The Landmark Trust

Lettaford

Sanders
The Chapel

History Album

Researched and written by Charlotte Haslam, 1982 &1991

Re-presented 2015

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BASIC DETAILS:

Sanders built c1500

Main alterations in later 16th and 17th centuries

Acquired by Landmark 1976

Architect: Paul Pearn, Pearn & Proctor

Builders: Blight & Scoble Ltd

Work completed 1978

Refurbishment works: Autumn 2002

Lettaford Chapel

Originally built in 1866

Closed in 1978

Architect: Paul Pearn, Pearn & Proctor

Builders: Penbekon Ltd

Work completed: 1982

Higher Lettaford*

Old house built late 16th or early 17th century

New house on site of shippon c1840

Acquired by Landmark 1987

Architect: Peter Bird, Caroe & Martin

Builders: Penbekon Ltd

Work completed 1990

*** Higher Lettaford has been in private ownership since 2013.**

Contents

Lettaford

Summary

The ancient hamlet of Lettaford, meaning 'the clear ford', is sited in a sheltered hollow close, near a crossing stream and ancient trackways. It now consists of three farmhouses with their attendant buildings, and a converted chapel. At its centre is a green, once forming a common area between the three farms.

The houses themselves are all on the east-facing slope, away from the prevailing wind, and are sited lengthways across the contour, on platforms excavated into the hill at the upper end. All three are or were at one time long-houses, a type of building which falls within the group labelled by historians of vernacular architecture as the House-and-Byre Homestead, in which men and animals live under one roof, and in its model form share the same entrance. The term 'Dartmoor long-house' is also frequently used. In the majority of cases the shippon, as the byre is always called in Devon, has long been entirely rebuilt or simply incorporated into the house. Fortunately, some have survived unaltered such as the shippon at Sanders.

Lettaford is typical of the many isolated farm settlements that encircle the central mass, or Forest, of Dartmoor, sometimes as single farmsteads, very often in small groups of three or more together as here. Most of them have been in existence from the early Middle Ages or before: clearance of these borderlands was begun on a serious scale by the Saxons from the 7th century, and there is evidence that the farmers of that period were occupying land that had already long been colonised. Lettaford is first mentioned in an Assize record of 1248 but it is not known whether it began as a single farm or group.

The earlier Tudor period saw a renewal of building activity in several other Dartmoor settlements. After a period of decline in the 15th century following the Black Death, population pressure elsewhere in Devon, and new sources of income from tin mining and cloth manufacture, brought about an influx of new settlers, and therefore new buildings, on the fringes of Dartmoor from about 1500. This process continued throughout the 16th century and into the 17th century, but by then had become part of the Great Rebuild that was going on in the country as a whole. The reflection of this in Lettaford can be seen in later 16th and 17th-century improvements to all three houses, with the insertion of chimneys and the flooring in open halls to create additional first floor rooms.

The Duchy Forester's Accounts record payments from farms or 'vills' under the system of 'venville rents' for the right to graze on the Forest. In 1505-6 this included Lettaford. The payment of 4d is consistent with what seem to be single holdings, and so we can perhaps assume that there was only one venville farm at Lettaford at that time. This does not altogether rule out the existence of Higher Lettaford or Southmeads, either at that date or before, since not every farm on the border of the moor was a venville holding; all householders in Devon had the right of free grazing on the Commons which lay outside the Forest boundaries, and within them simply paid the slightly higher charge levied from Strangers.

Sanders

When it was built in about 1500, Sanders contained, firstly, a hall open to the roof. The fire was lit on a central hearth, the smoke from which gathered among the rafters, and seeped out between the thatch of the roof. At the lower end of the hall, beyond a timber screen, was a cross-passage with a door at either end; and beyond that a shippon. The division between hall and shippon was very rudimentary, just a post- and-panel screen between the main area of the hall and the passage, of which one section survives. The fine granite ashlar of the front and east gable demonstrates the relatively high social status of its builders.

Major improvements were made in the later 16th century including the insertion of two upper chambers, jettied out into the hall, to give more sleeping space. Access to the chambers would have been by a ladder from the hall. There was no staircase at that date.

In the 17th century, a new chimney was built across the end of the hall, backing onto the cross-passage. The existence of a chimney made the lofty roof-space unnecessary, and so the hall was now floored in, to create a third upper chamber. Assuming there to have been an earlier lateral fireplace (and it would be surprising for a house of this status to continue with only an open fire for so long), this was now adapted to provide a stair to the upper floor, with a bread oven beside it. At about the same period, a lean-to was added at the back of the hall. Inevitably a number of alterations were made later, particularly in the 18th and 19th centuries. Most noticeable has been the raising of the roofs of both shippon and dwelling, adapting them to a shallower pitch for slate.
In its essentials Sanders remains the house it had become by 1700.

The farm-buildings that were an essential accompaniment to the house have been more extensively rebuilt and renewed. Only part of the small barn behind the house dates from the 16th century; mostly it is 18th-century. The linhey, stable and pig-houses are later still, probably all dating from the 19th century.

Restoration

Work began in 1977 to improve drainage on the site. Later, the electricity supply for the hamlet brought in by underground cables. The asbestos slate covering of the house was stripped off completely, porch and lean-to included. Battens and rafters were repaired or replaced as necessary, and then random Delabole slates were laid, in diminishing courses. Only minor repairs to the walls were required including raking out defective pointing, and repointing with lime mortar. The chimneys were also repointed, and the granite cap of the hall chimney repaired; brick tops were replaced with slate cappings. The cement repair of the main door surround was hacked off, and the jambs and head rebuilt or made good as necessary. The frames of all the outside doors were repaired. Window frames were repaired and a new oak lintol was inserted over the window in the shippon. Drip moulds were provided over those on the front most exposed the to Dartmoor elements.

Inside the cross-passage, the masonry of the chimney stack was cleaned and repointed. The plank partition on its lower side was repaired. In the shippon, apart from the clearance of accumulated rubbish, nothing was done at all.

In the dwelling, the stair that had been inserted against the north wall was removed to allow repair of the oak post and panel screen and the jetty beam was repaired. A new door jamb was made copying the existing original and a new timber stair was then built in the 17th-century position.

A new slate-paved floor was laid at the same level as the hall, which meant lowering it a few inches, and underpinning the walls at this end, since they rested on the ground where the original builders followed the slope of the hill. The Bungalow Belle stove was dismantled and reassembled in the same position, but at the new level.

Downstairs, plaster was removed to reveal the fine masonry of the walls, which were repointed and then limewashed. The back wall of the fireplace was exposed, where it had been plastered over, and the bread oven repaired.

Upstairs, all the ceilings were removed, and reformed to follow the line of the roof, with insulation above. The walls were limewashed, as they had always been, the colour matching as closely as possible the former rich golden shade.

In the yard behind the house, the outbuildings were also in need of repair. The walls of the linhay, stable and pigsty were all rebuilt and repointed, and the roof of the linhay made good. The barn was in the worst condition, and had been given a corrugated iron roof. When the collapsing walls had been rebuilt, it was given a new roof of Devon wheat reed thatch.

Lettaford Chapel

Bible Christian services were first held in the day school in Lettaford in 1860. The move must partly have been due to the influence of the schoolmistress, Mrs Susan Walling, and it may also have been due to her that a new building was erected to serve as both schoolroom and chapel. For about two years before this a small number of people had been meeting in cottages in hamlets nearby. It was not a wealthy community, consisting almost entirely of small farmers and farm labourers. Out of these the group of preachers would have been selected, who took it in turns to lead services in all the twelve chapels making up the Chagford Circuit. Records of building work suggest the existing chapel building opened in 1867 or 1868.

In the 1870s, the ownership of the Schoolroom passed to the Bible Christian Church, so that it became a fully fledged chapel, vested in trustees drawn from the congregation. The congregation declined with the gradual depopulation of the area during agricultural depression of the late 19th century.

The Bible Christians joined with the Free Methodists and the New Connexion to form the United Methodist Church in 1907. This foreshadowed their final unification in 1932 with the Wesleyans and the Primitive Methodists, to become the Methodist Church of Great Britain.

In the 1920s there must have been a rise in the congregation, and in the number of children locally, for in 1922 a schoolroom was added ‘at the rear of the chapel’, with a doorway leading through in the corner of the south wall. It was made of galvanised iron lined with wood, and was lit by oil lamps like the chapel. On the other end, or ‘front’ of the chapel a garage was added, also made out of galvanised iron.

By 1943, gas-lighting had been installed followed by electricity in 1962, when the congregation numbered only 4. The number of active members in the whole of the Chagford Circuit had dwindled so low that it was decided to amalgamate it with its neighbours by 1977. Lettaford was incorporated into the Exeter Circuit, and soon afterwards the decision was made to close the chapel altogether. Landmark, having already restored the long house, Sanders, was keen to preserve the chapel, feeling that it was an integral part of the character of the place, and so it was conveyed to them in 1981.

The Conversion of the Old Chapel

The Old Chapel was converted to retain its large open interior space. The two galvanised iron additions were removed and in place of the schoolroom on the south end, an extension built to provide a bathroom. The doorway leading into the garage was blocked, reinstating the chimney. A new fireplace was then inserted. The floor level of the chapel has been raised to enable those inside to see out, and to help air to circulate underneath, to prevent damp. This meant raising the entrance doorway as well, and building the steps up to it. The original door itself has been retained. The roof was overhauled, retaining existing slates where possible. New plumbing and electrics were installed. The walls were patched where the existing plaster was decayed, and then limewashed. All the new woodwork is softwood. Care has been taken in the furnishing to keep the interior as uncluttered as possible, in order to preserve the plain and simple feel of the building.

Higher Lettaford

In 2012-13, Landmark's Trustees undertook a careful review of all our buildings and decided that Higher lettaford should be sold, a very rare occurrence in our portfolio. This was because it had been acquired pre-emptively by our founder John Smith, to protect the important setting of Lettaford, and not because it was itself of outstanding importance or in jeopardy. Higher Lettaford's release also put a potential family home back into the general housing stock, and all the income from its sale was used by Landmark directly for other building rescue projects.

This album of Lettaford and its buildings, includes the original entry for Higher Lettaford. We are sad to see any Landmark disappear from our portfolio, but we can be content in the knowledge that it all contributes to our overall charitable purpose, of saving buildings for future generations to enjoy.

Lettaford

The settlement

The hamlet of Lettaford, sited in a sheltered hollow close to the crossing of a stream, now consists of three farmhouses with their attendant buildings, of which none remain in full agricultural use; and a converted chapel. At its centre is a green, once forming a common area between the three farms, on which until recently poultry, ducks and geese grazed. There were once two cottages on the west side of the green, close to the chapel, but these vanished in the 1870s or soon afterwards.

The name Lettaford derives from its geographical location, meaning 'the clear ford.' The hamlet was also known as Forder, certainly in the 19th century, when directories give it as 'Lettaford alias Forder.' More recently, it was often referred to as Harvey's Forder, from the predominant farming family there.

Over the ford, and through the hamlet, passes an ancient trackway, known as the Mariner's Way from its use at one period by sailors travelling between the ports of Bideford and Dartmouth, but in more recent centuries used mainly by cattle drovers. Just to the south is another important and ancient route, the packhorse track from Moretonhampstead to Tavistock, which in 1792 became part of the turnpike road from Exeter to Truro. A second track runs out of the hamlet, through the farmyard of Higher Lettaford, leading to the gate onto the moor itself. This was shared by all three farms, and opened onto what was known until recently as Lettaford Common or Down.

The houses themselves are all on the east-facing slope, away from the prevailing wind, and are sited lengthways across the contour, on platforms excavated into the hill at the upper end. All three are or were at one time long-houses, a type of building which (without going into the still debated typology of 'true' and 'false' long-houses) falls within the group labelled by historians of vernacular

Lettaford; Old Chapel with Sanders beyond. Photo: Alice Lennox Boyd, 1983.

architecture as the House-and-Byre Homestead, in which men and animals live under one roof, and in its model form share the same entrance. The three houses at Lettaford are representative of this type of building in various typical degrees of preservation or alteration.

The long-house is found in much of Wales and in parts of the North of England, but in the South of England is found in large numbers only on Dartmoor and the area of upland farming on its borders; to such an extent that although examples are found elsewhere in Devon, the term 'Dartmoor long-house' is frequently used. That it was there the most favoured building type has been established from a variety of examples, ranging in date from early stone houses excavated at Houndtor and thought to date from the 13th century, to others built well towards the end of the 17th century, and into the 18th.

In the great majority of cases the shippon, as the byre is always called in Devon, has long been entirely rebuilt as it was, for example, at Higher Lettaford; or simply incorporated into the house as is now the case at Southmeads. Fortunately, some have survived unaltered, used for storage as was in recent years the case at Sanders; and examples have been quoted of shippons still occupied by cows after last War. Mrs Harvey of Southmeads, Lettaford, for instance, remembers Mrs White at Lower Merripit, Postbridge, doing her milking in the shippon in the 1930s, thus saving herself the cold trip across the yard in winter, to a draughty outdoor shippon such as those built in the 19th century at Higher Lettaford; and thereby demonstrating the patent advantages of long-house life for the upland farmer.

Taking all these factors into account, it can be seen at once that Lettaford is likely to be ancient in origin. In this, and in its whole layout, it is typical of the many isolated farm settlements that encircle the central mass, or Forest, of Dartmoor, sometimes as single farmsteads, very often in small groups of three or more together as here. Most of them have been in existence from the early Middle Ages or before: clearance of these borderlands was begun on a serious scale by the Saxons from the 7th century, and there is evidence that the farmers of that period were occupying land that had already long been colonised.

For the most part, the Saxon settlers and those that came soon afterwards stayed below the 1,000 foot contour (Lettaford is at 975 ft.), and the population was still scattered and thin at the time of the Domesday Survey in 1086. Only two settlements, Beetor and Shapley, are mentioned in the manor of North Bovey, to which Lettaford once belonged. Clearance of the waste continued over the next two or three centuries, pressure of population driving settlers onto ever higher ground, the now long-vanished tenements on the high moor itself, where the living must have been hard and poor. Meanwhile the wasteland between the early farmsteads was gradually cleared and cultivated; a pattern which was virtually complete by the 13th century.

The beginning of Lettaford

It is in the 13th century that we have the first mention of Lettaford itself, in an Assize record of 1248. Whether it was to begin with a single farm, or whether there were always two or three together we do not know, although there is some slight evidence that Sanders and Southmeads once formed one holding, called Lettaford, which was later divided by inheritance or sale. As John Somers Cocks points out in his chapter on *Saxon and Early Medieval Times in Dartmoor: A New Study (1970)*, 'it is impossible to tell if a group of farms lying together represents an original plan or a later family expansion.' All one can say is that a similar pattern of group settlement is found throughout the more remote and intractable parts of the South-Western Peninsular, and in Wales; and the post-medieval evidence both for occupation by family groups, and the opposite, is about equal.

Of the three existing houses at Lettaford, Sanders is by a short head the earliest, dating mainly from 1500 or soon after, but followed closely by Southmeads, there by the middle of the 16th century. Higher Lettaford has been more substantially altered than the others, but it too had an open hall, and similar granite ashlar to Sanders, so can be presumed to date from the 16th century, but probably well towards its end.

The earlier Tudor period saw a renewal of building activity in several other Dartmoor settlements. After a period of decline in the 15th century following the disaster of the Black Death, population pressure elsewhere in Devon, and new sources of income from tin mining and cloth manufacture, brought about an influx of new settlers, and therefore new buildings, on the fringes of Dartmoor from about 1500. This process continued throughout the 16th century and into the 17th century, but by then had become part of the Great Rebuild that was going on in the country as a whole. The reflection of this in Lettaford can be seen in later 16th and 17th-century improvements to all three houses, with the insertion of chimneys and the flooring in open halls to create additional first floor rooms.

Since we know that Lettaford had already existed for over two centuries in 1500, one or more of the houses must occupy the sites of earlier buildings. In 1505-6 Duchy Forester's Accounts listing the payments from those farms or 'vills' that had the ancient right of grazing on the Forest under the system of 'venville rents', includes the 'villat de Litterford in parochia de North Bovye.' It is difficult to tell whether a 'villat' is a single farm (Jurston and Higher Jurston are listed separately); or a larger settlement - Chagford is described as a 'villat' for instance. The payment of 4d, however, is consistent with what seem to be single holdings, and so we can perhaps assume that there was only one venville farm at Lettaford at that time. This does not altogether rule out the existence of Higher Lettaford or Southmeads, either at that date or before, since not every farm on the border of the moor was a venville holding; all householders in Devon had the right of free grazing on the Commons which lay outside the Forest boundaries, and within them simply paid the slightly higher charge levied from Strangers.

Photo: Ian Sumner, 1994.

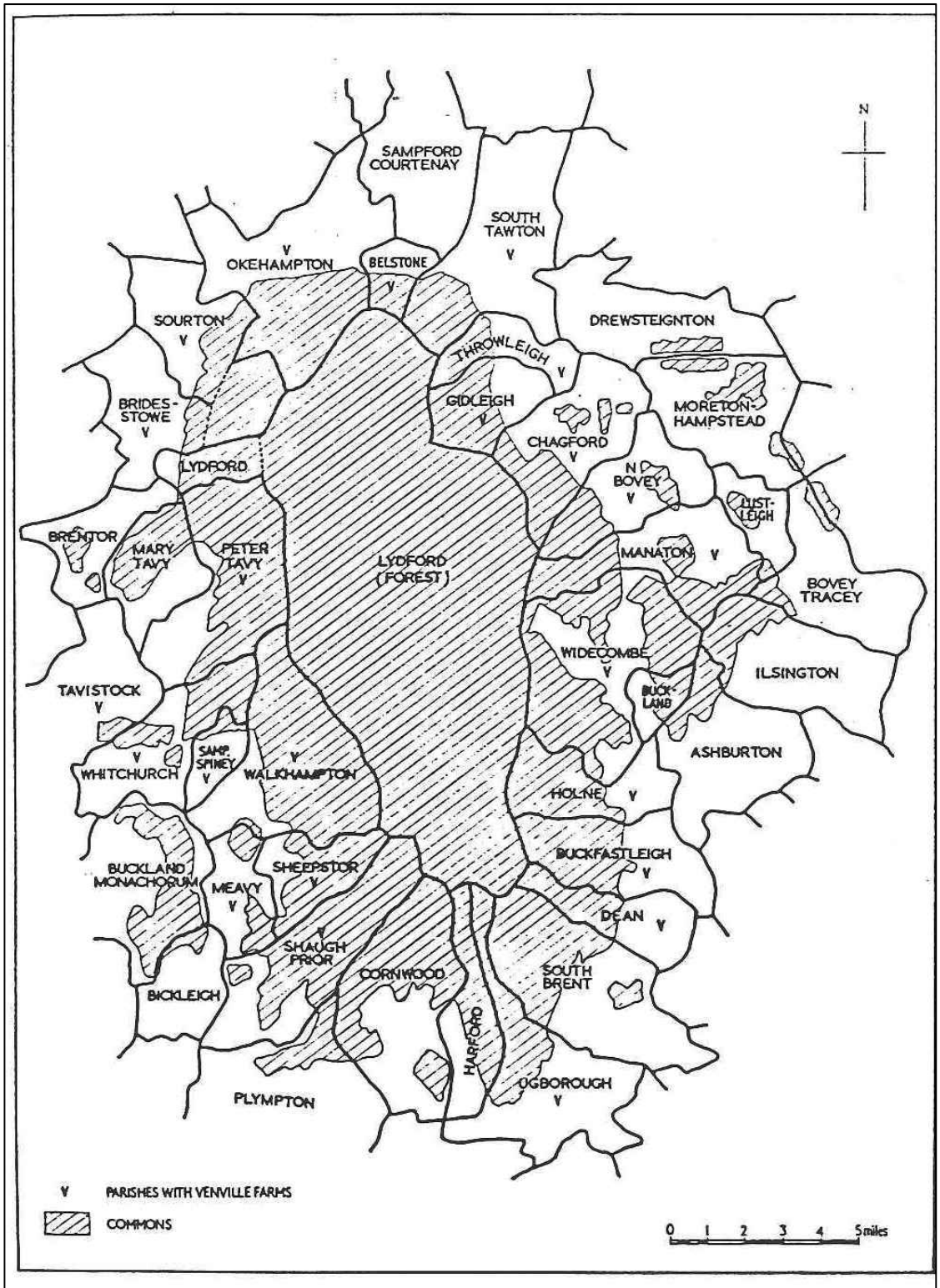


Fig 11. Dartmoor and border parishes.

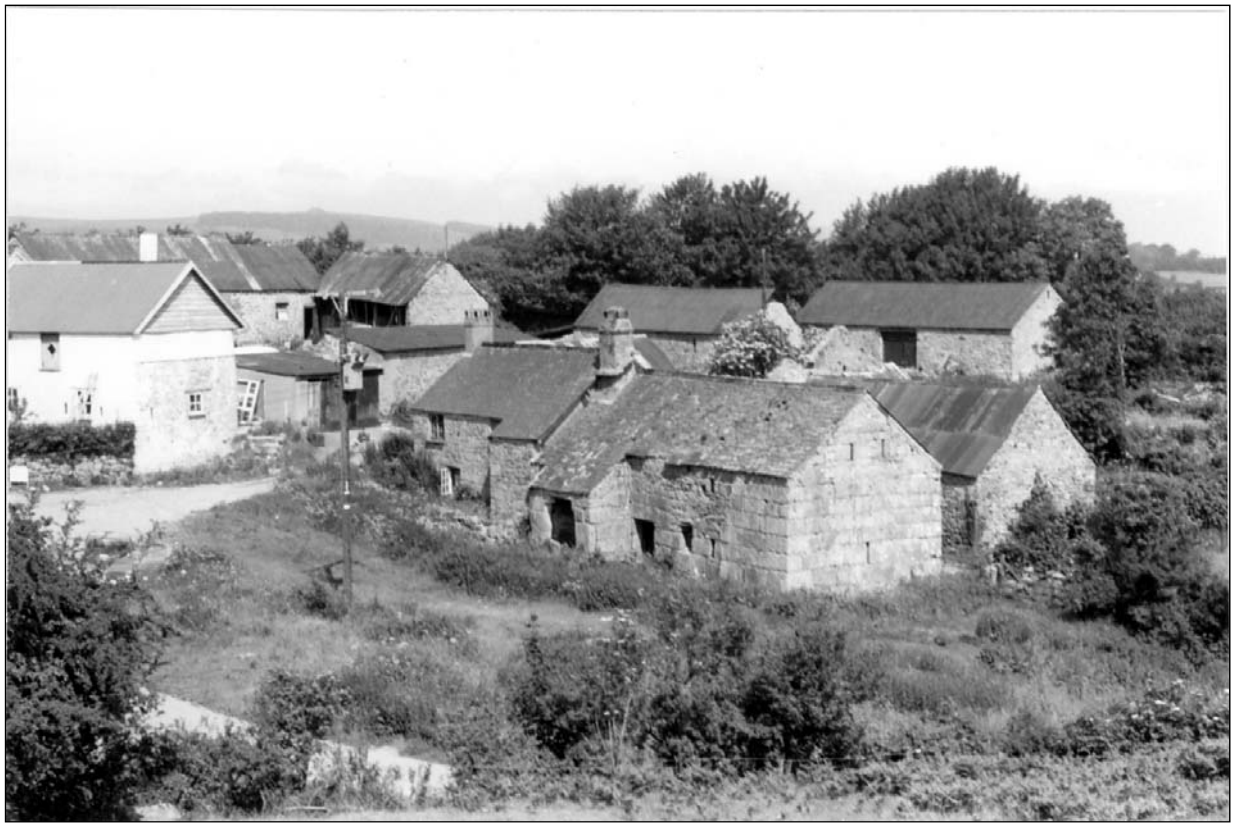
From Dartmoor – A New Study ed. C. Gill (1970).

Owners and occupiers

The builders of these houses were yeomen farmers, sometimes even minor gentry, as is evident from the quality of the buildings themselves. The fact that they chose to share their houses with their animals was a symbol of a very particular way of life, not of lowly social status. Over the centuries a distinct economy had grown up on Dartmoor, with its own class structure. W.G. Hoskins has indeed demonstrated from family papers (*Three Devon Families in Old Devon* 1966) that one Dartmoor yeoman family, the Cholwiches, who presumably were not untypical, had built up substantial holdings of land by the 16th and 17th centuries, both on the edge of the moor and in lowland parishes, with a rented house in a nearby market town as well. Some of their land they rented out in turn to smaller farmers.

Inventories and wills of the extensive Nosworthy family of North-East Dartmoor, transcribed by Miss Moger before the devastating loss (for local and family historians) of the Exeter Registry in a bomb attack in 1942, bear witness to a similar range of wealth and status. John Nosworthy of Jurston in 1622 left goods worth only £34, but his kinsman William Nosworthy of Clannaborow left property worth £927 19s 8d. In 1627, James Nosworthy of Mannaton was able to leave his eldest son, John, the tenement of Higher Murchinton in Throwleigh, and other property in Dawlish. These Nosworthys, even the wealthy William, describe themselves as yeomen, but by the end of the 17th century their descendants are calling themselves gentlemen.

An Inquisition Post Mortem in the Courtenay estate papers, also transcribed by Miss Moger and drawn up on the death of one John Tapper in 1606, states that on the day of his death he was ‘seized of a messuage and 80 acres of land in Cleve in the parish of North Bovey and of two tenemants and 60 acres of land in North Bovey called Heywood and of 30 acres of pasture in North Bovey called Millwalls’ A not insubstantial holding for a purely moorland farmer. It is likely that an examination of the builders of all the more substantial 16th and 17th century



JOHN STANGCOMBE of Ilsington, husbandman
By John Bonde, John Northway, John Archer, Elize Northway and Henry Lambeshed
24 February 1630/1

His wearyinge apparrell *£3*; Two dust bedds with thappurtenances and Bedsteeds *38s*; A Bible *5s*; One sylver spoone *6s*; One table bord *5s*; Two brassen Crockes *25s*; One brassen Crocke more *6s*; One Cauldron & Two skilletts *9s*; Pewter vessells, and one little lattyn Candlesticke *5s*; One fryenge pann *2s 2d*; One spynnynge torne *16d*; One baskett and stonynge Cupps *9d*; Tymber vessells *12s*; One brandyron, Iron Crookes pothangings Iron wedges one trill, and tooles of husbandry *12s 2d*; One Iron Rake & whetstone *13d*; One little boxe, and Coffer *3s*; Hoopes for tymber vessells *2s*; One halfe peck *6d*;

Two packe saddles, with Crookes gurses lyme pottes, donge pottes and a corne pike *17s*; Earthen vessells *12d*; Tymber and a harrowe *11s 6d*; Yearne *24s*; Little Milbaggs *2s 6d*; Two flitches of Bacon and one scrubb of Beefe *15s*; Honny *9d*; Butter *2s* [?]*2d*; Poult[ry] .....; A sceel..... sticke [?]*10d*; .....*3s*; ..... 15...; ..... little ..... *3d*; .....*9d*; .....; Wood..... Reeks .....; A Maunger and haye Racke *12d*; Other wood *10d*; Furse fagotts *40s*; Reck hookes *6d*;

Corne in the Barne *£3*; Corne and grayne in the vessells *£3 12s*; For sewle & seede *40s*; One Journey of Corne more in the earth *20s*; One pecke of Beanes *20d*; Halfe a bushell of Malt *2s*; One acre of Wood standynge *30s*; All his beastes and Cattells *£19*; Plowstuffe *8s*; 7 sheepe *30s*; One little pigge *4s*; Furses growinge *30s*; Hay and streeke *29s*; Marrell stones in a lyme kill *40s*;

Debtes owed upon espetialltyes *£17 12s 6d*; For certen yeeres to come in a chattall leasse concernynge libertye for fetchinge and carryenge of Marrell stones *6s 8d*; Debtes owed without spetialtie *£3 16s 8d*; A debt owed by Richard Stangcomb *4s*; Treen dishes trenchers, tynnynge spoones, a zellepp, and all other goodes forgotten *5s*.

Total £76 18s 1d

[Indented]

Probate inventories listing the goods and chattels of three moorland farmers of differing levels of income. From *Devon Inventories of the 16th and 17th Centuries* by M. Cash (Devon & Cornwall Record Society, New Series 11, 1966).

RICHARD .....DECOMB of Buckland in the Moor
By Ralph Woodleigh, Richard Smerdon, Thomas Groes and Gregory Windiatt
[31] December 1584 [date of death]

Tenne oxen £23; 7 kine £9; 12 young bullokes and 4 calves £12; 3 laboring beastes and two coltes £5; One hundred sheepe £13 6s 8d; 4 hogges and swine 20s; Geese and pultrie 6s 8d; The apparell of the deceassed 46s 8d; Corne in the barne and in the earth £13 6s 8d; Hay 10s; Wolle 20s; One fetherbed with other bedding and the furniture £4; 4 silver spones and the ring of a massard 13s 4d; 3 brasse pottes 20s; 5 brasse pannes a chafer and skillet and 3 candlestickes £3 6s 8d; Pewter vessel 40s; Beefe in powder with other fleshe 30s; Butter and cheese 10s; 3 table borders 13s 4d; 3 coffers 5s; Wodden vessell 10s; Plough stuffe and a payre of harrowes 20s; Iron stuffe for the kitchin as Spitt etc 5s.

Total £96 10s

[Parchment Indented]

THOMAS WILLS of Bovey Tracey, yeoman
By George Wills, Hugh Heward and Thomas Archer
12 November 1686[2]

His weareing Apparrell & money in purse £5; Twelve bullocks fower horses & two Colts £54; One and twenty sheepe & twenty three hoggs or swaine piggs £14 19s+; Corne & hay £57; Caretts & Turnipps £4; Hogsheads Barrells Keives Timber & hoopes £5; A horse Skin & Salt 10s+; 3 wheele Barrowes 4 paire of Dungpotts 4 pack saddles £1 5s; Crookes Crubbs Ladders Wood & paniers £1 19s+; Plow stuffe one Lumbe & Lumbe timber 2 Wrings £3 14s; Workmens Tooles bucketts two Tableboards & two formes £2 12s; Ten brasse pans 4 brasse Crockes & two Duzen pewter Dishes £6 11s+; Two Chests two boxes bedsteeds & bedding & wool £16 15s; For butter & Cheese £1; Goods forgotten £1.

Total £175 5s

Exhibited by Mary Wills relict 7 March 1686/7

houses on the edges of the moor would show a similar scale of landholding, and a similar pattern of social advancement.

As to the individual inhabitants of Lettaford, we have as yet very little clue. In their article *Sanders, Lettaford - A Devon Longhouse in the Proceedings of the Devonshire Archaeological Society 30* (1972), N.W. Alcock, P.C. Child and M. Laithwaite suggest from research in Sowton parish that the names of the two smaller farms given in the Tithe Survey of 1839, Southmeads and Sanders & Nosworthys, derive from owners of the 17th and 18th centuries, and there are some indications to support this. We have already seen that Nosworthy was a common name in the area. The Protestation Return of 1641 (when all men over the age of eighteen were asked to swear their loyalty to Church, King and Parliament), lists under North Bovey a George and a Christopher Sander; three Johns and one Laurence Nosworthy; and under Moretonhampstead four Southmeads.

The North Bovey Parish Register, which begins in 1580, records the baptism a year later of Richard, the son of Richard Sanders; and the name occurs regularly over the following hundred years, as does that of Nosworthy. The Southmeads seem to have remained firmly in Moretonhampstead, however, so that if they acquired a property at Lettaford, it was not for their own residence, but that of a tenant. They seem to have been a leading family in the area: in 1572 William Southmede, gent., with others including Sir John Fulford, was made Trustee to one William Hodge (one of the attorneys drawing up the deed was another of the ubiquitous Nosworthys); and John Southmeade, gent., was one of those called upon to swear to the Probate Inventory for James Nosworthy of Manaton in 1627.

None of the Lettaford names occur in the North Bovey Subsidy (Taxation) Returns of 1524-7, however (although inevitably there were Nosworthys in other parishes), so that does not help us back to the beginning of any of the houses

there, nor provide any hard information about the taxable wealth and social standing of their builders. We can only work sideways from the parallels already quoted, and guess at families of well-to-do yeomen, only needing a small boost to place them among the minor gentry; with a principal 'home' tenement, perhaps held by ancient copyhold from the manor; and other parcels of land elsewhere, both arable and pasture. These might be in the same, or a neighbouring parish, or away from the moor altogether. There was enough surplus income for the new house to contain such extra flourishes as the fine granite ashlar of Sanders and Higher Lettaford; and inside, inner rooms with a chamber above in addition to the open hall.

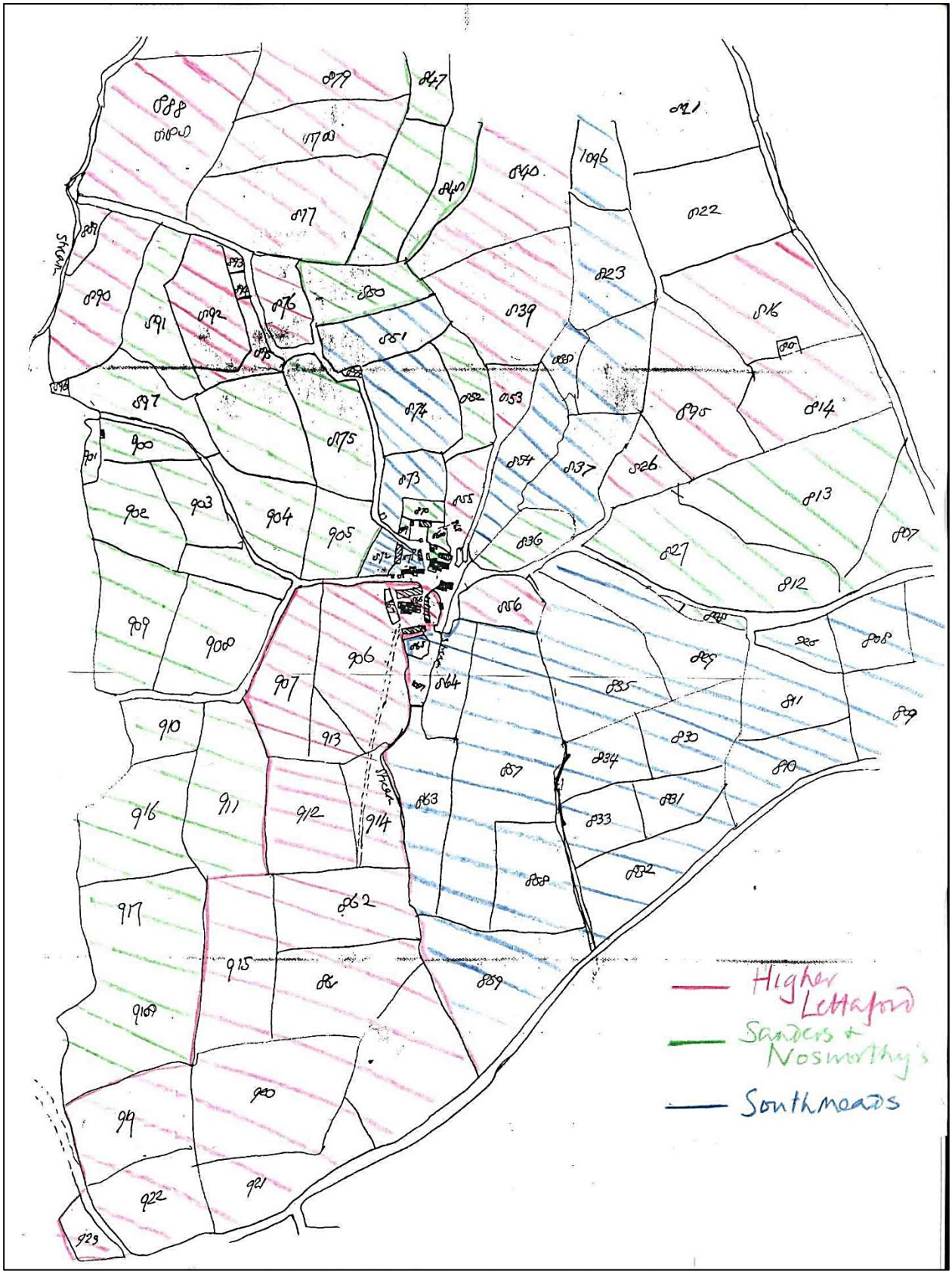
It would be pleasant to think that these families were in a position, like Walter Cholwich of Cholwich Town in 1557, to leave to their sons, with the intention that they become heirlooms, 'a folyng tabell & a Coborde, a brasen Crocke of the best, a short leged Crocke, & the best brasen panne, too flanders pannys of brasse, halff a dosen of pewter vessells performed, a dosen of sylver spones, a bounden weyn & all the plowgere of the same.'

Into the Nineteenth Century

Apart from one will of 1691, found by Veronica Chesher of the University of Exeter, in which Andrew Rowe of Chagford bequeaths a messuage called Littaford in North Bovey to his nephew Joseph Rowe, certain knowledge only starts with the plentiful records of the mid-19th century. According to the Tithe Map for North Bovey of 1839, the two farms then called Southmeads and Sanders & Nosworthys, of 64 and 69 acres respectively, were in the single ownership of Thomas Neck, but let under separate tenancies to Robert French and Joseph Ireland. Higher Lettaford, called Higher Lettaford and Blacksticks (the name of a group of small fields on the farm) was the largest of the three farms at 95 acres, and was independent of the other two, owned in 1839 by Burton Pinsent and farmed by William Rogers.

Some evidence of the other two farms having formed a single holding at a much earlier date comes in a conveyance of 1910, when Albert Harvey, who was already the tenant, bought Sanders from W.H. Rowell of Ilsington. The name Sanders is not itself mentioned. A distinct holding of 26 acres 'formerly in the posession of William Nosworthy, then of Robert Nosworthy and afterwards Thomas Neck' is presumably the 'Nosworthy's' of 1839, when it was already owned by Thomas Neck. But the main farm, which has the same fields as those listed under Sanders in the Tithe Map, is simply referred to as Littaford. This, then, is perhaps the original name of the medieval holding, attached to the senior house there, before it became divided by sale or inheritance among the Southmeads and Sanders and Nosworthys.

The census return of 1841 confirms the information on the Tithe Map, but adds a surprising number of extra households: four in all. The heads of three of these are agricultural labourers, one of whom is a second, possibly junior, Joseph Ireland. Presumably they lived in the two cottages, and in subsidiary parts of the long-houses.



Ownership of the fields around Lettaford in 1839-40.

The fourth household is that of Ann Pinsent, and her much younger sister Mary, together with 8 children between the ages of 11 and 4, from four or five different families. The Misses Pynsent, living at Forder, are listed as Gentry in Morris's Directory of 1870, and must have had some connection with the earlier owner of Higher Lettaford, Pinsent Burton, and with other Pynsents in the parish whose forebears had lived there since the 17th century at least. Although they do not reappear in the census returns of 1851 and 1861, a Miss Pinsent paid for the building of a new schoolroom-cum-chapel in 1866, and the younger sister, Mary Pynsent, is once more recorded as living at Lettaford in the census of 1871, and is described as a retired Schoolmistress.

This ties in with records of the founding of the Lettaford Bible Christian (latterly Methodist) chapel, which show that services were first held in the hamlet in 1860, supposedly in a schoolroom and at the invitation of the teacher. Another tradition has it that a private school was run in the hamlet by two spinsters, who when they retired in about 1860, gave their schoolroom to the Chagford Circuit of the Bible Christian church - although there is evidence to show that this last did not in fact happen until after 1872.

The interest in all this lies in the indication that there was, before 1860, a private school in Lettaford. Add this together with the Misses Pynsent of the 1841 Census, living with several children, none of whom were their own, and the indications become even stronger. Add to these again the building of a commodious new house on the lower end of Higher Lettaford, owned in 1839 by a possible member of the same family; a house which would seem from its appearance to date from about 1840, supplied with an extraordinary number of coathooks, and it begins to look as though this new building was intended to serve as a boarding school. Perhaps it was for the children of Nonconformists, like other small schools that are known to have existed. Presumably the farmer continued to live in the self-contained house at the upper end.

Whether the school had a separate schoolroom before 1866, when the existing building was put up; or whether lessons, and the first Bible Christian services, were held in a room of the main house, we don't know. The Tithe Map, surveyed in 1838-9, does not show such a building, but it does not show the new part of Higher Lettaford either, which must have been built shortly afterwards.

In 1851, all hints of a school have disappeared from the census, but it reappears in 1861 with a new teacher, Susan Walling. This time there are no unattached children listed as resident in Lettaford, so it would seem to have become a day-school. Mrs Walling also played a major part in the founding of the chapel, helping to boost its congregation to twenty three in 1868. Four years later the Chagford Circuit Book was recording 'with deep regret' that sister Susan Walling was to be removed from Lettaford, due to the closure of the school. This was presumably a result of competition for a falling number of children from the new Board Schools founded under the Education Act of 1870. However, the schoolroom's owner, a Mrs Splatt (perhaps a former Miss Pynsent), had given kind permission for the services to continue there. Not long afterwards its ownership passed formally to Trustees drawn from the congregation, and it became a fully-fledged chapel.

The census return of 1851, like that of 1841, shows rather more households at Lettaford than there would seem to have been houses. In 1861 and 1871, it settles down to two families apparently living in Higher Lettaford, and two in the cottages, in addition to Sanders and Southmeads. The Ireland family continued to farm Sanders, and did so until succeeded by another tenant, Joseph Mortimore, in the 1880s. The tenant at Southmeads changed twice before the arrival, by 1881, of William Harvey, whose descendants still lived there at the time of writing.

William Rogers' successor as farmer of Higher Lettaford did not reside in the farmhouse, however. No farmer is listed as living there in any of the census returns after 1841, and the Directories give only the farmers of the other two properties. In 1861, under Higher Lettaford, are the families of an agricultural labourer, William Taylor, and a road contractor, Thomas Ireland. Possibly the Misses Pynsent continued all the while in the larger part, although their name only features in 1871, and then not linked with any particular house. Only in 1889 does Kelly's Directory list Francis Heyward as the farmer of Higher Lettaford, to be succeeded before 1893 by George Mortimore, who had ‘comfortable farmhouse lodgings’ to let to the growing number of Dartmoor tourists. This would seem to show that he occupied the whole house, old and new.

The two cottages had gone by then, either from demolition or decay, probably in the 1870s as the effects of the agricultural depression were seen in a falling rural population. Between the census of 1871 and that of 1881, the households at Lettaford had shrunk from six to three. Mrs Harvey of Southmeads quotes Mrs Lee of Higher Lettaford, born at Sanders in the later 1860s, as being unable to remember the cottages, which must therefore have vanished in her early childhood.

Life on Dartmoor

Climate and agriculture

Like all hill farmers the inhabitants of Dartmoor had to adapt to surroundings that were far less favourable than those of their lowland neighbours. The siting of their houses in hollows, tucked well into the hill, is the most obvious consequence. As is the arrangement of buildings to keep trips outside in winter to a minimum - the feeding and milking of cows, that began and ended the working day, could be achieved in the long-house without venturing out of doors.

Polwhele's *History of Devon* (1797) quotes the 17th-century Hooker describing the climate of Devon in general as 'overlaid with dark clouds, mists and rains; and seldom shall you see the open wastes, and especially in Dartmoor, to be at any time clear and free from the same.' Polwhele adds to this that 'the frequent and heavy rains on Dartmoor (together with the sudden fogs) are said to be the greatest obstruction to the cultivation of the Forest.'

Cultivate it they did, even within the bounds of the Forest itself, and certainly on its borders. In the early part of the Middle Ages, where the land was cleared by a single family, the resultant fields were from the beginning theirs alone. Where there were farming hamlets however, there is growing evidence for some common husbandry of the fields, with strips allotted to different farmers. By the later Middle Ages, however, fields had mainly been apportioned out, into something as near a consolidated holding as was possible, with easy access from the centre of the settlement.

Something of this pattern can be seen by a study of the different farm holdings at Lettaford, as they existed in 1839. The two 'senior' farms of Lettaford (taking Sanders and Southmeads together as one holding, assuming a division in the early 16th century) and Higher Lettaford, each have a band of fields bordering the moor, and other but by no means adjoining parcels of land on the lower ground.

Each of these parcels show a consistent tendency to radiate out from the hamlet in a long line of fields, one beyond the other like the spokes of a wheel. This pattern in fact applies equally to the possible subsidiary tenement of Southmeads, and is one that has been noted at other settlements.

The fields themselves were little different to today, the stone walls serving the practical purpose of clearing the soil for the plough. According to W.G. Hoskins the traditional method of converting moor into ploughland was first of all to pare off the nearly solid natural turf and burn it in a kiln shaped heap. The ash was then scattered over the pared land before the first ploughing, when it would be mixed into the soil to act as a fertiliser.

Oats, rye and barley were the main crops in early times, but from the 18th century certain strains of wheat were persuaded to grow - Polwhele talks of red wheat, perhaps similar to the Cornish ‘pillas’ which was able to grow on poor and acid soils. The Tithe Survey in 1839 records about a quarter of the parish's land area as being arable, producing 799 bushels of oats, 552 bushels of barley, and 311 of wheat. The assessors tended, however, to exaggerate the areas of arable land, since higher tithes were payable on them, and would include fields that were only ploughed very rarely. That this was here the case is perhaps shown by the correspondingly small acreage of meadow/pasture, which amounted to 186 acres only.

In the late 18th century, potatoes became a staple crop, particularly around Moretonhampstead and Chagford, where the light soil was particularly suitable. Polwhele mentions that although there is much coarse ground in this area it is ‘turned to good advantage in the culture of potatoes.’

Polwhele also mentions that in Moretonhampstead, on the banks of the Teign, ‘there is an abundance of coppice wood’, and that North Bovey and Manaton ‘exhibit the same general features of moorland and coppice.’ What all Dartmoor

farms held in common was the grazing land of the moor itself. Livestock was always a major part of the farming economy: Hoskins cites the Domesday farm of Shapley as evidence of sheep farming even at that date. In the Tithe Survey nearly three quarters of the parish is designated as Common land, which is described as 'chiefly covered in furze (gorse) and heath, which is occasionally cut for fuel and occasionally burnt where growing to improve the pasture, and the whole is depastured (grazed) in the summer season with sheep and other cattle belonging to the occupiers of the adjacent lands.'

The use of this land for livestock was carefully regulated, except for sheep which were apparently unrestricted. Within the Forest itself the system of venville rents applied, whereby specified farms on its borders could in summer and by daylight graze free of charge only that number of cattle or ponies which they could maintain in winter on their own holding. If they wished to exceed this number they had to pay a fixed rent per head of beast, and similarly if they wished to keep the animals on the moor overnight they were subject to a small annual charge. Venville tenants also had the right to take peat for fuel, and stone for building and hedging. The system was in existence by the 13th century and Lettaford, as we have seen, was one of these venville farms.

Around the prescribed area of the Forest itself was the area known as the Commons of Devon. The layout of the parishes around the moor was clearly intended to provide each with some of this land - in North Bovey, for instance there was Lettaford Common north of the trans-Dartmoor track, and Shapley Common to its south. The farmers of these parishes could graze on the Commons free of charge day and night, subject to manorial custom, as in theory could all the householders of Devon, apart from those of Barnstaple and Totnes. Strangers or foreigners, as those from outside the Dartmoor parishes were known, had only to pay if they grazed their animals on the Forest itself. Inevitably, as time went on, landowners and individual farmers attempted to enclose, or prove exclusive rights over areas of Common, but such moves were always liable to challenge.

For the sale of their produce, the Dartmoor farmers needed markets. These came into existence in the 12th and 13th centuries in towns such as Chagford and Moretonhampstead. There too, from about the same date, were fulling and tucking mills, where coarse woollen cloths and serges were produced, which provided the area with much of its income until the 18th century. Further afield were the larger markets of Newton Abbot, Tavistock, Plymouth and Exeter, while Ashburton became famous for its cattle sales.

Farming in the 20th century

The traditional mixed farming economy of Dartmoor as it evolved over the centuries, with improvements but few fundamental changes, survived in all essentials until about the 1970s, but in that last generation had undergone a complete revolution on all but a few farms. In the same way, the names in the North Bovey parish register, which in the 19th century were little different from those of the 17th, have now been watered down by large numbers of new arrivals from other parts of the country. The change has happened astonishingly fast. The first tractors only arrived, as in many remote areas, at the time of the Second World War, and even then were frequently shared between several farms. In the 1950s a living could still be made from the countless small farms of between 50 and 75 acres, whereas today it is barely economic to farm an area twice that size.

Mr and Mrs Harvey took on Southmeads Farm, Lettaford, from his father, Sidney Harvey, in 1934; and in the same year another brother, Jack Harvey, took on Sanders. The picture painted by Mrs Harvey of the life they led at that time would be recognisable to any of their predecessors of the previous two centuries at least; but to few of those farming on the Dartmoor fringes today.

Higher Lettaford in 1934 was farmed by Dick Lee. Mrs Lee, then aged about 70, was one of eleven children born to the Ireland family in Sanders, and she could remember cows being milked in the shippon there. Her mother was a Harvey,

sister of the William Harvey who later farmed at Southmeads, and it was she who taught Mrs Harvey the skills of a farmer's wife, such as how to cut up a pig, and salt and cure it; to make butter and cream; to make whortleberry pie from the berries gathered by the women and children on the moor in late summer.

Sanders and Southmeads each had a herd of about 30 South Devons, a breed which is equally good for milk and beef. Of these 6 were milking cows, and the rest calves, heifers and bullocks. Mrs Lee at Higher Lettaford, with a larger herd, milked 12 cows, and needed the largest dairy, which was in the room now occupied by a bathroom. The Sanders dairy was in the lean-to at the back, again where the bathroom now is; the cows were milked in the larger group of farm buildings behind, which then belonged to that farm, as they had in 1839 (not Southmeads, as assumed in *Sanders, Lettaford: A Devon Longhouse*).

Each farm also had its herd of Dartmoor sheep, which they drove up onto the moor in summer. In recent years, Chris Hill, the Lee's nephew who succeeded them at Higher Lettaford shortly before the War, had some of the Scots black-faced sheep which have become common on Dartmoor.

The farming was still its traditional mix of livestock and arable. Oats were the main crop, the threshing being done by hand in the barns attached to each farm and the straw being used for fodder. Swedes and mangels were also grown, as well as about 2 acres of potatoes. The ploughing was still done with horses until the War, Higher Lettaford having two teams, the other farms one.

Pigs and poultry came under the supervision of the farmer's wife. About six pigs would be reared each year, to be killed and sold in the autumn, except for one which was kept for the household. The Sanders pig-houses were in the small yard immediately behind the house. Mrs Harvey had around 20 geese and brown ducks as well as hens, which roamed free on the green. Every week the eggs and butter and cream would be taken to market, an expedition everyone looked

forward to. The previous generation had gone to Moreton in the pony -trap, but the market there closed, and instead Mrs Harvey and her neighbours went to Newton Abbot, catching the market bus at Beetor Cross.

The focus of the life of the hamlet was still the chapel, which by then was Methodist (in 1907 the Bible Christians joined the United Methodist Church). Farmers and their families came several miles to attend the services, with Sunday School for the children in a tin schoolroom behind, added in 1922. For their regular schooling, Mrs Harvey's 7 children walked every day to North Bovey, joined by other children on the way. The sense of community among the scattered farms was by no means diminished by their being sited two or three miles apart, and it was this neighbourliness that Mrs Harvey missed most.

Recent History

Sanders was the first house in Lettaford to cease being a farmhouse. Jack Harvey gave up his farm in 1942, due to ill-health, and it was subsequently broken up, land, farm buildings and house going separate ways. In 1945 the house with its yard and one field was bought by Dr Frazer, who owned the ancient Leapa Farm, which he renamed Moorgate. Sanders became a farm- worker's cottage for Moorgate, with first the Raymonds and then Arthur and Lizzie Brown, who were the last people to live in the house. It must have been they, or the Raymonds, who turned the inner room into the kitchen, and installed the Bungalow Belle range, noted there by the authors of *Sanders, Lettaford: A Devon Longhouse*. Mrs Harvey remembered this room as a parlour, with an open fire, when the Jack Harveys lived there. The kitchen was then in the larger room, once the hall, with its large fireplace and bread oven. Originally the cooking was done on the open fire, which took considerable skill, not to mention much practice, but the Harveys had a Dutch oven, a low iron box which stood over the open fire. Mrs Harvey had one at Southmeads as well, and testified to its excellent results.

In 1972, the Frazers sold Sanders, and it changed hands twice before being bought in 1975 by the Devon Historic Buildings Trust, one of the first county buildings trusts, which was concerned at plans to modernise the house, and convert the shippon. It did not have the funds to repair the house itself, and so sold it on to Landmark a year later. The building work was carried out in 1977-8. In 1989, Landmark acquired the green in front of the house. After dwindling congregations for several years, the chapel closed in 1977, and Landmark acquired that too, to preserve the building itself as part of the hamlet.

The Hills, meanwhile, continued to farm Higher Lettaford, but like the Southmeads Harveys, were selling off land, reducing the farm from the original 100 acres to 40 at the time of Mr Hills' death in 1985. With the market as it was then, the price of land and house together was too high for local farmers. Most of

the interest came from people who wanted to modernise and enlarge the house, and develop the farm buildings. Landmark felt that this would radically alter a settlement which it had made great efforts to preserve in its historic form, and therefore decided to buy and repair Higher Lettaford itself. It was let for holidays for the next 23 years, but with every possibility of letting to a long-term tenant as a small-holding. In 2012-13, Landmark's Trustees undertook a careful review of all our buildings and decided that it should be sold, a very rare occurrence in our portfolio. This was because Higher Lettaford had been acquired pre-emptively by our founder John Smith, to protect the important setting of Lettaford, and not because it was itself of outstanding importance or in jeopardy. Higher Lettaford's release also put a potential family home back into the general housing stock, and all the income from its sale was used by Landmark directly for other building rescue projects.

We are sad to see any Landmark disappear from our portfolio, but we can be content in the knowledge that it all contributes to our overall charitable purpose, of saving buildings for future generations to enjoy.

At the time of writing, the Harvey family were still an active presence at Lettaford. Until her retirement (aged close to 80) in 1991, Mrs Harvey acted as caretaker for Landmark, greatly valued by all who met her, but she was succeeded by her daughter, so that the link between old and new inhabitants is maintained.

From: Local Building Traditions in Devon from the Medieval Period to 1700, by Peter Beacham in *Archaeology of the Devon Landscape* 1980

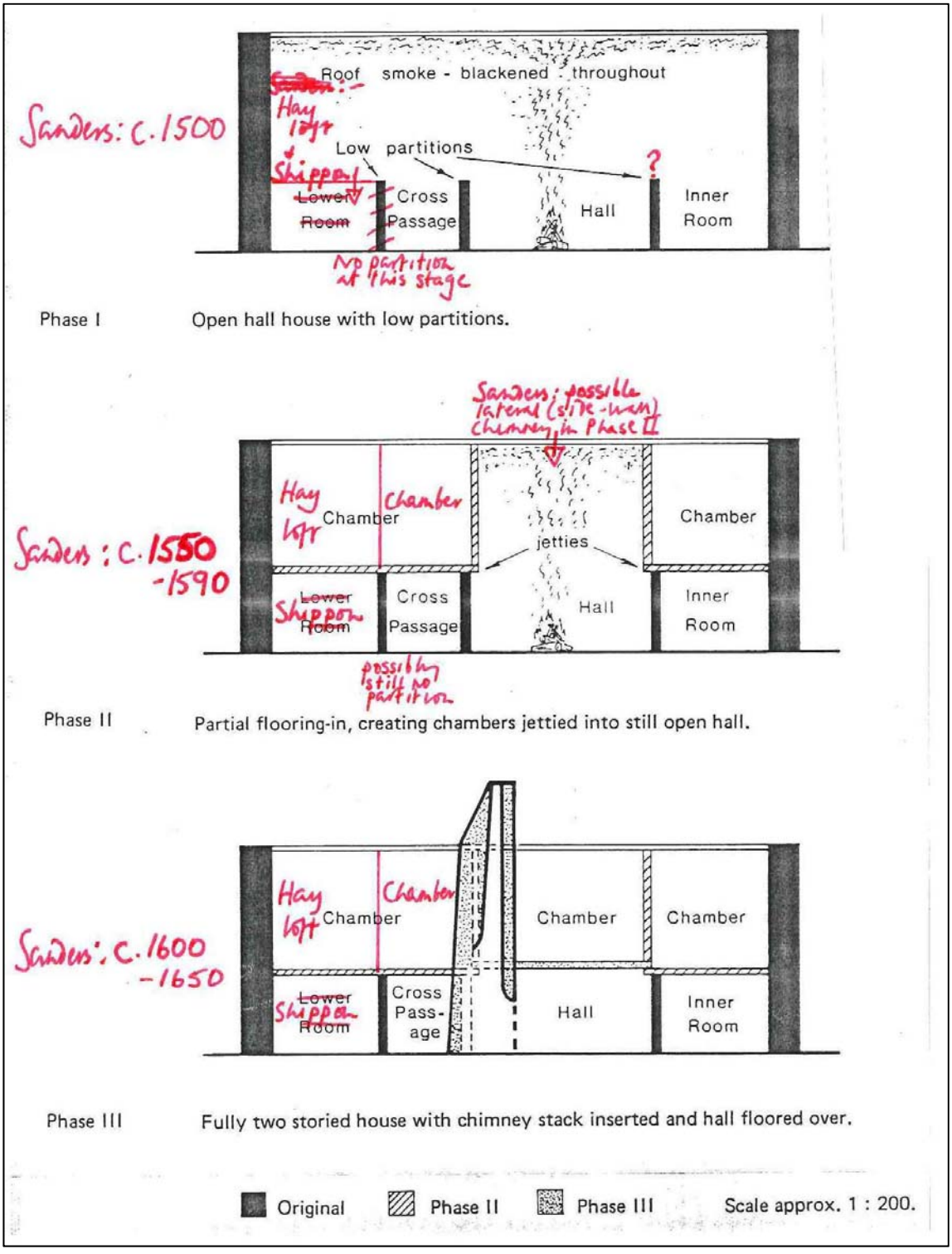


Fig.11.8 Long sections of a three room cross-passage showing its schematic internal development.

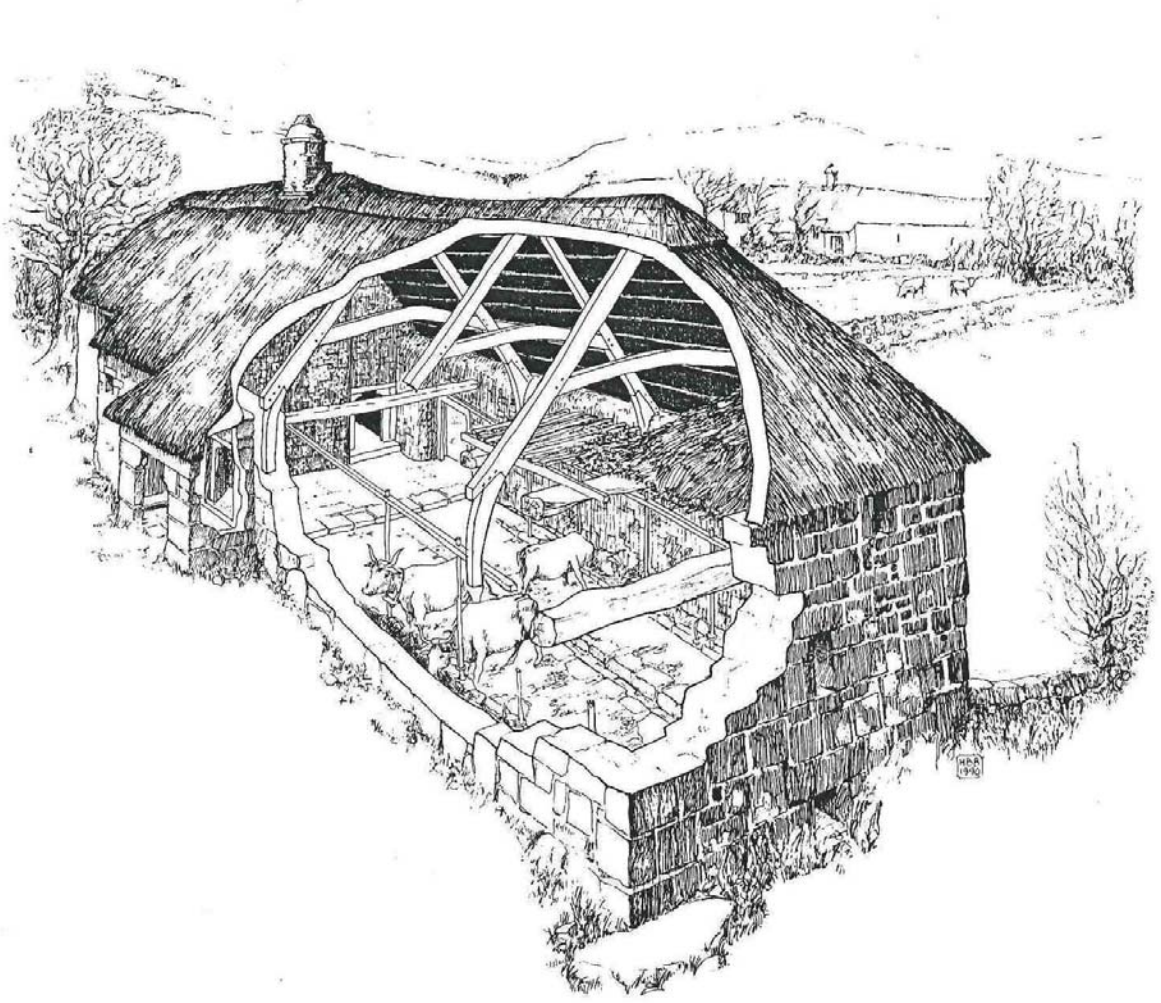
This illustration (if for Lower Room you read Shippon) shows how closely Sanders followed developments in rural houses throughout the region.

The buildings

Devon, like Wales, provides a seemingly endless supply of little altered medieval and post-medieval houses for the study of vernacular building specialists; and within Devon, Dartmoor forms something of an inner constellation, with what W.G. Hoskins called 'one of the most instructive collections of ancient farmhouses south of the Scottish Highlands, possibly in Great Britain.'

Devon has been exceptionally lucky too in the scholars who have been working in this field; both the pioneers such as R. Hansford Worth in the first half of the 20th century, whose collected writings on *Dartmoor* where published posthumously in 1953, and who first attempted to classify the Dartmoor house; and of course that luminary among local historians, W.G. Hoskins; to the more specialised historians of vernacular architecture who since the 1970s found their way into nearly every roofspace in the county in search of the carpentry which is often the only surviving clue to early origin. In line with similar studies in other areas, a detailed typology and chronology has evolved. The long-house itself has become particularly the preserve of Devon Historic Buildings Officer, Peter Beacham, who has written on the subject in successive publications, including the revised Devon volume of the Buildings of England; and in *Devon Building (1990)*, published under his editorship by Devon County Council.

The archaeological investigation of Devon farmhouses has been recorded in a series of articles in the *Transactions of the Devonshire Association* which was begun in 1968, with Dartmoor farmhouses of varying plan described by N.W. Alcock in 1969 and long-houses, both moorland and non-moorland, by S.R. Jones in 1971. In 1972, one long-house in particular was singled out for an article of its own in the *Proceedings of the Devonshire Archaeological Society: Sanders, Lettaford: A Devon Longhouse* by N.W. Alcock, P. Child and M. Laithwaite. Since then, Sanders has been continuously held up as one of the best-preserved examples of the type.



3.1. *Reconstruction drawing of a late-medieval longhouse seen from the shippon end, based on Sanders, Lettaford. Note the cows tethered to the lateral walls.*

From the chapter on the longhouse in Peter Beacham's Devon Building. It should not be interpreted too literally regarding the architectural development of Sanders – by the time the central chimney was built, for instance, there was already a chamber over the cross passage.

Some initial conclusions were modified by discoveries made during restoration in 1977, recorded in a note in the Society's *Proceedings* that year, but for a detailed description and discussion of the building, the original article should still be read in full. The following is only a summary of the chief features and the order in which they occurred. It includes the opinions of other authorities, and adds the information gained during building work, as well as detail on the use of the rooms gained from Mrs Harvey, which confirms theories put forward by Alcock et al.

Sanders

When it was built in about 1500, Sanders contained, firstly, a hall open to the roof. At the lower end of the hall, beyond a timber screen, was a cross-passage with a door at either end; and beyond that again a shippon, or cow-byre, partly floored in to provide a hay loft. At roof level, the building formed a single space from one gable to the other.

The fine granite ashlar of the front and east gable demonstrates the relatively high social status of its builders. It was thought at first that when built it had the further refinement of an inner room at the upper end of the hall, with a chamber above it. Doubt was cast on this theory in 1977, when during restoration it was revealed that the roof truss into which the chamber partition fits had smoke blackening on both sides. The partition, and therefore the chamber, were shown to be a later insertion. It followed that the stone wall, which supports the chamber, was also likely to be an insertion. Michael Laithwaite, investigating, concluded that ‘the massive boulders at its base are not bedrock but a structural peculiarity, and it appears not to be bonded into the front wall of the house.’

Just possibly the wall was built on the line of an earlier low partition or screen, similar to that between hall and cross-passage. Peter Beacham has found enough evidence of inner rooms divided from the main body of the hall in this way to identify the arrangement as a regular first phase in the development of the rural

house in Devon, as he describes it in a chapter on *Local Building Traditions in Archaeology of the Devon Landscape* (1980).

Such an inner room could have been a dairy. Alternatively, it could have been a parlour, as indeed it became later. W.G. Hoskins, for one, would favour the latter, it being his fond belief, as stated in *Old Devon,* that:

> the fundamental improvement in the dwelling house, its development into two rooms from the original one, was due to the need for some privacy for the women of the household. Left to themselves the majority of men would go on living in one room until doomsday.

As first built, there was no chimney in the hall. The fire was lit on a central hearth, the smoke from which gathered among the rafters, and seeped out between the thatch with which the building was then roofed.

Three roof trusses survive, two of them visible in the central bedroom: one, with straight principals, perhaps always marked a division between hall and inner room. The second is a raised cruck truss. Crucks are cut from the trunk and projecting branch of a tree, so that they are curved in the middle. A full cruck reaches from the apex of the roof to the ground, but in a stone building there is no need for that, and the curved end is buried in the wall.

The third truss, another raised cruck complete with smoke blackening, can be seen over the lower side of the cross-passage, just beyond the partition enclosing the end bedroom. The shippon has been reroofed, but it too probably once had raised crucks, and there is evidence of a half-hipped end gable. The beams of the hayloft survive, as does the loading door, together with the ventilation slits, the drain down the middle, with the drain-hole at the lower end, and even the sockets for the stall-posts to which the cows were tethered.

The division between hall and shippon was very rudimentary, just a post- and-panel screen between the main area of the hall and the passage, of which one section survives. There does not seem to have been any screen at all on the

lower side of the passage, there being no mortice slots in the underside of the beam in that position. The present partition is of much later date.

All the above is straightforward, and in line with other buildings of similar date and type. There are two areas of less certainty. The first is the date of the porch. This is not bonded in with the walls of the house, but is of similar granite ashlar, and has the same shouldered arch as the door between cross-passage and hall, of which one jamb is original. Alcock, Child and Laithwaite decided that the porch, too, was original, and Peter Beacham, in various articles and in *The Buildings of England: Devon*, agrees with them, as do the authors of the DoE Lists. W.O. Collier, however, Senior Investigator for the Historic Buildings Council, thought it a later addition, because it bonded in with the masonry of the projection containing the present staircase.

The second debated question is whether the separate shippon door is original or, as in most cases, a later insertion made as men began to wish for some further separation between themselves and their cows. Alcock et al. could find no evidence of it being inserted, but left the question open. The DoE Listing officer thought it original. Mr Collier tended to favour it as an insertion, of the same date as the porch - late 16th century. Peter Beacham, too, has come down in favour of insertion.

The roof of the shippon, reconstructed in the 18th of early 19th century, when the wall-heads were built up to allow the shallower pitch necessary for slate; after repairs of 1977-78.

Photographs taken by Sanders in 1976, by the architect Paul Pearn
The wire on the right is supporting the electricity pole on the Green.

Sanders, before restoration. Photos: Paul Pearn, 1976

The next stage in the development of Sanders came later in the 16th century (the lists say mid-, others say late-), when some major alterations and improvements were made. Most important was the insertion of upper chambers at either end of the still open hall, providing more private sleeping space. On the evidence found in 1977, a stone wall was now built between hall and inner room, and on this rested the floor and partition of the chamber, which projected into the hall as an internal jetty: the joists, with their rounded ends, are clearly visible. Old wattle and daub survives in the partition which rests on them. Access to the chamber would have been by a ladder from the hall. There was no staircase at that date.

The second upper chamber was inserted above the cross-passage and like the first one, was jettied out into the hall. On the upper side of the passage, the floor joists rested on the earlier screen. Access, again, was probably by a ladder-stair from the hall, presumably against the north wall.

Evidence for another addition of this date lies in the projection on the south face, next to the porch. This is generally accepted as the chimney for a lateral hall fireplace added at the same time as the upper chambers. All traces of such a fireplace have disappeared, however, and the Lists suggest that it may have been a stair from the beginning. If so, it would then belong to the next phase of alteration, which followed in the 17th century.

In this next phase, a new chimney was built across the end of the hall, backing onto the cross-passage. The existence of a chimney made the lofty roof-space unnecessary, and so the hall was now floored in, to create a third upper chamber. Assuming there to have been an earlier lateral fireplace (and it would be surprising for a house of this status to continue with only an open fire for so long), this was now adapted to provide a stair to the upper floor, with a bread oven beside it. At about the same period, a lean-to was added at the back of the hall, which Mrs Harvey confirms was a dairy, in use until 1942; and fireplaces were added in the parlour and the chamber above.

Inevitably a number of alterations were made later, particularly in the 18th and 19th centuries. Most noticeable has been the raising of the roofs of both shippon and dwelling, adapting them to a shallower pitch for slate. To judge from patches of inferior masonry, there has been some rebuilding of walls too. New window openings have been made, or existing ones enlarged. Two early window embrasures survive in the north wall, where they were blocked by the addition of the dairy. Doors were repaired and replaced. A new staircase, against the north wall of the hall, replaced that in the old chimney, which then became a cupboard. Fortunately, such alterations have all been minor. In its essentials Sanders remains the house it had become by 1700.

The farm-buildings that were an essential accompaniment to the house have been more extensively rebuilt and renewed. Only part of the small barn behind the house dates from the 16th century; mostly it is 18th-century. The linhey, stable and pig-houses are later still, probably all dating from the 19th century. The linhey was later adapted for milking, but according to Mrs Harvey, in the 1930s the Sanders cows were milked in the larger yard behind. This yard, with its large hay-barn, now belongs to Southmeads, but until 1942 it belonged to Sanders. It was probably added in the late 18th or early 19th century, at a time when ideas of new, more productive methods of agriculture were filtering through to hill-farms such as this.

Higher Lettaford

18th-century occupiers of Sanders would have little difficulty today in recognising their home, but the same cannot be said for Higher Lettaford. Of all three houses, this one has been the most altered. Its status as a long-house is inferred from its siting down the hill, and from its similarity to the other houses, both in the appearance and arrangement of the older part, and as shown in plan before it was rebuilt on the Tithe Map of 1839. There are, however, Dartmoor farmhouses with an additional service room below the cross-passage, instead of a shippon, and it is possible, though unlikely, that Higher Lettaford was one of these.

In the 19th century, Higher Lettaford was the largest of the three Lettaford farms and was owned by a well-to-do local family, and therefore it is not surprising that it was the one to be rebuilt. It is difficult to tell what its comparative status was in the 16th century, however. From the granite ashlar of its front, it would seem to have been at least the equal of Sanders, though perhaps not of Southmeads, where a fragment of carving hints at a once more ornate interior.

Like the other two houses, Higher Lettaford had an open hall and an inner room with a chamber above, proved by the existence of a closed-truss forming a partition between the two, which was later cut through to make a doorway when the hall was floored in. Other trusses have gone, but from the slightness of surviving purlins and rafters, it is likely that the roof was of thatch. These survived when, in the 19th century, a new slate roof was added, the walls being raised in cob at the same time to bring about the necessary shallower pitch.

There is no evidence of an internal jetty at either end of the hall. The chimney and staircase of the inner room are likely to have been 17th- century additions originally, of the same period as the floor in the hall, although the stairs themselves had been renewed in the 19th century. The lower wall of the hall, and the surrounds of the fireplace and doorway, are of similar masonry to the outside

The 'downhill-siting' of Higher Lettaford shows clearly in the photograph.

walls, and would appear to be part of the original building, rather than the 19th-century remodelling. The existence of a fireplace from the beginning would suggest a date in the later 16th century for the building as a whole.

The new house on the site of the supposed shippon appears to have been built in about 1840 and, initially at least, to have formed a separate dwelling. There is even a possibility that it was for some years a school. By the end of the century, however, the whole house had been brought together as one by a resident farmer, although there has remained a tendency to sub-divide it between different generations when necessary.

In the 19th-century house, the kitchen occupied the same position that it does now. In recent years the dairy was in the room opposite, where there is now a bathroom and loo. The two front rooms must have seemed over grand for most Dartmoor farmers, especially when combined with the verandah that adds such a strong whiff of Torquay to the house, but they came in useful to let out to visitors, thus providing a little extra income. The new bedrooms were all luxuriously provided with coal grates. The only explanation for the abundance of coat hooks is that the house was indeed, in its early days, a school.

A farm of this size needed ample farm buildings, particularly for livestock, and sure enough there were three shippons in all, as well as a stable and barn, all built in about 1800 or a little after. These presumably occupy the sites of earlier, smaller, buildings.

Sanders during restoration.

Building Repairs

Sanders

Plans for the repair of Sanders had already been drawn up when the Landmark Trust acquired the building in 1976. Work began in 1977, under the supervision of Paul Pearn, of the firm of Pearn and Proctor of Plymouth. The builders were Blight and Scoble, Building Contractors and Undertakers of Buckfastleigh.

One of the first priorities was to improve the drainage of water around the site. Land drains were inserted on both sides, and another runs under the kitchen, to encourage water that previously flowed past the doors to remain under the surface. Some difficulty was experienced due to the fact that the ground was in places solid granite. At the same time, the area of granite paving in front of the porch was uncovered, separating Sanders from the green. The wall enclosing a small garden area in front of the house was repaired. Later, an electricity pole which stood in the middle of the green was taken down, and the electricity supply for the hamlet brought in by underground cables, so that the green was not marred by unsightly criss-crossing wires.

On the building itself, the roof was the most urgent job. The roof of the house had been renewed not all that long before with asbestos slates, but the shippon roof was full of holes. The covering was stripped off completely, porch and lean-to included. Battens and rafters were repaired or replaced as necessary, and then random Delabole slates were laid, in diminishing courses. The porch needed a new wall plate. The gable end between dwelling and shippon had been slate-hung, but this was now rendered, with lead flashings.

The walls were not in need of major repair. A certain amount of ivy had to be cleaned off the north, or rear, wall. Small areas of rebuilding were needed, in the south wall of the porch, for instance, which included the replacement in granite

of a previous brick repair; and over the loading door of the shippon; but for the most part it was only necessary to rake out defective pointing, and repoint with lime mortar. The chimneys were also repointed, and the granite cap of the hall chimney repaired; brick tops were replaced with slate cappings.

The main door surround had been repaired with a thick layer of cement. This was hacked off, and the jambs and head rebuilt or made good as necessary. The frames of all the outside doors were repaired, and the doors themselves.

Over the window in the shippon, a new oak lintol was inserted. The windows in the lean-to also needed new lintols, and new window frames. All the other window frames were repaired. Drip moulds were provided over those on the front, being most exposed to the weather, to shed the copious Dartmoor rain.

Inside the cross-passage, the masonry of the chimney stack was cleaned and repointed. The plank partition on its lower side was repaired. In the shippon, apart from the clearance of accumulated rubbish, nothing was done at all.

In the dwelling, some alterations were made, however. The first of these was the removal of the stair that had been inserted against the North wall. This allowed the repair of the oak post and panel screen, and the doorway in it. One muntin was found wedged in above the jetty beam, and so was put back in its right place, and the jetty beam repaired as well. In addition to parts of the screen itself, one door jamb was renewed, copying the existing original, and the sill beam also had to be renewed. The door itself is new.

A new timber stair was then built in the 17th-century position, in the supposed Elizabethan chimney breast, which had latterly been a cupboard. The solid treads are chestnut, and the newel posts, balusters and handrail are oak. The marks of the original, probably stone, treads could be seen in the plaster. The small window was discovered while work was in progress.

The other alteration inside the house was to take up the existing screed floor in the present kitchen, and to lay a new slate-paved floor at the same level as the hall, which meant lowering it a few inches, and underpinning the walls at this end, since they rested on the ground where the original builders followed the slope of the hill. The Bungalow Belle stove was dismantled and reassembled in the same position, but at the new level. A new floor of quarry tiles was also laid in the lean-to, where a new bathroom replaced the existing one. The lintol of the door to the lean-to also had to be renewed, and the frame and door repaired, as were those to the kitchen.

Downstairs, all that remained to be done was to remove existing plaster, to reveal the fine masonry of the walls, which were repointed and then limewashed. The back wall of the fireplace was exposed, where it had been plastered over, and the bread oven repaired. The two former window openings were discovered in the north wall, and left as niches. The purpose of the niches in the wall between hall and inner room is unknown. The little corner cupboard in the hall came with the house, and was repaired by Blight and Scoble's joiner, who also made the dresser for the kitchen.

The ceiling in the hall, which is lath and plaster, was simply made good where necessary, but in the kitchen a new plaster ceiling replaced recently inserted flaxboard, both there and in the bedroom above.

Upstairs, all the ceilings were removed, and reformed to follow the line of the roof, with insulation above. In the small bedroom, insulation was put under the floor as well, and in the partition between it and the shippon. Oak boards were laid directly on the joists of the cross-passage ceiling, then the insulation, and then new softwood boards. The floorboards in the other two rooms are the old elm ones, repaired where necessary, and with a new section where the stair used to come up into the middle room. The removal of the stair also meant that the

partition with the small bedroom needed making up, where it had been cut away to provide headroom.

Plaster was removed from the main trusses, to leave them visible in the middle room, or upper hall. Here you can see both the early crucks, and the later principal rafters, inserted when slate replaced the original thatch.

In the large bedroom, the fireplace was opened up and provided with a new granite lintol. The walls were limewashed, as they had always been, the colour matching as closely as possible the former rich golden shade.

In the yard behind the house, the outbuildings were also in need of repair. The walls of the linhay, stable and pigsty were all rebuilt and repointed, and the roof of the linhay made good. The barn was in the worst condition, and had been given a corrugated iron roof. When the collapsing walls had been rebuilt, it was given a new roof of Devon wheat reed thatch. The thatcher was Mr Warren, of Lower Venton Farm, Widecombe.

The work on the main house was completed, and the dwelling furnished, in March 1978. The only hitch had come from a neighbouring farmer who had acquired ownership of the green some years before from the Lees of Higher Lettaford. In spite of the fact that previous owners of Sanders had repaired the roof, and stood their scaffolding on the green without anyone minding, he raised every objection possible to Landmark's scaffolding being erected thereon, and the builders standing any materials or equipment there, finally issuing an injunction requiring it all to be cleared away. He was very unwilling to allow access to Sanders at all, but after protracted and Dickensian legal negotiations, Landmark finally acquired the green in front of Sanders, and down to the stream, in 1987.

When they wrote their article on Sanders in 1972, Alcock, Child and Laithwaite stated in their introduction that ‘impending modernisation will inevitably conceal,

if not destroy, some significant features.' Sadly this has indeed been the case with all too many long-houses that survived in tact until after the War, only to fall victim to modernisation in the last few decades. But happily it has not, after all, been the case at Sanders.

Higher Lettaford

Work started on Higher Lettaford in 1989. The architect was Peter Bird, of Caroe and Martin, and the builders were Penbekon Ltd. The house had been going downhill for some years, and after it fell empty in 1986, the Dartmoor weather quickly pushed it over the borderline into dereliction.

In drawing up the plans, it quickly became apparent once again that what we had was in fact two houses. The Victorian end provided as much accommodation as was going to be needed, and so it was decided to do no more than repair the older part, and leave it as it was. By looking at the 'before' photographs, it can be seen that the repairs were extensive. First of all the roof was stripped, to reveal the structure beneath. According to Peter Bird:

The visible roof proves to be a relatively modern structure, overlying an earlier roof made of riven oak rafters, with riven laths fixed very nicely to their backs with oak pegs. This earlier roof lies on a line level with the inside face of the wall; and so does appear to have been made for thatching - the laths would have been thatching spars.

The new roof was again constructed over this and on the same line as before. A steel bar was fixed to the main truss, to reinforce it, because the original tie beam had been cut through when a door was inserted into what was once a closed truss. The whole of the old roof structure was retained, suspended from the new rafters on wires. The new roof covering, as on Sanders, is of random Delabole slates laid in diminishing courses, the largest slates 20', the smallest 12.'

Higher Lettaford in 1983. Photos: Michael Campbell-Cole

The brick end chimney was taken down, and rebuilt in field granite, to match that of Sanders.

The walls, although they looked in imminent danger of collapse, in fact only needed minor repair, and repointing. Just one section of the south wall had to be rebuilt, where a doorway had been turned into a window; and another small area on the north front, next to the new house, where the water had been getting in and had completely destroyed the core of the wall. What remained of the old render was hacked off, to reveal the fine granite masonry. Above the granite, however, there is a band of cob, or rammed earth, added to raise the height of the eaves when the roof was adapted to a shallower pitch for slate. Here again the water had been getting in, causing the cob to disintegrate. It was all taken off, therefore, and the old material mixed up with new, before the wall head was reconstructed. This was then rendered and limewashed to keep it weatherproof. Local arsenical sand was mixed with the lime used for the mortar and render, to match the colour found elsewhere in Lettaford.

Inside the old house, as much of the old plaster was retained as possible, bulges and all. Only where it was missing or actually crumbling was it renewed. Most of its sins were then hidden under a good coat of limewash.

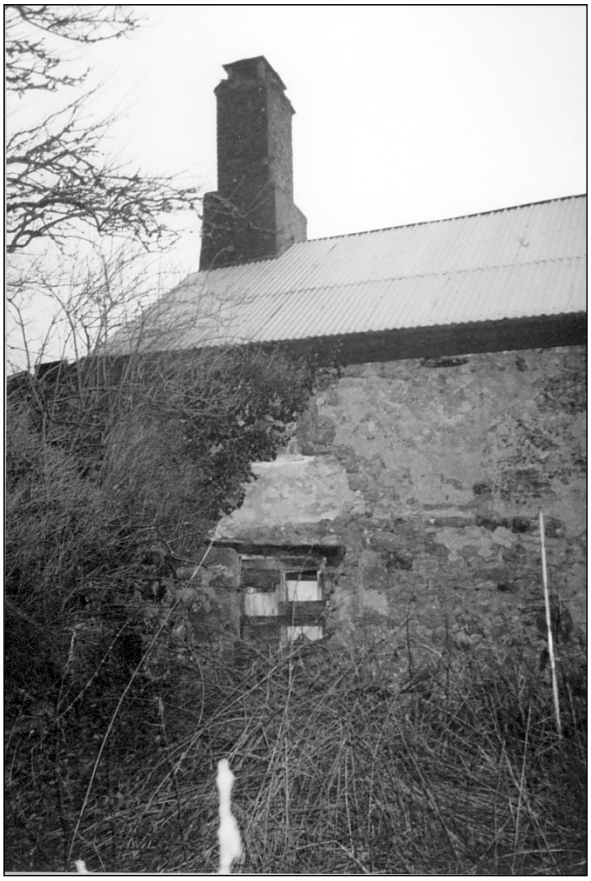
The brick floors of the downstairs rooms were retained, but the floor above was rotten at one end. Here new oak joists were inserted, with new pine boards. The stair beside the fireplace was also rotten, so a completely new stair was built, in softwood as before, but retaining the old doors. The windows were repaired, and painted green. Flakes of this colour had been found on the windows themselves, and the door was also painted with it.

The roof of the new house was covered with asbestos slates. These have been replaced with new Ffestiniog slates from North Wales, which were already in abundant supply when the house was built. Asbestos gutters have been replaced

with ones of cast iron. The render on the chimneys was renewed, and they were given new brick tops, instead of the existing concrete. The roughcast on the rest of the house was repaired and newly limewashed. All the doors and windows needed repair. The back door still bears the scratches of generations of sheepdogs.

The veranda roof was rebuilt, reusing the existing Delabole slates. Granite saddles were inserted at the base of the posts, where they had rotted. The paving was repaired and patched, using quarry tiles salvaged from the smaller house at Lower Porthmeor in Cornwall.

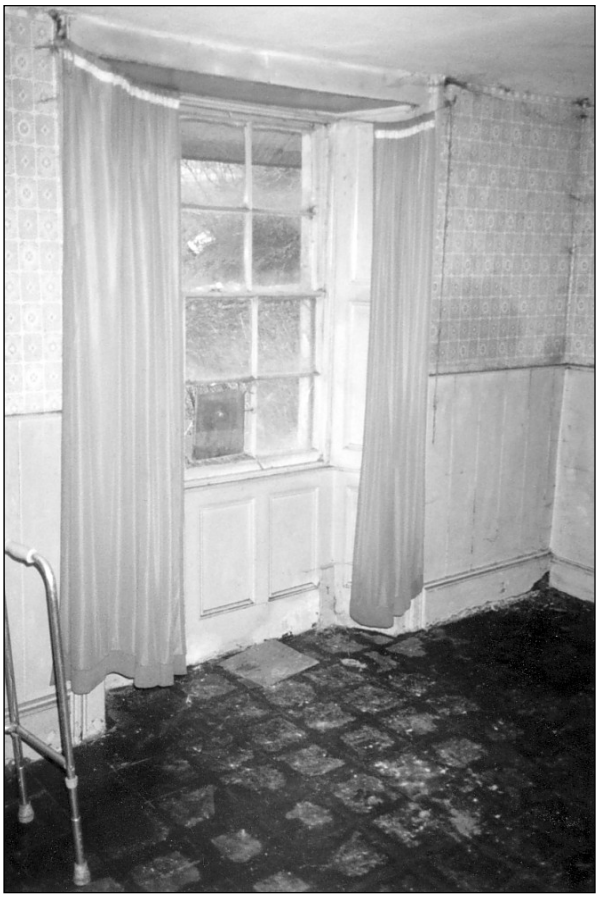
Higher Lettaford; the shed at the top end, taken down 1989.



The south wall which was collapsing when a door had been inserted.

Unstable section of wall on the north front.

Inside Higher Lettaford:
The old house (above)
The new house (below)



Inside the house, some repairs were needed. The ends of several of the floor joists had rotted where they ran into the wall, particularly on the south side where they are most exposed to south-westerly gales. Since the howling Dartmoor wind will continue to drive rain right into the wall, it was thought prudent to repair the joist ends with steel plates, which will last better than timber. Some of the ground floor partitions had to be underpinned with slate.

Minor alterations were made. A new opening was made in the wall between the kitchen and dining room, and a new Burlington slate floor laid. The house was completely redecorated, but the 'back stairs brown' paint is a copy of what was found when scrapings were made. Bathrooms were provided - the only running water before consisted of a tap on the verandah. Electricity had also to be laid on, brought in underground.

Outside the house, the garden wall was repaired and the yard paving disinterred from under several inches of mud. The doors of the barn were repaired, but otherwise the farm buildings have been left as they were. All in all, Higher Lettaford remains exactly what it has been for the last 150 years: a surprisingly prominent addition to this otherwise low-lying Dartmoor settlement.

Charlotte Haslam
February 1991

Lettaford Chapel

Bible Christian services were first held in Lettaford in 1860, when it seems that permission was given to use the day school for Sunday prayer meetings. For about two years before this a small number of people had been meeting in cottages in hamlets nearby, but with a more regular meeting place the memberships quickly rose to about twenty.

The move must partly have been due to the influence of the schoolmistress, Mrs Susan Walling, and it may also have been due to her that a new building was erected to serve as both schoolroom and chapel. The work was actually ordered by a Miss Pynseat, however, who may have become the Mrs Splatt who is later referred to as the owner of the building. The record of the work exists in a book of 'Tenders and Estimates for the building of Chapels and church extensions.' The entry is undated, but presumed from its place in the chronological order to be for 1866:

'The second estimate for Work proposed to be done at Lettaford for Miss Pynseat.

> 'I hereby agree to build the walls of Schoolroom with Granite stone 20 inches thick and of the dimensions shown in plan, and to cover the roof with best Coryton Countess slate 20 by 10. To lath the Battering of Back and South end and the Ceiling with Good stout laths. The plastering of same and remaining part of Wall to be three Coat Work. The External face of Walls to be pointed. To provide Granite Cills for Windows and Door and find all Material and Carriage for the sum of fifty eight Pounds ten shillings. £58-1-0
>
> W. Stone'

This almost certainly refers to the existing building, which would thus have opened in 1867 or 1868. This ties in with the list of active members of the congregation; the number had sunk to only six in 1866, but rose to seventeen in 1867 and twenty three in 1868. It was not a wealthy community, consisting almost entirely of small farmers and farm labourers. Out of these the group of

preachers would have been selected, who took it in turns to lead services in all the twelve chapels making up the Chagford Circuit.

In 1872 a change occurred in Lettaford. On September 5th a resolution was noted in the Chagford Circuit Book:

> 'That as we learn with deep regret that sister Susan Walling and her daughter are about to be removed from Lettaford we hereby desire to express our high appreciation of assistance they have rendered us in entertaining the preachers, conducting prayer and class meetings, in supporting the cause of God financially and in carrying out the discipline of the society generally and we earnestly pray that their valuable lives may long be spared and that the choicest of Heaven'' blessings may rest upon them and that ultimately they may gain their full and permanent reward in the home of the sanctified where change and disappointment may never come.
>
> That this meeting desires to express its most cordial and hearty thanks to Mrs Splatt for her great kindness and liberality in allowing us the free use of the schoolroom at Lettaford in which to preach the Gospel. We believe many souls have derived much good therefrom, some of whom we trust are now joining their songs of praise with that of the redeemed in glory.
>
> We learn with deep regret that Mrs Walling who has rendered us good service there is shortly about to remove but notwithstanding her removal and the consequent closure of the school we shall be very pleased with the kind permission of Mrs Splatt to continue public services as heretofore and we trust many precious souls may yet find a birthplace there and may Heaven's blessing be hers through life, after which may Heaven be her eternal home.'

At some date, probably not long after this, the ownership of the Schoolroom passed to the Bible Christian Church, so that it became a fully fledged chapel, vested in trustees drawn from the congregation. The late Mr Wallace Perryman of Yeo Farm, Chagford, who played the harmonium in Lettaford Chapel from 1914 until the 1960s, and whose father had been a preacher on the Chagford Circuit, remembered in a newspaper interview given in 1960 that at this time, or perhaps when services were first held in the school, the Bible Christians encountered strong opposition from a local landowner, who even went to the lengths of padlocking the door on Sundays to keep them out. A law suit followed in which

BIBLE CHRISTIAN PREACHERS' PLAN

FOR THE

CHAGFORD CIRCUIT.

1879.

"In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace."—Ephesians i chap. 7 v.

PLACES AND DAYS.	TIME	FEBRUARY 2	9	16	23	MARCH 2	9	16	23	30	APRIL 6 G.F	13	20	27
CHAGFORD	11	~~N~~		1		2		1		1		2		2†
	3	17	6	1Q	5	8	~~N~~	6C	5	6	3D	11	17	~~N~~
	6	5	11	2Q	3	8	9	1C	19	4S	3D P.M.	11	9	2†
Wednesday	7	2		1T		2		1		2		1		2
PROVIDENCE (Class)	11	3	5	5	8	8	3	5	1	5	3	3	5	8
	3½	11	5	9Q	8	2	3C	14	1	8D	13 P.M.	2	11	1†
	6½	11	6	1Q	8	2D	3C	14	18	9D	5	2	11	1†
	7		8		2		1E		2		1		1	
Wednesday	7	P.M.		T.P.M.		P.M.		P.M.		P.M.		P.M.		P.M.
Thursday Prayer Meeting	7													
HITTISLEIGH	2½	12	3	8Q	1	13	11C	~~N~~	9	7	2D	12	8	3†
	6	12	3	8Q	1S	13	11C	~~N~~	9	7	2D	12	8	3†
Monday	7		P.M.		3T		P.M.				2		2	
Wednesday	7								1		1			
WHIDDON DOWN	11	6	2M.S.	2	1	3Q	10	2	2E	15	2 C.A.	1	6	1D
	6	9	1M.S.	10	17	3Q	8	2S	11C	15	13 C.A.	10	6	8D
Tuesday	7	2		2				2				2		
Thursday	7		M.M.		1T				1					
LETTAFORD	2½	~~N~~	11MS	6	3Q	17	9	10	19S	1S	6	~~N~~	9	17D
Tuesday	7			1T		2		1		1				
SOUTH ZEAL	3	3	2M.S.	14	9	1Q	15	11	2C	18	8	1D	14	15†
	6	3	2M.S.	14	9	8Q	15	11	12C	18	8 P.M.	1D	14	15†
Tuesday	7		M.M.		2T		1		2S		1		1	
OKEHAMPTON	3	2	B.M.S.	3	2Q	14	1	9C	8	2	11D	15	1	13†
	6	2	B.M.S.	3	2Q	14	1S	9C	8	2D	11D 18	14	1	13†
Monday	8	2	M.M.	2	2T	1E	1	2	2	2	1	2	1	1
SPREYTON	2½	13	8	12Q	11	15	17	2C	3	12	2T	8	13	11D
	6	13	8	T2Q	11	15	17	13C	3	12	2T P.M.	8	2S	11D
Tuesday	7				1		13		1		2		2	
LONGDOWN	2½	9	1M.S.	2T	17Q	12	8	13	11C	~~N~~	12	7	2S	8D
Monday	7								1				2	
Wednesday	7				1		12				2			
YEO COTTAGE	2½	5	17	11Q	~~N~~	11	6	1M.S.	17	8	~~N~~C	5	3	2D
Monday	7	P.M.		1T		2		1		1		1		2
DREWSTEIGNTON	3	8	9	~~N~~Q	13	6	12	17C	P.M.	3	1M.S.	13	12	9
	6	8	9	11Q	13	6	12	17C	10	3	1M.S.	13	12	9
MURCHINGTON	1													
Wednesday	7			2		1		2		1		2		1

NAMES AND RESIDENCES.

1 T. C. PENWARDEN, Ash.
2 C. WARE, Okehampton.
3 J. CROCKER, Forder.
4 J. BARRETT, Chagford.
5 W. WEBBER, Murchington.
6 J. JEFFERY, Chagford,
7 W. MIDDLEWICK, Creyford.
8 T. DUNNING, Ash.
9 J. WEBBER, Yeo Cottage.
10 J. B. MOORE, Gooseford.
11 W. PERRYMAN, Yeo Mills.
12 R. RICE, Longdown.
13 W. ENDACOTT, Longdown.
14 W. H. DREW, Okehampton.

ON TRIAL.

15 T. LETHBRIDGE, Okehampton
16 G.W.
17 W.R.

AUXILIARY.

18 R. DREW, Okehampton.
19 M. ROWSE, Postbridge.

CIRCUIT STEWARDS.

Mr. W. Perry Penwarden
Mr. T. DUNNING, Ash.

REFERENCES.

Q—Quarterly Collection. C—Circuit Collection †—Lighting Collection. S—Sacrament. L—Lovefeast. T—Ticket Renewal. E—Elders' Meeting P.M.—Prayer Meeting. W—Worn-out Preachers' Fund Collection. D—District Fund Collection.

NOTICES.

1. The next Preachers' and Quarterly Meetings will (D.V.) be held at Chagford, on Thursday, March 27th, 1879, the former to commence at 2, the latter at 3 p.m.
2. Each Preacher is expected to fill his own appointments or himself to get an accredited supply.
3. The Society Stewards are expected to provide for the Sacraments and Lovefeasts and to publish all the Collections the Sabbath before they are appointed to be made.
4. The Leaders and Stewards are affectionately requested to attend the Elders' Meetings, and present their books for inspection, and the Stewards to attend the Quarterly Meeting.
5. *Providence Chapel, Throwleigh, is Licensed for the Solemnization of Marriages.*
6. Bible Christian Magazines and Hymn Books. The 16th edition of Billy Bray's Life, revised and enlarged with a beautiful steel engraved portrait, Plain Cloth, 1/. Gilt, 1/6. Illustrated Edition, crown 8 vo. price 2/6. The Life and Labours of Mr. J. Thorne Bible Christian Minister written by his son with two steel engraved portraits, at 3/. Also the life and labour of Mr. S. Thorne written by his son S. L. Thorne, Bible Christian Minister, at 2/6. F. W. Bourne's Sermons at 3/6. Gilbert's Christian Ministry may still be had at 4d. A new revival Hymn Book, cloth, 226 hymns, for 4d. School Rewards and all other Religious Publications may be had through T. C. PENWARDEN the Circuit Minister. All orders must be given by the 18th of each month. All Books to be paid for quarterly.
7. A BAZAAR in aid of the Circuit Fund will be held at Whiddon Down, on Good Friday, April 11th, 1879. All the friends in the Circuit are affectionately requested to do their utmost to make it a success.

the landowner tried to prove that the building stood on his own land, so that he had the right of control. The Bible Christians won the case however, by establishing that the chapel was in fact on common land.

Mr Perryman remembered a period when cattle drovers who used the old Way through the hamlet fixed a chain across the door of the chapel, to prevent their animals from straying inside.

The Rev. L.H. Court in 'The History of the Bible Christian Methodist Church in the Chagford Circuit' in 1904 states that the congregation at Lettaford never properly revived after Mrs Walling's departure, and that numbers began to decline from then on. The agricultural depression of the late 19th century, causing the gradual depopulation of the area, would have contributed to this trend.

For the twenty years from 1897, when he was made a trustee, the chapel was cared for by a Mr William Chammings. In winter he would light the open fire to warm the chapel before meetings, and the oil lamps by which the building was lit. He would have overseen the installation in 1913 of a harmonium, given by Hittesleigh Methodist Chapel.

During Mr Chammings' trusteeship, in 1907, the Bible Christians joined with the Free Methodists and the New Connexion to form the United Methodist Church. This foreshadowed their final unification in 1932 with the Wesleyans and the Primitive Methodists, to become the Methodist Church of Great Britain.

In 1917 a new group of trustees was installed. In the 1920s there must have been a rise in the congregation, and in the number of children locally, for in 1922 a schoolroom was added 'at the rear of the chapel', with a doorway leading through in the corner of the south wall. It was made of galvanised iron lined with wood, and was lit by oil lamps like the chapel. On the other end, or 'front' of the chapel a garage was added, also made out of galvanised iron.

At some time after this, although possibly not until after the War, the old entrance in the east, or side, wall was blocked up and a new entrance pierced through the chimney breast in the north end, reached through the garage. At the same time the pulpit was moved from the north to the south end.

This, with the installation of a new organ for Mr Perryman, and gas-lighting, in 1943, followed by electricity in 1962, completes the account of alterations to the building in its time as a place of worship, since by the latter date the congregation numbered only four, and they found it difficult even to maintain the building. Mr Roger Thorne, who has made a study of the history of the Methodist Church in Devon, preached at Lettaford on three occasions, and remembers the warmth of their welcome however.

By 1977 the number of active members in the whole of the Chagford Circuit had dwindled so low that it was decided to amalgamate it with its neighbours. Lettaford was incorporated into the Exeter Circuit, and soon afterwards the decision was made to close the chapel altogether. The Landmark Trust, having already restored the long-house, Sanders, in Lettaford, were keen to preserve the chapel, feeling that it was an integral part of the character of the place, and so it was conveyed to them in 1981.

The Conversion of the Old Chapel

The Old Chapel has been converted to provide accommodation with as little alteration as possible. For this reason the interior has been retained as a single open space.

The two galvanised iron additions were removed, however, and in place of the schoolroom on the south end, an extension built to provide a bathroom, with walls of the same rubble masonry as the main building, and Delabole slate of a similar colour to those on the main roof. A new doorway had to be made to lead into this. A small window was formed in the west wall of the chapel, to light the kitchen area.

The doorway leading into the garage was blocked, reinstating the chimney. A new fireplace was then inserted, with a granite surround.

The floor level of the chapel has been raised to enable those inside to see out, and to help air to circulate underneath, to prevent damp. This meant raising the entrance doorway as well, and building the steps up to it. The original door itself has been retained.

The west wall was given a new coat of render, and made damp-proof on the inside as well. The roof was overhauled, but the existing slates were retained where possible, made up with randoms from the Delabole quarry where necessary. Slates from the same source have been hung on the south gable. New plumbing and electrical systems had to be put in, the wires of the latter entering the building underground. The ceiling, and some of the floor, joists had to be renewed, and a new coat of plaster applied to the former. The walls were patched where the existing plaster was decayed, and then limewashed.

All the new woodwork is softwood; floorboards and skirting board, the cupboard beside the fireplace and the low partition behind which the kitchen is concealed.

Care has been taken in the furnishing to keep the interior as uncluttered as possible, in order to preserve the plain and simple feel of the building.

The architect for the conversion was Mr Paul Pearn of Pearn and Procter, who has restored a number of buildings in the West Country for the Landmark Trust. The building was carried out by Messrs Penbekon Contractors (Devon) Ltd, of Devonport, Plymouth.
Charlotte Haslam
September 1982

1981; before the garage was removed. Photo: Robert Chapman

The interior of the Old Chapel in 1981; south end (above) and north end (below). Photos: Robert Chapman

Sanders – Refurbishment works autumn 2002

After some 24 years since the original restoration, the electrical wiring at Sanders needed renewal, so we took the opportunity to refurbish the Landmark. Externally very little was needed other than outside painting, the exception being that years of use demanded that the upper part of the chimney stack needed rebuilding. We have also made the cross passage permanently accessible, as such as it would have been in earlier days.

Rewiring gives us the opportunity to review the furnishings which we have done. Accretions that had taken place over the years have been simplified particularly in the kitchen, but also in the bathroom where we have added a shower. Repainting with limewash throughout the bedrooms, staircase and sitting room has brought us back to colour schemes similar to those at the original restoration, and we have painted out the later roof timbers so that the earlier timbers read more clearly. After laying new cables, the upper floors have been refixed, incorporating fewer squeaks than before.

The work was carried out by JDC of Ivybridge, Devon and their Contracts Director Peter Dolley was particularly valuable as he had worked on the original restoration. The site foreman and carpenter was Steve Downie. The works were arranged by the Landmark Trust's Building Department in collaboration with John Evetts' Furnishing Team, and Marilyn Donohue our Regional Property Manager.

From *Proceedings of the Devon Archaeological Society,* 1972.

Sanders, Lettaford: a Devon Long-house

by N. W. Alcock, P. Child and M. Laithwaite

The house described in this paper shows the typical features of Devon long-houses in an excellent state of preservation, with enough surviving detail for its development to be clearly traceable. Close examination reveals aspects of plan and construction that are so far unique, and that merit full description. The building has until this year (1972) remained as a labourer's cottage, almost unaltered for perhaps a century, but impending modernisation will inevitably conceal, if not destroy, some significant features.[1]

THE HOUSE (Pls. XIII–XVI, fig. 1)

Sanders (Grid Ref. SX 702 841) is one of the three houses in the hamlet of Lettaford in the parish of North Bovey, about three miles south-west of Moretonhampstead.[2] As it now exists, Sanders is a two-storeyed house, arranged on the long-house plan of inner room, hall, cross-passage and shippon, with three corresponding rooms and a hayloft on the upper floor; behind the hall is an added lean-to. The house is set down a slight slope with the upper end built into a bank.

The outer walls are of granite, in part of large beautifully cut and coursed ashlar blocks (Pl. XIII), particularly on the east gable and the south wall of the shippon. This is perhaps for display, as this corner faces the lane into the hamlet. The near wall of both house and shippon is mainly of slightly inferior ashlar work, and it is significant that the masonry is continuous at the crucial junction between the domestic quarters and the shippon, showing that both parts are of the same date.[3] Although the south and west walls of the domestic part contain some ashlar blocks, they are of markedly inferior construction, which may well be the result of rebuilding. There are patches of rubble masonry high up in the centre of the shippon walls on each side, probably rebuilt after a collapse.

The entrance porch is also built of large granite blocks and has a wide shouldered-head doorway (Pl. XIII). There are stone seats at either side within the porch, and a round-headed inner doorway of wood. Structurally, the porch is independent of the main walls of the house, and the jointing reveals that it must either pre-date or be contemporary with the projection in the wall immediately to its west. The similarity in character between the masonary of the porch and of the shippon wall suggests that the porch is of the same date as the main house, but this cannot be proved. Beside the porch there is a second doorway, into the shippon, which is framed in granite blocks.

The Roof

Three of the original roof-trusses have survived. Two are short crucks (with curved feet some 2 ft. long). The one most easily visible (*I* on fig. 1) lies at the west end of the shippon, almost level with the lower side of the cross-passage. It retains a

1 Our thanks are due to Dr. D. B. Fraser and Capt. J. W. L. Bucknall, the past and present owners for allowing us access to the building.
2 The overall topography of the hamlet is discussed below, p. 000.
3 A straight joint is normally absent from Devon long-houses, but its presence in very many Welsh examples has led to much argument about the origin of the long-house plan. Cf. J. T. Smith, 'The Long-House in Monmouthshire: a Re-appraisal' (in *Culture and Environment*, ed. I. LL. Foster and L. Alcock, 1963, 389) and P. Smith, 'The Long-House and the Laithe-House: a Study of the House-and-Byre Homestead in Wales and the West Riding' (*ibid.*, 415).

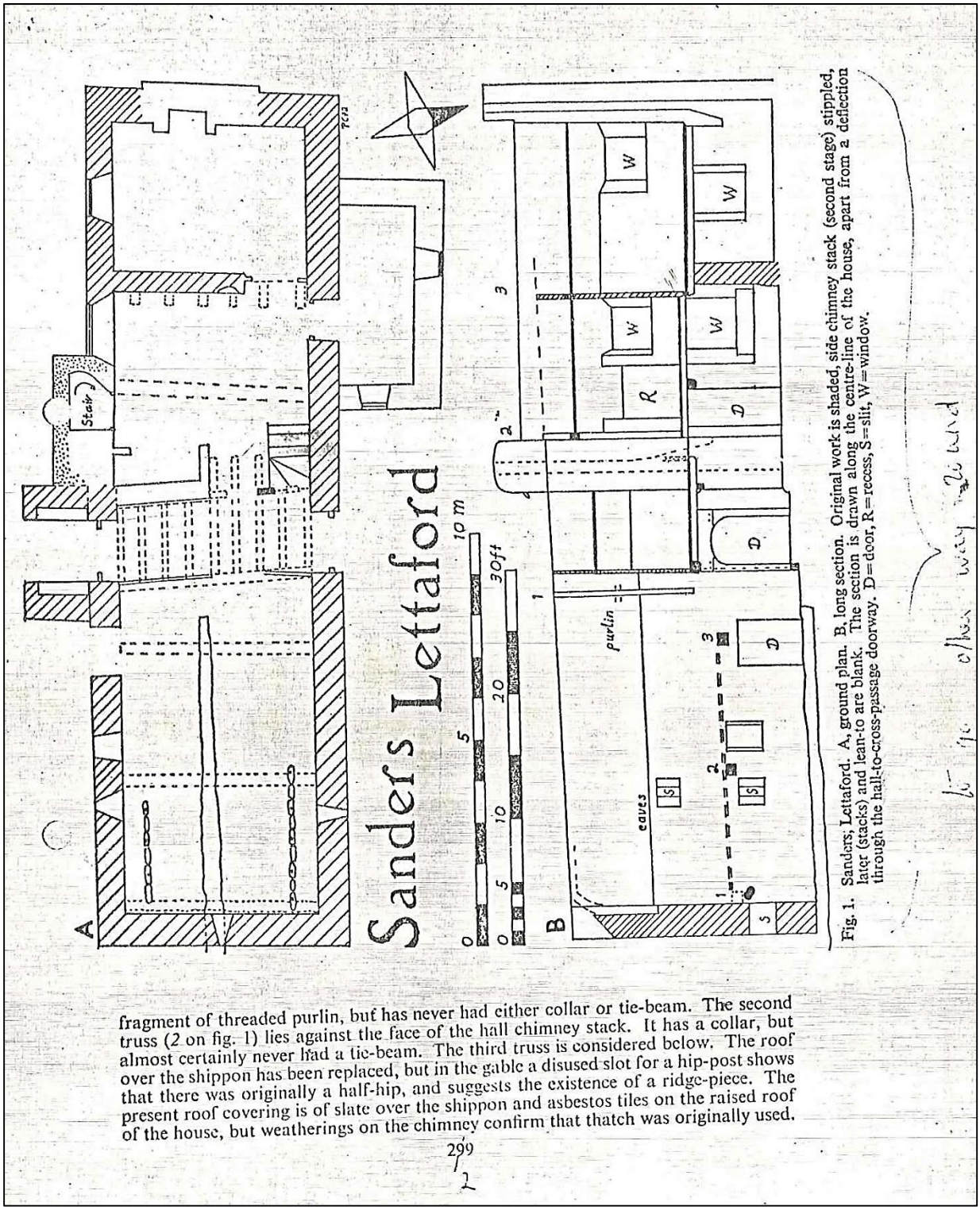


Fig. 1. Sanders, Lettaford. A, ground plan. B, long section. Original work is shaded, side chimney stack (second stage) stippled, later (stacks) and lean-to are blank. The section is drawn along the centre-line of the house, apart from a deflection through the hall-to-cross-passage doorway. D=door, R=recess, S=slit, W=window.

fragment of threaded purlin, but has never had either collar or tie-beam. The second truss (2 on fig. 1) lies against the face of the hall chimney stack. It has a collar, but almost certainly never had a tie-beam. The third truss is considered below. The roof over the shippon has been replaced, but in the gable a disused slot for a hip-post shows that there was originally a half-hip, and suggests the existence of a ridge-piece. The present roof covering is of slate over the shippon and asbestos tiles on the raised roof of the house, but weatherings on the chimney confirm that thatch was originally used.

299

The Domestic Part

The hall was originally open to the roof, for the first-floor rooms over the inner room and the cross-passage were at one time jettied into it (Pl. XIV).[1] The curved joist-ends can still be seen projecting at either end of the hall, contrasting with the later ceiling-beam which runs north-south across the centre of the room. Probably this beam was inserted in the 17th century; it is chamfered with smoothed, step stops.

The jetty at the upper end has heavy joists about 7 in. wide, projecting 1 ft. 4 in. beyond the stone ground-floor wall. The joist-ends are curved and chamfered, and on them rests a beam which carries a partition at first-floor level. This partition, still retaining wattle and daub infill, runs up into the third original roof truss (*3* on fig. 1) which has straight rafters and a collar (but no tie-beam) and retains the mortices for threaded purlins. It is clear from the difference between this closed truss and the open short crucks over the hall that the internal jetty at this end is original. The stone ground-floor wall, rarely found in this situation, should also be original, for its base appears to have been cut out of the bedrock, and the joists are stopped at its face. The door has a chamfered frame with mason's mitres.

At the lower end of the hall only the north end of the jetty survived 17th century alterations, and part of this was destroyed by the recent insertion of the staircase. Most of the joists were cut off short when the axial chimney-stack was built, and their ends rest on a corbel-table at the back of the stack. The three remaining joist-ends project 2 ft. 7 in. into the hall above the fragments of a stud-and-panel screen; they are narrower than those at the other end of the hall, about 5 in. wide, and though their ends are curved, they are not chamfered. At their other extremity the joists are tenoned into a beam (chamfered on both sides with straight cut stops) at the lower side of the cross-passage. On this beam, and morticed into it, rests a rough partition of stud and plaster (perhaps replacing daub) separating the room over the cross-passage from the shippon. Its upper part is held in position, not by the roof truss, but by a collar fixed to the purlins just west of the truss. The first-floor wall at the west end of this room, which would have rested on the jetty, has been totally removed, but the position of the joist-ends shows that it must have been similarly fixed, for it would have stood a foot or so east of the surviving hall truss. The awkward relationship of these partitions to the trusses confirms the evidence of the joists that the room over the cross-passage is an insertion.

Only a short section of stud-and-panel remains, to one side of the stack on the upper side of the cross-passage, with one post of a shouldered-head doorway. This partition has been shifted sideways at some period, because it now lacks any end stud. The shape of the doorway suggests that it may well pre-date the insertion of the floor over the cross-passage.[2] On the lower side of the passage *the beam has no mortices for a partition on its underside*, and the present division is a very late construction of crudely nailed studs and planks with a re-used 17th or 18th century door.

The present hall fireplace (which has never been filled in) is a massive structure with monolithic granite jambs and lintel, decorated only with a slight chamfer. Its masonry makes a straight joint with the wall beside the front door. This fact, together with the sawn-off joist-ends in the cross-passage and the vestiges of the jetty, show that the stack is an insertion, probably contemporary with the flooring over of the hall. The original roof-truss over the shippon (*1*) and that over the inner partition (*3*) show smoke-blackening from an open hearth. However, it appears that this was soon superseded by a side fireplace, while the hall was still open. This is the best explanation for the cupboard (latterly a coal bunker) and the corresponding recess on

1 A discussion of such internal jetties is shortly to be published by N. W. Alcock and M. Laithwaite in *Medieval Archaeology*.

2 Recent work (N. W. Alcock and M. Laithwaite, unpublished) shows that the shouldered-head is the standard and ubiquitous doorway shape in internal partitions of late medieval Devon houses. From the number of examples, a considerable date-range can be inferred. It is not normally associated with the deep-chamfered or heavily moulded beams generally dated to the early to mid-16th century, and so a final date of 1525–50 may be correct. Little can yet be said about its first appearance, because too few houses have been identified with surviving partitions that pre-date the use of shouldered-head doorways.

the first floor in the front wall of the hall, with a considerable projection on the exterior. No trace now remains of a fireplace-surround, but this may be because it was later partly blocked and converted into a staircase. (There is the outline of a flight of steps in the plaster within the cupboard.)[1] The blocking supports the inserted ceiling-beam, and this helps to confirm the theory of a complete remodelling of the hall in the 17th century. A sealed-off oven, associated with the 17th century stack, apparently occupies the eastern end of the side fireplace.

Another development that probably took place in the 17th century, though not necessarily at exactly the same time, was the addition of the lean-to behind the hall, possibly serving as a dairy. The date is suggested by the wooden doorway, with a shallow cranked head, leading out of the hall. Latterly the room served as a combined scullery and bathroom.

Cooking was probably done in the hall in the 17th century, for there is a large iron bar in the hall chimney. But eventually it moved to the inner room, where there is now a range inscribed " Bungalow Belle 1931 ". The fireplace-surround, however is of the 19th century, and the room may then have served as a parlour. The date of the inner-room stack itself could not be determined, but from its masonry it is unlikely to be original.

The Shippon

It is clear that for many years little use has been made of the shippon, and as a result its essential features are well preserved. Down the centre runs the drain with an outlet in the gable wall to the left on plate XV. The drain is 1ft. 7in. wide and (at the lower end) 1 ft. 2 in. deep, but at the upper end it has been blocked with stones for about 9 ft. At the lower end, on each side of the drain is a line of stones set parallel to, and 1 ft. 6 in. from the walls. Those on the north side extend 12 ft. from the gable wall, and those on the south 9 ft. Small holes are cut in the tops of the stones at about 2 ft. 6 in. intervals, identifying them as manger stones, the holes being for tethering-posts.[2] These posts would have been fixed into the joists (the second on each side, whose mortices are aligned with the manger stones).

The shippon is lit by slits with wide internal splays, with a wider opening in the south wall for removing dung [3] (possibly not original, as it adjoins the rebuilt masonry). Only the massive beams of the hayloft now survive, and of these (numbering from the east, fig. 1) beam *2* has joist mortices on both sides, beam *3* has them on the east only, and both are square and evenly cambered; however, beam *1* has no mortices, is crude and wavy, and partly covers the end slit. The suggested interpretation is that beam *1* is a late replacement for a properly cambered beam (which would just clear the slit), and that the hayloft floor extended up to beam *3* only. Beyond this, there must always have been a section of the shippon open to the roof. The reason was no doubt twofold—partly for an easy way of moving hay up and down, and partly because the ground rises so sharply at this point that a ceiling would impair access from the cross-passage. There is now a hayloft door in the north wall, but from the masonry this has obviously been intruded. The date of the hayloft cannot be determined, but the good workmanship of beams *2* and *3* is not inconsistent with its being original.

The major problem with the interpretation of the house concerns the shippon. The original arrangement in Devon long-houses usually involved a single door for both cattle and people, with no physical division between the cross-passage and the shippon.[4] In modernisation, a separate door was usually opened into the shippon and a wall built to close off the cross-passage (either with or without a door from house to

1 This somewhat uncertain evidence at Sanders is much strengthened by the recent observation (N. W. Alcock) at Hobhouse, Drewsteignton, of a precisely comparable side fireplace for an open hall, similarly superseded by an axial one, and converted into stairs. There, the identification as a fireplace is clinched by the survival of one corbel for its lintel, and the reason for its replacement is apparent because the lintel, some 9 ft. above the floor, would have been cut off by the ceiling inserted in the hall.

2 Cf. N. W. Alcock, ' Devonshire Farmhouses, Part II: Some Dartmoor Houses ' (in *Trans. Dev. Assoc.*, 1969), p. 98.

3 Op. cit. in note 7, p. 98.

4 Op. cit. in note 7, p. 94.

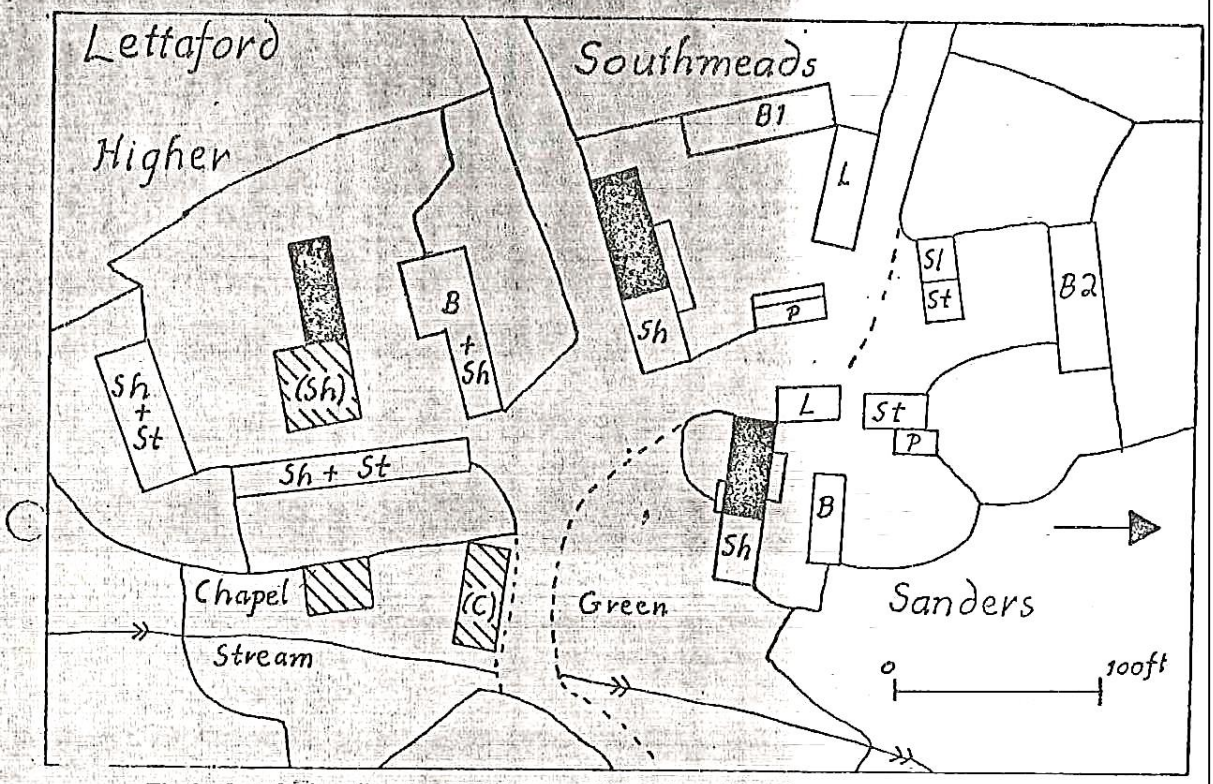


Fig. 2. Lettaford, outline plan of the hamlet. The lane into the hamlet from the east is at the bottom. The medieval houses are solid black with shading for the more recent changes. B = barn, C = cottage, L = linhay, P = pigsty, Sh. = shippon, Sl. = shelter, St. = stable. The buildings of each farm are grouped, but it should be noted that B2 and the adjacent yard belong to Southmeads, not Sanders. The scale is approximate.

shippon). At Sanders, the division between passage and shippon is late, following normal practice, and there is no trace whatever of any earlier division, but there is a separate doorway to the shippon, which *prima facie* is original. The door (Pl. VXI) has a surround of large ashlar blocks with a chamfered lintel, which seem to fit satisfactorily into the original pattern of the masonry. Because of the problem which this raises in the interpretation of the plan, the possibility must be considered that the door is a skilful insertion. The authors are unable to decide whether this would have been feasible, and the evidence must be assessed by the reader (Pls. XIII and XVI). The only alternative explanation is that the apparent inconsistency is correct, i.e. that as a very early stage in the separation of people and cattle, a separate door was being used, but that it was felt that there was no need for a partition other than the one between hall and passage.

Conclusion

The original house at Sanders was single-storied, apart from one first-floor room at the upper end, and possibly the hayloft over part of the lower end; the hall and shippon etc., the hall and shippon were separated only by a low partition. Such a house sounds incredibly primitive, but recent research has suggested that among Devon medieval houses it was actually advanced in having any first-floor rooms at all.[1] If it is accepted that the shippon door is original, this lends strength to the view that Sanders is a transitional house between the medieval and post-medieval periods; it also makes it easier to understand the inconsistencies that seem to exist in the house

1 Op. cit. in note 4, where the evidence for this statement will be examined.

between the primitive and the sophisticated. The early side-fireplace and the jettied room over the cross-passage show that Sanders continued as a house of high quality for some time before its decline to an ordinary farmhouse and eventually the humble status of a labourer's cottage. The single most remarkable feature of the second stage is the existence of *two* jettied rooms, a logical effect of the use of this type of construction, but one that is so far unique.

Providing absolute dates for vernacular buildings is always very uncertain, but the round-headed and shouldered doorways and the other original features suggest the first half of the 16th century; the side-fireplace and the second jettied room are presumably later 16th century, with the final flooring of the hall in the 17th century.

THE FARM BUILDINGS (fig. 2)

Longhouses themselves provide most of the working space for the farm, but they are often associated with small barns [1] and this is the case at Sanders. Immediately behind the house is a partly rebuilt barn with slit windows on two levels. At its west end there is some granite ashlar masonry, which could be contemporary with that of the house.

In the 18th or 19th centuries, the farm acquired a further group of buildings, of particular interest as giving a good picture of a small farmstead of this period. They may replace similar early buildings, but may well indicate increased farming activity and efficiency, perhaps with a concentration on pastoral husbandry. On the western edge of the yard are a pigsty, a small stable with loft above, and a two-bay linhey; part of this was later enclosed to form a milking parlour for three cows—a 19th century development probably, since the mangers are of brick. This building, in particular, increasing the accommodation for cattle, suggests that they were becoming more important in the farm's economy, while the stable may have been needed because of the replacement of draught oxen by horses.

THE HAMLET (fig. 2)

The whole hamlet of Lettaford is of considerable interest as a typical example of a Dartmoor fringe settlement,[2] Hardly any fieldwork has been done on these settlements, but they seem to contain up to five houses (almost always long-houses) with associated farm buildings. Lettaford stands in a slight hollow, sheltered from the south-west and at a height of 975 ft.; about 400 yards away is the rough grazing on the open moor at 1100 ft. and over. The houses are grouped round a small green with a stream running through it. The North Bovey Tithe map (1839) [3] identifies the three farms as:

	Name	*Owner*	*Occupier*	*Area*
I	Sanders & Nosworthys Littaford	Thomas Neck	Joseph Ireland	69 acres
II	Southmeads Littaford	Thomas Neck	Robert French	64 acres
III	Higher Littaford and Black Sticks	Pinsent Burton	William Rogers	95 acres

The names of farms I and II are probably those of 17th or 18th century owners. [4] The most substantial changes since 1839 are the demolition (within living memory) of a pair of cottages belonging to Higher Lettaford, and the building of a Methodist chapel.

Higher Lettaford appears to have been a long-house but has been partly rebuilt as befits its status as the biggest farm in the hamlet. Everything below the cross-passage has been replaced by a square, four-room-plan 19th century house, which the old house

1 Op. cit. in note 7, p. 99.
2 Cf. Pizwell, Widecombe, containing four long-houses, to which attention was drawn by S. R. Jones, 'Devonshire Farmhouses, Part III: Moorland and Non-Moorland Long-Houses' (in *Trans. Dev. Assoc.*, 1971).
3 Devon Record Office, p. 40.
4 As is true of most of the farm names in Sowton parish (unpublished work by N. W. Alcock).

serves as kitchen and store. An original shippon can be inferred from the siting down a slope and the similarity to the other houses, which extends to the use of granite ashlar masonry as at Sanders. The farm buildings have also been rebuilt. They comprise a large barn with opposed doors, set down the slope and with a shippon underneath the lower end, and two long ranges of enclosed shippons and stabling.

Southmeads remains as a long-house; as usual it has had a wall inserted between the entry and the shippon, with a new outside door into the shippon. The house is built of rubble masonry and has jointed cruck trusses; the core could be medieval, but all the visible work is 17th century. Unexpectedly, it has the largest group of farm buildings. The large barn is set across the slope, in contrast to the other two farms; it has one big doorway on the lower side and opposite there is only a 4 ft. high by 2 ft. 6 in. opening, either a pitching hole or a wind-hole for winnowing. The lower side of the main yard contains a range of pigsties. On the north side is a seven bay linhey (a cattle shelter with open hayloft over). It has granite orthostats topped by timber posts, with low rubble walling across the front, which in this moorland situation may be original. Across the lane is a smaller yard with another barn (perhaps for more hay) and a combined stable and shelter or cartshed. This farm therefore shows the biggest development from the medieval pattern of long-house and barn for small-scale mixed farming,[1] towards a complex farmstead mainly for pastoral farming.

1 Op. cit. in note 7, p. 98.

The publication of this paper has been assisted by a grant from the Research Board of the University of Leicester.

From The Dartmoor Longhouse, by P. Beacham in *Archaeology of the Devon Landscape*, 1980.

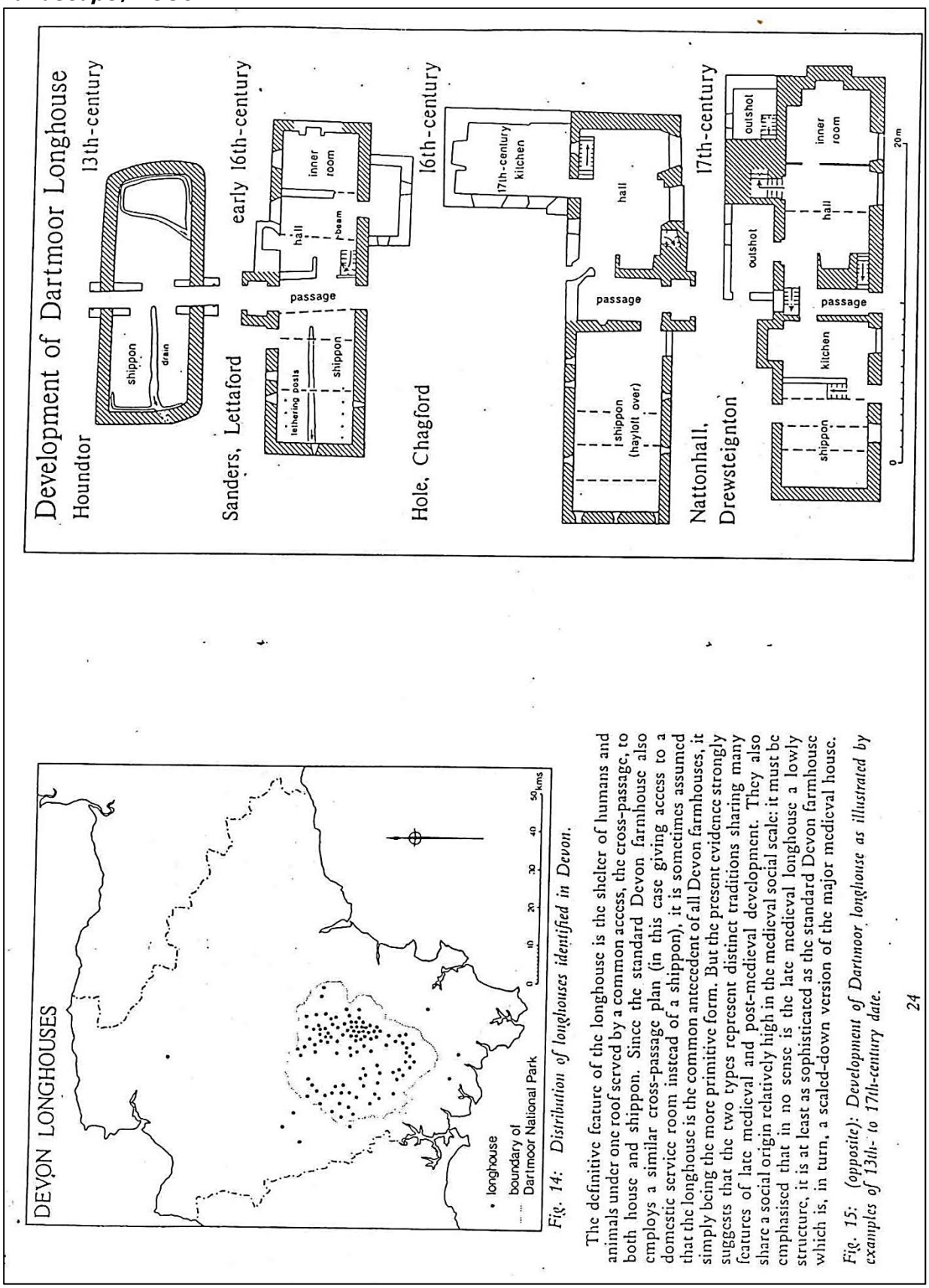


Fig. 14: Distribution of longhouses identified in Devon.

The definitive feature of the longhouse is the shelter of humans and animals under one roof served by a common access, the cross-passage, to both house and shippon. Since the standard Devon farmhouse also employs a similar cross-passage plan (in this case giving access to a domestic service room instead of a shippon), it is sometimes assumed that the longhouse is the common antecedent of all Devon farmhouses, it simply being the more primitive form. But the present evidence strongly suggests that the two types represent distinct traditions sharing many features of late medieval and post-medieval development. They also share a social origin relatively high in the medieval social scale: it must be emphasised that in no sense is the late medieval longhouse a lowly structure, it is at least as sophisticated as the standard Devon farmhouse which is, in turn, a scaled-down version of the major medieval house.

Fig. 15: (opposite): Development of Dartmoor longhouse as illustrated by examples of 13th- to 17th-century date.

24

And the oldest 3-room cross-passage houses are at least as ancient as the oldest standing longhouses, sharing a late 14th- or 15th-century origin. In the case of the longhouse there is the additional evidence produced by excavation of deserted medieval settlements, as at Houndtor (Fig. 15) and Meldon, that similar structures were being built long before the earliest standing longhouses: perhaps future excavation of non-moorland farmstead sites may indicate whether the 3-room cross-passage house also had precursors of its own type, since most farmstead sites are many centuries older than their earliest buildings.

An interesting question is why the longhouse tradition persisted on Dartmoor when the other type dominated the rest of Devon in the 15th to 17th centuries, especially since the two types show such close parallels in their development. Part of the answer probably lies in the distinct agrarian history and economy of the moor which differentiates it from much of the rest of Devon.

Some sense of the functional nature of the longhouse as a building type can be appreciated from its appearance even today, its site dug into the shelter of the hillside, its granite walls often incorporating huge site boulders at the base, its sweep of thatch emphasizing its long, low shape and downslope orientation. To the passing visitor it may look picturesque but it is a building evolved to cope with the rigours of farming in an upland environment where the climate is distinctly more hostile than in lowland Devon.

Before the extensive research of recent years it was argued by R H Worth (and others subsequently) that longhouses showed a clear evolutionary pattern from the most primitive type where the shippon is undivided from the cross-passage (as it still is at Lower Chaddlehanger, Lamerton) through houses showing varying degrees of separation of shippon from house, to the most sophisticated version where the house is distanced from the shippon by incorporating the part of the shippon nearest the cross-passage as another domestic room. But detailed examination of standing examples shows that the longhouses of the 15th to 17th centuries were built from the start with different arrangements, and were subsequently adapted in all kinds of variations on the standard theme (Fig. 15).

An example of the most straightforward type is Higher Uppacott, Poundsgate, Widecombe-in-the-Moor. This relatively small-scale building still retains the common cross-passage entrance to both house and shippon with only a very late and unsubstantial partition between shippon and cross-passage. The shippon retains all the features of the animal shelter: a central drain in the cobbled floor leading to a square dung-hole placed above it in the gable end wall for clearance of animal waste; splayed slit windows in the walls to give maximum light while maintaining maximum shelter; drilled stones to hold the tethering stakes for tying up the cows along the lateral walls; and beams for the hayloft

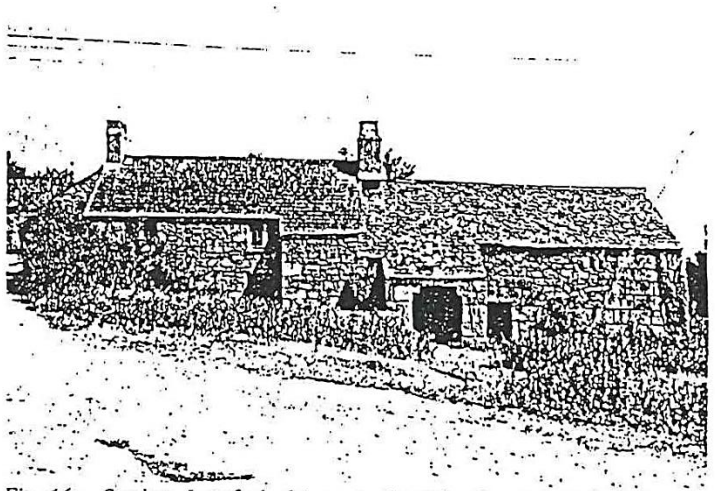


Fig. 16: Sanders, Lettaford; shippon to the right of central porch, hall to the left (Devon County Council).

above. Off the other side of the cross-passage is the small hall and narrow inner room of the originally open hall house, its history preserved in the smoke-blackened roof carpentry and original thatch. Subsequently the hall received a stone chimney stack sited to back onto the cross-passage, where it displays high-quality granite masonry, and finally the hall was floored in to complete the transformation to 2-storied dwelling.

Other longhouses of comparable 15th-century origin and of the open hall type display different arrangements from the start, and more sophisticated extension and development. At Whymington, Sampford Spiney the shippon has a separate entrance door from the outside whose pointed-head design looks coeval with the similar granite doorframes of the high-quality original house: subsequently there was considerable 16th- and 17th-century rebuilding and extension at the upper end and in the cross-wing built on (to block the cross-passage) as a kitchen with a large hearth-oven complex including a full height smoking chamber. At Sanders, Lettaford, North Bovey, one of the best preserved of all longhouses (Fig. 15), there is a separate shippon entrance which may or may not be original. Two important features of this house are the spectacular ashlar granite blockwork of the shippon end (Fig. 16) (characteristic of many longhouses and emphasizing just how superior these buildings could be) and the existence of two upper chambers jettied out into the hall from over the cross-passage and the inner room.

But perhaps the longhouse that most convincingly demonstrates how sophisticated the longhouse could be from the start is Higher Shilstone,

Throwleigh (Fig. 17). This was always a prestigious house, as the high quality of the medieval roof carpentry which survives complete with its original smoke-blackened thatch indicates: the central hall truss has chamfered edges and an arched collar. But here the shippon, whose original roof on raised cruck trusses with an end-cruck also survives complete, was always separated from the house by a solid full-height cross-wall of granite at the lower side of the cross-passage with original access provided both from the passage, through a massive timber doorframe, and from the yard. After a stage of partial flooring over the cross-passage area, the house was extended by a small unheated service cross-wing as dairy and pantry off the hall, and the exterior was transformed by new hollow-moulded granite mullioned windows throughout. The architectural prestige was completed by the decoration of the doorframe to the cross-passage which boasts a continuous roll moulding enclosing lugged spandrels enriched with oak-leaf decoration (Fig. 18). In other words this longhouse maintained its very high quality throughout the 15th- to 17th-century period.

In fact, such 17th-century exterior sophistication is another distinctive feature of the Dartmoor tradition, a contrast to the rest of Devon where farmhouses generally retain a modest exterior appearance reserving their display for interior carpentry, stud-and-panel screens, and plasterwork. An outstanding group of such decorated 17th-century doorframes can be found in Widecombe-in-the-Moor, with examples at Lake and Lower

Fig. 17: Higher Shilstone, Throwleigh; hall to the left of central cross-passage entrance, shippon with separate entrance to the right; 15th- to 17th-century date (Chris Chapman).

28

Fig. 18: Higher Shilstone, Throwleigh; decorated granite doorframe with datestone of 1656 above (Chris Chapman).

29

Tor, Poundsgate, Bonehill and Corndon. Hole Farm, Chagford (Fig. 15) is another example with excellent ashlar granite blockwork, granite mullioned windows including a king-mullion example, and a 2-storied porch with a wooden doorframe and stylized fern-leaf decoration. Many of these houses have 17th-century initials and datestones.

Finally, there are examples of longhouses where part of the original shippon was subsequently annexed to form another domestic room and accentuate the separation of house from shippon. At West Combe, North Bovey this happened in the 17th century or even later in a very high-quality medieval hall house (the jettied chamber over the inner room is on spectacularly massive decorated joists). At Nattonhall, Drewsteignton (Fig. 15) the same process occurs in a 17th-century longhouse which is newbuilt as a 2-storied structure with spacious upper chambers but on the old longhouse plan. There are other interesting variations: at Chimsworthy, Bratton Clovelly, the original longhouse, incorporating the most massive true crucks anywhere in Devon, was extended in the late medieval period with an open-halled cross-wing at the upper end. Other houses gained a superficial similarity to longhouses by the addition of shippons to their lower end, as at East Down Farm, Dunsford where the extent of the original medieval house is proved by the survival of the smoke-blackened end-cruck. A similar process was observed at Hatherleigh Farm, Bovey Tracey, sadly demolished in 1984. Just as the 2- or 3-room cross-passage house occurs alongside the longhouse on the Moor, so the occasional longhouse is also found well away from the Moor, as at Higher Brownston, Modbury.

The longhouse tradition is much more complex and sophisticated than has sometimes been suggested, and many questions about its origins and evolution remain unanswered. It is time these questions were asked urgently, for today it is a tradition under threat: while there are thousands of 15th- to 17th-century farmhouses in Devon, there are fewer than 100 longhouses even vaguely recognisable as such, and only about a quarter of these are more or less unaltered.

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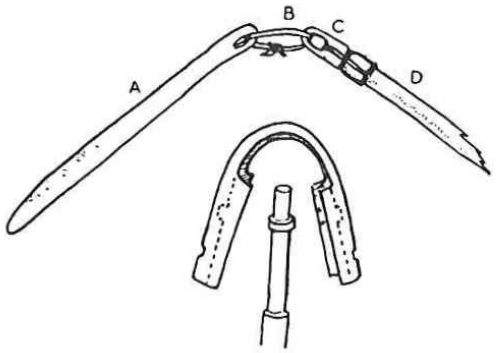


Fig 18. 'Drashel' or flail as made and used on Dartmoor farms. A: flail; B: leather thong fastened with wooden pin; C: 'keepall' of bent ash or horn enabling flail to revolve around D: handstave. Inset: keepall unbound showing how ridge on handstave fits into groove inside keepall.

or weasel would spring a slate which would drop and imprison it. Rabbits did much damage both to crops and hedges on the Moor, though often providing a large part of the income, until their numbers were decimated by myxomatosis in 1954. This brought an end to the traditional Boxing Day shoot and the ferreting that was a pastime of many Dartmoor men.

The Dartmoor Farmhouse

Many of the present Dartmoor farmsteads are of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century date. They consist, typically, of a longhouse and a cornbarn. Both buildings have a central passage-way, usually with opposing outer doors. In the barn this passage-way was the threshing floor where the corn—oats, barley and rye, or, after the mid-eighteenth century, oats, barley and wheat, were threshed on wet winter days with hand 'drashels'

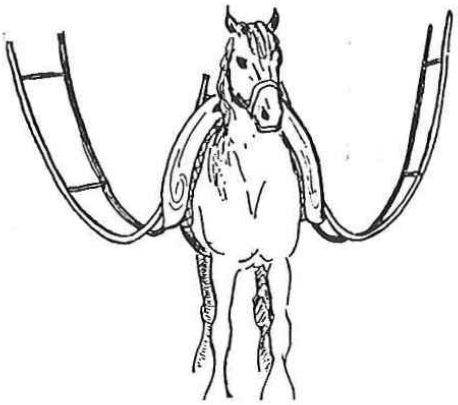


Fig 19. Pack saddle with crooks.

(flails). The threshing-floor was boarded over sleeper beams to give some spring to help the threshers. The through draught helped to blow the 'doust' (chaff) from the grain, though the winnowing proper was done later, originally on some breezy hilltop 'wimstraw' by the womenfolk with sieves, the grain being shaken and tossed over a 'wim-sheet'. The through passage, which often had large double doors, gave access originally to the packhorses which carried the sheaves in from the harvest field in 'crooks' fixed to their pack saddles. The sheaves were stacked in mows on each side of the threshing-floor. This floor was also used in June to shear the sheep on, shorn sheep being penned on one side of the barn, those awaiting shearing on the other.

The wool, the main cash crop of earlier days, was stored in the 'wool chamber' in the upper floor of the dwelling house or 'livier'. This small room, well plastered against damp and rats, was generally above the porch, and had a trap-door in its floor so that the fleeces could be passed up without having to be taken through the kitchen and up the winding stairs.

The livier was in the higher end of the long house, separated from the shippon (cow-shed) by a central passage, but with communicating doors so that the housewife, who generally milked and looked after the cows and calves, had no need to go out of doors to tend them. In the earlier long houses there was sometimes no other way into the shippon, so that the human and bovine inhabitants of the long house used the same front door, turning to the right or left inside to their respective quarters. Later most had a separate doorway from the yard into the shippon for the cows to use.

The tradition of having an outer door at each end of the passage may have persisted from medieval times, when the housewife herself threshed out the day's or week's allowance of bread-corn there—hence 'threshold'.

She ground it in a stone quern and, this being even more laborious if the grain had a high moisture content, she first crisped it over heat. What are thought to be corn-drying kilns made for this purpose have been found in deserted long houses and corn barns on Dartmoor.

The medieval housewife had her hearthstone set in her kitchen floor, with no chimney other than perhaps a wattle and daub funnel leading to a hole in the roof. Against the hearthstone was her tiny, box-like oven, made of slabs of moorstone, where she baked her bread after raking out the hot ashes with which she had heated it. But by the mid-seventeenth century every farm kitchen had its great open hearth and chimney, generally against the passage wall.

Most hearths have a stone 'furze-oven' built into one of the sides. These

were heated with a blazing faggot of dried furze, the ashes were scraped out, and bread, cakes and pasties were baked inside, behind an oven door. Where there was no oven, baking was done on the hearth, either in a baking 'kettle'—a cauldron inverted on a large iron plate set in the embers—or a 'camp kettle'—a type of cauldron with a lid that hung from the chimney crook. These kettles were covered over with smouldering 'vags', the dried slabs of heathery turf that were one of the main sources of fuel on Dartmoor until the last war. Near every farm and cottage back-

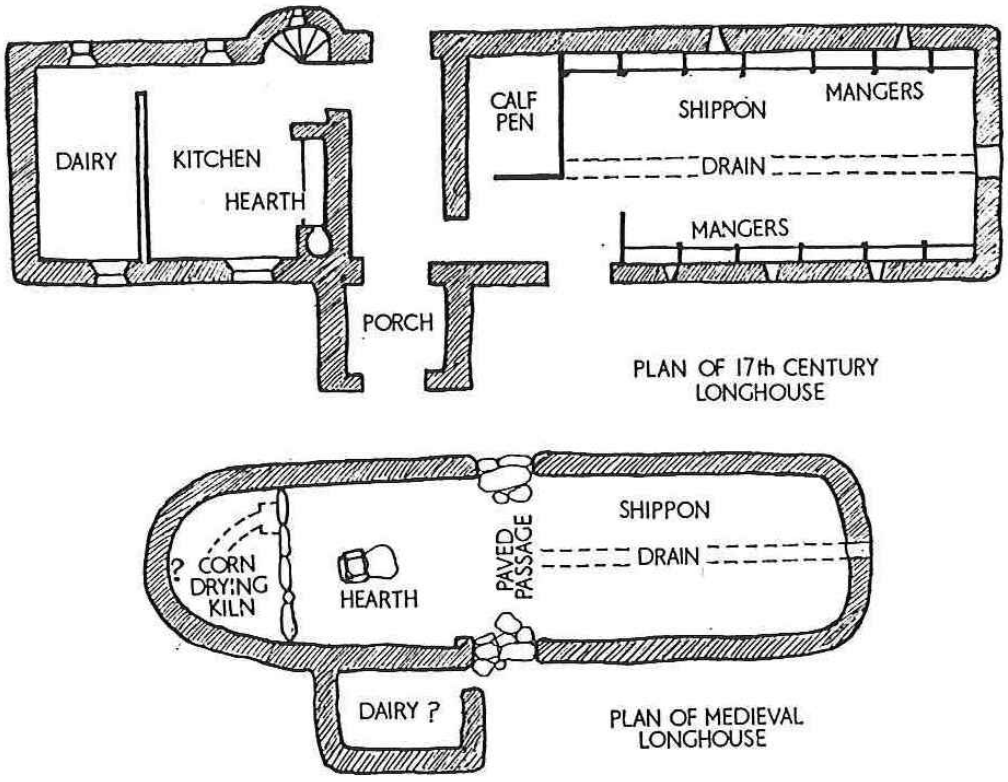


Fig 20. Plans of longhouses: (*above*) seventeenth century; (*below*) medieval.

door was the 'vaghouse' where the fuel was stored. In the border parishes the 'ood-rick' of faggots cut from the hedges stood near, on the high moor the thatched 'turf-rick' of peats took its place.

An important function of the hearth was for scalding the cream. This method of separating cream for butter-making has been the accepted one in the West Country since records began, when churns were unknown in Devon. The milk was left in large shallow pans or 'steans' in the cool dairy at the far end of the house for twenty-four hours till the cream had risen. The pans were then placed carefully over a gentle heat inside a larger pan of water. This was brought to simmering point, and when

the cream began to crinkle, without being allowed to boil, it was taken back to the dairy to cool. The cold scalded cream could be lifted off the surface of the milk with a skimmer, and, by stirring with the hand, made into butter.

The sale of butter on market day, together with scalded (clotted) cream and sometimes eggs or poultry, provided the housewife with enough cash to pay for any bought food and household goods, and often paid the wages of any labour hired by the farm.

The dairy also housed the salting 'standards' or tubs in which the bacon was dry-salted after pig-killing day. Once salted, the hams and cuts of bacon were hung from the beams in the kitchen ceiling until required.

Today, farmhouse production of Devonshire cream continues, aided by the mechanical separator, to the disgust of the purists. The old type of Dartmoor farmhouse, in which dwelling and shippon were all part of the same building, has also been altered out of all recognition. The sanitary laws of the 1920s banished the cows to a separate building, and the former shippons on dozens of Dartmoor farms have been converted into extra rooms in the farmhouse, often to accommodate summer visitors.

The shippon was always at the lower end of the house to facilitate drainage. It commonly housed between 8 and 14 head of cattle, usually with a small pen for the calves in one corner. The gutter for the dung and urine ran down between the standings to a drain at the far end. Above this was a large hole through which dung and soiled bedding could

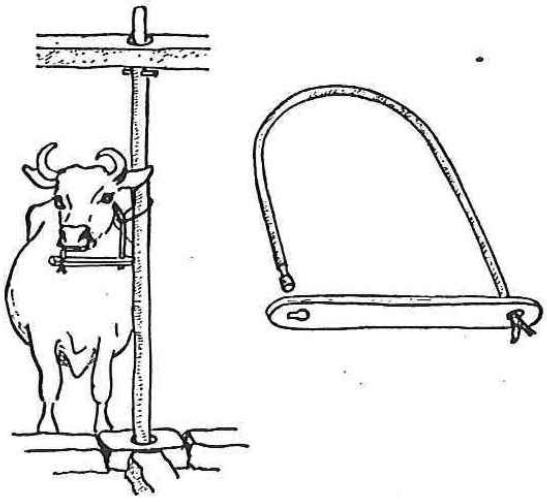


Fig 21. Stall post and tethering yoke.

be thrown out. The mangers were at floor-level, separated from the standings by a raised stone curb. At intervals of about 4ft a hole about 4in in diameter was made in the curb to take the lower end of the wooden stall-post to which each cow was secured. The upper ends of these posts were first pushed up into holes through a beam above and then rammed down and secured by a peg or nail through the post just below the beam. This meant that they could be easily removed and renewed when broken.

Fifty years ago the Dartmoor farmer never bought anything if he could make it himself from what lay around him, so instead af using neck chains or even rope tethers to tie his cows he made 'tethering-yokes' from hedge wood. He cut a springy 'nuthalse' (hazel) stick about a yard long, with a small fork at one end. Near the other end he pared out a notch. This formed the bow. He made a base with a flat piece of wood about 14in long, drilling a hole near one end wide enough to pass the bow-stick through. Near the other end he cut a 'key-hole'. The bow was held in the first hole by its fork, then bent over and the other end put through the wide part of the key-hole. As the thinner, notched section entered it sprang into the narrow outer end of the 'key-hole' and was held there by its own tension. To tie up the cow, the bow was passed over her neck and through the ring on the stall-post before the end was locked in the key-hole.

Above the shippon was the 'tallet' or hayloft, from which hay could be thrown down to the cows through holes left above the mangers. Most tallets originally had 'braith' floors of loose hedge poles and brushwood laid over the beams. About a week's supply of hay was brought in from the field hayricks in trusses by packhorse and hauled up through a space between the beams just inside the shippon door.

Later, when two-wheeled 'wains' came to the district, tallet doors were usually put into the gable-end so that the hay could be pitched in direct from the cart.

Though the long house and the barn were the main buildings, most Dartmoor farms in the course of the centuries added one or two 'young-bullock's houses', sometimes as a lean-to; a stable for the 'labour-horses' which took the place of the plough-oxen in the nineteenth century; a pig's 'loose' (Anglo-Saxon 'hlos') with troughs hollowed out of moorstone; and an 'ash house'. This last was important, as the wood and turf ashes were an essential manure but lost their value if leached by rain.

The ash house was the only building not thatched with combed straw 'reed'. The warm ashes might have held sparks which could fly up and set fire to thatch, so the ash houses usually had corbelled stone roofs. They were generally round and sometimes built into a bank and turfed

over, but the best had an aperture high in the wall where the ashes could be thrown in, and a shuttered opening at ground level from which they could be shovelled out. In some cases perches were put in as a roost for the farmyard fowls, the mixture of ash and poultry droppings making a rich, easily-handled manure.

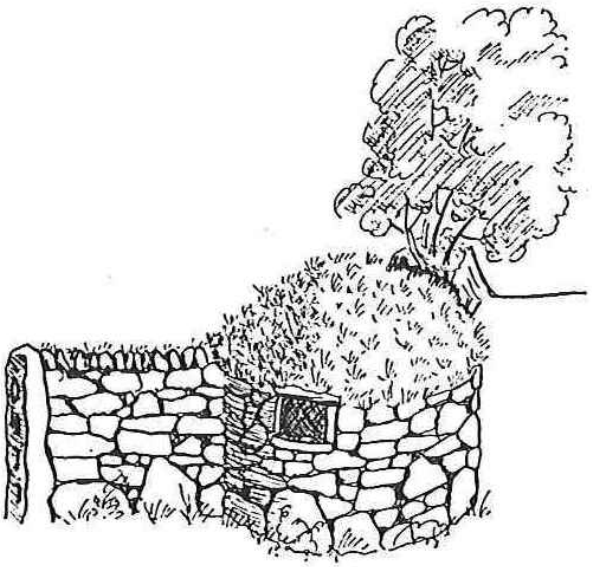


Fig 22. Dartmoor ash-house.

Nothing was wasted. The drainings from dung heaps and shippon were caught in gutters into which the nearest spring of water was diverted to irrigate the meadow that almost always lay just below the farmyard. A meadow watered like this during the winter could provide lush spring grazing for cows or ewes at least a month before the dry pastures had started chinking.

Notes to this chapter are on page 292.

1452 COUNTRY LIFE—MAY 22, 1986

NEW LIFE FOR DARTMOOR'S LONGHOUSES

By KEITH SPENCE

UNTIL the Victorians opened up Dartmoor—or at least made its name both feared and familiar as the site of their most famous prison—it remained a wild and unfrequented place, crossed only by a few packhorse roads, and left very much to itself by the Devonians, who sensibly built their small towns round its periphery.

However, despite its forbidding aspect for most of the year, Dartmoor was inhabited—though sparsely compared with the rest of the county—from earliest times, as the remains of Bronze Age settlements below the high tors make clear. In later centuries, and especially from the Middle Ages until the 17th century, farmers grew prosperous from cattle pastured in Dartmoor's narrow but fertile valleys, and sheep fed on the sparse upland grazing. During those centuries they evolved their own type of dwelling, built if possible in the lee of a slope, with maximum natural protection against the searching moorland wind.

Known as "longhouses", these dwellings are unique to Dartmoor, at least as far as the South of England is concerned. About 100 of them still exist, some at the end of steep and bumpy lanes, unsuspected by holiday-makers who crowd the roads in summer. Many of them have been so enlarged and adapted down the years as to bear little resemblance to their original form. But enough longhouses remain virtually intact to make them a significant part of Dartmoor's uniqueness, suitably treasured by the authorities of the Dartmoor National Park, under whose planning jurisdiction many of them fall.

1—DARTMOOR LANDSCAPE NEAR TWO BRIDGES: TYPICAL "LONGHOUSE" COUNTRY. The longhouse, one room wide, in which farmer and cattle shared the same roof, evolved on the moor from the Middle Ages to the 17th century

Their name describes them exactly—long and narrow, one room wide and built originally one storey high. They were built on gently sloping ground, the living quarters with its central hearth being at the upper end and the shippon beyond a cross-passage at the lower; this allowed the slurry from the cattle to run down the central drain of the shippon, out through a hole in the wall at the lower end, to a manure heap on the outside. Doors at either end of the cross-passage were used by both people and cattle, the animals going one way into their straw-floored shippon, the family turning the other way into the smoky warmth of their communal hall.

2—HIGHER UPPACOTT, A THATCHED LONGHOUSE AT POUNDSGATE. Longhouses were normally built on a slope, with the cattle housed at the lower end

Excavations at Hound Tor, high on central Dartmoor, have shown that this type of building had evolved by the 13th century; it remained largely unaltered, apart from small modifications, for the next 500 years. Though it seems to be a building of the simplest and most primitive type, the longhouse was in fact lived in by modestly prosperous farmers—halfway between the labourers, whose mud-built hovels have all disappeared, and the wealthy landlords who possessed stone houses on a far grander scale. If a farmer on Dartmoor had the money to build in stone, he was doing all right for himself; and the high quality of the granite masonry in many of the longhouses shows that Dartmoor farmers built to last.

Though Dartmoor was remote, building improvements elsewhere in Devon did not pass the longhouses completely by. In the 16th century, many had chimneys built against the wall, or through the centre of the building, in place of the open hearth. Often, an upper floor was added. In some instances only part of the ground floor was built over, and the upper floor was raised on "jetties" (projecting beams normally found on the outside of timber-framed buildings) protruding into the interior hall space, which might be used as a kind of canopy over the main table of the house.

In the early longhouses, the cross-passage was normally divided from the animals only by a low wooden partition on the shippon side; but as time went by this was raised to the height of a full wall, making a firm demarcation line between humans and animals. Eventually, the shippon might be converted entirely to domestic use, with a new detached barn built for the cattle, or outbuildings such as a dairy

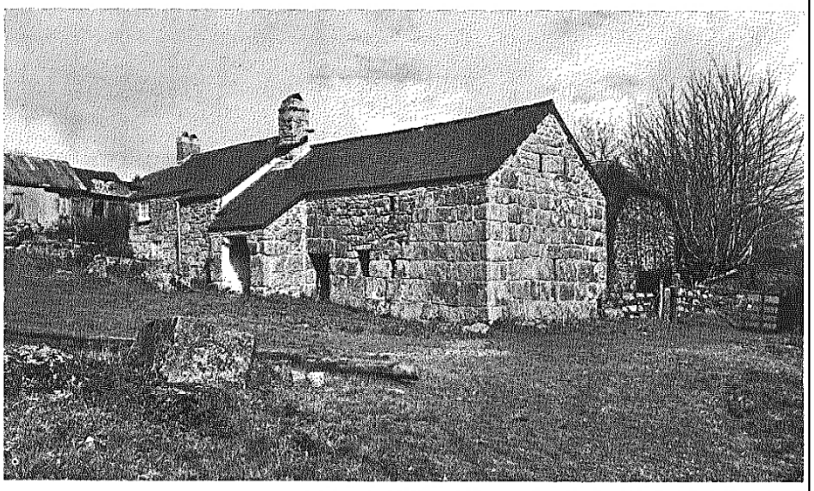
might be tacked onto the back of the longhouse.

One well-preserved longhouse, Higher Uppacott, at Poundsgate, owned by the Dartmoor National Park and rented by them to a sympathetic tenant, shows the various stages of evolution. (The shippon has remained unaltered, one of the main criteria the park authorities use in deciding whether a longhouse can still be considered "authentic" or not.) The early phase when Higher Uppacott had its open hearth, where peat cut on the moor was burnt, is illustrated by smoke-blackened beams in the roof, and even by smoke-blackened thatch, which has lasted since 1600 or earlier. Built of Dartmoor granite 2½ft or more thick, Higher Uppacott has been "frozen" in time since 1650 or so; and its rough-hewn shippon (Fig 6) has no doubt remained unaltered since a couple of centuries earlier than that.

Another longhouse, far better documented, is Sanders, at Lettaford, not far from Moretonhampstead. Figure 3 shows it before restoration, and Figure 4 as it is today, after being restored by the Landmark Trust in 1977. Sanders is notable for the size and quality of the ashlar blocks used in much of its construction, especially round the main door and at the lower end of the shippon, which give an almost fortress-like effect to its exterior.

In an article in the *Proceedings of the Devon Archaelogical Society*, published in 1972 while Sanders was still more or less derelict, three experts on the history of Devon building went into every aspect of this superb example of a longhouse, from the roof—originally thatched—of which three of the original roof-trusses have survived, down to the drain of the shippon. Among the unusual features at Sanders is the separate door into the shippon, next to the entrance porch. The authors suggest that this may represent a changeover from the medieval to the post-medieval period: in earlier times the family was happy to share its entrance with the cattle, but by the time Sanders was built, it had become less acceptable to walk through cow dung into one's house. Sanders has other interesting variations, among them a staircase built into the earlier of two fireplaces, and a first floor built in two stages, representing phases in the closing-in of the original open hall.

Like other longhouses, Sanders did not stand in isolation but formed part of a small hamlet, facing onto a green. The hamlet of Lettaford consisted of a small cluster of four or five houses, originally all longhouses with shippons, though as the years went by barns, pigsties and "linhays" (open-fronted cattle sheds) were added. The most substantial house in Lettaford is a 19th-century building on the site of a shippon, with the original farmhouse turned into a kitchen and store.



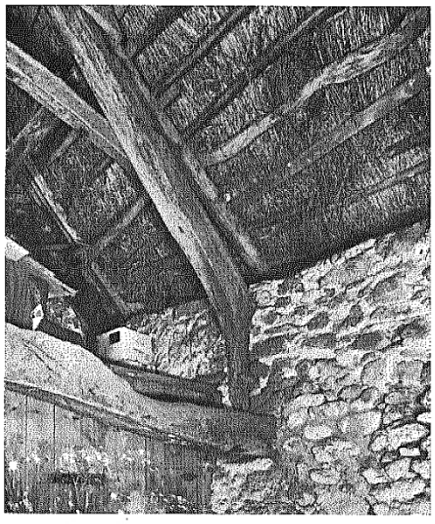
3 and 4—SANDERS, LETTAFORD, BEFORE AND (*below*) AFTER RESTORATION BY THE LANDMARK TRUST. "Notable for the size and quality of the ashlar blocks used in much of its construction"

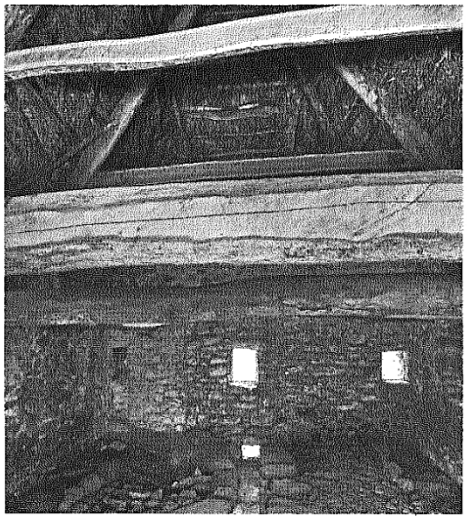
In the handbook *Devon's Traditional Buildings*, published by Devon County Council's planning department in 1978, Sanders features prominently, in company with vernacular buildings of all sorts, from town houses to breweries. The summing-up essay, by Peter Beacham, encapsulates a problem that is perhaps even more relevant to Dartmoor longhouses than to better-known styles of building: "Over-enthusiastic and misguided attempts to 'restore' a building to an (almost entirely speculative) original form or character (together with the financial resources to carry this out) constitute at least as great a threat to our heritage as redundancy and decay."

In the case of the longhouse, this means doing nothing whatsoever to the shippon, and carrying out the minimum alteration to the living quarters, consistent with bringing them up to modern standards of plumbing and other services. When the shippon is converted to domestic use the result may be aesthetically very attractive and conform to everyone's ideal of an away-from-it-all Dartmoor house, but in the judgment of the National Park authorities it no longer has the status of a proper longhouse.

Thus an empty cattle-shed from which the animals have long since vanished becomes the touchstone of genuineness—an odd paradox, which would surely have bewildered the practical-minded farmers who built the longhouses, lived in them, and adapted them as the changing conditions of their time demanded. (Higher Uppacott can be visited by appointment through the Dartmoor National Park office at Parke, Haytor Road, Bovey Tracey, Devon.)

Illustrations: 1, 2, 4-6, A. F. Kersting; 3, Landmark Trust.





5—CRUCK BEAM AND ANCIENT THATCH IN THE SHIPPON OR CATTLE SHED AT HIGHER UPPACOTT. (*Right*) 6—THE SHIPPON. The slurry ran to a manure heap against the outside wall

Rep. Trans. Devon. Ass. Advmt Sci. **107**, 47–75

The Last Bible Christians

Their Church in Devon in 1907

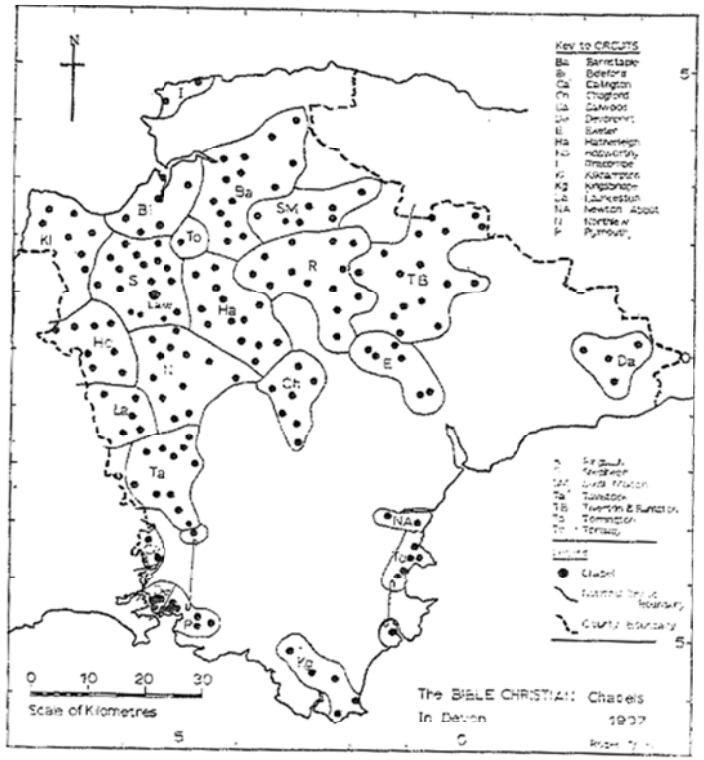
By *Roger Thorne*, *C.Eng.*, *M.I.Mun.E.*
11 Station Road, Topsham, Exeter

IN *Methodist Worthies*, his six-volume parlour table book for Victorian Methodists, George Stevenson briefly refers to the Bible Christians as a poor, regionally based, little Methodist denomination in the far South West:

"Devonshire presents attractions to the observer and traveller of a varied and most interesting character; but there are found there, for some persons, associations which impress the mind more deeply and permanently than the beauties of nature. The birthplace of the Bible Christian Society was Devonshire, in that county a large portion of its members and ministers were born, and there the denomination has its chief stronghold; hence it is that the members of that community generally hold that south-western county in special veneration." [1]

". . . their great want has been the finances necessary to undertake new responsibilities when they have presented themselves. The union of this body with that of the New Connexion would be likely to prove beneficial to both. . . ." [2]

Union did come, more than twenty years later, on 17 September 1907, with the United Methodist Free Churches as well as the Methodist New Connexion. The United Methodist Church thus formed joined the Wesleyan and Primitive Methodist Churches in 1932 to form the modern Methodist Church. In 1907, after 82 years of independent existence, the last Bible Christians numbered 32,202 souls with 640 chapels, a tiny and uninfluential band compared to 496,430 Wesleyan members with 8,520 chapels. However, the tiny denomination has a particular attraction just because it was so small and regionally based. It was founded in Devon, although conceived in Cornwall, and more than one quarter of its chapels lie within the County. This paper mentions some of the factors which shaped the progress of the denomination from 1815 to 1907 and describes its state in 1907. At the end is a schedule of the chapels being used by the Bible Christians in Devon at the time of Union in 1907.



Progress and Development

The founder of the Bible Christian Church was William O'Bryan (1778–1868), a layman who parted from the Wesleyan Methodists in 1815 due to his desire to pursue irregular evangelistic work. Soon after this break he gained the support of the Thorne family of Lake Farm, Shebbear, and at a meeting in their home a number of people desired to join him, thus forming the foundation of the little denomination. O'Bryan was a complex character whose self denying labours and enthusiasm attracted others to join him in his work of tramping around the villages of Devon and Cornwall and further afield, to preach and establish little Methodist groups. He was convinced that many inhabitants of the parishes of Devon were untouched by the ministrations of conventional Christianity and he felt a mission to preach the Gospel to them. Rev. J. H. B. Andrews has come most ably to the defence of the contemporary Anglican Church in a paper in these *Transactions*,[3] and his references to surviving sermons by Devon clergy underline the paucity of Methodist material of this type and period. Rightly, he condemns the glib and unthinking repetition of threadbare stories about hunting parsons by later Methodist writers, who merely copied from each other. However O'Bryan was a contemporary observer, and a very shrewd one, and he seemed to be sincere in his conclusion that the clergy, whatever their personal characters were not successfully evangelising their parishioners. The quality of written sermons is rather beside the point as the O'Bryan mission demanded a relevant self authenticated commendation of the Gospel which could not be committed to paper. The presence of the clergy was not ignored by O'Bryan who gave various reasons for going into their parishes to preach. While still a Wesleyan, he wrote of himself:

"In Devonshire, he has been informed of more than twenty parishes destitute of any Methodist preaching." [4]

After the break he records:

". . . I was persuaded to visit Clawton, near Holsworthy, a parish where I suppose no one living had ever heard a dissenter preach." [5]

He reveals a strange attitude in an exchange with the clergyman at Black Torrington, when he wrote seeking his permission to preach. He went so far as to claim:

"I wish my hearers to attend the established Church. . . ." [6] Permission was not forthcoming, but O'Bryan announced his intention of preaching anyway, with the question:

"Is there no sinner, Sir, in your parish? no drunkard?, no swearer no liar . . .? If there be not one of these kind in your parish . . . I am persuaded there is not such another parish in the united kingdom,—nor perhaps in Europe." [7]

He did preach at Black Torrington, on 30 March 1816, and found ". . . all were not converted to God, nor did I meet anyone in the parish who knew anything about the change of heart." Rather primly he adds:

"How very different did I find the fruit from that which might be expected of the labours of a good clergyman." [8]

In 1815 the only other Methodists in Devon were the Wesleyans who had some strong centres, but in the sparsely-populated rural areas they were continuing missionary activities in the face of opposition, and here the Bible Christians' rural background and ability to endure privation gave them an advantage. There were about 4,300 Wesleyan members in Devon, including 400 at Tavistock, 409 at Barnstaple, 745 at Exeter, and 1,712 at Plymouth with 181,709 nationally.

The attempts by O'Bryan to establish an autocratic rule, as Wesley had done in the Old Connexion, were not acceptable to his preachers and he took no further part in shaping the Church's future after 1829.

The Connexion continued to extend its work in Devon, opening new chapels around established centres and spreading further from Shebbear, but it was slow and difficult. In 1860 T. W. Garland visited the South Devon Mission, around Kingsbridge, and reported:

"The absence of the wealthy friends of the community who could give considerable support to the society. In the North of Devon, we have a goodly number of farmers, and many of them rich, so that they can do what may astonish people in other places. But here I have not found one as a member of society and not many as hearers." [9]

A significant factor after the middle of the century was the presence of two more Methodist denominations, the Primitive Methodists and the Free Methodists. The first was founded in the North of England in 1807 and was rather similar to the Bible Christian Church; after early lack of success in North Devon, it spread along the southern coastal strip, Exmouth, Dawlish, Teignmouth, Dartmouth, Torquay and Plymouth. The second had originally divided from the Wesleyans and in Devon was based upon the urban centres of Tavistock, Exeter and Plymouth. Where towns had sufficient population the Bible Christians found themselves working in parallel, if not in competition with two or three other Methodist bodies, as at Plymouth, Exeter and Torquay, and even Bere Alston. To a limited degree the strength of these towns enabled each denomination to support chapels in the surrounding countryside.

As the nineteenth century proceeded, life in Devon improved, but as late as 1859 Samuel Jory reported on Sheepwash in O'Bryan-like terms:

"This is a wicked place, and but few in it have hitherto valued the religion of Jesus. Drinking, swearing, Sabbath-breaking, etc. abound; . . . No-one of any standing or influence having taken the lead in either the moral, intellectual or spiritual improvement of the people."[10]

Opposition became greatly reduced, and violence became a memory, but the presence of dissenters in the parish was still an irritation to some clergy and landowners who harried them in various ways, which included threats to employment or attempts to prevent sites being obtained for chapels. The classic case was near Clovelly where the clergyman was instrumental in terminating Bible Christian services which had been held at Dyke for 40 years. After 18 months of open air worship at Woolsery Cross, Providence Chapel was built in 1860, just on the other side of the parish boundary. There seems to have been a certain readiness on the part of the Bible Christians to assume the role of martyr, perhaps as a result of their lack of social self-confidence, and examples were often recounted. In 1974 the author was told of an incident in the 1880s when the gardener of a large house in West Devon was dismissed for his Methodist allegiance, and the efforts of the local Wesleyans enabled him to set up as a nurseryman. They had previously sought little contact with the Bible Christians, but they could not resist the opportunity to make this gesture which was more political than religious.

Generally relations between Methodist denominations became increasingly cordial but not always close, and congregations would attend each other's special services or bazaars. A significant trend was the support or even presence of the local landowner. In May 1886 a bazaar was held in the British School at Witheridge to clear the chapel debt to which the Earl of Portsmouth sent a £5 donation and the message, "I believe that no religious body is more active in good works than the Bible Christians, or more staunch in promoting liberal opinions."[11]

Despite the low level of formal education throughout the denomination, it was responsible for founding and developing two secondary schools in Devon, which in 1975 are more flourishing than ever. In 1829 Mary Thorne (daughter of O'Bryan) and her husband Samuel began a little school for boys and girls in their home, Prospect House, Lake Farm. The occasional preacher also obtained some schooling here. In 1841 a few ministers and laymen gave some financial assistance and the school was named "The Bible Christian Proprietary College," later to become "Shebbear College." Belatedly the Conference assumed responsibility in 1860.[12]

Shebbear College was a boys' school and in 1882 a Conference committee was set up to examine the possibility of a girls' school. A

large villa residence in Bideford, called Edgehill was purchased, and opened in 1884 as "Edgehill Girls' College."[13]

Towards the end of the nineteenth century a move toward union began at connexional level and the Methodist denominations were less ready to build against each other in the same villages. At places such as Landkey and Buckland Brewer the close proximity of Wesleyan and Bible Christian chapels was a constant reminder of past lack of co-operation between fellow Methodists. A combination of reasons may have inspired the Bible Christians to begin their work in Ilfracombe as late as 1891 even though the town was well served by established Wesleyan chapels. Predictably this caused resentment and from 1892 to 1894 the Wesleyan Circuit Plan bore the rather ingenuous notes:

"15. Any of our members who are asked to join other churches on any grounds are requested to communicate at once with Rev. Lionel Westlake.

16. We shall be glad to assist any cases of sickness by giving hospital tickets or rendering help in other ways." [14]

The Bible Christians had little success in Ilfracombe, but were soon on friendly terms with the Wesleyans, and in 1936 the churches of the two former denominations amalgamated.

As the 1907 union approached it was viewed with mixed emotions although accepted as inevitable, and within a few years chapel closures and amalgamations were effected, sometimes with a sense of relief. At Bere Alston, Tavistock and Newton Abbot the Free Methodist and Bible Christian congregations soon amalgamated after 1907, but an attempt to amalgamate circuits in Plymouth, without chapel closures, was quickly abandoned.

A total of 176 chapels were being used in Devon in 1907 and many of these were less than two decades old, but these were replacements of older buildings and there was no prospect of territorial expansion. In some circuits the list of chapels remained almost the same for many years, perhaps from the mid-19th century until 1907 or later. All the places in the Ringsash circuit in 1845 were still on the list in 1907 and there has been little change since.[15]

In 1907 the early years of the denomination seemed remote, although there was the plea to recapture the early enthusiasm, but 1815 was a different world. Without any sense of incongruence, the President wrote in the magazine:

"So was formed the first Church at Jerusalem; so was formed the little Church at Lake in 1815." [16]

The last issue of the Bible Christian magazine appeared in December 1907 in a nostalgic mood. 'An Old Contributor' rather cynically parodied the self conscious style of the reports that had been a feature of the magazine since its earliest days:

"Brother B's thrilling story of the revival spreading like a blessed epidemic from Bethel to Rehoboam and from Battledown to Cranberry Hill—right through the Circuit; Brother C's report of his astonishing missionary tour, the receipts going up several shillings in every place except one where the night happened to be stormy and very dark." [17]

Here the dilemma of the denomination is revealed. It began as an evangelising body influencing those who were neglected by other Christians, but it ended as a small denomination, respectable, teetotal and unable to maintain the missionary zeal that was its raison d'etre, although reports of small successes were couched in exciting terms. The last Bible Christians devoted their lives to their chapels, but they were like the clergy of the early 19th century, full of good intentions towards those outside the church's ministry and increasingly out of touch with them.

As a small denomination the Bible Christian Church had ceased to justify a separate existence but its history had been honourable and its people had tried to be the friends of all and the enemies of none. Many of their leaders and ministers were drawn from a fairly limited part of Devon and yet these men displayed great courage and enterprise in strange surroundings at home or overseas. Rev. T. G. Vanstone was born at West Putford in 1851 and went to China as one of the first Bible Christian missionaries, returning home broken in health to minister at Newton Abbot and Chagford before dying in 1898. His grave in Providence burying ground reminded his denomination that its men had a pioneering zeal that was not finding an expression at home.

The denomination is remembered as a family, and this was one of its strengths, but limited its ability to face the problems of the 20th century, thus the Union of 1907 brought new horizons and opportunities. Sadly the trends of the 19th century were reversed and by 1932 the United Methodist Church had lost 10,140 members.

Administration

The chief feature of Methodism is not any novel doctrine or practice, but its genius in organising itself for mission and pastoral care. Its people in each chapel are linked with each other and with the denomination at all levels, permitting central organisations to be set up such as the Missionary Society, which can work on a scale which would otherwise be impossible.

O'Bryan began to organise his people on the traditional Methodist pattern, but on a small and homely scale. In 1907 the Wesleyans were able to set ministers apart for specific offices, but the Bible Christian officers were circuit ministers too, like the Pastor of the Plymouth

Circuit who was also Superintendent of the District and Connexional Home Mission Secretary !

TABLE 1
BIBLE CHRISTIAN ADMINISTRATION IN DEVON IN 1907

The arrangement and numbering of Circuits is that used in the Minutes. Membership is for the whole Circuit, *i.e.* including any Chapels outside Devon.

Circuit	*Membership*	*No. of active Ministers*	*No. of chapels*	*No. of preaching places*
DISTRICT III—DEVONPORT AND PLYMOUTH				
19 Devonport	461	2	4 (including 1 in Cornwall)	
20 Plymouth	1089	5	7	1
22 Tavistock	465	2	11	
23 Callington	666	2	12 (including 10 in Cornwall)	
24 Launceston	642	2	14 (including 9 in Cornwall)	
DISTRICT IV—SHEBBEAR				
25 Shebbear	685	3	17	
26 Kilkhampton	586	2	12 (including 5 in Cornwall)	
27 Holsworthy	724	2	12 (including 4 in Cornwall)	
28 Bideford	412	2	6	
29 Torrington	110	1	1	
30 Barnstaple	787	3	14	
31 Hatherleigh	479	2	12	1
32 Northlew	680	2	11	1
33 South Molton	108	1	6	1
34 Ilfracombe	125	1	2	
DISTRICT V—EXETER				
35 Exeter	526	3	5	1
36 Ringsash	560	2	13	
37 Torquay	374	2	6	
38 Newton Abbot	93	1	2	
39 Kingsbridge	119	1	5	
41 Chagford	192	1	7	
42 Tiverton and Bampton	504	3	13 (including 1 in Somerset)	4
DISTRICT VI—BRISTOL				
51 Dalwood	65	1	4	

The chief court of Methodism is the Annual Conference, the decisions of which appear in the printed minutes, together with the current statistics. In 1819 O'Bryan entitled the minutes of his first Conference, "Minutes of the First Conference of the Preachers in Connexion with William O'Bryan", deliberately using similar words

to the early Wesleyan Minutes. 89 Conferences were held, and 49 of these were in Devon, some being in small villages, and a few in O'Bryan's home in Stoke Damarel, Plymouth.

The Connexion spread beyond the South West and in 1907 it had circuits as far away as Sunderland, London, Brighton and the Channel Islands, with missionaries in China. This was a considerable source of pride, but in reality the most distant places were little more than isolated missions.

Between 1815 and 1907 the total Bible Christian membership increased from nothing to 32,202 with 640 chapels, but during the same period the Wesleyan membership increased from 181,709 to 496,430 with 8,520 chapels seating 2,326,228.

After Union in 1907 the Bible Christian Connexion found itself the smallest of the united bodies and as Robert Currie points out, it was "grossly unrepresented" in the appointment of officers.[18] The United Methodist Church was itself the smallest denomination in the Union of 1932 and in its turn its traditions have had little influence. However the Bible Christian tradition did provide a President of the Methodist Church in 1939, in Rev. Richard Pyke, who was born in Sampford Courtenay.[19] It also provided a Vice-President, always a layman, in 1934 in G. P. Dymond, Headmaster of the Hoe Grammar School, Plymouth.

The rural character of the Connexion affected it to the end, and in popular sentiment Shebbear remained its centre. In practice Plymouth assumed first place, being situated in a key position on the Devon/Cornwall border and having a large population. From its opening in 1886 until 1910, the minister of Greenbank Chapel in Plymouth was, would be, or had been President.

The Connexion was first divided into Districts in 1823, and the Devon Circuits were included in the Plymouth-Dock, Shebbear and Exeter Districts. By 1907 one circuit in Devon, Dalwood, was also in the Bristol District. Shebbear remained at the head of a District until the 1907 Union when it was absorbed into an enlarged Exeter District. This was not acceptable to the ex-Bible Christians and in 1908 the UM Conference resolved:

"That as this District is mainly composed of the former Bible Christian, Exeter and Shebbear Districts, the latter being much the larger of the two, we recommend that the District be in future designated, 'The Exeter and Shebbear District'."[20] Following the Union of 1932 Shebbear's name disappeared for good.

The first printed Minutes of Conference listed 12 circuits in 1819, and five of these were in Devon. In 1907 there were 23 circuits with chapels in Devon, but many of these had been divided off from the large early circuits. The last circuit to be formed in a new area was

Ilfracombe in 1890, and the last circuit to be divided off was Dalwood, from Crewkerne in 1891. The list of Devon circuits then remained unchanged until 1907.

Advocates of Church Union always emphasise the benefits to be gained from rationalisation, but neither 1907 nor 1932 achieved this quickly. Barnstaple remained as the head of two circuits, ex-Wesleyan and ex-Bible Christian, until 1955. In some areas where one denomination was particularly strong, little amalgamation was necessary after either union. In 1975 the Northlew, Ringsash and Shebbear circuits contain only chapels in the Bible Christian tradition, while the Hatherleigh and Chagford circuits each contain only one ex-Wesleyan chapel. In the circuits farther from Shebbear, where Bible Christian influence was less, Wesleyan chapels have generally been kept when amalgamations took place, and the Bible Christian chapels have been closed. At Exeter five Bible Christian chapels have been closed out of six, and at Kingsbridge three out of five.

The locations of the chapels in Devon are shown on the map. Notional circuit boundaries are also indicated, based on the assumption that chapels drew their membership within a radius of about 3 km, although some members travelled further than this, while the presence of another denomination's chapel near by could inhibit support from that direction. The pattern of chapels and circuits was continuous in North West Devon, spreading out from Shebbear as far as Exeter and Plymouth but it was the potential of these cities that drew the Bible Christians and not the surrounding rural areas where their work was relatively unsuccessful. Having extended part of the way round the barren mass of Dartmoor, the Bible Christians were unable to encircle it and extend successfully in South Devon where they had only isolated circuits based upon the urban centres near Torbay, and the Kingsbridge Circuit, which was a struggling survivor of the early days. East Devon was something of a Methodist desert and after attempts in the mid-19th century the Bible Christians left it alone. The Bible Christians who founded the chapels in the tiny Dalwood Circuit came from Chard and Crewkerne in the north and not from the west.

As can be seen from the map less than half of Devon was at all densely covered by Bible Christian chapels, although there were chapels in the biggest towns. As the 19th century progressed territorial coverage became a matter of importance in view of a shifting population and the coming of other Methodist denominations. When members moved anywhere in North West Devon they probably found a Bible Christian chapel within easy reach of their new home, but migration to other parts of the county might result in their loss from the denomination. Migration to London or the Midlands or North of England would almost certainly result in members joining other Methodist denominations, although some little Bible Christian causes were established, such as Bradford, Yorkshire, where members from Wellington, Somerset, moved. In London the Bible Christian churches were few in number and could take little effective action as witnessed by the advertisement that appeared in the magazine in 1907:

"LONDON BIBLE CHRISTIAN COUNCIL

Owing to the numerous losses we sustain through friends coming to London and not re-joining our Churches, the members of the above Council had adopted the following resolution:—

'That the Ministers, Circuit Stewards, and Friends throughout the Connexion be asked to send Names and Addresses of all Members and adherents moving to London to the Secretary. Although they may not be residing near any of our Chapels, we shall be able to keep a register of such names, and inform them of our May Meetings or any special gatherings of our people'."[21]

Chapels and Preaching Places

There were 167 Bible Christian chapels and nine preaching places in Devon in September 1907 which were taken into the United Methodist Church. Too much emphasis upon bricks and mortar was deprecated, but many Societies that built chapels have survived to the present while all those without have disappeared.

Like all Methodist denominations, the Bible Christians experienced difficulties with buildings due to ill-advised and costly erections, and chapels that were not under the legal control of the Connexion. The first problem was dealt with by a careful scrutiny of chapel building proposals, which tempered local enthusiasm. The second was solved by the adoption of a Model Deed[22] which firmly tied the property to the Connexion through local trustees. Problems had to be overcome as chapels were an important part of the denomination's life, as described in the 1854 Chapel Report:

"Time was, when from the novelty of dissent, and the paucity of dissenting places of worship, a congregation might be gathered in a barn, or a dwelling house, and the attendants thought themselves happy in being so favoured; but now the novelty has passed away, and dissenting chapels having become more numerous than the churches and chapels of the Establishment, the case is greatly altered, and it is now next to useless to think about gaining and keeping a congregation unless our chapels be made at least comfortable and convenient.

In a number of instances, and in various localities, the good work of God has been greatly retarded for want of suitable chapels; but we have the pleasure of stating, that in many cases this difficulty has been

surmounted and our people now sit with quiet comfort in the house of prayer, having concluded that it was not seemly that they should 'dwell in their own ceiled houses and God's house lie waste'."[23]

Architecturally the chapels varied widely with many of them incorporating extensions and alterations of various dates. It can be difficult to determine what changes have been made, but Keith Parsons has done this for the chapels in the Northlew Circuit, describing their erection and later Gothicising.[24]

The chapels in use in 1907 can be divided into broad categories:

(*a*) *Secular premises*—These were borrowed, generally free of charge, for holding Sunday services. At Point Farm, Combebow, the services were held in the kitchen with a few forms pulled out and the preacher standing at the table, while for many years services were held in the the up-side waiting-room of Sampford Courtenay railway station on the Southern Railway line to Okehampton.

(*b*) *Purchased Buildings*—Some premises were purchased as chapels from other denominations as at Exeter, where Providence was purchased from the Brethren and has now been sold to the Assemblies of God, while at Chagford the chapel was purchased from the Baptists and has now been sold to the Brethren. In other places secular buildings were acquired as at Ilfracombe where the Oxford Grove Assembly Rooms were purchased, or at Heddon where a cob barn was slightly altered.

(*c*) *Temporary Buildings*—Economy and lack of security sometimes made a temporary building the best choice, and these were widely advertised in the religious press in the form of 'iron chapels'. A second-hand iron chapel was built at Preston, Torquay, although later encased in brick, and a second-hand one was used for the school at Elburton. A wooden structure or vehicle was used at Yarnscombe from 1861 until 1908. Happily this small wooden hut still survives in the village but minus its six wheels. At Petton a broad gauge railway coach propped up on low brick walls was used as a chapel until 1901.

(*d*) *Purpose-built Chapels*—The earliest buildings were built with limited funds and were unselfconscious in style, often similar to the contemporary farm out-buildings or cottages. A few of these hipped roof chapels of low square appearance still survive as at Cookbury or Prawle. Practically every old chapel suffered modernisation later in the century like Highampton in 1891:

". . . old cob walls have given place to brick ones, old fashioned windows to others of modern design, lime ash to wood floors, old ricketty seats to pews of best pitch pine, with room to sit comfortably. The ceiling too has been raised, the building lengthened, and platform

for convenience of choir erected, making it one of the neatest and most convenient chapels in the circuit, in short such a chapel as our friends at Highampton deserve."[25]

As prosperity increased there was the desire and ability to build chapels of distinctive appearance and this was done by incorporating a variety of features in the basic box shape, such as the more or less inappropriate insertion of rose windows, pointed window arches, as well as embellishment with ornate ridge tiles, barge boards and varicoloured brickwork. A distinctive feature of many later buildings was the use of very pale brickwork to dress the corners of walls and window openings. A typical example of a late rural chapel was Tetcott, opened in 1899:

"The walls are of dressed local stone, with white brick facings for quoins and windows, and worked Polyphant stone. The entrance porch is spacious and Gothic in design. The interior has a beautiful white plaster ceiling with curved pitch-pine corbels. The rostrum end has a massive plaster arch and the walls are finished in rough stucco, the windows being glazed with cathedral tinted glass. The dado, seats and rostrum are all of pitch-pine varnished, as also is the communion rail on ornamental iron standards. Adjoining the sacred edifice are a preacher's vestry and good sized schoolroom, the latter being capable of being opened into the chapel for special occasions. But these are not the only special features of accommodation, there being likewise a nice furnace house, with tap for drawing water in the vestry, and a large carriage house and stable; in fact, it would be difficult to plan a more compact, well lighted, and ventilated suite of buildings. . . ."[26]

At the opening one of the speakers commented:

"Hostility to Dissent was not so general as it was inasmuch as they did not experience so many difficulties as of yore in procuring sites."[27]

Only a few places, the showplaces of the Connexion, could afford major buildings in a coherent architectural style, like Gothic Yelverton, now minus its tower, or Romanesque Greenbank, Plymouth.

Having described the broad categories of the chapels, there are some features which apply to most of them.

(*a*) *Accommodation.* Not all rural chapels were as extensive as Tetcott and some, such as Cookbury, remained a single square room, but most provided themselves with a separate schoolroom or at least a stable. Often the old chapel became the school when the new chapel was built either adjacent or nearby. At Whitchurch the old and new chapels are adjoining, while at Bridestowe they are a few yards apart. In towns such as Plymouth, extensive school premises were needed. Only a few chapels in each circuit would have a "burying ground" but each could be used by the other chapels. In the early years Bible Christians

were buried in churchyards and at Bridestowe the elaborately inscribed gravestone of Rev. Henry Walsh (died 1839) lies only a few feet from the parish church porch.

(*b*) *Names*. It was common for 19th-century non-conformist chapels to be given a name with a scriptural connection rather than to be dedicated to a saint, and there were many Bible Christian "Hopes", "Zions" and "Siloams", but chapels built in 1865 were named "Jubilee". Some chapels, like Buckland Brewer, Oakford or Barnstaple were named as memorials. A pleasant feature of many chapels is the tablet in the gable end or over the door bearing the name and date, and sometimes additional miscellaneous information. Memorial stones were popular as their layers placed a substantial donation on the stone.

(*c*) *Finance*. Only small grants were available from central funds and local people had to provide or raise most of the funds needed for building, repairing or maintaining their chapel. It was usual for debt to be incurred when major building or restoration work was put in hand. A strong cause often cleared a debt quickly, but a small chapel in a poor area could carry a crushing burden for years. Two unhappy results flowed from this, pastor and people were dispirited and new members were discouraged from joining.

The schedule at the end of this paper gives the year's income of each chapel trust for 1907, and the outstanding debt at that time. The tiny income for some rural chapels probably means that most maintenance work was done by members and that the chapel was "free", i.e. of debt. This financial information has been obtained from the District Chapel Books, that have survived for the closing years of the denomination for the Districts which included the Devon circuits. The finances of each chapel were recorded by the pastor into a Circuit Chapel Book, and these details were then copied into the District Book.

The Last Bible Christians

What now remains of the last Bible Christians, their buildings, the children in their Sunday Schools? There were about 9,000 Bible Christians in Devon in 1907 and now only a tiny remnant survive, probably no more than three or four dozen, aged at least 83. The author is glad that he knows some of these personally, Mrs Gale of Ebford, Mrs Maunder of Marytavy who saw Zoar Chapel being built, Mr Pellow of Plympton and Mr Vanstone of Holsworthy who remembers attending a public meeting at the 1899 Conference.

One hundred of the chapels are still in use, but a number have an uncertain future as they are in remote and sparsely populated areas with elderly congregations. Happily others have still an important part to

play, like Elburton which has large congregations as a result of the spread of suburbia.

Many older Methodists in Devon were not Bible Christian members, but were children in their Sunday Schools and absorbed the Bible Christian ethos there as well as at home. Even in rural areas there is a tendency for Methodist worship to become uniform, and the Bible Christian ethos and traditions are not particularly prominent in the Sunday services, but they still survive in personal attitudes, piety and family life.

Schedule of Bible Christian Chapels in Devon in Use on 17 September 1907

The author and Mr M. E. Thorne, M.P.S., are currently attempting to locate and list all former Methodist chapels in Devon and many of the details in the Schedule have been obtained by Mr M. E. Thorne.

Notes

1. Chapels are listed under circuits, for list of circuits, see Table 1.
2. Each entry is arranged thus: First line, details from District Chapel Books for 1907, Name, Accommodation, Trust income for year, Debt.
   Second line, Name, Location, National Grid reference.
   Third line, Opening and closing dates, Reason for closure, Present use or condition of building.
   Fourth line, Years that Conference met in chapel or its predecessor.
3. Accommodation details are for 1905 for circuits 25–28, 31–34. No details are available for any year for circuit 30.

Abbreviations

O.—Opened. C.—Closed. Amalg—Amalgamated. BC—Bible Christian Methodist. UMFC—Free Methodist. Wes.—Wesleyan Methodist.

The abbreviations for accommodation follow those used in the District Books, and are generally self-explanatory, except possibly for the following:

BG—Burying Ground. FH—Furnace House. Gdn—Garden. GYd—Grave Yard. Ves—Vestry. Org—Organ. St—Stable.

(19) Devonport Circuit		
Haddington Road (Ch/Sch/Hse) Chapel, Haddington Road, Devonport, Plymouth O.1868 C.1941: War damaged: Demolished	£174.17.2	£540.0.0 (454 556)
King Street (Ch/Sch) Ebenezer Chapel, King Street, Devonport, Plymouth O.1845 C.1936: Failure of Cause: Demolished Conference: 1846	£139.5.0	£305.0.0 (452 547)
St George's Road (Ch/Sch) Chapel, St George's Terrace, Devonport, Plymouth O.1906 (Sch O.1898 and used for services) C. 1941 due to war damage. Sch repaired 1955, Ch rebuilt 1964.	£132.1.7	£4230.0.0 (457 559)

(38) NEWTON ABBOT CIRCUIT

Jubilee (Ch/Sch/Hse) £38.10.2 £510.0.0
Jubilee Chapel, Queen Street, Newton Abbot (865 714)
O.1866 C.1965: New chapel on same site: Demolished

Stoke (Ch) £3.8.6 £4.0.0
Chapel, Stokeinteignhead Village (915 705)
O.1869 C.1926: Failure of Cause: Used for many years as Brethren Chapel, now empty

(39) KINGSBRIDGE CIRCUIT

Aveton Gifford (Ch/Sch) £20.13.1 —
Chapel, Aveton Gifford Village (693 475)
O.1850s C.1933: Amalg with ex-Wes. Chapel: 2 Flats

Chillington (Ch/Sch/Cem) £64.4.8 —
Chapel, Chillington Village (790 428)
O.1850

Dodbrooke (Ch/Sch) £16.19.4 —
Chapel, Ebrington Street, Kingsbridge (736 442)
O.1867 C.1933: Amalg with ex-Wes. Chapel: Youth Club

Hallsands (Ch/Sch) £2.9.10 —
Chapel, side of track on cliff top near Hamlet (818 387)
O.1850 C.1944: Failure of Cause following evacuation of South Hams for battle practice: Derelict on edge of crumbling cliff

Prawle (Ch/Sch etc.) £37.10.4 —
Chapel, Prawle Village (780 364)
O.1848

(41) CHAGFORD CIRCUIT

Chagford (Ch/Sch) £16.9.9 —
Zion Chapel, Southcombe Street, Chagford (701 876)
O.1842 (Purchased from Baptists, built 1823) C.1934: Amalg with ex-Wes. Chapel: Ebenezer Chapel, Brethren

Hittisleigh (Ch) £19.0.8 £65.0.0
Chapel, roadside (730 948)
O.1904

Lettaford (Ch) — —
Chapel, roadside, Mariners Cross (702 840)
O.1860 (Services first held in the day school by invitation, later purchased or donated)

Providence (Ch/Sch/Cem) £33.9.0 £25.0.0
Providence Chapel, roadside, Providence Place (675 893)
O.1839

South Zeal (Ch/Sch) £30.11.8 £50.0.0
Ebenezer Chapel, Shelley Hill, South Zeal Village (654 935)
O.1866

Spreyton (Ch/Sch) £8.9.8 £60.0.0
Chapel, roadside, 0.5 km from Hamlet (701 974)
O.1880

Whiddon Down (Ch/Sch) £9.14.0 £230.0.0
Chapel, Whiddon Down Hamlet (690 925)
O.1906 (First Ch O.1866, now Sch)

(42) TIVERTON CIRCUIT

Bampton (Ch/Sch/Hse) £15.14.3 £119.0.0
Chapel, Mary Lane, Bampton (958 222)
O.1862 (Sch O.1896)

Caddeigh (Ch/Sch/Hse/etc.) £10.18.10 £85.0.0
Bethel Chapel, roadside, Little Silver (916 093)
O.1843

Cheriton (Ch/Sch/Cem) £6.13.11 £50.0.0
Chapel, Cheriton Fitzpaine Village (870 063)
O.1887

Clayhanger (Ch/Sch) £21.11.6 —
Chapel, Clayhanger Hamlet (021 229)
O.1892 C.1971: Failure of Cause: Empty

Halberton (Ch) £4.10.5 £65.0.0
Chapel, Halberton Village (010 129)
O.1860 C.1933: Amalg with ex-Wes. Chapel: Eastgate House

Oakford (Ch/Hse) £7.10.7 £35.0.0
Melhuish Memorial Chapel, Oakford Village (910 213)
O.1899 C.1930s, reopened briefly during war years by conscientious objectors working on farms in area: Failure of Cause: Store

Petton (Ch) £38.17.6 £125.0.0
Chapel, roadside (007 245)
O.1901

Rackenford (Ch/Sch/Cem) £4.10.5 £30.0.0
Ebenezer Chapel, Rackenford Village (852 184)
O.1848 (Sch O.1891)

Templeton (Ch/Cem) £2.18.2 —
Chapel, roadside, Templeton Bridge (878 145)
O.1859, Renovated 1898 C.1970: Failure of Cause: House

Tiverton (Ch/Sch/Hse) £42.4.6 £380.0.0
Providence Chapel, St Andrew Street, Tiverton (940 124)
O.1887 C.1957: Amalg with ex-Wes. Chapel: Assembly of God Chapel

Upham (Ch/Cem) £3.17.5 £78.7.7
Chapel, roadside (882 082)
O.1894

Witheridge (Ch/Sch) £12.1.7 £60.0.0
Chapel, Witheridge Village (804 144)
O.1859 (Sch O.1903)

PREACHING PLACES

Bickleigh — —
Chapel, Burn Farm, side of A396 road (944 053)
O.*Ca.* 1900 (Building provided by farmer) C.1910: Building used by another denomination: Empty

From *Devon's Traditional Buildings*, published by Devon County Council, 1978

The Chapels of Devon

Roger Thorne

There are probably more than 1,000 buildings in Devon that are, or have been, chapels belonging to one or another of the nonconformist denominations. None can compare in age or historical or architectural importance with the older parish churches of the County, but they deserve to be recognised as an integral part of the heritage of Devon and its people.

Two different approaches to style may be discerned in our chapels — a vernacular style using local material and method, and an imported style, reflecting contemporary denominational or national taste. In late Victorian times, it was possible to order all chapel fittings from a catalogue, and even complete 'iron chapels' were offered.

That so many chapels have been built is a measure of Devon's importance as a centre of nonconformity from the seventeenth century. Indeed, Devon witnessed the early beginnings of two major nineteenth century denominations — the Bible Christian Methodists and the Plymouth Brethren — while, at the other extreme, the redoubtable Joanna Southcott began her career in East Devon.

The history of the Nonconformist denominations is so long and intricate as to defy brief summary, but, in essence, it is the story of men and women who desired a form of church government and worship different from the established Church of England. Nonconformists in any sphere of life attract attention and sometimes serve as scapegoats, and this has been the experience of religious nonconformists, whether the highest principles or mere obstinancy inspired them. A universal feature of all denominations was their need of a meeting place which was usually met by a chapel built for the purpose, or converted from some existing building.

In passing, it may be noted that some denominations invariably apply the term 'chapel' to their buildings, others use 'church' or 'chapel' without distinction. Again others prefer such terms as 'the room' or 'the meeting house.'

Money for chapel building usually had to be raised locally so the scale of the premises reflect the economic status of the congregation (or a benefactor) as well as its tastes. In Devon can be seen small early nineteenth century barn-like buildings *(Plate 41)*, built by farm labourers at the end of their working day, even by moonlight — as was Southcott Wesleyan Chapel (now closed). In the town streets can be seen vast architecturally designed premises built at great expense with extensive suites of rooms, whose original builders included many of the professional and business people of the day *(Plate 42)*.

A once and only national census of churches and chapels was made in 1851 and the results for Devon are worth quoting. There was a total of 1,297 places of worship which included 549 Anglican churches. The most numerous Nonconformist buildings were Methodist — 379 chapels, Independent (i.e. Congregationalist) — 142, Baptist — 112, Unitarian — 12 and Friends (i.e. Quakers) — 8.

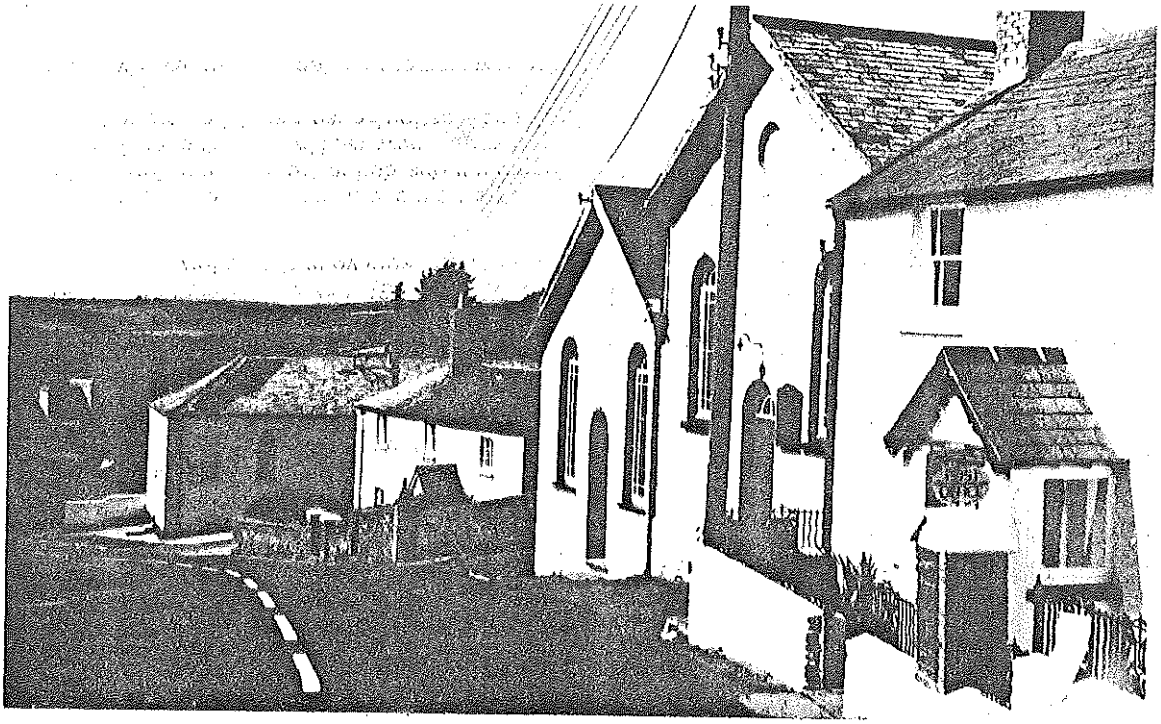
Since then other denominations including the Plymouth Brethren have been active in chapel building, but obviously their premises are more recent than some of the above. In 1971, a large part of the Congregational Church joined the United Reformed Church, and their chapels now bear that name, while a substantial section still continue separately as Congregational.

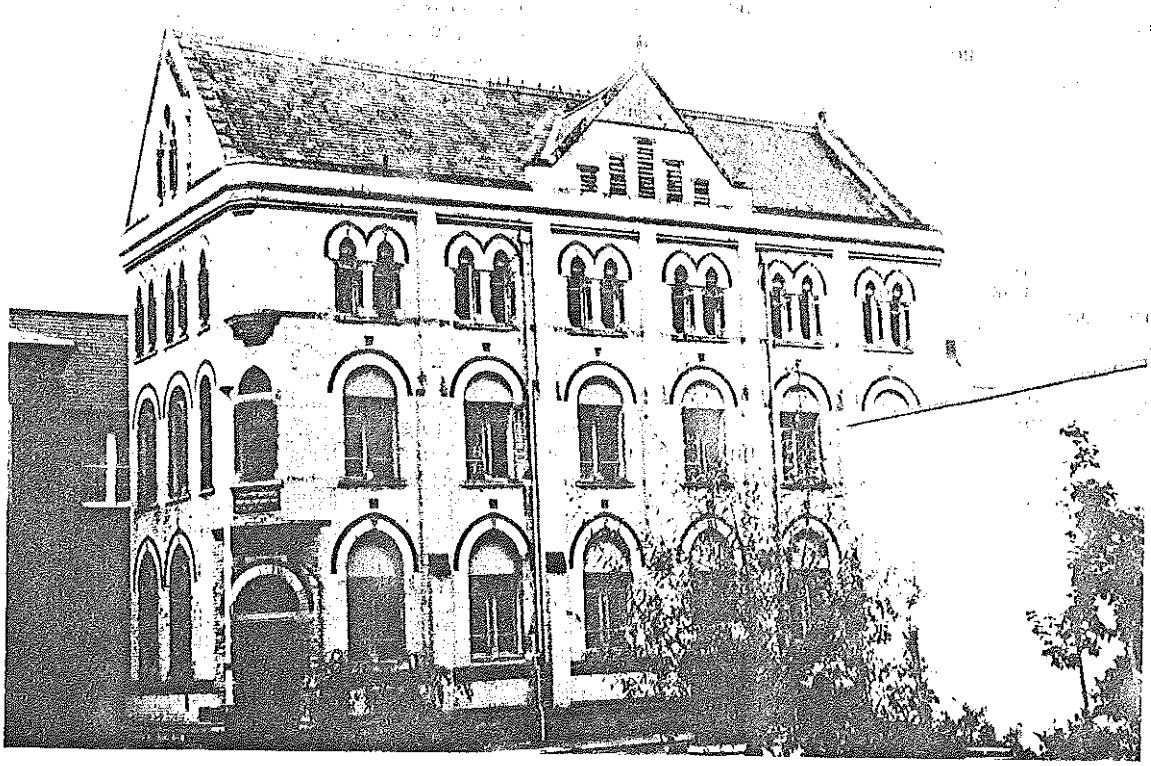
The writer of these notes has personally seen more than 400 of Devon's chapels, past and present, and has seen something of interest in each building. Mostly this must mean looking at the outside, as chapels are usually locked during the week, a practice increasingly being adopted by our parish churches. This is disappointing, but much pleasure and information can be derived from exteriors *(Plates 47 and 48)*, not forgetting their locations. If it is possible to see inside *(Figure XIV, Plate 43)*, it may be found that modern restoration has swept away old pews and fittings, but these may still survive in the gallery.

QUAKER MEETING HOUSES

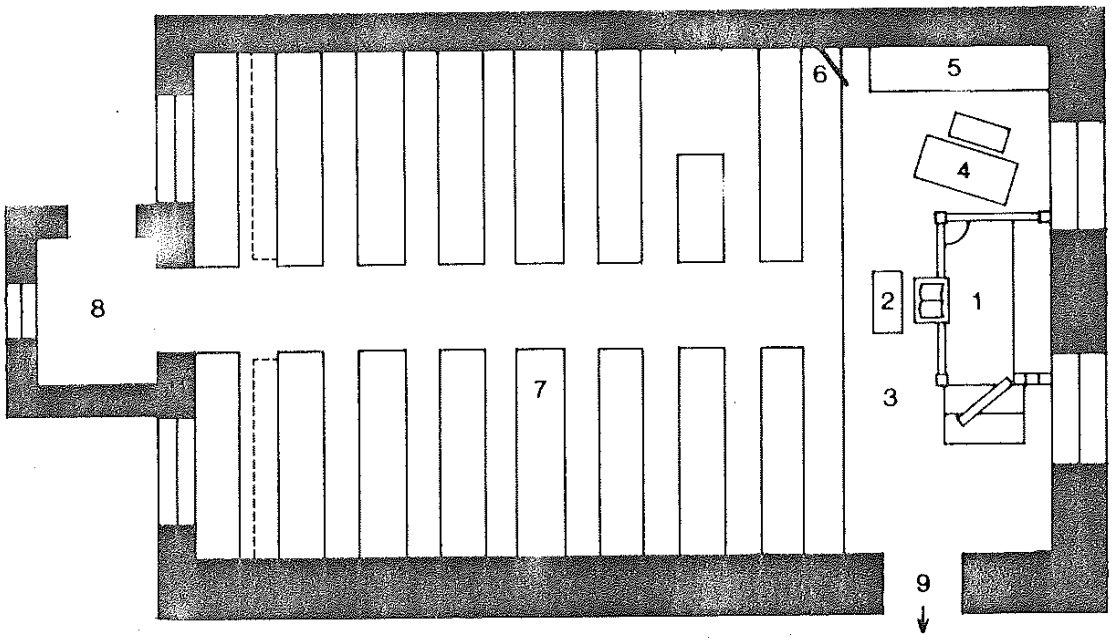
These are really in a class of their own and express in their austere simplicity something of the principles and ethos of the Society of Friends, one of the older denominations dating from George Fox of the eighteenth century. The former meeting house in Friars Walk, Exeter — now used by The Salvation Army — is interesting but untypical. Both typical and evocative is Spiceland Meeting House, near Uffculme, with the dwelling-house attached. This has a delightful period interior.

Other meeting houses are scattered across the County. The Swarthmore Settlement, Mutley, Plymouth is an interesting modern example.





Plates 41 and 42. Contrasts in chapel building. (Above) Chapels in the village street, Bratton Fleming. In the foreground are the Methodist chapel and Sunday school (Bible Christian) with the Baptist chapel lower down the hill. (Below) Urban grandeur. The former Jubilee Sunday school (Congregational), Barnstaple, with exuberant brick detailing.



Scale 1:200

1. Pulpit with door, seat, shelf and book-rest. Two steps up.
2. Table
3. Dais, six inches above floor level of chapel
4. Harmonium and stool
5. Side pew
6. Hymn board
7. Pews (of stained and varnished deal)
8. Porch
9. To hall (modern)

Notes

(i) A striking difference in the layout of many older non-conformist chapels compared with most Anglican and Roman Catholic churches is the prominence given to the pulpit rather than the altar. This reflects a different emphasis between the denominations on the place to be given in worship to preaching and to the sacrament of communion.
(ii) There are important differences between the non-conformist denominations in the layout of their chapels. This chapel, for example, has no communion rail as this branch of Methodism administers the sacrament to the congregation in the pews. Many chapels, however, have a simple communion rail at the front of the dais. Additionally, a Congregational chapel would have a preacher's chair behind the table. A Baptist chapel might have a baptistry near the pulpit, usually covered over.

Figure XIV: A small country chapel. A plan of Newton St. Cyres Methodist chapel built by the Bible Christians in 1864 and "considerably improved" in 1873.

56

BAPTIST CHAPELS

These belong to another of the old denominations and can be found throughout Devon in towns and villages. The earliest centres of this denomination, like the other old denominations, tended to be the towns, particularly boroughs. However, the needs of growing congregations in the nineteenth century meant in many cases that original buildings were replaced by late Victorian ones. It is in the quieter country areas that chapels of this and other denominations have tended to remain unchanged or unreplaced.

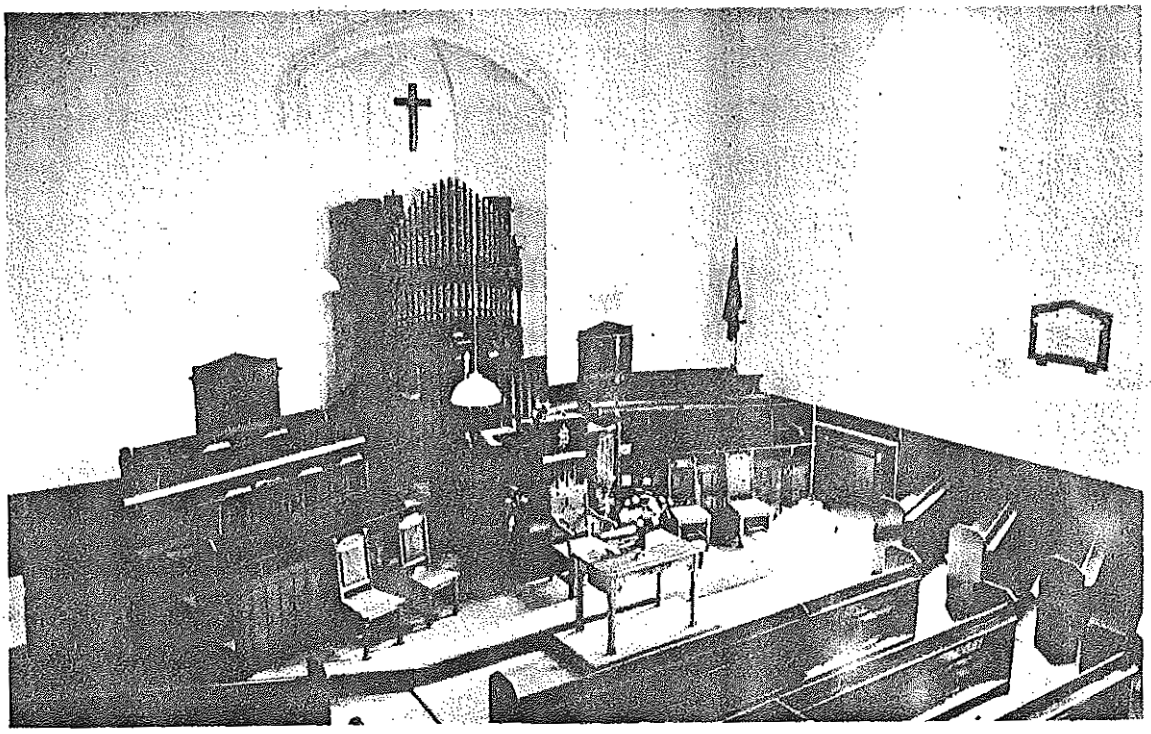
The outstanding example is Loughwood Meeting House which dates from the 1650's. It has been carefully restored and is in the care of The National Trust, so it is possible to inspect the interior which has been little changed since the early eighteenth century. Attractive ninteenth century buildings, usually with a small graveyard can be seen forming a valuable part of the street scene in Bovey Tracey (1824), Bradninch (1832) and Malborough (1815, later enlarged). Knowle Chapel, Budleigh Salterton (1844) was in the country when it was built, but there are now houses around it. Sainthill Chapel, Kentisbeare Parish (1830) is typical of many Devon chapels in its location, as it is by the roadside at the end of a road, in a very sparsely populated rural area. Attractive village chapels can be found in Bratton Fleming (1850) (*Plate 41*), and Frithelstockstone (1872), in each case only a stone's throw from similar Methodist premises. In Exeter are two striking city chapels, the former chapel in Bartholomew Street (1817) with strongly coloured rendered walls, and the splendid brick South Street Chapel (1823). Although interiors of Baptist chapels are not generally open, an almost universal fitting is a baptistry, usually covered in in some way.

UNITARIAN

This is another denomination with its roots back for centuries. In some cases its chapels were originally built by Baptist, Independent or Presbyterian congregations that changed their doctrinal views. At Moretonhampstead, Cross Street Unitarian Chapel had Presbyterian origins. This chapel is altogether attractive in itself and in its siting with a little railed grass area between it and the street (*Plate 44*). The diversity of nonconformity in very small towns is very well displayed in Moretonhampstead. Behind Fore Street are the derelict, but still dignified remains of the long closed Unitarian Chapel, which had General Baptist origins. In Cross Street is the now closed Wesleyan Methodist Chapel dated 1816, but rebuilt in 1865 and in Station Road is the former Congregational Chapel, while in Fore Street is the Baptist Chapel.

The grandest chapel in Devon must be George's Meeting House, South Street, Exeter (1760). Its

Plate 43. A chapel interior. The front of the Congregational chapel, Topsham.



Georgian brick exterior and hipped roof makes it outstanding in a distinguished street. Its interior, too, is impressive. A personal favourite is the modern Notte Street Chapel in Plymouth, which with a little central spire on a square building, stands out amongst post-war development.

CONGREGATIONAL (FORMERLY KNOWN AS INDEPENDENTS)

Many Devon chapels joined the United Reformed Church, many belong to the Congregational Federation; still others now have non-denominational congregations. They all share a common ancestry. The Independents, or Congregationalists as they are better known, have a long history and some congregations trace their origin to the seventeenth century.

In Bridgeland Street, Bideford, Lavington Chapel with twin spires, although relatively modern, makes a contribution to the attractive street scene. A complete contrast is the tiny Point-In-View Chapel, Exmouth (1811) with its little almshouses. It is approached by a path across a field. Town chapels are represented by the little white chapel at Colyton (1814) now Methodist, and the large stone premises at Crediton (1865) fronted by a large courtyard. Topsham is another home of dissent and the rendered chapel (1839) *(Plate 43)* with graves in front is situated in a narrow road. Its congregation originally separated from a Presbyterian group that had become Unitarian. In Little Castle Street, Exeter, the former chapel (1796) now a club still presents an imposing appearance with sandstone walls and slated roof. In contrast, a little colour-washed village chapel can be seen at Bickington, near Fremington (1835), while at Moreleigh the chapel, partly slate-hung and surrounded by its graveyard, still has considerable dignity even though disused.

The chapels in the ancient East Devon market towns of Ottery St. Mary and Honiton are much more in the 'meeting house' style, although both have been altered. Jesu Street Chapel, Ottery St. Mary, dates from the late 1600's and Honiton from 1836. Both are brick with slate roofs.

PLYMOUTH BRETHREN

This is a nineteenth century movement which purchased some old chapels from other denominations as well as building some new ones.

A plain, but impressive, early building built by the Brethren about 1845 is in Grosvenor Street, Barnstaple. Chapels formerly used by other denominations include the little white-washed former Methodist Chapel at Chagford, and the larger rendered former Baptist Chapel at Teignmouth. Much more humble, but a pleasant picture, just outside Harbertonford is Zion Chapel (1799) formerly Baptist.

PENTECOSTAL

This growing movement worships in a variety of chapels in Devon, some built and some purchased. None can be grander than the Chapel in Northernhay Street, Exeter; built for the Brethren in 1839, it was purchased by the Bible Christian Methodists in 1851 and sold again in more recent years.

METHODIST

This denomination had its beginnings in the Evangelical Revival of the eighteenth century, but it was not until the early nineteenth century that it began to make real progress in Devon. From then until the Great War, it was by far the most prolific builder of chapels in Devon. Unlike the older denominations, it came from youth to maturity within a lifetime in the nineteenth century, and stages of development were telescoped into decades that with others took half centuries. As a result it is possible to trace, in a small village, a succession of buildings that were utilised as the denomination grew from an oppressed weak movement to a self-confident and prosperous denomination. In towns, the earlier meeting places have often suffered re-development, but they survive better in the country where many old people maintain oral traditions such as "the first Methodists met in *that* cottage, then they took a room over *that* stable, then they converted a cottage into a chapel which became our Sunday school when our present chapel was built."

The nineteenth century was not only an era of expansion; it witnessed offshoots and divisions from the present body of Wesleyan Methodists, several of whom had built Devon chapels by the end of the century. Doctrinal differences had divided Methodist groups in the eighteenth century and were reflected in Plymouth by one group establishing themselves in Dock (i.e. Devonport) while the other persuasion settled for Plymouth. The nineteenth century groups were divided by strong views on organisation, but friendly relations were maintained, although the different Methodist denominations eventually found themselves building against each other in towns and some villages by the end of the century.

There were 5 similar denominations, varying widely in size; The Wesleyans with its roots in the mid-seventeenth century, the New Connexion which split off in 1797, the primitive Methodists formed in 1810, the Bible Christians formed in Devon and Cornwall in 1815, and lastly the Free Methodists who divided from the Wesleyans as a result of mid-nineteenth century dissention. The New Connexion, the Bible Christians and the Free Methodists united in 1907 to form the United Methodist Church, itself responsible for building several distinctive Devon chapels. In 1932, the United Methodists amalgamated with the Wesleyans and 'Prims' to form the Methodist Church of Great Britain.

(i) WESLEYAN METHODIST CHURCH

This denomination was the mother of modern Methodism, and in its size and geographical coverage dwarfed all the other branches. The sparse population of some parts of Devon inhibited its early growth in Devon, but by 1875 it had 220 chapels here. The denomination had strong central government and its national but close-knit character may have contributed to the tendency towards uniformity in its buildings. This denomination was often regarded as 'better off' and indeed did attract the middle classes, but more working class people belonged to it than to any other branch, so that its chapels are to be found in town centres, side streets and villages, although not often by the roadside.

By and large its premises were well planned and constructed, so that subsequent amalgamations have generally used the former Wesleyan chapels. A large number of chapels remain in use in Devon and the following examples are only a personal selection.

In the grand style, Ivybridge chapel (1876) with its spire represents the munificence of a wealthy member, while the former chapel of much plainer appearance is up an alley nearby. In Plymouth city centre Ebenezer Chapel (1816) was remodelled and reopened in 1940 as the Plymouth Central Hall. In Devonport the Keyham Mission (1902) in Admiralty Street is a large building in a residential street. In contrast to grey limestone is the red brick of Sidwell Street Chapel (1905), Exeter, an early venture in reinforced concrete construction. Another alternative is the red sandstone of Old Mill Road Chapel (1908), Torquay.

Chapels of the earlier period were not usually Gothic in style, and examples are the very similar chapels at Tiverton (1814, later enlarged) and Torrington (1832, later enlarged). The smaller older chapels, too, were often plain in appearance, perhaps rendered and colour-washed like Appledore (1851) with its traceried windows, Instow (1838), Hemyock (1838), Bere Alston (1841) and Parracombe (1839).

The grandest chapels are almost invariably in the Gothic style, although their layout is determined by the particular site occupied. In Boutport Street, Barnstaple, the former chapel (1868) and Sunday school buildings stretch magnificently along the street. Ilfracombe chapel (1898) was designed for a flat site, but looks quite at ease on a prominent but sloping site! Marwood chapel (1873) is a meeting place by the roadside, but occupies a large site and is urban rather than rural. The former chapel (1829) is nearby.

None of the simple buildings constructed in the early nineteenth century are now in use, as all have closed for one reason or another and, like the little stone chapel at Horndon (1836), are now used for other purposes.

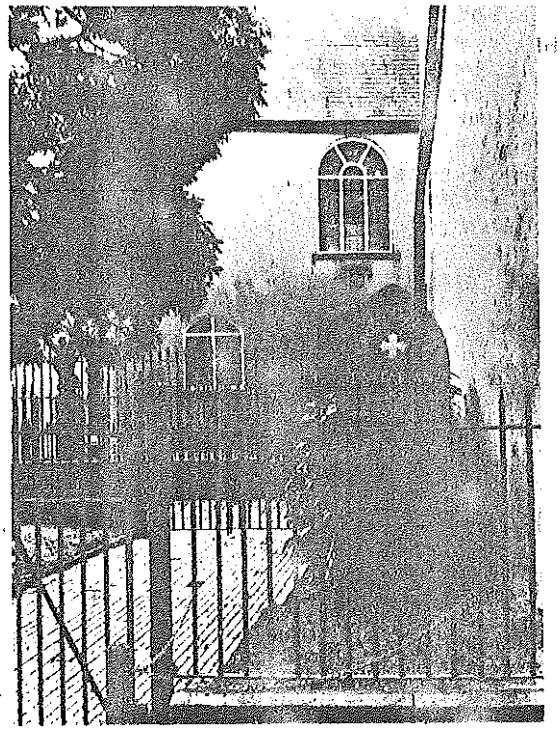


Plate 44. Unitarian chapel, Cross Street, Moretonhampstead. An early, and particularly attractive, chapel exterior.

The Wesleyans were not driven to press into service the sort of premises that the poorer denominations sometimes used, but their buildings were varied enough, including the cottages and mills that were lent for the Sunday services. In North Devon, mills were not uncommon as meeting places, as they could offer a spacious area for worship and were probably located away from the main village with its parish church. St. Michael's Mission (by 1913) in Torquay was a small room at the end of a tenement block, while at Starcross the former pumphouse of the Atmospheric Railway was used as a chapel. Smallridge chapel (1813) was described in a poem, affectionately, as an "eight sided tub,", and so it seems to be. Early plans did not always materialise and at Mount Gold, Plymouth, the chapel (1904) was built as a Sunday school soon to be replaced by a grander chapel on the adjacent site, but the original building remains in use to this day.

More than any other of the branches, the Wesleyans built chapels in Devon that have some claim to architectural merit. I would want to include the following in any list of 'top' Devon chapels, of any denomination.

Lana, Pancrasweek (1838) with its large premises, including a former day school, Kingsbridge (1814), Brixham (1816, later enlarged), Dartmouth (1816, later enlarged), Ashburton (1835, later enlarged), Stonehouse Mission, Plymouth (1813, and enlarged in 1857), Mary Tavy (1835), Shaldon (1867), Landcross (1854), Halberton (1816) and, for its location seemingly in the heart of the moor, Peatcott, near Princetown (1912).

(ii) METHODIST NEW CONNEXION

This rather intellectual denomination was based upon the midlands and the north and its only chapel in Devon was purchased from a mission. It is in Innerbrook Road, Chelston. Torquay, and is now a school's kitchen. Built in 1897, it became Methodist in 1904, soon to lose its identity in the Union of 1907.

(iii) PRIMITIVE METHODISTS

This essentially democratic and working-class denomination was based in the north and midlands. For many years, its chapels in the South West were regarded as outpost missions. It established chapels in Cornwall, but had some failures in Devon until after the mid-century, when it spread along the coastal strip of South Devon, with groups or 'circuits' of chapels based upon Plymouth, Torquay, Dartmouth, Teignmouth and Dawlish and Exmouth. Generally in Devon, its chapels have been disposed of as a result of amalgamations, but an attractive little village chapel is at Harbertonford (1900), and a stone chapel (1883) with brick school (1875), announces its origins proudly at Lympstone. This denomination was so similar to the indigenous Bible Christians that its progress was always inhibited by their presence, and in the end, they were restricted to an area where the Bible Christians were weak or not represented.

(iv) THE BIBLE CHRISTIANS

This was the smallest of the major Methodist denominations and its influence was regional, not national, but Devon was a stronghold where it could match even the mighty Wesleyan Connexion. It was founded in 1815 in the border parishes of North Devon and North Cornwall, and in Devon most of its 175 chapels were always concentrated in the north of the county. This movement was a grass roots religious revival, and its chapels give this impression. In village after village in North West Devon, little colour-washed chapels bear the inscription 'Bible Christian Chapel.' Increasing prosperity and confidence and the desire to demonstrate their hard won status enabled buildings to be replaced or extensively renovated from 1870 onwards. Generally, the opportunity was taken to adopt the Gothic style, which was widely adopted by nonconformists nationally. In Devon, the result was often no more than adding Gothic touches or features to an otherwise very plain structure. Extensive use of pale Marland bricks to form arches, window openings and corners, instead of using dressed stone, unwittingly drew attention to the lack of means available. The L-shaped plan of new chapels which became popular for twentieth century rural chapels was already becoming evident, although with the Sunday school wing smaller and lower than the chapel wing.

A complete list of Bible Christian chapels in Devon is given in the author's paper in The Transactions of the Devonshire Association, 1975.

There came pressure for the denomination to match the Wesleyans' great expansion in the urban areas and it was partly achieved in Plymouth, with the mighty Greenbank Chapel (1887) now closed and in Barnstaple with the Thorne Memorial Chapel (enlarged in 1876). Mount Pleasant Chapel (1903 and 1910) in Exeter is now demolished, but soon after its opening, seemed to a young girl from the country to be "like a Cathedral."

Amalgamations in Devon over the years have very often closed Bible Christian chapels as they were the smaller and humbler premises, but about 100 are still in regular use. Some of the older surviving chapels are low squarish buildings with hipped roofs, or else are simple and barn-like. Due to hostility or indifference, it was often difficult to obtain sites, so some chapels are tucked away up a narrow track or inexplicably maintain a solitary vigil by a lonely road.

The chapels at Cookbury (1840) *(Plate 45)* and Chillaton (1837 but altered) are approached by tracks, while Widin chapel (1830) is almost alone by the roadside, like Atworthy (1836 but rebuilt) or Thornehillhead (1830, later enlarged).

Other early chapels were built actually in villages or outlying hamlets and are a humble, but integral part of them. The little white-washed former chapel at Derril (1843), now the Sunday school, is in a little row of cottages, while at Woolfardisworthy the chapel (1858) and school (1887) form a long low white-washed block stepping down the sloping street. Not all the early chapels were low and colour-washed, and approaching the tiny hamlet of Haytown the lofty gable of Bethel Chapel (1842) can be seen. Now closed, it has considerable dignity with its stuccoed front bearing a long inscription including a text from Haggai. Rather less severe in appearance, but nonetheless distinguished both inside and out, is Providence Chapel (1839), Throwleigh. Its 'burying ground' lies a short distance away and contains the graves of one or two prominent ministers.

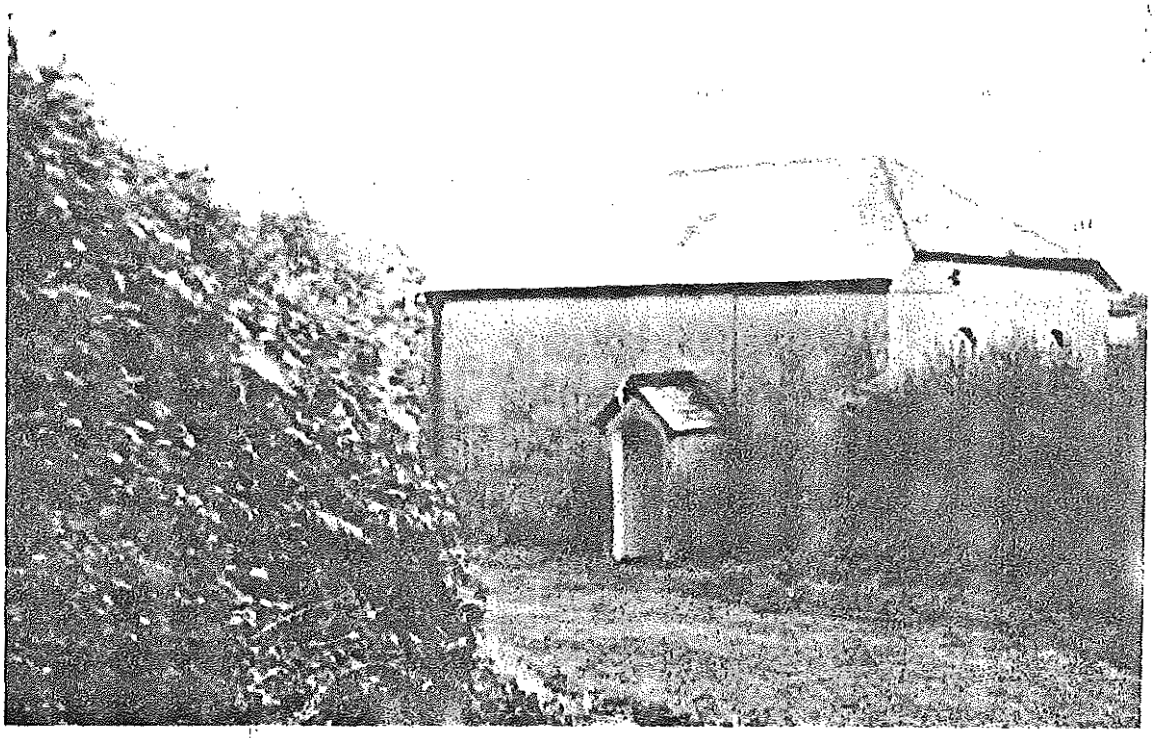
As a later generation of chapels arose, some were better constructed but bigger versions of earlier simplicity.

Sampford Courtenay (1877) is almost Puritanical in its lack of adornment, but loses nothing thereby. Ashwater (1865) begins to show the Gothicising which was so soon to come in with a rush, but Charles Bottom (1865) is satisfied with prominent, round-headed windows and doors.

Gothic features, more or probably less correct or tasteful, were widely adopted at the end of the century, but a modern preference for the simpler earlier styles must be seen against a contemporary anxiety to appear a respectable and established body. Worshipping in buildings that looked like barns or by their simplicity spoke of lack of means, no longer seemed so unimportant. Several architects were particularly active designing chapels for the denomination and similarities can be seen repeated. The front elevation of Tetcott (1899) *(Plate 46)* is almost exuberant, if such a word is allowable for a nonconformist chapel, and Ashreigney (1906) too, is resplendent in stone and brick.

However, this was a small denomination with very little resources, although it bravely sent missionaries to China, and the Gothic town or village chapels were its showpieces. More usually, it was the original chapel that was enlarged, reroofed, repewed, renovated or just rebuilt. From contemporary sources, it is sometimes difficult to discover just what was done.

Plate 45. Cookbury Methodist chapel. An example of rural simplicity, this Bible Christian chapel is a very simple square building reminiscent of a farm building.



(v) UNITED METHODIST FREE CHURCHES

The Free Methodists were dissentients who wanted to reform Wesleyan Methodism, but parted company from it. It was by its nature an urban movement centred upon the manufacturing cities. However, the local response was spontaneous enough so that to a degree it was indigenous. In Devon, it was centred upon Exeter, Plymouth and Tavistock, each with its town chapels and a circle of country 'causes.' Its Devon chapels have generally been disposed of as a result of amalgamations. Colebrook Chapel (1868) is still in use, although its school, the former chapel (1866) is demolished. In Exeter, the former Queen Street Chapel is well disguised as an Employment Exchange. Russell Street Chapel, Tavistock, is now a United Reformed Church, but bears an interesting similarity to the Wesleyan Chapel not far away. Locally known as 'Little Zion,' the chapel at Topsham, now a works, is situated in narrow Chapel Court.

(vi) UNITED METHODISTS

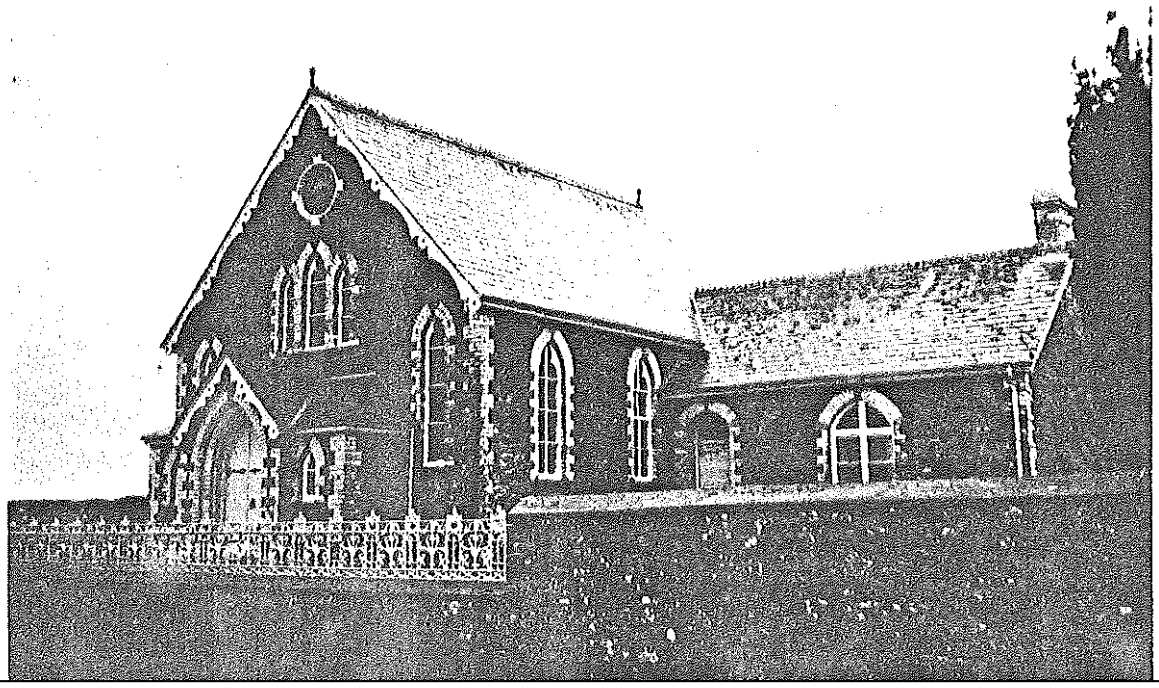
This denomination was formed in 1907 from the above three branches. Its 25 years of existence witnessed a steep decline in chapel building and in Devon its chapels were mostly replacement of older premises, an exception being Halcyon Road Chapel (1929), Plymouth. Its rural chapels often followed the L-plan that had begun in less accented form in the earlier period. Typical are Chawleigh (1922), Madworthy (1922) and Yarnscombe (1908), but these are workmanlike rather than memorable. Ambitious efforts were made at High Street, Bideford (1913) and Bodmin Street, Holsworthy (1910), but these were the very end of an era.

(vii) METHODISTS

This denomination resulted from the final union of Methodism in England in 1932. Like the United Methodists in 1907 it was not long before hopes and plans were disrupted by war, but ironically the largest buildings erected since 1932 were replacements for war-damaged chapels. Modern buildings have been built with a strict eye to economy and designed for social as well as purely religious purposes, so they tend to have a businesslike appearance, sometimes unkindly described as 'light industrial.'!

Plymouth suffered cruelly in the war years and several post-war chapels have been built. King Street Chapel (actually in the Crescent) continues the curve of the adjoining terrace. At Whitleigh large premises are situated in the centre of council estates, while at Plympton new premises serve the Woodford estate.

Plate 46. Tetcott Methodist chapel and Sunday school (Bible Christian). The L-shaped building is made interesting by an enthusiastic attention to detail.



Elsewhere in Devon, chapels are usually confined to developing suburbs like Sticklepath (Barnstaple), Goodrington or Whipton (Exeter).

Two attempts to build in a distinctive style are the new Mint Chapel, Exeter and the Central Church, Torquay (combined Methodist/United Reformed Church), while unconscious distinction is achieved at Petrockstowe (1933), built completely in very pale brickwork.

POSTSCRIPT

In Devon there are now at least as many former chapels as there are chapels in use. Even with faith and hope, these have closed for one reason or another — a decline in support, amalgamation or, more happily, replacement by new premises. Some former chapels took on a continuing role as a Sunday school, as at Langtree, Whitchurch, Whiddon Down or Brayford, but eventually ageing premises are given up completely.

Generally, careful plans are made when town chapels are closed through amalgamations and some fittings and equipment are often taken to the combined building. When rural chapels have closed due to dwindling and aged congregations, the buildings and their contents have sometimes been shown scant respect. The final drawn out stages of these chapels' lives usually follow the pattern of services being held fortnightly, then monthly and then are "temporarily suspended." Meanwhile weeds grow, slates fall, paint peels, dust settles and the organ, hymn-books, Bible and hymn numbers remain as they were left when the last few worshippers filed out of the door. The final fate of the chapel has to be decided by the body of Trustees, most of whom live at a distance, and often any decision is delayed.

In general terms, there is a legal responsibility for Trustees to obtain the best possible price for redundant property, which means offering it on the market, thus putting it beyond the reach of another denomination or an organisation with a social or welfare commitment. Since the war, and even earlier, a succession of redundant chapels has been coming on the market to be mainly purchased for some secular use. Sadly, there appears to be no immediate end to this in view. In rural areas some of these chapels occupied good sites in pleasant villages, others were on awkward sites, literally in farmyards, others again were situated near the coast or at beauty spots where modern development is closely controlled. It is not unusual for the smaller nineteenth century chapels to have little more land than that occupied by the buildings themselves. Often a sympathetic farmer had given, or sold cheaply, part of his own field for a site and sheep and cows grazed up to the back wall of any wayside chapel. Where chapels were built outside settlements due to the difficulty of getting a better site, there may be no such services as mains drainage.

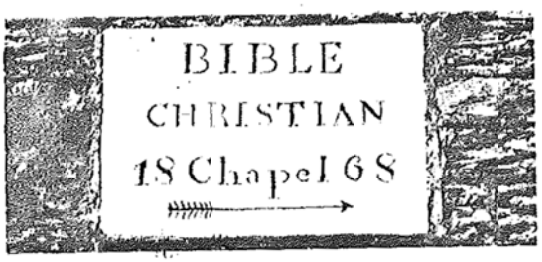
A study of the careers of former chapels in Devon takes us from the sublime to the outrageous and new owners display attitudes from careful sympathy to mindless unconcern.

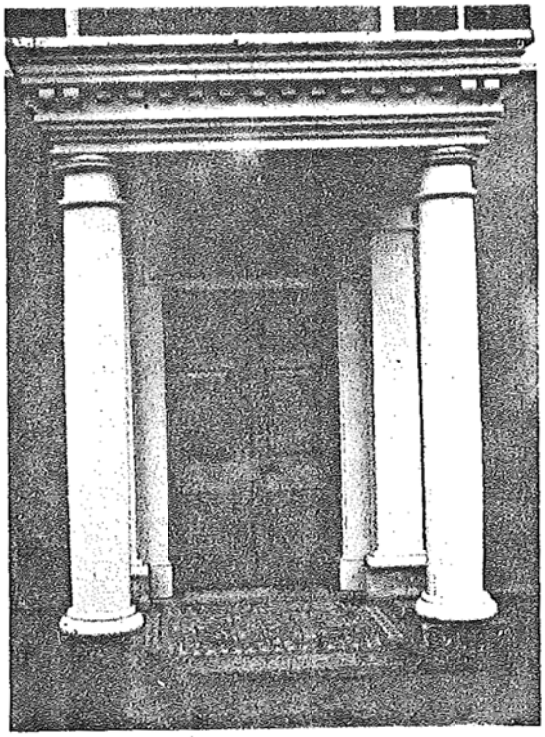
The simplest case is when a small single-room chapel is used as a barn or store, with no more alteration than an enlarged doorway. Surprisingly, many fittings can survive, possibly a minute gallery with its steep ladder-like staircase, or the painted timber dado around the walls and behind the pulpit. Even on crudely constructed buildings well cut date stones may still be seen. Usually maintenance is not carried out, which leads to eventual collapse especially if there are cob walls. Where small premises are in or near a village they can be used as a garage or workshop and suffer more extensive alterations or additions. Maintenance is usually much better, and a variety of fittings may well survive. The coherence of the appearance is spoiled, but its original shape can still readily be seen.

Middling to large chapels in towns can find new uses as warehouses, works, shops, garages or auctioneer's premises. Visible alterations, such as enlarged entrances or added shop fronts, are almost inevitable, but the building size is such that these changes are not overwhelming. Large chapels closed in towns include the former Wesleyan chapels at Holsworthy and Barnstaple, and the former Bible Christian chapel at Bideford.

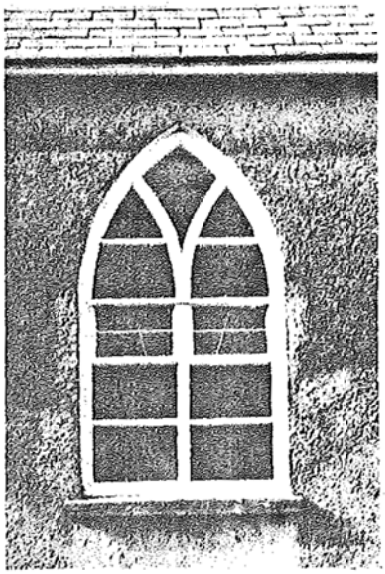
Dwellings form the largest class of new uses for old chapels, a use begun in the last century when chapels came on the market as they were replaced. In poorer rural areas chapels had sometimes been originally converted from cottages anyway, or built very much like them, so they reverted easily to domestic use. These and other small chapels generally lack height so they can form compact cottage style dwellings and, if in a terrace, are indistinguishable from their neighbours. Where resources had permitted and chapels were built rather higher, this permits modern owners to insert a floor to form an upper storey, giving generous ceiling heights.

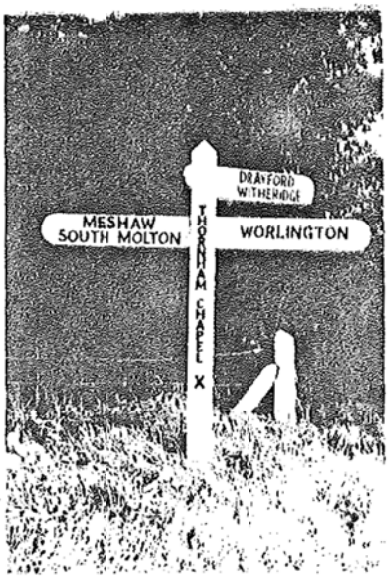
The late Victorian chapels were almost always nonconformist Gothic in style and these are now coming on the market, but are the least easy to convert satisfactorily. Those that are L-shaped and not too lofty are easier, but the uncompromising features — steeply pitched roof, elaborate windows, jettied porch — all present difficulties. Whereas the earlier buildings had simple windows which required little alteration, except partial blocking, the later chapels can accept little alteration without looking awkward. There are examples in Devon of successful conversion of ornate later chapels, but these underline the fact that exterior change is best done with a light touch.





Plates 47 and 48. Typical chapel details. (above, left to right). Two name plaques and a foundation stone and a classical porch to the otherwise plain chapel. (below, left to right) A typical chapel window, a crossroads taking its name from a nearby chapel, and decorative use of corrugated iron for canopies.





Quite large chapels have been converted into dwellings, and where they are of medium height perhaps a little row of three houses results, but where buildings are at all lofty, flats are the easiest answer. In many ways a former chapel would be a happy location for a craft workshop, art gallery or studio, but, although this is not uncommon in the adjoining counties, this use does not seem popular in Devon.

Some chapels are just empty. It is more than sentiment to see still a certain defiant witness in the upright square lines of a slate-hung Bethel or Rehoboth, ivy gaining its hold on the walls, railings broken, nineteenth century slate gravestones askew, weeds showing through the gravel path and hardly a dwelling in sight. This speaks of a former witness, of sacrificial giving from slender resources, of humble families who worshipped God there and finally were laid to rest in the burying ground. I hope that some roadside chapels may thus remain, waiting.