

OXFORDSHIRE BUILDINGS RECORD

The Oxon Recorder

Online Newsletter

The Oxon Recorder is the newsletter of Oxfordshire Buildings Record and is published four times a year. OBR aims to advance education and promote research on the buildings of Oxfordshire by encouraging the recording of buildings and to create and manage a publicly accessible repository of records relating to such buildings. *The Oxon Recorder* is also available on our website www.obr.org.uk Copy date for the next issue is 1 March 2015. Please send any contributions or comments to: newsletter@obr.org.uk



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Secretary's Note

Following our appeal for a new editor for the newsletter, we have had a number of offers to help, and shall shortly be welcoming Richard Farrant as a co-opted member of the committee and 'editor-in-chief'. Richard will, I hope, take the newsletter forward into the digital age in a far more competent manner than I have been able to do in lashing up this edition as the first in the New Year. However, Barbara Creed has been working on the Mailchimp software to get it into a professional form, and if it looks OK, that is entirely down to her. Please let her have any feedback about how it worked for you.

Subscriptions

It's January once again, and the start of the OBR financial year, so if you don't have a standing order, please send your cheque for £5 to *Paul Clark, Membership Secretary, Grove End Farm, Henbrook Lane, Upper Brailes, Banbury, Oxon OX15 5BA* now. It would be a great help if you could pay by standing order in future or use a Bank Transfer. Our bank details are: Oxfordshire Buildings Record, Nat West Bank, Sort code 60-70-03 Account No. 84266643.

If you do not intend to continue your membership, please email Paul Clark at membership@obr.org.uk. This will save you being bombarded with reminders for the rest of the year.



Great Haseley windmill. (D. Clark)

Presentation Day, Great Haseley 22 November 2014

Our annual 'Presentation Day' has become a well-supported fixture in the OBR's calendar of events. In it we aim to survey the work we have done during the past year, and in recent years have chosen to do this in a place that has featured in our work, thereby

allowing members and guests to have a walk around the location in the morning before hearing members report of their activities. For 2014 the choice of a village in the area of study by the South Oxfordshire Project (SOP) and the Victoria County History (VCH) was almost inevitable, as a number of members had contributed to this work during the year and had many interesting finds to report. We also had in Great Haseley the added attraction of being able to have access to two important buildings, the 14th century church farm barn, and the recently restored 18th century windmill, both thanks to John Alexander, local resident and a key player in the conservation of buildings in the village.

The programme attracted a record number of members and guests, so after a welcome hot drink in the village hall, we divided into two groups, touring the village in opposite directions to look at the windmill and examples of vernacular cottages in the village centre before meeting up to go together to Crown House, and the barn.

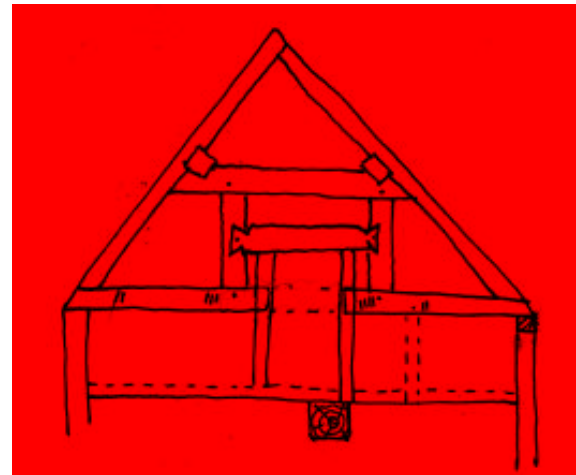
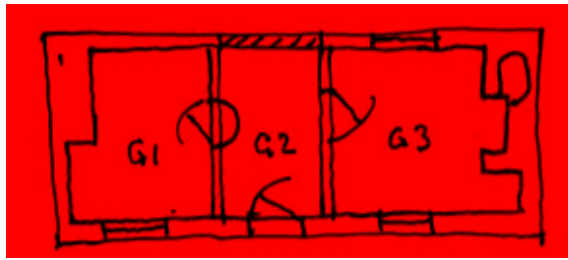
The windmill stands alone a short walk up a track (Mill Lane) from the village and has recently (thanks to the efforts of John Alexander and others) been restored to working order, with a fine cap and set of sails. Although there was a windmill in Haseley in the Middle Ages, it is not clear when the present one was built; in Oxfordshire Mills, Foreman puts it at 1760, while the VCH felt that it was probably early 19th century.



Mill Lane Cottages – Walnut Tree on left. (D. Clark)

One of the cottages we looked at was **Walnut Tree**, at the far end of the village on Mill Lane. This was a three-bay cottage with a queen-post roof structure, but possibly started life in the 17th century as a single-bay timber-framed house with a lean-to hovel at one

end. The stone cladding was probably 17th century or later.



Left: Sketch plan (not to scale) Right: Roof truss. (D. Clark)

The drawing of the roof truss shows the creation of a later doorway to allow movement between the upper spaces.



Crown House rear elevation (1960s architect's drawing)

Crown House was recently recorded by a team from OBR. The roof was made from timbers felled in 1450, but had been completely rebuilt. It seems that the range parallel to the street is what remains of the earlier building, and that in ca.1610 the alterations involved building the wings on to what remained of the earlier building – part of a small window (and an internal vertical shutter groove) was obscured by the north wing.

Study of the rafters suggests that there were enough for a 13-bay building. It was either unheated or had chimneystacks as the timbers were not sooted. Thus possible uses were as an almshouse (13 is a good number for that use), a court-house (it is just across the

road from the manor house) or a 'church house' for fundraising church ales, or chantry priests, or indeed for all or some of these.



Church Farm Barn (above) and (below) roof with 1313 truss in foreground (both © D. Clark)

Church Farm Barn is a ten-bay stone barn of ca.1313 with truncated-principal roof trusses marked with Arabic numerals – we could see a 6 on a purlin. The barns were repaired in 1485/6 by the then owners, the canons of the chapel of St George at Windsor but by 1495/6 the entire framework of the eastern three bays (and the roof of the porch) was replaced with the present arcaded structure. The western bays were removed in 1811, when the three remaining 14th-century trusses were supplied with additional arcade posts to relieve the pressure on the walls.

The scarfed extended arcade posts of the 1495/6 phase were shown by

dendrochronology to be contemporary with the construction, not a later repair; the need for extra scotches in these lower elements may have been for additional supporting timbers as the posts were levered into place in the knowledge that the scarf joints were a structural weak point until the timbers were vertical and in compression.

Lunch was provided by the wonderful Alison Broadbridge – those who went on the Checkendon excursion last summer will recall the magnificent lunch she gave us there.

Simon Townley of the VCH – and OBR committee member – kicked off the afternoon presentations with a brief overview of **Great Haseley parish**, based on work by assistant editor Mark Page. Key points were its position near two important roads, and by Davis's map of 1797 its landscape setting of open fields with enclosed grassland, supporting prosperous mixed arable farms. The manor had a succession of high status owners from the Conquest, finally the Dean and Chapter of St George's Chapel, Windsor from 1478. Their tenant farmers were able to build some imposing houses, such as Church Farm.



Church Farm House – one of the stylish farmhouses in the village (D. Clark)

A windmill was recorded in 1360. It also supported a range of trades – more usually associated with towns (and there was a market grant in 1228) – but here these proto-town characteristics were probably due to trading opportunities engendered by its proximity to the London/Oxford road. As for building materials, possible earlier timber buildings had given way to stone by the 17th century, and local quarries were supplying Oxford in the 1730s. The church, too, is surprisingly large – again a reflection of the wealth and status of its medieval owners and parishioners.

Sally Stradling, the building recording professional with the SOP, had the almost impossible task of summarising nine months' detailed work to understand how the buildings of the area contributed to the 'peasant perceptions' of life in the villages before 1650. Some 50 buildings had been investigated. She summarised the different treatment of stone and brickwork, the coexistence of cruck and box-framed construction in the houses and the types of scarf joint found – there seemed to be a common use of the double-splayed scarf joint with a dated example on 1414. She then discussed layouts – 2-bay halls with services being the most common – doors and windows, and hence how these allowed the occupants to see roads, fields, rivers, and to hear the sounds of church bells. Interiors were found with hitherto unknown wall-paintings, along with more usual signs of people's interaction with their houses such as datestones and burn marks. The work done clearly amounted to one of the most intensive surveys of buildings done in the county, and we were left wishing we did not have to wait a couple of years to see the publication of the results.



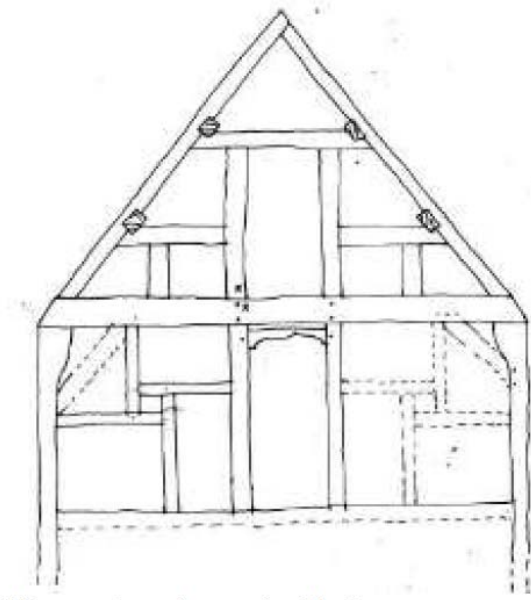
A typical South Oxfordshire fireplace. (D. Clark)

Heather Horner, one of the OBR helpers on Sally's team, then filled in some of the detail, drawing attention to details such as trestle-sawn (medieval) timbers, use of early (flat) augurs to start mortices, inserted fireplaces, some in the corners of rooms, and outside privies protected by yew trees – some of which seemed earlier than the houses. She also hinted at some emerging conclusions such as stone cladding of timber-framed cottages (such as we had seen on the village walk).

Secretary David Clark then reported on some houses he had helped record in nearby **Chalgrove** where a local group was working in parallel with SOP and VCH to bring

buildings and documents together in order to understand the village's historic development. Ten houses had been studied, mostly having early origins as small cottages. Cruck and box-framing were found together in the same houses, with some interesting late 16th/early 17th century transitions – some rebuildings of open hall houses but one with a possible change of plan during construction. Some new box-framed houses seemed to have been built for two families.

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Left: Unusual roof truss in Chalgrove. Right: Cruck cottage in Chalgrove. (both D. Clark)

Moving away from South Oxfordshire, Heather Horner reported on work that she and Donna Thynne had been doing at **Duck End, Stanton Harcourt**. This was another small (2½ bay) cruck-framed cottage with a lean-to hovel at one end. The building was being restored after a period of neglect and the opportunity to record it during the work was an excellent opportunity to develop a real understanding of the building.

The roof timbers were smoke-blackened and the apex of the cruck truss had a delicately shaped saddle. Unusually the in situ base coat of thatch was water reed. The inserted post-medieval floor, timbers with red ochre colouring, apotropaic marks on fireplace lintels and good 17th century door fittings made the cottage a treasure-house of features and an instructive case-study.



Cottage at Duck End. (D. Thynne)

At last year's Presentation Day in Chipping Norton we were given a taster of the work that was about to start on an English Heritage funded project, part of their '**Early Fabric in Historic Towns**' programme, and this year project manager Vicky Hubbard and local researcher John Marshall travelled the length of the county to update us on progress. A picture of the early town topography was emerging, with market infill and an industrial area to the north. All the initial surveys had been completed and work had started on more detailed investigations. One of the most interesting group of houses was on Market Place, where a decorative fire-surround was found backing on to a house with a spectacular smoke-blackened hall and cross-passage. This pair will be studied in the next phase, when some tree-ring dating may be possible.



Medieval House, Chipping Norton. (V. Hubbard)

Finally, the Secretary gave his usual round-up of some of the other buildings recorded during the year. One of the most exciting had been **Appleton Manor**, again as part of a local history project. This moated manor house has elements dating from the late 12th century and although many others have published reports on it, we were able to show that much of the apparently early stonework was an early 17th century rebuilding of the early medieval hall. This phase had also included a two-storey porch (ca.1605), fireplaces and upper rooms.

In **Burford** we had the opportunity to record a pair of cottages on the Hill that we had guessed were originally a single hall-and-cross-wing house when we studied the town for the VCH about ten years ago. Our conclusions were reported in *The Oxon Recorder* Issue 60 and will not be repeated here.

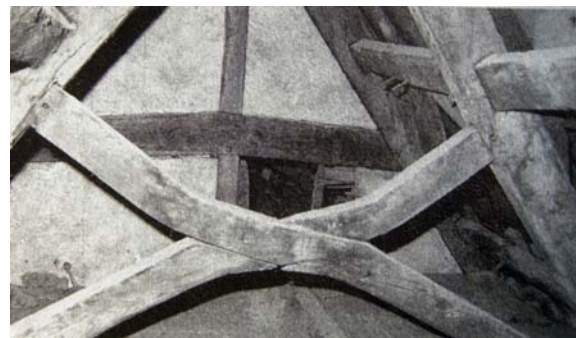


Lockinge Estate yard, Ardington. (D. Clark)



Underground bases for sawmill. (D. Clark)

Ending with something completely different, what had seemed to be an unprepossessing group of workshops at **Ardington for the Lockinge Estate** turned out to be a fascinating group of structures in which many of the different layers of change were still visible. The main building was a sawmill, built between 1881–5 and initially powered by a steam engine with a large boiler-house. Shafting from the engine ran underground to power the saws and other machines in the carpenters' and joinery shops – an arrangement possibly modelled on the works yard in Longlands at Holkham in Norfolk. Lord Wantage, the owner of Lockinge was well known as an agricultural innovator, and took note of what other landowners were doing to improve efficiency during the agricultural depression. Although most of the equipment had been taken away, enough remained of the fixtures and fittings to give a glimpse of what a hive of activity this must have been at one time. We hope that our findings at Ardington will influence the way in which the buildings are to be converted to domestic use.



Above left: Oak Inn, Westbury during demolition (P. Slocombe)

Right: Curved truss from 38 High Street, Steeple Ashton (Medieval Houses of Wiltshire p.93)

Curved Scissor-braces

More news on this roof type – see Issues 59 and 60. Ruth Gibson writes to say that the truss at 25 Market Place, Henley has now been tree-ring dated by Dan Miles to 1471.

And Pam Slocombe writes from Wiltshire:

I was interested in your items in *The Oxon Recorder* Issues 59 and 60 about the curved scissor braces in a roof at Henley. Wiltshire Buildings Record members have found various examples of scissor

braces in Wiltshire. There are a few early ones, for example at the Old Deanery in Salisbury Close of the late 13th or early 14th century and at the Red Lion, Milford Street, Salisbury of the 14th century. Then we have a group further north dating from the late 15th/early 16th century. Most are smoke-blackened. Recently we were able to dendro-date timbers from the Oak Inn, Westbury, which was only discovered to be scissor-braced during demolition. Two timbers dated to 1489 and four to 1507. There were some timbers from later in the 16th century but these were probably from alterations. The third phase in the county of bolted scissor braces dates from the 19th century. I gather from Matt Bristow of the Vernacular Architecture Group that they are not uncommon further west. He mentioned Devon.

Although the Westbury example has straight arms, another recorded at Steeple Ashton in Wiltshire has the curved shape we have been noting in Oxfordshire. The latter was illustrated in Pam's book, *Medieval Houses of Wiltshire* (Stroud, 1992), which also mentions other examples. Thank you Pam for drawing these to our attention. [Pam was instrumental in founding the Wiltshire Buildings Record and among her other publications are books on Wiltshire town and farm buildings – ed]



Above: Ventilator at Manor Farm, Marcham (J. Hine) and Chalgrove Manor ventilator. (P. Jacques)

Louvred ventilation

On our recording day at **Manor Farm barns, Marcham**, we noted that one of the buildings – probably never a 'barn' in the true sense of the word, but perhaps a former stable – had had interesting louvred ventilators operated by means of a vertical post into which short pegs were fixed that lifted the louvres when the post was rotated. Each louver had an integral stub dowel at each end that allowed the louver to pivot. Needless to say, many of these had failed, but some were intact.

John Hine subsequently tracked down an example in English Heritage's *Glossary of Terms – Farmsteads Toolkit* (www.farmsteadstoolkit.co.uk/downloads/glossary/Complete_Glossary.pdf) This was from a granary in the Hampshire Downs and the point was made that ventilation was important to keep the stored grain dry.

He found a further example at Ivy Lodge Farm, Stetchworth, East Cambridgeshire (see website: <http://newmarketsausages.blogspot.co.uk/2009/05/ivy-house-farm.html>). These ventilated a slaughterhouse that was built around 1880 as an extension to an earlier barn.

However, member Paul Jacques later reported that he had one at Chalgrove Manor! It had ventilated a first floor space at the end of the north wing of the manor that had been used as a grain store, but had been moved during restoration. It was, however, in excellent shape.

So far, these adjustable louvred windows have been found in barns, granaries, tanneries and slaughterhouses. Discussions with delegates at the VAG conference on farm buildings in January confirmed that they have also been noted in animal shelters of all types (stables, cow-houses etc). Thus the window is not on its own going to answer the question of how the barn at Marcham might have been used – careful examination may be needed to find other features that correlate with one or other of these possibilities.

Forthcoming events

OBR AGM

Provisionally at Bloxham on Saturday 16 May. Please put the date in your diary. Final details with the next newsletter.

Oxfordshire Past

This annual showcase of historical, archaeological and architectural history work in the county over the past 12 months will take place this year in Chipping Norton on 13 June, featuring the work of our EH funded project among other delights. Full details in the next edition.

January 24-25 – weekend school

Exploring the Material Culture of the Early Modern Home - at Rewley House, Oxford. Further details from Oxford University Department for Continuing Education.

Abingdon Area Archaeological and Historical Society 7.45pm at Northcourt Centre, Northcourt Road, Abingdon

Thursday 16 April

David Beasley: *The history of Howbery Park and its connection with Jethro Tull*
This talk will be illustrated with a number of old photographs, maps and paintings. Howbery Park is near Crowmarsh Gifford. Members who helped record the farmhouse at Howberywood Park in nearby Nuffield may recall our debate as to whether the two properties were related.

Thursday 21 May (Lambrick Lecture)

Professor John Blair: *Early Abingdon in Context: Monasticism, Wealth and Urban Growth in Late Anglo-Saxon England*.

The monastic origins of Abingdon are well known, but can be better understood in wider contexts, both of the monastic boom of the decades around 700 and of the reform from the 940s. This lecture will present some completely new evidence

for understanding the layout of the monastery, town and surrounding landscape.

OAHS lectures Hilary Term 2015 5.30pm at Rewley House, Oxford

Tuesday 27 January

Dr Jill Hind: *Wells, Pumps and Fountains – Oxfordshire's Water Supply from 1540*

Today we take for granted a virtually unlimited supply of clean water in the home, although this position was only reached as recently as the 1960s. The talk describes how access to water for domestic use changed from the 16th to 20th centuries in Oxfordshire, considering advances in technology and comparing urban and rural populations and different social classes. Under the influence of climate change and population growth, attitudes to water supply may need to be revised again.

Tuesday 10 February

Dr Stephen Miles: *Peasant Perceptions of Landscape in South Oxfordshire, 1200–1600*

This talk will present the latest findings of The South Oxfordshire Project, an investigation into ordinary inhabitants' perceptions of their environment and the formation of local identities during the Middle Ages. The study area includes the contrasting landscapes of the clay vale, with its villages and open fields, and the Chiltern Hills, a wood-pasture area of dispersed settlement and early enclosure. Much has been said about perceptions, but this is the first study to attempt to develop a methodology to tackle the subject in regional landscape history.

Tuesday 24 February

The Tom Hassall Lecture

Dr Neil Christie: *Wallingford – New Thinking on an Old Town: The Results of the Burh to Borough Research Project (2008–10)*

The historic small town of Wallingford is widely known yet still too little studied archaeologically. With late Saxon roots, a prominent castle and a rich medieval documentary history, there is a busy story to be told of early medieval to late medieval urbanism, royal power politics, trade flows and urban decay. This talk outlines the contribution of the recent AHRC project which started to explore the town's space and its high archaeological potential.

Tuesday 10 March

Professor Christopher Dyer: *A Cotswold Wool Merchant and his World: John Heritage, c.1470–c.1534*

The Cotswold wool trade is famous, but our knowledge of it has hitherto depended mainly on legal and tax records and on the letters of the Cely family

who were Londoners travelling into the region to make purchases. Now the account book of John Heritage shows how a merchant based at Moreton-in-Marsh went about buying wool, and the transactions throw light on the producers of wool as well as the merchant. From the last phases of the trade, around 1500, we can glimpse the society and farming of a region going through major changes.

Contact details

Contributions for the newsletter should be sent to Richard Farrant (newsletter@obr.org.uk)

Copy dates are 1 March, 1 June, 1 September and 1 December.

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