langford and Kelmscott) was launched at Kelmscott Manor in September, and is now available. Publishers Boydell and Brewer are kindly offering a discount to OBR members (flyer enclosed with this issue of *The Oxon Recorder*)

The new 300-page book covers nine villages near the Oxfordshire-Gloucestershire border: Broadwell, Broughton Poggs, Filkins, Grafton, Holwell, Kelmscott, Langford, Little Faringdon, and Radcot. Thanks to its William Morris connections Kelmscott is by far the most famous, but the area as a whole has a complex and interesting history from Anglo-Saxon times onwards, when it formed a single large estate.

OBR members will be most interested in the buildings, which reflect the limestone-built vernacular of the Cotswolds. Many use local stone, which was quarried at Filkins probably from the Middle Ages. The villages' built characters reflect their contrasting experience: Langford and Filkins, for instance, contain numerous houses with relatively grand, classically influenced fronts, built by prosperous and aspirational yeoman freeholders. Architect-designed gentry houses include the gothic-style Bradwell Grove House, now the centre of the Cotswold Wildlife Park, (*above right*) and the book also covers some important lost buildings,



from the demolished Norman castle at Radcot (excavated by *Time Team*) to the 18th C Filkins Hall, burned down in 1876. A particular feature is the Vernacular Revival buildings erected in the early 20th C, some of them by Morris's widow and daughter at Kelmscott. Others are found at Filkins, where Sir Stafford Cripps worked with the local mason George Swinford on a number of community building projects, and ensured that new council housing (designed by Percy Morley Holder and Stanley Roth) was built in local vernacular style.

Building investigation benefited substantially from the help of OBR secretary David Clark, and we were glad to be able to welcome David and some other OBR stalwarts to the Kelmscott launch, which was capped by a visit to the Manor.

Simon Townley

We will try to include a review of this volume in next edition of The Oxon Recorder. Any volunteers?

Review copy of Volume 17 available – Ed.

Recording Day Saturday 13 October: The Old Mill House, Ewelme

An opportunity has arisen to study and record this complex multi-phase house in Ewelme, on the edge of the Oxfordshire Chilterns. Its medieval core contains cruck timbers, but the house has been repeatedly altered and extended, and in the early 20th C was turned into a gentleman's residence. Despite the name it was not physically attached to the mill, which stood across the road by the stream and burned down in the 19th C. It was, however, part of the mill holding from an early date. The VCH is currently researching Ewelme, and will assemble some basic documentary history.

If you would like to take part please email David Clark at secretary@obr.org.uk, or Simon Townley of the VCH at

simon.townley@history.ox.ac.uk. This will be a full-day recording, and numbers may have to be limited. There should be opportunities for on-the-job-training, so do not hesitate even if you are inexperienced at recording.



Correction to Do you still want a paper copy of *The Oxon Recorder*?

Sorry, an e-mail address error crept into last issue, so I repeat the message, this time with the correct contact details. Ed.

At OBR AGM on 12 May 2012, a question was asked about electronic versions of *The Oxon Recorder*. Each issue (in full colour) is uploaded to the members' section on our website, sometimes

even before the hard copies have been posted. If this is your preferred way to receive our newsletter, please e-mail the membership secretary Paul Clark at Membership@obr.org.uk. We will send you an e-mail to notify you as soon as a new edition is available. We will then also use e-mail to remind you about membership renewal, and remove you from our postal list.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

OBR events

Saturday 6 October 2012 OBR trip to **Hook Norton**, tour of brewery, tastings, lunch, guided tour of town Details in Issue 51, or telephone Ann Atkinson 01993 706210. *Sorry, Issue 52 unlikely to reach you in time - Ed.*

Saturday 13 October 2012 **Recording Day at Ewelme** The Old Mill House. Training available, suit beginners. E-mail Simon Townley. simon.townley@history.ox.ac.uk **Flyer enclosed**

Tuesday 6 November **OBR sponsored lecture, please support.** Artisan art: the significance of the wall painting of the early modern period by Dr Kathryn Davies. Details below under OAHS.

Sunday 18 November **Recording Day at Watlington** The Town Hall Training available, suit beginners. **Flyer enclosed**

Saturday 24 November **OBR Presentations Day, Ewelme.** Guided village walkabout, building visits, lunch, presentations by OBR members on recent work and current interests. Your chance to catch up with the year, even if you cannot be an active member. **Flyer enclosed**

Other organisations

OUDECE 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

Thursday evenings 10 weeks from January 2013 **Medieval Rural Houses** Tutor: David Clark, at Rewley House

Tuesday evenings 10 weeks from April 2013 **Talking Houses: An Introduction to Vernacular Architecture.** Tutor: Paul Clark, at Ewart House.

(Several other 10-week and weekend courses could be of interest to OBR members, e.g. churches, gardens, interiors. See brochures)

Oxfordshire Architectural and Historical Society (OAHS) Lectures held at Rewley House, Tuesdays at 5.30pm, free, open to non-members.

9 October 2012 A Berkshire landowner in the Commonwealth: Lord Craven's case, 1650-60 by Dr Manfred Brod

23 October The Clarendon Building: Printing Houses and Propyleum by Dr Geoffrey Tyack

6 November Artisan art: the significance of the wall painting of the early modern period by Dr Kathryn Davies **OBR sponsored lecture, please support.**

20 November The restoration of Abingdon County Hall and redisplay of the Museum by Jane Bowen

4 December Oxford's Historic Waterway – from legend to leisure by Mark Davies

15 January 2013 Oxfordshire's Swing Riots of 1830-31 – a fresh view by Shaun Morley

29 January The late Iron Age and Romano-British landscapes of the Vale of the White Horse by William Wintle

Wiltshire Buildings Record Market Lavington Community Hall, nr Devizes. www.wiltshirebuildingsrecord.org.uk

3 November 2012 Inside architecture – domestic interiors from the early modern period to 1900. Annual study day.

Society of Antiquaries, Burlington House, Piccadilly. henderson.paula@btinternet.com (or Ed. & Sec have booking form)

19 January 2013 New Insights into 16th and 17th C British Architecture. One-day conference. Student places available.

Copy date and contacts

Copy date for Issue 53 is 1 December 2012. 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

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e-mail drc@davidrclark.plus.com or david.clark3@which.net

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.

