

The Landmark Trust

THE WHITE HOUSE History Album



Written by Charlotte Haslam, July 1991
Updated 2007, 2012
Re-presented in 2015

The Landmark Trust Shottesbrooke Maidenhead Berkshire SL6 3SW
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BASIC DETAILS:

A gift to the Landmark Trust from Miss Constance Purser

Acquired by Landmark: 1990

Architect for repair: Andrew Thomas

Builders: I J Preece & Son

Work on cottage completed 1991

Contents

Summary	5
Introduction	7
The Discovery of the White House	11
Building work carried out by Miss Purser	11
The Stedmans at the White House	13
The White House in 1990, before alteration by the Landmark Trust	22
Building work carried out by Landmark	25
Tour of the White House with Miss Purser, 1971	33
News sheet by Constance Purser from 1973	41
From the Museum's Annual Report 1974-1975	45
The White House: Museum of Buildings and Country Life, Extracts from Annual Reports	50
Ten Years of the White House	59
The White House Museum of Buildings and Country Life	65
Extracts from <i>A Book of Dovecotes</i> by A.D. Cooke 1920	70
Illustrations from <i>Houses from the Welsh Countryside</i> , Peter Smith	73



The White House

Summary

Until 1946, the White House was the home of the Stedman family, who had lived there in nearly unbroken continuity since the Middle Ages. At one period, in the 19th century, the house was let to tenants. At the same time descent through the female line meant a change of name to Stedman-Smith and then to Farmer. Members of the family still visit the house.

Period 1 ?13th century - Miss Purser used to talk of the White House as four-houses-in-one. The earliest of these survives only in shadow, in the cellar of the Elizabethan cross-wing. It is possible that stonework here belongs to the undercroft of a much earlier wing, perhaps even dating from the 13th century. This is thought to be the date of the ruined dovecote in the garden, so there must have been a manor house on the site then, of which all other traces have disappeared.

Phase 2 14th century - The earliest part of the house still standing is contained in the long wing which runs from east to west along the side of the hill. This is a cruck hall, in which the main trusses are formed from two great curved timbers rising from ground level and meeting at the top. These appear mysteriously in the rooms on the first floor, but the full sequence of trusses can best be seen by peering into the roof space.

Originally there was an open hall, divided by a central cruck truss (now to be seen against the chimney of the hall bedroom) into two bays, with a two-storey service bay at the east end. In the north and south walls at the eastern end of the hall were two entrance doors opposite one another. The passage between these two doors was divided from the main body of the hall by a spere truss. Two great free-standing posts supporting a collar beam narrowed the hall at this point, and braces running from each post to the collar formed an arched entrance to it. Usually there was some sort of moveable screen standing between the posts, to keep the worst of the draughts from those within. This building has been dated to the early 14th century, and Miss Purser suggested that it was the work of Roger Stedman, described as "of Aston" in 1335. There was no chimney in the hall at this stage, only a central hearth. The smoke from this gathered in the roofspace, before escaping through a special opening, or louvre, in the ridge, evidence for which survives.

Phase 3 Late 16th /early 17th century - Towards the end of the 16th century, in the Elizabethan period, a new timber-framed wing was built at the west end of this hall, probably replacing the earlier wing. This now contains the History Room, the smaller sitting room and the rooms above. It is box-framed and, curiously, was built as a self-contained structure, although there were always doors between wing and hall.

Soon afterwards, in the early 1600s, a great remodelling of the hall range took place. Its timber-framed walls were cased in stone. The hall (now the dining room) was provided with a fireplace, whose chimney occupied the space between the central and spere trusses. At the same time a floor was inserted to form an upper chamber, the hall bedroom. This was reached by a new stair, with typical Jacobean flat balusters, rising from beside a new entrance door. Later on, the chimney was enlarged to its present huge size, to provide a new kitchen fireplace. Slightly later again, a lean-to dairy was added at the east end.

Phase 4 Late 18th century - The next, and last, phase occurred between 1780 and 1800, supposedly after a fire. The cross-wing was extended westwards to provide a

new drawing room, staircase hall and main bedroom. Across the southern end of new and old work a stuccoed Georgian front was added, with a central door and symmetrical windows, so that from the outside, it all appears as one. Changes of level inside, and sections of box-framing, give clues of a richer and more complex history, whose trail was eagerly followed by Miss Purser.

THE WHITE HOUSE - Miss Purser's Museum

Between 1966 and 1986 there flourished at the White House a Museum of Buildings and Country Life. Started by Miss Constance Purser, who had moved there with her parents in 1947, it ran on enthusiasm and voluntary help for twenty years before its founder, by then in her eighties, felt unable to carry on.

The house itself, with its outbuildings, formed the heart, of the exhibition. The structure was carefully labelled, so that visitors could distinguish the trusses of the 14th-century cruck hall from the Elizabethan timber-framing. The high point of the tour was the view into the roof-space, through a trap door, where the medieval building could be most fully appreciated.

To this a variety of agricultural and domestic implements was added, starting with a small display in the dairy and gradually extending into every corner of the property.

Miss Purser and her Helpers set themselves the highest standards, both of conservation and display. A full catalogue of all accessions was kept, and every item was checked in the workshop, to see whether it needed attention. Expeditions were made to other museums, to learn from their methods. Guides were given particular areas to read up, so that there was always someone able to answer questions about some aspect of the museum's collection. At the same time the White House Museum had the special character of all amateur enterprises, where as much as possible is home-made, and therefore reflects the personality and interests of its makers.

Choosing a successor for this very individual enterprise was not easy. Eventually Miss Purser decided on the Landmark Trust. Landmark would not be able to run the White House as a museum, but Miss Purser had always felt very strongly that it was first and foremost a home. This aspect of her wishes would certainly be fulfilled: the White House now becomes home for a short time to a succession of different families and groups of people. Miss Purser transferred the White House and its contents to the Landmark Trust in 1990, and after minor repairs and redecoration, it received its first visitors in 1991.

Most of the agricultural machinery had already been dispersed from Miss Purser's collection before the Landmark Trust took over, but items in the cider house are largely intact, as is the stable, complete with Captain, the life size model cart horse. The collection of implements in the middle of the barn is also largely complete.

In furnishing the house for use, the displays which filled some of the rooms were of necessity cleared away. Many objects have been absorbed around the building, however, and small displays have been reassembled in the dairy and kitchen, so that its overall character remains very much the one that Miss Purser created. Above all, the History Room has been put together to act as a reminder on a small scale of the museum as a whole in Miss Purser's time, and of her achievement

Introduction

In 1990, Miss Constance Purser, whose father had bought the property in 1947, passed on the White House to the Landmark Trust, and thereby handed on, in a very real sense, her life's work - although only undertaken when she was already past normal retiring age. From the day early in 1963 when the first cruck truss of the 14th-century hall was uncovered during building repairs, leading a year or two later to the idea of a Museum of Buildings ('not taken from somewhere else and re-erected but in their original position in functional relation to each other'); and from 1966 when, with the help of a schoolboy, she opened the first small section of the Museum of Country Life in the Dairy, Miss Purser devoted herself tirelessly to the care of what she always referred to (from its owning family over many centuries) as 'the Stedman Homestead.'

Although each were to some extent separate, house and museum were always thought of as one, the buildings themselves being the chief exhibit of the museum, and the museum artefacts in turn bringing life to the different rooms and outbuildings. Visitors were always taken around the outside of the house first, before being shown what was inside. The climax of the tour was the climb into the roof space, where the altered structure of the hall-house could be best appreciated, with each beam carefully labelled - including the significant absence of a ridge beam, which associates the hall with that at Stokesay Castle, and dates it to the earlier 14th century.

In the mid-1960s respect for traditional methods of doing almost anything was perhaps at its very lowest. At the same time the new age of technology had been in existence long enough for many people to feel a need for something more individually rewarding, and less limiting of personal choice. The founding of the White House Museum, like that of the Landmark Trust (whose Church Cottage was let for the first time in 1966) both answered this need and nurtured and encouraged it, by quietly pointing out the achievements and capacities of our forebears in many different fields, at the humble level as well as the grand.



Miss Purser greeting visitors in the 1970s.



Miss Purser at work in her office in the 1970s.

Miss Purser's annual reports speak of the delight with which early visitors recognised tools and utensils from their childhood and acknowledged, almost with relief, the obvious skill of the generations of craftsmen who had made them and used them. All the more so, when confronted with the idea of raising a building themselves, which could still be admired 600 years later.

A group of Helpers materialised. Gifts of objects poured in, but Miss Purser accepted only those that research proved to have been used at the White House in the past. At the same time, new discoveries were made in the building itself, and left visible for all to see. Miss Purser began to talk of four-houses-in-one. Exhaustive research into the history and ramifications of the Stedman family, which in turn threw new light on the former use of rooms, became a whole area of study on its own, and the History Room was created for the display of the findings. Most rewardingly, as their own experience and expertise grew, so did that of visitors, who proved themselves increasingly well-informed. The work which Miss Purser had set out to do was already, to a large extent, achieved. As with any very individual creation when there is no obvious successor to carry it on, provision for the future was a serious problem. As Miss Purser passed 80, the work of running the museum became hard to keep up with. When the gate closed at the end of 1986, after twenty successful years, it was not to reopen.

This was not to be the end, however. After considering a number of different solutions, Miss Purser finally settled on the Landmark Trust as her successor. It could not run the house as a Museum, as she had done, opening it to the public; but there are now many others doing the same thing, and the future preservation of old implements and machinery is secure. Moreover, she had always felt very strongly that the White House was first and foremost a home, that it was meant to be lived in, as it had been by her throughout its years as a museum. This aspect of her wishes the Landmark would be able to fulfil, offering it as home for a short time to a succession of different families and groups of people. This, too, would allow the study and understanding of the house at a deeper and more

thorough level which is perhaps more appropriate today, when the first principles of a philosophy of conservation - that old buildings and objects are worthwhile - are widely accepted.

In furnishing the house for use, the more crowded areas of display which had spread into some of its rooms have of necessity been cleared away, but much has been absorbed around the house, and its overall character remains very much the one that she created. The outbuildings remain just as they were when we took them on, with their existing contents available for our visitors and occasional parties to study. Above all, the History Room has been put together as a microcosm of the house as a whole in Miss Purser's time, to serve as a reminder of her achievement.



The White House in 1975.

The Discovery of the White House

Building work carried out by Miss Purser

The work of discovery and the unpicking of the historic fabric of the White House was incidental to a programme of repair sparked off by the severe winter of 1963. Always, in Miss Purser's words, 'work has been done as an urgency, several times as an emergency.' Damage in 1963 led to the uncovering and identification of the first cruck truss. Subsequent repairs led to the discovery of more of the timber frame, both of the hall range and of the Elizabethan cross-wing; and showed the way in which it had been repaired before, or adapted to meet new requirements, such as a new ceiling height. Fireplaces were removed to reveal older ones behind; works in the cellar produced evidence of the undercroft of the earliest house.

Each round of repairs opened up yet another feature, and as each piece of construction was revealed it was cleaned and left so that visitors could see the various periods from the 14th to the 19th centuries. Neatly inscribed labels were attached to every element that might be of interest, from a windbrace to a carpenter's mark; while a collection of building materials that had of necessity been removed from their original position was displayed in the Men's Room, the room above the kitchen then only reached by a ladder, where the menservants had slept.

Miss Purser was ably and expertly advised throughout by her architect, Roy Beard, who had attended a Day School on Timber-frame houses at the White House in 1966, conducted by J.W. Tonkin, and 'kept his professional eye on it' thereafter. In a paragraph of thanks in the Museum's Report of 1971, Miss Purser said, 'the moment difficulties arise he is on the spot promptly, summing up the situation and putting into effect the best course of action, and by doing so saved the Stable Block from complete destruction. No one has the preservation of our heritage more at heart than he or gives more liberally of themselves in its service.'

Great support also came from the Jones family, builders of Rushbury, who answered the first call for help in 1963, and got there in spite of snow drifts. Their most notable achievement was the winching up of the Stable Block in 1971 after it had been nearly blown over by a gale - a story that was told in Miss Purser's most stirring prose (see page 38); and an operation which led to the building's identification as a late 16th-century hall house.

The interpretation of the house was also the work of several. After her mother's death, Miss Purser found a note in her handwriting recording the visit in 1948 of Dr Watkins-Pitchford, then President of the Shropshire Archaeological Society. From him they had learned that the Dovecote was Norman, that the 'stone' part of the house was 14th-century (though he did not mention crucks - nor were any visible), the cross-wing Elizabethan, the back stairs Jacobean and the front Georgian.

After the discovery of the hall trusses in 1963, the architect FW.B. Charles, an authority on timber-framed buildings, with Mr Alec Gaydon of the Victoria County History, spent an afternoon examining the house and pronounced it worthy of further, and more thorough, specialist examination.

As a result, just such specialist help appeared in the shape of Mr and Mrs J.W. Tonkin, who paid a visit in November that year, he, as he later recalled, dressed in his best suit to meet Miss Purser; hours later, he emerged from the roof covered in cobwebs and soot.

In the Tonkins, Miss Purser not only found the right people to interpret The White House, but to help her unravel the documentary history as well. The Day School on Timber-framed buildings in 1966 set the Museum on its feet, and the publication of J.W. Tonkin's account of the building in the Transactions of the Shropshire Archaeological Society confirmed its architectural interest and importance.

The Stedmans at the White House

Miss Purser subordinated her own occupation and use of the White House to that of the Stedman family, who had occupied it for many centuries and whose descendants had sold it in 1946. Days when members of the family came to visit were especially important to her, and were written up enthusiastically, as in the News Sheet for 1973, after Major and Mrs Fyffe had arrived with their son:

The presence of David Michael Stedman Fyffe in the house for even a few hours brought intimate family life to its structure - House Guides no longer talk of empty people-less rooms - it is the home where Michael Stedman, his 12th great grandfather, was born in 1538 - direct succession father to son to Mrs Fyffe's father and, through her to her son - he became one of our working staff for the day!

Her long history of the house and its Stedman occupants evolved and expanded as her research grew. The illustrated family tree was 11 feet long. Research was carefully done, but at the same time, as Miss Purser grew older, facts became blurred with what she felt strongly ought to be the truth, so that to some extent, myth became graven in stone.

Such, for example, as the supposed building of the hall in 1335. Evidence from two distinct documents of that year, which in her earlier histories are separately described, became combined: a grant by William Stedman of Corfton to a third party, Hugh de Preston, of a messuage and 5 ½ acres in Aston, and a record of Diddlebury Tithe Case in which 'Roger Stedman of Aston' was Advocate of the Court, evolved so that it became Roger of Aston who obtained the messuage and 5 ½ acres (which corresponded so happily with the White House's surviving 6 ½ acres) and built there his magnificent new cruck hall.

Then again, the bare suggestion that the late 16th-century cross-wing was the work of Michael Stedman, which was almost certainly the case, was not enough; she had him building it to prepare his home for his new bride, Margery, whom he married in 1571. The date of the wing was always firmly given as 1570.

It is churlish to quibble; Miss Purser could be right, and her Stedman story has in any case brought the house alive for thousands of people, who would be left cold by academic uncertainties.

Although there is no firm evidence to connect the Stedmans with the White House before the 16th century, it is clear from the documents that they owned property in Aston in the 14th; moreover they appear to have been the only family there of sufficient status to have built the hall of the White House, so tradition should have the benefit of the doubt, and make it their work.

Whether the Stedmans who are described as 'of Aston' during the 15th century are also of the White House, or of other properties and lines which emerge more clearly a century later, is uncertain. They seem at this time to have fallen into the class of wealthy yeomen farmers, on the borderline of the gentry. It is not until the 17th century that they are regularly described as 'gentleman.' On the other hand, their marriages, especially by the later 16th century, are to families of gentry status.

Working backwards from 1694, when the name The White House first occurs in a transfer of property from one brother to another, Miss Purser and the Tonkins established from wills and marriage settlements the first certain Stedman occupants: Robert and Johane, who were married in 1535.

After them came Michael and Margery, of the cross-wing, and presumably also of the contemporary and neighbouring house which later became the Stable Block. It could have been they, too, who remodelled the hall, or more probably their son, John who succeeded in 1610 and before 1616 had married Elizabeth Littleton, daughter of Sir Thomas Littleton of Stoke St Milborough, a neighbouring parish. Her cousin, Sir Edward, was to become Solicitor General and be created Baron Littleton of Munslow in 1640.

The inventory of property made on the death of the next John Stedman in 1682/3 provides the first description of the White House. The rooms mentioned are the hall (now dining room), parlour (now History Room), and kitchen; and on the upper floor a kitchen chamber (the Men's Room above the kitchen), hall chamber (bedroom), parlour chamber (north bedroom of cross-wing - called by Miss Purser the Spinning room, because the holes in the passage wall are thought to have some connection with the working of wool), porch chamber (probably the bedroom in the projecting southern half of the cross-wing), buttery chamber (probably at the eastern end, over the southern half of the kitchen, which could still have been divided in two, as it would originally have been) and Gallery. The last is suggested by Mr Tonkin to have been the landing at the top of the stairs.

The next John Stedman lived at Oakly Park, Bromfield, which was owned by the Lords Herbert of Powis Castle. It appears that he might have been steward, or agent, for their Shropshire estates. Be that as it may, he handed over his own estate at Aston to his brother, Thomas, and it was in the deed of this transfer that the name the White House was first referred to.

Thomas's son, Edward, lived at the White House for much of the 18th century, to be succeeded in 1777 by his son, John. This John, builder of the Georgian addition, was the last male Stedman to live there, since he never married, and on his death in 1804, the property passed to his nephew, Thomas Stedman-Smith. The Stedman-Smiths had other houses, and from the middle of the 19th century the White House was let to tenants. In 1910 a Stedman descendant, Stephen Farmer, whose mother was Emily Stedman-Smith, came back to live there. His two children, Major Stedman Farmer and Mrs Cynthia Fyffe, both of whom were born in the house and still have some Stedman possessions, gave their support to Miss Purser's efforts to repair the house, and run it as a Museum.

By direction of the Owner-Occupier, Mr. A. H. Davies

SOUTH SHROPSHIRE

JUNE, 1947

THE
WHITE HOUSE ESTATE

ASTON MUNSLOW



Solicitors—

Messrs. MARSTON & SONS,
LUDLOW
(Tel 29)

Auctioneer—

LEONARD H. DAVIES, F.A.I.,
LUDLOW
(Tel. 11—two lines)

Miss Purser's father, Walter Purser, bought the White House in 1947 when it was put up for sale by Mr A. H. Davies, who had bought it a year or two before from the Farmers. They had previously lived near Bewdley, where Miss Purser had been a successful poultry breeder, winning several prizes. The uniform of a Special Constable, now in the History Room, belonged to Walter Purser, who wore it during the First World War. His family had been farmers near Moreton-in-the-Marsh for several generations, and so Miss Purser was, by inheritance, well-suited to the traditional rural character of Corvedale. Her interest in the earlier inhabitants of their new home, which had passed by descent for so many centuries, was quickly aroused, an interest that was to grow beyond expectation and lead to remarkable results.

Charlotte Haslam
July 1991

REMARKS AND STIPULATIONS

(which shall be considered as part of the Conditions of Sale).

- SITUATION** In the Parish of Munslow, the Properties lie in the near hamlet of Aston Munslow, a picturesque district of the Southern part of the County of Salop. The lands are intersected by the main Ludlow and Craven Arms Road, leading to Much Wenlock, Bridgnorth and Midland centres. The distances, respectively Craven Arms, 6, Ludlow 9, Bridgnorth 15, Shrewsbury 20, Wolverhampton 29. There is a daily bus service (Corvedale Co.) Ludlow and Bridgnorth at frequent intervals. Churches at Munslow and Diddlebury. Post, telegraph and telephone Munslow one mile. The telephone is installed (*Munslow 6*).
- POSSESSION** As to Lots 1, 2 and 4—Possession will be given at the 29th September next; as to Lot 3—Possession at the same date, with the exception of the Cottage; and as to Lot 5—Possession will be by arrangement to be given out at time of Sale.
- A purchaser will be required to take at Valuation to be made in the usual way all Hay, Clover, Straw and crops, Clover Seeds and Cultivations. Apart from these items the Ingoing will be entirely free.
- TIMBER** The Growing Timber in O.S. No. 325 has been sold and the tree tops in No. 379 have also been disposed of. A condition will be inserted in the Contract as to removal.
- WATER SUPPLY** The water supply to Lot 1, analysed as pure, is from a Spring and Cistern in No. 643, of Lot 4 pumped by means of a 1½ h.p. *Lister* engine and treble acting pump, through a pipe line direct to the House or to a concrete reservoir in No. 690 gravitating to the House.
- DRAINAGE** The drainage is to a cess pool in O.S. 691.
- OUTGOINGS—** The total Amount of Redemption Annuity on the whole of the Lots is as stated.
Land Tax 4/7 per annum.
- GENERAL** The Vendor, Mr. A. H. Davies, purchased this small Freehold Estate some few years back with the sole desire to permanently remain in occupation and with that object in view made many alterations and created improvements. It is regretted that Mr. Davies' health has failed and acting under medical advice he has decided to relinquish his ownership and occupation.
- Copies of these Particulars with plans, may be obtained from the Auctioneer LEONARD H. DAVIES, F.A.I. (*Tel. 11—two lines*); and Messrs. MARSTON AND SONS, Solicitors (*Tel. 29*), both of Corve Street, Ludlow.
- The Auctioneer will be happy to arrange appointments to view.
- The Vendor by arrangement, will direct applicants over. Mr. Davies is available on the telephone (*Munslow 6*) between 8 and 9 a.m. and 1 p.m. until 2 p.m.

The White House sale details in 1947

SOUTH SHROPSHIRE

In the Corve Dale Valley, famed for its fertility—nine miles Ludlow and six Craven Arms.
WITH AUTUMN POSSESSION OF THE PRINCIPAL LOTS.



“THE WHITE HOUSE”

ASTON MUNSLOW

a period Residence with a wealth of interesting features, matured grounds, Pastures and
Orcharding $6\frac{1}{2}$ ACRES

ROSE COTTAGE

Pleasantly situated, containing four rooms.

THE ADJOINING SOUND

CORN AND STOCK FARM

115 ACRES

An Area of Feeding Pastures

of exceptional merit 25 ACRES

A BUILDING SITE

with long main road frontage, nearly TWO ACRES

For Sale by Auction by

LEONARD H. DAVIES

AT THE “COMPASSES HOTEL,” LUDLOW

On **MONDAY**, the 16th day of **JUNE, 1947**

at 3 o'clock in the afternoon (subject to Conditions)

Copies of these Particulars (with Plans) from the Offices of the Vendor's Solicitors, Messrs. MARSTON & SONS (Tel. 29), and from the Offices of the Auctioneers (Tel. 11—two lines) both of CORVE STREET, LUDLOW.

DETAILED PARTICULARS

LOT 1. (*Coloured Green on Plan*).

WITH POSSESSION ON COMPLETION OF CONTRACT

which will be fixed for the **29th SEPTEMBER, 1947**

THE WHITE HOUSE

ASTON MUNSLOW

A Residence of character of the early Eighteenth Century, with possibilities of some portion going back to an earlier date.

It is a solid construction, part stone and rough-cast, and the remainder attractive half-timbered black and white-tiled roof, all in first-class structural and decorative order, the present Owner-Occupier having made many improvements

THE RESIDENCE

beautifully positioned, nice altitude, has a South and South-East aspect and commands grand views of this unspoilt countryside, the ranges of Titterstone and the Cleve Hills being clearly visible with the naked eye.

The interior accommodation :

Basement	CELLARAGE—two compartments.
Ground Floor	ENTRANCE HALL OR LOUNGE, measuring 23ft. 8in. x 16ft. 9in., height 9ft. 6in.—with old stone flag floor, exposed oak beams, open rustic brick fireplace and oak mantel
	THE DRAWING ROOM, measuring 16ft. 8in. x 14ft. 7in., with two shutter windows, having North-East and South-West views—tiled fireplace.
	THE DINING ROOM, 16ft. x 14ft. 4in., having old oak beams, rustic grate, oak corner cupboard, with door leading to Garden.
	KITCHEN, quarry floor, exposed oak beams, "Basbar" cooking range, independent boiler.

THE PRINCIPAL STAIRCASE

a very fine specimen in carved oak with old mahogany hand rail, leads from the Lounge to the

Second Floor—oak landing and corridor.

THE FOUR PRINCIPAL BEDROOMS, all having fine old oak floors.

No. 1	facing South, 16ft. 8in. x 14ft. 8in.—hob grate.
No. 2	14ft. x 12ft. 10in.—hob grate.
No. 3	16ft. x 14ft. 10in. low grate.
No. 4	13ft. 10in. x 14ft. 2in.—fitted with a quaint fireplace.

TWO STORE ROOMS

The well-appointed **BATH ROOM** (h. & c.) fitted porcelain bath (5ft. 10in.) pedestal wash basin and pedestal W.C., chromium fittings.

There is a second Staircase leading from the Kitchen, a fine example of the Jacobean age.

THE LAWNS AND GARDENS

inexpensive of upkeep, are picturesque and add beauty to a delightful setting.

Select Shrubs, Flower Beds, borders are given shelter by Horse Chestnut, Acacia, and other fine trees, and enclosed by a belt of Rhododendrons, with clipped Yew fences.

An old circular stone Dove Cot is a feature of the surrounds and is reputed to go back to the 13th Century.

Productive sheltered Kitchen Garden.

The **OUTSIDE OFFICES** include a Stone, Brick and Tiled GARAGE. Tool Shed, etc.

THE HOUSE BUILDINGS

stone and iron Cow House, tied for six—concrete floor, Loose Box, Incubator House, a range of Root or Store Houses with brick floor. Hackney Stable and two loose boxes—lofts
A two-division Piggery, Sheep Dipping Bath, and a two-Bay iron **DUTCH BARN**

THE SWEET PASTURES AND PASTURE ORCHARDING

in three enclosures, throw off an abundance of keep and affords a purchaser the opportunity of providing his own Dairy and Poultry. the whole comprising an area of about

6 Acres 1 Rood 32 Perches

SCHEDULE

Ordinance No.	Description	Area
690 ...	Pasture	1.903
691 ...	Pasture Orchard... ..	1.518
692 ...	Pasture	2.009
696 ...	House, Garden and Buildings	1.018
		6.448

Tithe Redemption Annuity £1 6s. 8d. per annum.

LOT 2. (Coloured Brown on Plan).

WITH POSSESSION ON COMPLETION

of Contract fixed for 29th September, 1947, or earlier if desired

ROSE COTTAGE

a stone and tiled construction pleasantly situated in the Village of Aston Munslow, containing: KITCHEN; BACK KITCHEN; Passage and Two BEDROOMS; WASH-HOUSE (boiler fixed); COAL HOUSE; Pigs Cote; all standing in its well enclosed Garden and Pasture Plock, in all about

3 Roods 11 Perches

SCHEDULE.

Ordinance No.	Description	Area
702	Cottage and Garden432
704 ...	Pasture Orchard... ..	.477
		.819

Tithe Redemption Annuity 1/3 per annum.

LOT 3. (Coloured Pink on Plan).

WITH POSSESSION OF THE LANDS AND BUILDINGS AT THE 29th SEPTEMBER NEXT.

The Cottage is let under a weekly tenancy to Miss Bradley.

THE ADJOINING SOUND

CORN AND STOCK FARM

sometimes called

“ SOUTH HILL ”

of an area of about

114 Acres 3 Roods 36 Perches

and comprising

SWEET HOME COTTAGE

a brick and tiled erection containing FOUR ROOMS with OUT-BUILDINGS and a good Kitchen Garden, let to Miss Bradley.

THE BEECH HOUSE BUILDINGS

with a never failing supply of water laid on, are conveniently planned and afford excellent winter quarters. At little cost a portion of the well-built range could be converted into living accommodation.

THE TOP BUILDINGS

known as the “ Top Barns ” are well placed to the Arable and give excellent cover for wintering Stock.

THE LANDS

are healthy, well-sheltered and face the sun. Stock does exceedingly well. There is a good depth of rich soil, the sub-soil being lime rock. The “ cast ” has been consistent and with a general good average. The land has been well manured and is in excellent heart. Barley, Oats and Roots are thriving crops.

The White House in 1990, before alteration by the Landmark Trust

Brief Architectural Description

*For a detailed account see J.W. Tonkin's *The White House, Aston Munslow*, reprinted from the *Shropshire Archaeological Society's Transactions*, in a separate *Reader Volume*.*

J.W. Tonkin described the White House in the 10th annual report of the Museum in 1976 as 'a fascinating and valuable example of an early cruck building, in which the main trusses are formed from two, great, curved timbers rising from ground level and meeting at the apex.' A pair of crucks was formed by splitting the trunk and lower branch of a single oak tree, one of the simplest methods of constructing a building, and also one of the grandest.

The whole of this early building survives in the long wing which runs from east to west along the side of the hill. Its great roof timbers appear mysteriously in the rooms on the first floor, but the full sequence of trusses can best be appreciated by climbing through the trap-door outside the bathroom, into the roof-space.

Originally there was an open hall, divided by the central cruck truss (now to be seen against the chimney of the hall bedroom) into two principal bays, with a further two-storey service bay at the east end. The western bay of the open hall was subdivided by an intermediate truss, also visible in the hall bedroom (where the removal of the curved brace has caused it to sag, hence the iron strap).

In the eastern bay, dividing the main body of the hall from the screens passage (with doors to the outside at either end, and others leading into the service rooms on the east), was a spere truss. Two great free-standing posts supporting a collar beam narrowed the hall at this point, and braces running from post to collar formed an arched entrance to it. Usually there was some sort of moveable screen standing between the posts, to keep the worst of the draughts from those within.

From details of construction, particularly the absence of the ridge beam which is usually found in cruck buildings, and its similarity in this respect to the hall at Stokesay Castle nearby, completed in 1305, Tonkin dates the hall of the White House to the earlier 14th century. Miss Purser suggested it was the work of Roger Stedman, described as 'of Aston' in 1335.

There was no chimney at this stage, only a central hearth. The smoke from this gathered in the great empty volume of the roofspace, before escaping from a special opening, or louvre, inserted in the ridge, evidence for which survives.

The open hall extended as far as the end wall of the present dining room, and hall bedroom above it, which was constructed in such a way as to be suitable for an outside wall. However, immediately to its west, and presumably linked in some way, was a cross-wing, running north to south down the hill. This would have contained, among other rooms, a solar, or upstairs chamber for the family, off the High End of the hall. This cross-wing seems to have formed part, or possibly even the whole, of a still earlier house.

Such a house must have existed from at least the 13th century, during which the dovecote in the garden was built. The wing appears to have had a stone undercroft, or vaulted lower storey, running into the hill at its upper end, with a timber structure above. Whether it was itself a complete house, with an upper hall of the Norman type, or whether there was an earlier hall range on the site of the existing one, is now impossible to say.

The evidence for this earliest building was largely destroyed when the wing was entirely rebuilt, with a new cellar, and box-framed upper structure, towards the end of the 16th century. Curiously, rather than tie the new frame into the older cruck building at this time, it was again built as a self-contained structure, although with openings linking the two.

Shortly afterwards, in the early 17th century, a great remodelling of the hall range took place. The timber-framed walls were encased in stone. The hall (now the dining room) was provided with a fireplace, whose chimney occupied the space between the central and spere trusses. At the same time a new floor was inserted to create an upper chamber, the hall bedroom, which also had a fireplace. This was reached by a new staircase, with typical Jacobean flat balusters, rising from beside a new entrance door. A partition was built to divide the chamber from the landing at the top of the stairs, which seems to have formed a sort of gallery, leading to the rooms of the cross-wing.

Later in the 17th century the chimney was enlarged to its present immense size, when a new fireplace was provided for the kitchen, probably in what had formerly been a pantry. The spere truss was left, sandwiched between the two. Slightly later again, a lean-to dairy was added at the east end.

The next, and last, major phase occurred at the very end of the 18th century, after a fire which is said to have occurred in 1780. The cross-wing was extended westwards, and at its southern end was itself incorporated within a neat, stuccoed late Georgian drawing-room block, with a central door and hall, and elegant staircase. The ceiling level of the southern room in the cross-wing was substantially raised, to make it the same as the new rooms, so that you now have to go up several steps from the older part of the house to reach the bedrooms on the first floor of this wing.

Building work carried out by Landmark

Interior

When Landmark took on the White House in 1990, there were a number of jobs that needed doing to the house, both in the way of maintenance, and to make it work as a house to live in, rather than one to show people.

Thus, for example, the Men's Room above the kitchen, which had formerly only been reached from it, up a ladder, was linked with the rest of the house by a new door opening; to reach it, the passage was extended by making the bathroom slightly smaller. In the Men's Room, again, the gaping hole beside the chimney was plastered in, although this meant the loss of the view of the spere truss buried in the chimney breast.

The same happened in the middle, or hall bedroom, where the infill of part of the frame had been taken out, to show how the cross-wing was constructed as an entirely separate structure from the hall range. Since the room was now going to be used as a bedroom again, the wall was made good. The separation of the two structures can still be seen by looking in the small recess behind the door; and by comparing the frame with that in the next room.

Downstairs, a wall dividing the old kitchen from a small modern one was taken down to make one large room. In the southern end of the cross-wing, on the other hand, partitions which had been taken out at some point in the past, were reinstated to form the smaller sitting room, and recover the central staircase hall. The mark of the partition on the floor could be clearly seen, as could the position of the doors in it.



The Men's Room – chimney wall



The bathroom – now much smaller to give access to the Men's Room.



The Hall bedroom.



Staircase hall.



The sitting room – the partitions have been reinstated.



The History room.

Other minor improvements were made, such as taking up softwood floorboards in the hall bedroom, to reveal the old oak boards beneath. In the drawing room, the original fireplace had been replaced by a modern one, but the old one was stored in one of the outbuildings, and so has been put back. The chair rail, which was partly missing, was put back. A window in the north wall was blocked, to make this a purely south-facing room.

The sitting room and the History Room both have new fireplaces, the latter from the demolished wing of Ascog House in the Isle of Bute, which is owned by Landmark. The new door to the sitting room from the hall has old knobs, which were again found in an outbuilding. The dining room was provided with a new skirting.

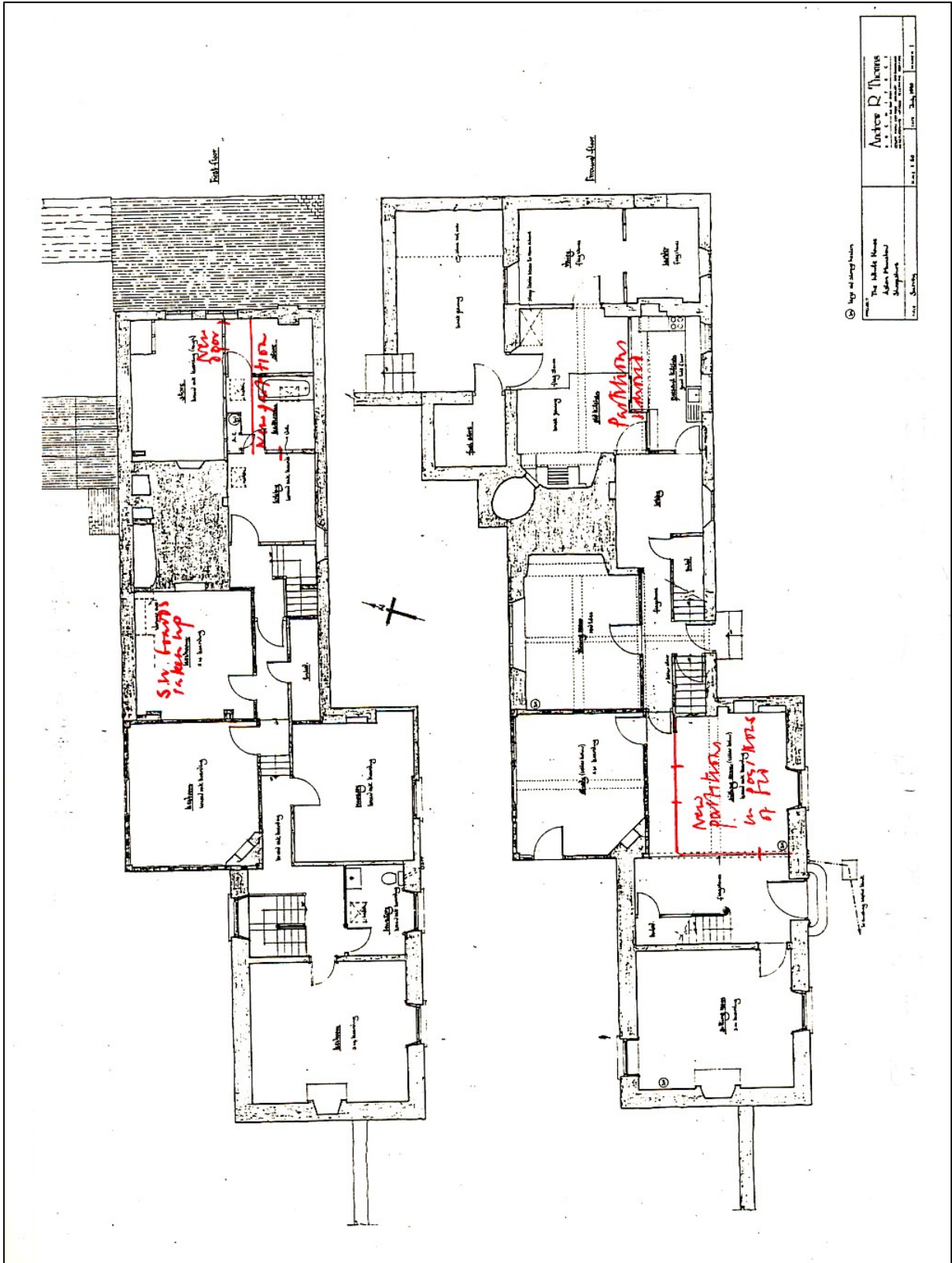
The left-hand window in the south wall of the kitchen is new, and most of the leaded lights had also to be renewed. Some of the brick floor in the kitchen had been replaced with tiles, and these have now been made up with ones taken from the yard outside, which has been stone-paved. The ceiling of the dairy was repaired.

The house was completely redecorated. All the woodwork is painted with microporous paints, which allow the material beneath to breathe. In the Spinning bedroom, the north room of the cross-wing, the oak frame was limed and then brushed in the traditional way. In the hall bedroom, the chimney wall was replastered and limewashed.

Exterior

Outside, more general maintenance was needed. On the south front, the render had been renewed a few years ago with cement, which was already cracking, and could lead to the rotting of the timber frame concealed within it. It was hacked off, and replaced with lime render, which draws moisture out of the wall, and allows it to evaporate into the atmosphere. The opportunity was taken to make good the timber frame at the south end of the cross-wing, where it had been weakened when the Georgian windows had been roughly planted within it.

The exposed frame at the north end of the cross-wing was also repaired in places. The chimneys were re-pointed where necessary, and the tops rebuilt. The roofs and ridges also needed some attention, and the small lean-to next to the kitchen yard was given a new tile roof. The outbuildings were given new doors, and the appearance of the entire Homestead improved by putting all electric wires underground.



The pages that follow are largely drawn from Miss Purser's own papers, which were more copious than organised, but give a flavour of the house's vibrant and collectively managed care during her tenure.



Display of larger implements in the fold-yard.



Wash house erected out of spare materials in the backyard, outside the kitchen. The timber came from the garden, the tiles from an earlier roof of the White House.

Tour of the White House with Miss Purser in her words, describing how the house looked in her day.

The front cover of a book rarely indicates its contents, not even how many chapters there are, or what age it is, if fact or fiction. Look round to the back cover, this will probably give a general outline, or even headings, some idea of its subject and a glimpse of those involved - but it is necessary to open the book and read its pages, chapter by chapter to learn its story and understand its meaning, to know its people, and follow its theme through succeeding phases of development to enjoy and experience its influence.

The White House, Aston Munslow, is such a book, in serial form, not to be read sitting in an armchair beside the fire on winter evenings, but on a walking tour through the centuries. The late Dr. Pantlin of Oriel College, Oxford spoke of buildings as 'historic documents', upon which the history of our country is written. Nowhere are those words more clearly illustrated than in the beautiful Corvedale in South Shropshire, high on the south east slope of Wenlock Edge - midway between Ludlow and Much Wenlock on the site of the Saxon Manor of Estune (Aston-East Town) held by Lord Elmund in 1042 A.D.

Visitors may take that walk on certain days during Spring and Summer. They will not find it eerie or cold - lonely or silent - boring or drear. It will be full of life, people of all ages, about their daily affairs, family and home life, skilled craftsmen intent on perfecting their art, so proud of their work they put their mark on it which we can read now 600 years later - unexpected surprises, happy events, joyous music played the world over. The originator - one of the sons in the 17th century.

Let us start that tour, there is so much by the way we will not want to be hurried. Standing on the lawn, the front cover of our book, we reluctantly draw our eyes from the view across the verdant wide open valley of the dale below, heights of the great Neolithic camp, Nordy Bank and higher peak of Abdon Burf, and away in the distant south, Titterstone Clee, to look at our nearer surroundings, dominated by a ruinous round structure of great age, the earliest visible document above ground standing on the side of the winding drive, not far from the front door of the house.

Turning our back to the view, we face an ordinary Georgian type house. To the right of it a low range in local stone obviously much older, but not informative, we must look to the back cover! Following the path to the right beside the stone walled wing, its old windows almost hidden by climbing roses, we turn the corner to the binding of the book (north east end) and are surprised to see a black and white gable. Even so soon we can read features about it indicating it to be a 17th- century restoration. Rounding the corner of it, the back cover (north aspect) comes into full view. Here chapters are clearly marked, each packed with

detail, completely different from the next, not in discord but in harmony of life flowing on.

As we move along, we do not meet them in date sequence, to do so we need to start in the middle, but for conclusive evidence the Medieval Hall must be understood first. Here it is from the gable end (north east) right along to the black and white cross-wing. Three bays - service bay, with upper floor at the north east end - cruck truss of screen-passage, with spere truss on the hall side - two open bays, with the hearth stone a little to one side. A beautiful Gothic arch of cruck blades, braces and massive collar, the central truss of the open hall and a tie-beam truss of equally heavy timbers at the south west end against the Solar, which was an earlier house adapted and had an upper floor, thus giving a four bay hall.

Instead of jumping 200 years forward to the present cross-wing we must turn back 400 years before that cross-wing was built. This is where the first 'document' we noticed on the lawn comes in, for it is a Norman dovecote, granted to the Lord of the Manor following the Conquest. In those early days they were permitted by law to Monasteries or other religious houses and then to a Manor held directly from the King, who had at the reorganising of the Hundreds retained Estune for himself. Domesday record gives details of the Manor settlement hence the house against which the Medieval Hall was built was the Manor House to which the dovecote was granted in the late 12th or early 13th century.

Two more local developments still further illumine the evidence of the cruck hall. Early in 1300 the lower area of the Long Forest, including Aston and Munslow, was disforested giving vast quantities of timber from which to select the great trees for our crucks etc., so when 'Roger was granted a messuage (house) and 5 ½ acres of land in Aston' in 1335 what better could he do than build a beautiful hall beside his new house!

The means by which size, shape and position of that earlier Manor House are known are its foundations. Beneath it are two compartments, exactly the same size and shape and entirely underground as the ground floor rooms of the cross-wing. There are other indications about this undercroft that it was not simply a storage place, but at some time had been lived in - some day its mysteries may be solved and its underground window opened. In the meantime we will look again when inside, and now return to the recently restored exterior of the cross-wing.

A typical 1570 structure of two bays, north and south, with upper floor, corner posts thicker at the top (the tree being upside down) rising from the sill, clearly visible, close spaced studs with box frame panels and struts in the gable at the top. An exact copy of this north west gable is at the front entirely covered by Georgian alterations and rough casting.

Adjoining this 1570 wing to the south is the Georgian wing added about 1780 after fire had destroyed some of the black and white attractive front - an inventory of 1683 mentions rooms that cannot be found now, and charred timbers inside indicated the burnt down area was the south west end. The Georgian addition to some extent replaced lost rooms but did not restore the charming character of the cross-wing externally, except for the north west gable on the vegetable garden side.

The first part of our tour ends as we pass through the door in the wall from the back lawn, and vegetable garden, where chemicals have never been used and generation following generation have grown herbs and vegetables for home supplies, to again stand on the front lawn to see the dovecote so near that early undercroft on the right of the front door. Is it possible we have circled continuous home life, types of buildings, progressive modernisation, one generation adapting the work of another without destroying - a moving on of continuity of 12th, 13th, 14th, 15th, 16th, 17th, 18th, 19th, and 20th centuries, without discord?

From the outside four houses looked at individually, are inside, one complete home, lived in without a gap, alterations of a previous generation adapted to meet the needs of the next. Harmonious introductions and developments without destroying the character of each period - the ribs of its skeleton structure can be seen from base to apex. So stout are the crucks, so careful has been its treatment its life and character flow on from long ago, through the present, to the unknown future.

For a short space of time WE are privileged to participate in its progress, upon US of this present day, depends its protection and preservation, that its influence and evidence may pass on to the future as we have received it from the past.

No room is furnished to a particular period - families have continued - each has characteristic features. The ground floor room of the Georgian wing displays varieties of needlework, the lounge hall is dominated by the hanging staircase and uncovered timbers of the 1570 house, the north room of which is known as the 'history room' where maps, photographs, documents of various types and a chronological script measuring 11 feet shows the 'Stedman Occupation' to have been 611 years.

A reprint of the *Tintinnalogia*, the first text book on Change Ringing in 1668 and other relics of Fabian Stedman the famous Campanologist, whose father was the youngest son of Michael and Margery for whose marriage this cross-wing was built. Other features of the family and estate are all around research into its history never ceases.

The Medieval hall is no longer open to the roof, but crucks and other timbers still stand stout and firm for all to see. A huge chimney was built in shortly before 1600 a.d. on the hall side of the spere truss, so that smoke from blazing logs on the hearth curls up the chimney instead of swirling about among the roof timbers

before escaping through the louvre. Wooden, pewter, earthenware and horn utensils equip table, still in the position of the original high table.

When a second huge chimney was introduced, back to the first one, it filled up the passage, leaving the spere truss intact between the two and enabled the earlier Buttery to be converted to a cooking kitchen.

Its great hearth is still furnished with pots and pans and utensils of earlier days. At its side a large bake oven, the faggot fork, rake and peel used on baking days are on a rack over the roasting beam. From a bacon cratch overhead, where sides of bacon were stored, hang bunches of herbs and onions. Many cooking and domestic utensils hang around and on shelves. Dairies too are fully equipped for milk, making butter and cheese, salting and curing meat and bacon.

Halfway down the flight of stone steps from the hall, look up above there are timbers, each one bearing a date, and an open shaft to the roof, on one side dates are 14th century and the other 16th century, two houses side by side and at no point joined.

The first noticeable feature of the underground apartments is that they are hewn from solid rock, shelves or alcoves of various sizes and shapes, - a corbel - an opened up window frame with chamfered mullions built up beyond? Features that indicate more than just storage places and they are under the present cross-wing and here before the medieval hall existed, a mystery time may solve, we cannot.

Over the Jacobean stairs is the cruck blade of the central arch, cut off to permit the stairs to be introduced, how dared any moderniser take such liberty with a whole tree, and that tree the support of a three bay hall? Yet the old house is as strong and sturdy as when built over 600 years ago!

To the right at the top of the stairs is a ladder to the viewing platform in the roof space where one enters a forest of timbers of early 1300 and sees the pairs of crucks in sequence and the unbelievable way they are joined at the apex, just wooden nails through the tenon. Crucks of the screen can be seen the length of two floors down, with a collar of giant dimensions and arch braces to support it. Many architectural rarities fascinate the visitor, an architect's paradise for lecture courses. In 14 years that roof has never failed to awaken the most uninterested visitor, some almost need to be pulled down by the heels!

A north room inserted over the open hall has been cleared and timbers uncovered in order that the skeleton formation can be seen in position with the tie-beam truss beside the cross-wing, the most conclusive evidence of the whole complex.

The cross-wing (North room) is now as it was when built in 1570 all covering plaster removed, the timbers tell its story as the work room where spinning and weaving was done, where Margery Stedman, a stately dignified head of the household and her maids spun and wove hemp from the hemp yard still known

not very far from the homestead. Flax from the flax fields (there are one or two marked by that name) wool from flocks and many sources of supply around. At her death in 1641 she left a 'roll of my gown cloth' to Fabians' father and five shillings to baby Fabian then only 5 months old.

The south room of this upper floor was altered after the fire which destroyed one corner of it, but in the alterations the timbers of the gable as seen on the north side, were not removed only cut away to let in a large sash window, then entirely covered by lath and plaster and the corner squared up by an odd piece of pine wood. This room had to be restored in 1975 owing to water from a large outside tank overflowing into the ceiling and wall. In removing the damage the gable timbers were found and restored to their original beauty. This room is now the nursery, complete with baby in cradle, rocking horse 'Nannies nursing chair' and all the paraphernalia of early baby care. Long clothes etc., are changed from time to time. Down the Georgian staircase to where we started at the front door our walking tour is ended!

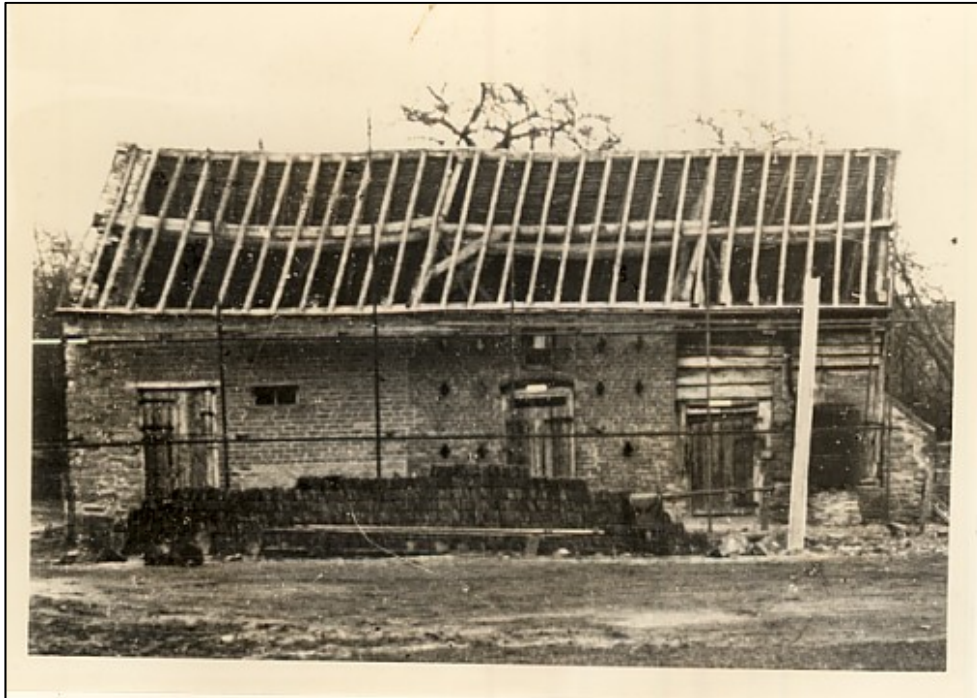
One other room has not been mentioned, it is the upper room of the service bay, accessible only by ladder from the big kitchen. From confirmation point of view it is as important as the tie-beam truss. Its once built over open hearth fire place and the whole of that end of the room has been opened up to enable the great mountain of stone of the two inserted chimneys to be seen - it also clears the cruck blade of the screen from wall plate level to apex, enabling the lintel of the door across the passage to be seen; several parts of the spere truss are also visible on this side. Displayed in the room are materials of which the house is built and tools used in the building thereof.

Just as the house itself is a complex of developing periods, so too are its supporting buildings of various ages for a particular function in relation to the home and each other .Each equipped for its purpose, the cider house, the complete process of making cider, huge stone mill pushed round by a horse, heavy timber press, costrels and other details.

The stable of 1680 where a 15 ½ hand heavy horse stands at the manger and a lady sits side-saddle in hunting habit. Granary and cart shed, hand tools in great variety in a section of the barn. Horse drawn implements, wagons, carts, traps are round about and beyond the Fold Yard is the orchard where varieties of old fruits are being planted which are presentation trees by interested friends. Here on fine spring afternoons visitors may drive in among the daffodils at 1 p.m. for a picnic before we open at 2 p.m.

This homestead is run entirely by volunteers who give themselves, their time, ability and effort in its service to preserve it that it may give pleasure, interest and relaxation to visitors from all over the world.

The Stable Block



The following is an extract from Miss Purser's Description of the Rescue of the Stable Block

As the result of gales in November 1970, the roof of the Stable Block was pushed over from the vertical position so much that the South gable and each interior truss overhung 4 ft. from the upright.

This building comprises 3 of the Country Life Museum Sections; Stable, Implements and Local History, containing some 700 exhibits, which had to be immediately evacuated to safe refuge, kind Helpers housed many to ease congestion.

Mr R. Beard, A.R.I.B.A, came to inspect and advise – props were put to the South end and each interior truss – this saved further collapse.

Under Mr Beard's direction, T. A. Jones & Sons, Builders, Roman Bank, Rushbury commenced restoration work the first week in March 1971.

Scaffolding was erected, all tiles and laths removed – purlins were lashed to rafters on each side, for there was no support for them at the North end, but, surprisingly, the stone veil of the gable still held at a critical angle and had to be removed stone by stone until part of it crashed, breaking through the loft floor.

When all was cleared, a vehicle with low geared winch – provided by D. Mitchell of East Vall, took up position in the field above.

Then came the skilful job of coupling up each truss, with supporting planks across them, at exactly the same tension so that the strain on each was even, to avoid cracking of timbers or irregular stress, and finally, a chain fixed right around the south gable – all cabled up to the winch.

The men who had climbed among those overhanging trusses – now merely naked timbers – with little or nothing to support them, came down to relax for a few minutes, and drank cups of tea before the winch was set in action.

Sighs of relief and perspiring brows – not from exertion, but concentrated anxiety – more cups of tea!

With the winch holding the whole roof in position, the men went up again to fix supports along each side and to readjust props – not until all was made secure could that winch be released, and those who had borne the strain and carried out the difficult task so ably were wearied and tired, but thankful that there had been no harm to man or building. One remarked as he climbed into his van to go home – ‘the end of a Perfect day’!

For the first time since the scaffolding was erected and the clearing of the roof from the lane side began, neither of the Jones brothers returned at 11pm. To see the lamps were burning and all was well – such acts of kindness are the riches along life’s way that make the sharing of tasks worthwhile.

Next day was very much the ‘morning after the night before’ – however, reconstruction began in real earnest – braces were fixed, timbers cleaned and all treated at the rate of £2-10 per gall; for 15 galls! Roofing felt fixed – re-lathed and the old tiles replaced. By great good luck and thanks to careful handling, no new tiles had to be introduced.

A timber frame and weather boarding were fitted to the North gable, suitably matching the other end- exterior timber creosoted – left floor patched up – a movable step ladder made for the use of saddlery workers to get to the loft.

Scaffolding was dismantled – exterior pointing where necessary. A skilful and satisfactory job carried out with goodwill and cooperation was finished at 1pm. on Good Friday, April 9th, 1971. Visitors began arriving at 2pm!

So much for the structural repairs; but what of the picture it revealed? Hitherto assessed as a building – possibly cottage with stable added – of late 17th-century, converted into a barn later.

As the uncovering of the roof progressed, odd mortices and evidence of non-weathering etc. began to appear, indicating an earlier pattern than the present.

There is only one solution to a vernacular architectural problem, and that is an expert interpretation by Mr. J. W Tonkin, B.A., who has already the many demands on him and his over-crowded programme, he made it possible to come to examine the structure in detail when it was in the most naked stage, and his interpretation confirms that of the other vernacular architects. Here it is:

A timber frame dhouse of about 1570 A.D.

Present Implement Section – a one bay hall (no upper floor)

Present Local History Section – passage with door at each end, and steps down into the lane (see wall outside) to the south of passage, a small apartment with a floor above.

To the south of present building, another bay, now gone, with upper floor.

Present Stable – original 1670-80, including cobbled floor. The north wall is dry-stone walling of mud plaster – stone. In good condition except exterior weathering. It is possible this was also an earlier timber frame bay, but there is not sufficient evidence to prove it.

Living History – another bit of Shropshire heritage preserved, at the cost of £456.55.

Constance Purser
June 22nd, 1971

News sheet by Constance Purser from 1973

THE WHITE HOUSE
COUNTRY LIFE MUSEUM
ASTON MUNSLOW, SALOP

3 ½ p

NEWS SHEET 2nd. Year No. 1

Our Aim:

'To learn and gain that we may give: To love to serve and so be free'

Most sincere apologies for the omission of February issue and real thanks to those who sent their annual subscription for it, asking, for news -- these have had a personal letter of thanks, not only for the money, but for their interest and concern for our progress - it is very encouraging to find these friends from afar think of us in the months when we are daily grappling with laborious back-ground work without visitors to cheer us on.

Unfortunately, Miss Warwick, who produces these News Sheets, had to go hospital in Christmas week -- her wonderful courage and optimism is enabling her to again take up some of her many generous activities - we are thankful she is making progress, even if she thinks it is slow, and wish her a speedy return to her usual cheerful helpfulness.

Since 1971-2 Report went out in November, activity here has continued, but not much spectacular development. Our 'Constructionists', Mr Unwin, Derek, and Robert spent until the 2nd. week in Dec. erecting shelters for our larger implements with tarpaulins, kindly given by Miss Murrell - we have 3 of them, - and succeeded in getting everything under cover somehow.

Then on, Derek and I persistently concentrated on recording our accessions, section by section - all exhibits displayed are now coded and filed. This enabled everything to be thoroughly overhauled, for while we wrote, measured and marked, a little team of workers - generally three - often four - surrounded us. They scraped, brushed, rubbed and greased until every tool is in first class condition, and here I want to say how pleased we are these local school children are taking a share in our endeavour to preserve and care for the riches of the past. The youngest has become a member of our 'Staff' - week by week sharing our happiness and difficulties. For there are difficulties at times - the bathroom ceiling fell into the bath on Christmas Eve! Nobody thought of free baths as a Christmas present, so I managed without, and tried to do something about the heap of rubble, and removed some of the dust that invaded the kitchen below. After the holiday, Frank Jones restored order, and as two sections of the Stable Block were then stripped down, treated all the roof timbers, and Robert continued the good work on the walls and lower part.

As indicated in the Report, our influence is spreading, and help is coming from widening areas - this help is not just a flippant flash in the pan - it is concrete and practical, not producing a showy result, but genuine foundation work upon which future progress will be made. Mr Unwin is one of these background helpers - coming last summer as a visitor, offered to join our 'Staff' - Head of the Lower School of a large Wolverhampton school, with an agricultural degree - a most valuable combination. An hour's drive, he arrives at 10am armed with lunch box and works flat out till the job in hand is finished, and it makes no difference what the job is - erecting poles - lashing down tarpaulins, brushing walls and treating the Stable roof - teaching A level boys from Folkstone Grammar School - heaving ploughs and heavy Implements - squatting in the roof to study the construction - following Derek and Robert, tour by tour on Bank Holiday Monday to learn the technique of conducting house tours - late in the afternoon taking his own first tour with Derek in the rear to correct mistakes, leaving at 6:30pm to join the queue of cars over Bridgnorth Bridge, not getting home until 8 30pm, but back again next morning at 10:30am to take tours the whole day through, with Robert to ease the pressure in the afternoon, while I sat in the Car Park with a sprained ankle.

He is not the only one. Mr Bennett from a Birmingham School offered help in the Christmas holidays. He brought another teacher from the same school, and they spent a long day in the Cider House cleaning down walls and treating the Press and Mill timbers and all equipment, not leaving until long after dark on a winter's night. They came again at half-term, spending the day polishing and treating harness in the Stable - only a quick snack at lunch time and a hasty cup of tea. As they left, Hiss Bayliss remarked 'a most enjoyable day - I shall come back to finish in there' - 1 ½ hour's drive home.

These people are enjoying the satisfaction of service freely given - they have vision to see the value of our endeavour. The Rev. Lancelot Smith, retired and living at Tenbury Wells has a little printing press, produces Post Cards, Party and School Rates Cards, Greeting Cards etc. etc. by the hundred, a most valuable help to our Stall.

Recently, a party having never heard of our site and its complexity of buildings and equipment were taken through the house by Derek and Robert. When the tours were ended, I went inside - two of the party were silently gazing up the stairs - one turned as I passed, saying 'those great trees in the room up there - they live.' Three were facing the interior screen of the cross-wing, gently touching the timber!

Before, the holiday week, I had 7 days away studying various aspects of this work, and had the good fortune to meet one of the senior Custodians of the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust and his Staff. Experience of vast thousands of visitors has taught him 'It takes a life-time to train a Guide.' When I find 8 years has gone so far towards that life-time, that those uninitiated see our crucks as living trees, I am humbly grateful for such apt and loyal pupils.

Miss Murrell has become an indispensable part of our development - during the Autumn spending weeks chasing wagons – following clue after clue in all directions without success, finally finding a Montgomery-Salop border one, hiding in a barn, where she arranged for it to remain for the Winter. Mr & Mrs Duerdin and John recently spent a whole day transporting it on a low car conveyor behind the Land-Rover, with two in their car as escort. All perfectly managed without a hitch or scratch. It is beautiful - skilled hands have fashioned every detail - its timber has been guarded with respect - the craftsman who made it lives in its form - those who, through the years have harvested in it. It had been in Mrs Peate's family for over a hundred years, on the same Montgomery farm. We think of her with gratitude and are glad we did not fetch it until after her death in January - we appreciate Mr Peate's kindly consideration and wish him a happy retirement when he leaves the old homestead in the autumn.

This Hay-wain is worthy of our best. Until it is possible for our own 'Wainous' to be ready, I am going to desecrate our environment by the temporary introduction of modern synthetic material to cover it, for it must be protected from wet. We are proud to have it in our keeping and very grateful. It will ever remain Miss Murrell's contribution that we have the privilege to cherish.

Fyffe and their son David Michael Stedman Fyffe made the long journey from Aberdeenshire. Mr. Andrew Jewell, Keeper of the Museum of English Rural Life drove from Reading. Mr Griffith came from Surrey. Miss Murrell joined the party, and the Rev. Lancelot Smith came too, but we, the basic Staff of 5, were not all dressed up in tidy 'Open Day' clothes. We were at our usual Saturday work in dungarees and overalls. Before starting work, we assembled in the work-shop, in order to realise something of what we are trying do. Four or five years ago, a problem boy, the despair of his teachers, with a second school party, became quite changed after visiting the Museum. When asked what had made him different he replied, 'It's real - really Real.' That is what we hoped our visitors would find - that we ourselves are genuine in our desire to protect the true naturalness of our environment - to regard the skill of craftsmanship - respect nobility of labour and preserve reality of life in bygone ages for the benefit of generations to come. We knew the fact that Mr Jewell made the long journey from Reading to be with us during an ordinary working day and the whole party had coffee in our work-shop among our benches with rust, untreated accessions hanging around their heads would lift our little Museum - that never again would we be just 'another collection.'

The presence of David Michael Stedman in the house for even a few hours brought intimate family life to its structure - House Guides no longer talk of empty people less rooms -- it is the home where Michael Stedman, his 12th great grandfather was born in 1538 - direct succession father to son to Mrs Fyffe's father and through her to her son - he became one of our Working Staff for the day!

That day, we were initiated to our various duties on the Staff and now wear the label of our position when on duty. This helps in handling increased numbers of visitors and schools.

Robert received good wishes for his birthday - his 16th - and tokens by which he would remember it.

8 Years of hard foundation work would not have been possible with-out the never failing co-operation of Derek. That day, while we were still our own small number, before another era begins, he received books as a symbol of appreciation for his loyalty and contribution to what unavoidably is already upon us.

Undoubtedly the appalling weather at Easter - three weeks later than last year reduced the number of visitors, but did not bring it below last year's figure. Owing to the lateness of Easter our season is three weeks less but the number of visitors is over 200 more than at the same date last season.

Mrs. Duerdin and I are now working daily through school parties, many old friends who have been coming for four years, but many more new ones from different parts of the Midlands, and as far afield as Folkestone and Marlborough. Adult Education Groups are also up. A number of Saturdays we have two in a day as well as the General Public. They can be controlled, but we are powerless to halt the spread of our reputation. Visitors tell us we are a topic of conversation as far afield as St. Albans, Bedford, Oxford, Gloucester - the Custodian of Folk Museum there asks for cards and leaflets to replace the only one they had which has-been handles so much it is tattered and torn.

This is a very homely chatter all about ourselves and you, but we are becoming a vastly larger circle of true friends. Before we get too large I want us to feel very closely linked; we shall depend on you - and how we long that more of you are nearer - we are so few to meet the ever heavier demands of each day; yet even that most backie days run happily because of the mutual desire and training of those working together.

We are a very happy Staff facing the heaviest season, yet, with less than half the number of people required to handle it. Won't you share the privilege of service with us before it is too late?

Constance Purser June 14th. 1973.

From the Museum's Annual Report 1974-1975

Repairs and maintenance 1964-74

Resulting from weather damage during the severe winter of 1963 the first timber was uncovered and later interpreted to be a cruck.

This started a programme of repairs to preserve and protect the architectural features and construction of at least 4 different periods of building - at that time unsuspected. In each case work has been done as an urgency - several times as emergency. What has been done has been carried out efficiently with the best possible provision for security and preservation of the fabric. In doing this the earlier houses - all part of the whole - have come to light, each repair opens up yet another feature.

Major schemes carried out since 1965 are: -

- Reroofing the south side of the Medieval Hall from east gable to cross wing. Repairs to Dormer Window, removal of interior damaged plaster, this opened up the timbers of the Medieval Hall in a north first floor room.
- Renewing ceiling in north room of cross wing - this opened up timber frame screen. Crumbling plaster of interior screen of cross wing on ground floor removed revealing timber frame panels showing how the upper floor was raised at the time of the Georgian alterations.
- Removal of hot water tank in Open Hall made visible a dressed stone pier carrying a heavy lintel of a much built up great hearth.
- This hearth has since been opened up by removal of numerous grates and ranges as far as safety would permit and suitably finished off.
- Many attempts to patch up the dormer failed so the whole roof on the north side from the big chimney to the ridge copings of the cross wing had to be stripped and reroofed.
- Slipping window heads on the south elevation of the Georgian addition replaced and damaged rendering repaired.
- Roof of Barn pushed over 4ft 6in. by gale in 1970 had to be entirely stripped, pulled back to upright position and braces fixed entirely related etc. This was a skilful, dangerous and capable job, carried out by Jones & Sons, Rushbury.
- Brick culvert built and drains laid about Fold Yard to carry off surface water to prevent flooding and seepage into buildings.

- These and many more jobs have been carried out. The White House is structurally in greatly better condition for the attention and care of those who realize it is taking its part in the future of our Nation.

Constance Purser

Repairs and Maintenance Carried out in 1975

The White House like all old buildings requires constant maintenance and repair and the year 1975 has seen three quite major repair schemes carried out. These have not only strengthened the fabric but in the course of the work things have been revealed that give us more information and knowledge on the house.

The three major repair works done in 1975 were:

- The removal of the rain water tank on the front elevation adjacent to the cross wing from which water was damaging interior ceiling and wall plaster; and repair of the panel infilling.
- Work in the cellar, building a supporting brick pier, repair to timber etc.
- Repair work to the rear gable of the cross wing, taking out the unsatisfactory infill panels, and providing new.

The removal of the tank and the repair to the infill panels and renewal of interior plaster made it possible to reveal at first floor level the timber framing of the entrance front of the cross wing. This makes a very significant addition to the things to be seen. Before, the framing was plastered and papered over.

In the cellar it was necessary to strengthen the floor by building a brick pier and by some general strutting. This necessitated better artificial light and this in turn made a detailed examination of the cellar possible.

This detailed examination provided strong evidence to suggest that the cellar is not of the same age as the cross wing but is the undercroft of an earlier building. One of the mysteries of The White House has always been where was the house that must have been co-existent with the Dovecote, which is clearly much older than The White House itself. A dovecote was the adjunct to a house of some standing, be that house lay or religious. Where was the house that was contemporary with The White House Dovecote?

That what has been found now is part of the remains of the undercroft of this house seems a distinct possibility. The area is roughly square, hewn out of the solid rock. At one corner is what looks like the remains of a corbel designed to take a cross-vaulted roof. There are the remains of a built up window which contains part of a frame and mullion.

It is hoped to carry out further examination during the year. This may prove, or disprove, the idea of this being the remains of the earliest house on the site. On the present evidence it seems a reasonable suggestion.

In addition to these quite major repairs there has been throughout the year steady and regular maintenance on the house and buildings. Considerable work to the house roof should take place at any time, however, funds make it absolutely necessary to defer this for as long as possible. Though some money has been made available for repairs it is in no way adequate for the purpose. In the meantime we can only hope and pray that the roof will hold out until funds are available.

Roy Beard A.R.I.B.A

The following is Miss Purser's notice describing building work carried out in the nursery, or south bedroom of the cross-wing:

South upper Room of Cross-wing

Gable Room or Nursery (Jan – Feb 1975)

Floorboards removed to investigate cause of sagging; joists in sound condition, no deterioration found. Water damaged plaster of ceiling and walls removed; then dried out, re-plastered. Ceiling and walls lining papered - 2 coats Emulsion. Woodwork 2 coats Paint.

Work by: E. Jones, Builder, East Wall.

Timbers of gable cleared of plaster to expose architectural details of cross-wing construction, leaving 2 panels of original plaster and framework of original window also revealing pinewood Georgian extension post in corner.

By: C. Purser.

Rough panels of gable cleared - back framework built in and packed with fibre glass: and mesh and faced with plasterboard, emulsion.

By: C. Jones

Original timbers cleaned, treated and oiled.

By: C. Purser.

Electric fittings	By Derek Edwards
Labels	By Susan Jones
Floor, scrubbed	By C. Purser
Floor, polished	By C. Purser
Fire Grate	By Eileen Reynolds

Unrealised Plans

The White House Museum of Buildings, Aston Munslow

On the 6 ½ acre site of a Saxon Township stands

- A. Dwelling House listed grade II with star.
- B. Dovecote listed as Ancient Monument.
- C. Timber framed 16th cent. House listed grade II, converted to barn, as now 18th cent. – known as Stable Block.

Other buildings stand around the Fold Yard.

- A = Mediaeval Cruck Hall 1335.
Cross-wing built on foundations of an earlier 13th c house contemporary with Dovecote.
18th cent. addition comprising entrance hall, staircase, drawing room and two rooms on first floor.

Evidence of intent:

To convert the 18th cent. drawing room and bedroom into much needed offices.
(a) drawing room for display of local history collection at present housed in badly lighted 3rd bay of Barn and adapted for study and information room.
(b) Bedroom to be reconditioned to an interesting display area of household subjects at present unsuitably placed about the house or not exhibited.

Both those conversions depend on the repairs of the 18th cent. roof, renewing of windows and general reconditioning. This is all part of a scheme begun 12 years ago of which this is the last restoration phase.

The whole plan would be greatly to the advantage of the public, enabling visitors to have better facilities for use of the house museum and could be informed of the natural and historic features of the Corvedale area. This dwelling remains and has never ceased to be a family home.

To date by careful restoration adjacent buildings have been brought into use, furnished and equipped to illustrate their original function.

Cartshed - Beneath the fully equipped granary is as the 17th cent. Cider House which is fully furnished for Cider malting - Stone horse-powered Mill - heavy timber press, Butts, Barrels, Costrels etc.

Stable- first bay of Barn - a realistic representation of furnishings, saddlery and a life-like 15 ½ h.h. Horse at the Manger.
Tools 2nd bay of Barn – wide range of hand tools - sowing, cultivating, harvesting, Forestry, Estate, trapping and animal control.

3rd Bay of Barn, at present ineffectively filled by Local History, when that is removed it will permit the presentation of many hand powered implements not at present displayed.

Horse drawn implements, wagons etc, around outside.

In September 1975 a revised schedule was made and estimate obtained for bringing the house into good order. This was in the sum of £5940, say £6600, at today's prices. From this estimate two items have been done at a cost of £569 against estimate of £640. In addition work to the total of £560 has been carried out due to storm and other reasons of normal wear and tear. £6000 is now required to make the Georgian wing habitable, without it the building sequence of the house is incomplete.

For further information refer to Mr-Roy Beard, A.R.I.B.A., Abbots House, Butcher Row, Shrewsbury.

Further investigations (from Report of November 1976)

In 1975 it was necessary to support the upper floor by introducing a brick pier in the cellar. For this electric light was taken down which made it possible to examine the two rooms of the cellar (see 1975 report). Two items of architectural interest, one unnoticed, the other remarked but disregarded before, were revealed. The first, a stone corbel in the S.W. corner indicating there had once been a vaulted ceiling. The other three which would have made up the number carrying the vault had disappeared in introductions of new entrance steps and alterations to the upper structure. The other was a curious piece of timber sticking out of a hole in the S.W. wall, in what was clearly a filled in aperture, which could be moved up and down or from side to side.

In January of this year (1976) it was felt the time had come to try to discover the reason for this timber and what lay behind. The plaster, stone and rubble were removed to expose an oak window frame. The whole window area, including a double sill, is 4ft.6in. long, 1ft.9in. high, the lower sill 7 ½ in. wide and the upper 6in., the step between the sills 6in. The wood of which the window frame is constructed - lintel, jamb (one has disappeared) and mullion was in a sodden condition and the lintel had to be supported at each side. All have been cleaned and are constantly treated with a hardening preservative. The mysterious piece of timber which protruded through the stone of the built-up area is chamfered. One side of its has the groove where laths for plaster filling have been, and is now fixed in the mortice of the mullion in which it was found when the frame was cleaned. This is a remaining puzzle for it still projects from the window at right angles!

Mrs Veronica Bamfield

The White House: Museum of Buildings and Country Life, Extracts
from Annual Reports November 1968 to October 1969

Our aim 'To learn and gain that we may give'

Visitors: The number of visitors is well up on previous years:
Museum - Adults 1115 Children 331 Total 1446
House - Adults 1111 Children 204 Total 1315

These numbers of course overlap and are not the overall total, for families often see one or the other, but not both.

Throughout the year numbers have been steady and visitors more knowledgeable. The great attraction of course is the construction of the house, but visitors were also sincerely appreciative of the Museum sections where they enjoyed the tangible evidence which contributes so much to a better understanding of life and reality in the past.... It is rewarding to find so many Student and Adult Education Groups, conducted by tutors, taking the opportunity to visit both for the architecture and the museum.

Do visitors realise how much they can contribute to the success and happy atmosphere of the place and people they visit? Interests are varied - townspeople who know little of farm life are pleased to find horse-tackle 'used by grandfather in his city trade'; elderly country folk are delighted to see the tools of their hardworking past valued as part of history and to help explain how they were used.

Elizabeth Evans

Museum Developments: there have been many of these - the most readily noticed being the starting of the Cider House and Cart House.... The increasing number of horse-drawn implements staged outside are a constant interest for discussion, especially with those who have worked with them..... Behind the scenes a completely new department is developing, that of a photographic and illustrations library together with files containing the histories of trades and firms.... Visitors lead to accessions; many people come with their car boot full..... Recognition of what we have, makes people look with new eyes at their own homes and find interest and value in forgotten and discarded things, and in bringing Grandfather's blacksmith tools, feel they too are sharing in our endeavour.

Derek Edwards

Working Party: October 16th 1966, the day school on 'Timber frame and cruck buildings' conducted by Mr Tonkin. During an interval between sessions I was

telling someone that so many people were bringing articles for me 'to keep', I could not cope with them, when an unknown voice behind me said 'Can I help?' and another chimed in 'I'm fairly handy with tools, can I do anything?' - thus the Working Party. The 'handyman' with tools has never failed others joined the jolly party, nobly scrubbing and scraping as we worked our way from section to section.

Constance Purser

1969 -70

Visitors: Considerably increased on last year - overall total estimated at 2,250.... Visitors are much more knowledgeable and interested than last year - and indeed are more interesting to talk to. Some are now classed as regulars, coming back each year.

Derek Edwards

Educational: 23 organised School parties, also 4 Young Farmer's Clubs and 3 Youth Hostel parties. Our general aim is to arouse interest, to set the young minds questing and enquiring.

Workshop: Almost every accession comes to the Workshop for an assessment of the treatment necessary to be carried out before it can take its place in the appropriate setting; often the object requires lengthy attention such as de-rusting, stabilising, painting, repairs to wooden parts, renewal of handles. Every removable part is taken out, treated and reassembled, and not a single piece of wood or metal is destroyed than can possibly be of future use.

Margaret Champion

Library: We are greatly in need of a librarian!

Thanks: Mrs Evans wins the laurels for the main road sign board - for the first time it can be seen! Millie who is the mainstay of all, not only looks after me and polishes everything polishable in the house, but also pours gallons of lemonade and opens the 'Shop' for school parties.

Summary: Consolidation - experience - expansion are words that most aptly sum up the 4th year of progress.

The House will for ever be the core of homestead and history. Each Guide interprets in their own special way, rarely do they fail to awaken understanding - not only are structural features described, but nobility of forest trees, skill of craftsmen, dignity of labour and continuous family occupation which together awaken an awareness of the reality of abiding life. Indication of this is the fact

that not once, not even on the busiest Bank Holiday with 20-30 people picnicing around, has a transistor been produced.

Constance Purser

1970 - 71

Miss Purser's Introduction: Previous Reports have dealt only with activities & development, but, lest we become so engrossed in them, to the exclusion of the purpose of our endeavour, & in order to keep a balanced perspective, it will be wise to take a more comprehensive view by a survey of two aspects hitherto not mentioned.

Here is a Saxon Settlement - confirmation of which is the ruinous Dovecote on the lawn - it must be one of the earliest. The House itself of three periods - crucks, spere truss & massive collars of an early 14th-century Hall - a timber framed cross-wing of 1570 A.D., replacing a previous solar bay - and an addition of Georgian times, following a fire of 1780 A.D. Both Dovecote and House are Listed Grade 11 as buildings of special architectural interest.

Added to these is now the Stable Block, for, during the restoration of it, after gale damage last November, its character has been interpreted to be a timber frame house of 1570 A.D. and stone stable with cobbled floor 1680-90 - this also is recommended for Listing, Grade II. All these standing on 6 ½ acres - once 'Open Fields' of a Saxon Township - I quote - 'something in itself quite unique' - 'the very real value of this group of buildings as vernacular architecture.' I make no apology for quoting this - there is no question of pride of ownership. Its preservation is a heavy responsibility which has unavoidably fallen to my lot. However large the mansion, or vast the acreage, we can never possess, but are servants and caretakers for the period of human existence, having the privilege of passing on to future generations what we ourselves have received from those of the past, adding to it the contribution of our stewardship.

Since my late Father bought the property in 1947, I have continued research into its history, and that of the Stedman family - when the character of the house was discovered in 1963, my researching became intensified, and with the advent of Mr and Mrs Tonkin into the area, has become considerably more efficient, for Mrs Tonkin is an expert genealogist, not only checking my findings, but herself searching in many archives about the country, being lavish of herself - her time and ability.

During these 24 years, many hundreds of Stedman references throughout England, Scotland, Wales, Germany and America have been examined, particularly the branch that settled in the Corvedale in 1272 A.D., 78 years after the son of Calcarba, Duke of Arabia, arrived in England in the retinue of Richard-Coeur-de-Lion in 1194 A.D., from whom all Stedmans descend.

House and family are inseparably knit together - children born in its rooms; married and became heads of household - Father arranged for sons to continue at College after his death - grandfather dispersed the family silver by leaving an odd spoon to each grandchild - a complete library of books went to a son who never married, but left a perpetual contribution to the cultural life of this country - grandmama gave her daughter her 'beste gown and second peticote'; 'my beste band and my second apron' and to another 'my beste peticote'; and to a daughter-in-law 'beste apron and beste girdle' - various servants were given other clothing, and tenants had their quarter's rent reduced. Such details of home life make it just as important to keep cobwebs from the crucks of the hall where Robert and Johane started married life in 1535, and brought up 4 sons, as it is to repair the roof to prevent rain pouring into the room where Margery, née Crowther, and Elizabeth, née Littleton, provided the family with blankets and clothes by spinning wool from the sheep grazing on the common land at Little London - or to treat the Cider Press for woodworm - paint the Hay Loader - cut the lawn - de-rust a Plough - put new shafts on a Dog-cart - or keep Captain's harness shining and the pans of milk free from dust - and to find the entry of marriage of John and Elizabeth Littleton, or discover how another John came to reside at Oakley Park from 1677 -1713.

All are one complete whole - a Homestead, not a House and Museum.

Visitors: the number of visitors has again increased; 2500 would be an under estimate.... Some have returned in the same week to bring other members of the family to sit about the garden in between Museum sections.

Workshop: Because of November gales, the Stable Block roof became a dangerous situation, with a 4 foot overhang to the South.....In spite of difficulties there has been progress - the Granary was made accessible, and equipped with Winnower, Kibbler, Types of measuring etc. The completion of the Cider Mill by fitting shafts, which now needs only a horse to work it, has made the Cider House a complete unit of Cider making process.

The outstanding feature was the creation of Captain out of the lifeless wooden frame carrying some harness. He occupied the workshop from mid-November until the end of January - where Miss Champion constructed a scale skeleton of a 15 ½ hand heavy horse. Every nook and cranny not occupied by storage was littered with Captain's joints and innards!

Another creation occupied the Workshop as soon as Captain moved out - the Stall - out of the old pump hut, Miss Champion constructed a wooden stall, complete with shelves, folding shutters and two cupboards underneath for storage.

Derek Edwards

Derek has mentioned the work others have done, but has omitted his own great contribution to the efficiency of our lay-out, by wiring and fitting electric lights in the Granary and Cart Shed, and each section of the restored Stable Block, including the newly conditioned loft - now the harness room.

Educational: work is settling down to a more uniform pattern. Schools are including a visit in their syllabus, becoming regulars whom we look forward to seeing....It is encouraging to find a number of Adult Education Centres bringing parties, accompanied by Tutors....The majority come for architectural interest, but latterly, Training Colleges are seeing only the Museum, especially the bigger Implements; their construction as well as functional procedure. Mrs Duerdin's technical knowledge, as well as her personal experience with the Implements is of great value in this field.

Stall: - our new 'Shop' is a great success. Often a car comes in just for the occupants to buy some of Nannie's Lemon Curd - what a help to our funds. Some visitors also empty purses and pockets of Green Shield stamps. These, added to the ones Mrs Reid regularly gives to us, are augmenting our Tool Rack; the last two additions being a Trimmatool, and a set of Wood Chisels - next will be a Hack Saw.

Publicity: increases in every direction beyond our control; every travel guide includes us - even Farmers' Weekly recommend a visit in their Women's Page. Friends in other counties travel with a leaflet on the seat of their car - they are on the W.I. notice boards - Hairdresser's Assistants talk of their visit while doing a perm - and Patient's Waiting Rooms ease the suspense with a supply on the table.

1971 - 72

Visitors: Overall total - including schools and parties - 3772. During the Summer Holiday week our 3000th visitor was welcomed and the 2000th taken through the house, an achievement not reached before. Officials from the Natural History Museum and Science Museum, South Kensington, have come to assess our work and progress. Visitors are often specialists in one department or another, making it necessary for us to do our own homework and know each detail of our collection.

Derek Edwards

Workshop: Standard of work must be our main objective.

Outing: On the last Saturday of our Open Season, we locked all the doors, put NOT OPEN on the gate, and set off to see what other Museums were doing. The main thing I think we learnt was that we must learn to accept criticism from our

visitors - we indeed, though not openly, criticised what we saw, and learned a lot by other people's mistakes.

Robert Humphries

1972 - 3

Our aim: To Learn and Gain that we may Give
In Love to Serve & so be Free

Jan 1963 Ten long years ago - that bitter winter of ice and snow seemed never to end. During it, the first timber inside the White House was uncovered.

Oct 1966 A Day School on Timber Framed Buildings was conducted in the house he has done so much to interpret by J.W. Tonkin BA.

May 1968 Another Day School conducted by Andrew Jewell, BA, Keeper, Museum of English Rural Life, Reading University, the result of which could not have been foretold. From it, one Country Life Museum has grown! Following these two equally vital sources of inspiration, our Museum has taken shape.

Nov 1970 The collapse of the Stable Block roof forced expansion into other buildings and its own restoration enlarged methods of display and development.

Sep 1973 Our Country Life Museum is one of six private Museums about the country to be selected for inclusion in a National Index of Agricultural Equipment now being compiled at Reading University as a standard reference for Historic and Educational purposes. Later some items will be photographed and pictures of site and layout made to illustrate the documentation, with information of how and where to find it.

Each of these steps in our climb during the past 10 years has contributed to our training. This last broadening development demands of us higher standards and efficiency than at the moment we are equal to - yet because of the demand, provision for it will be forthcoming.

Constance Purser

Education: There is no doubt of the need for this work, not only schools but 7 or 8 Colleges of Education are now on our list - members of staff come privately for special subjects, others bring groups of students for vernacular architecture

and history. But it is obvious, this philanthropic work cannot continue without considerable financial support.

Recording: list of accessions for the year 1972: 115 articles. Consider this figure along with those from previous and later years, you will realise that the numbers run into four figures. Imagine those contained in various buildings, being looked after by several untrained people, cleaning, repairing, de-rusting etc; the result could be chaos. Our solution: systematic recording of individual items, with records containing descriptions and uses of articles, history of origin and treatment used.

Recording should be the prime factor in any collection of material. What use in looking at a hammer neither knowing its name or its use? This was obvious from our very beginnings, and emphasised by a Day School in May 1968, at The White House, when Mr Jewell (Reading University Museum) gave several lectures, one based on recording techniques.

Derek Edwards

Conservation: the arrival of the Hay-Wain, given to us by Miss Murrell, has provided work for the whole summer. In between visitors, every minute has been spent in the construction of a timber frame and PVC roof to protect it from wet.

Robert Humphries

Development: The enlarged picnic area is a big asset.

Open Days and Visitors: There were 88 advertised Open Days. The highest ever number of visitors - 3955. Many more members of the Stedman family are seeking links with this old Stedman Homestead. A team of Bellringers from Gnosall, Stafford, spending their annual outing about the home where Fabian's Ancestors had lived for many generations, before leaving entertained us and other visitors to Hand Bellringing on the lawn in memory of the famous Campanologist.

Helpers: Robert's O levels, followed by illness and long holidays, kept him away till mid-Aug...latterly Miss Murrell and Miss Wells have taken whole days of House Tours as well as Car Parking, but it is to Mrs Jones the laurels of the year go. She and her little daughter Cathy, as others failed, filled the gaps day after day.

Stall: business has been brisk. Nanny has kept up her wonderful record - 700 pots of all kinds of preserves and chutnies. The figures of the financial statement will show how deeply grateful we are for this aid to our income.

1973 - 4

Visitors: One party that stands out in memory is that of the National Trust members from Liverpool. As this was unusually large (93) and consisted of knowledgeable and 'well-prepared' people, we decided to adjust our usual method of showing groups round the house and the museum, so that these particular visitors would get maximum benefit and interest. We were each made responsible for a certain room, area, or aspect of the homestead, bearing in mind not only the house itself, its architecture and contents, but also the all-important point of the family who had lived in it continuously for six hundred years. With unerring insight, Miss Purser allocated her helpers to the places where she knew our greatest interests lay, and where such knowledge as we may have, could best be used for the benefit of our visitors.

A.A.M. Wells

During this last summer we have had several parties of older people - these thoroughly enjoy their visit, particularly the Museum sections, where they see items they have used in their younger days. There is a general feeling of excitement and appreciation at seeing these things preserved - they obviously respect them.

Mrs Blodwyn Hughes

Educational: a 10 year old boy when completing his questionnaire on Granary exhibits added 'wood worm, as they make very interesting holes!'

Colleges: we welcome any who hope to become teachers or leaders of the young in order that they may learn some something of life of the Homestead of yesteryear - its dignity - its security - sense of service - spirit of community life - pride of craftsmanship - dependence on nature and natural laws - compassion and allegiance to Christian ideals.

Constance Purser

Museum development: work in Museum sections and workshops was continuous during the winter months, but results were not very visible owing to the work done being routine maintenance, such as treatment of timber inside buildings, and restoration of one or two large implements - Hay loader, Haywain. In the spring... stripping and re-roofing the north side of the house from the big chimney to the top of the cross wing, including the dormer window. This was a major job and a big step in preservation of the crucks and timbers of the medieval hall. In doing it, the chimney of the big hearth in the original open hall was restored and has since been repaired on the inside, making it possible to have fires - this greatly adds to appearance and original character.

The very dilapidated little Pony Tub that has taken 2 years to dry has been excellently rebuilt by Mr S. Shuter - it is the star turn of the year....Displays have been re-arranged in the dairy by the introduction of 'live' exhibits to illustrate preserving and storage of food without energy, and a realistic flitch of Bacon (made by Mrs Reid) hanging from the dripping hooks... The last three weeks of the year were taken up by the construction of a large shelter for our biggest accessions from a PVC jute sheet 24 x 15. A Cypress on the lawn was felled to provide timber for the frame; boards cut from an Ash tree last spring were used for the roof.

Derek Edwards

Ten Years of the White House

1974 – 1975; Survey of 1st Decade 1966 – 1976

On a rather bleak Sunday in 1964 the writer and his wife first visited The White House, having been directed to it by a small boy who assured them it was the house up the land by the 'conker tree.' Over the course of the next twelve months or so the story of the building of the house was gradually sorted out, but even now fresh pieces of evidence keep cropping up to show more facets of the history of the structure.

Today not only are the great cruck trusses visible, but a roof platform enables the visitor to see the curved wind-braces, the site of the louvre and the quite substantial remains of the spere truss. The arch braces of the cruck trusses and the intermediate and end trusses can be examined while the 17th-century stairway and the Regency hanging stairway and a good variety of carpenters' assembly marks, all add interest and are labelled for the interested visitor.

As the work on the house progressed, so attention was turned to filling it with appropriate utensils and making the kitchen and dairy a real rural museum. After this work was focused on the outbuildings, one of them itself a 16th-century house which had come to be used for farm purposes, was restored and once more the stable-end houses a horse (a life-size model) and all its harness, while the other rooms contain a fine collection of farm implements and tools of all types and an exhibition of election posters from 1910/11 which had been found used as wall paper on an upstairs partition in the main house.

The shed opposite has gigs and carts for the horse to pull and the cider house once again has a press and a mill. On the bank outside are ploughs and farm implements and machinery all carefully cleaned and preserved while beyond these is the workshop.

The house and buildings have been used for day schools on houses and on the exhibits, the latter being taken by the curator of the museum of English Rural Life at Reading University. Hundreds of students from schools, colleges and universities have added to their knowledge here.

In front of the house is a beautiful garden and in it is a dovecote, probably contemporary with the earlier house before the cruck hall.

Visits to the National Library of Wales at Aberystwyth, the Public Record Office and the county record offices have gradually sorted out much of the documentary evidence of the house and the Stedman family who lived here for so long. Much of the results of this are on show in the house.

This whole complex of buildings is a museum of rural life in its fullest sense, for it is housed in a most interesting early house with much later modification and

addition, the 16th-century house restored and in use, and complete range of outbuildings, including the early dovecote.

J.W. Tonkin F.S.A.

The outward appearance of our Museum sections has undergone many changes. What started life as a small display confined to one building ten years ago, now ranges over the whole area taking in all buildings and overflowing into a variety of shelters erected as temporary coverings for larger items.

Starting in the Dairies, and as conditioned, bay by bay of the Barn, now known as the Stable Block, as small display sections. The Workshop at that time being a bench in the Cart Shed, in those days a garage, moving to its present site years later. Our only tools a hammer, saw and pincers. Helpers brought their own tools and benches. Gradually our equipment has built up by making and gifts of Green Shield Stamps from many people.

Other buildings have been conditioned and furnished to their original usage. When we were offered a Cider Mill and Press it was necessary to create a Cider House in one. The restoration of the Stable Block revealed its original form, a dwelling house, and added to our architectural examples. When our model horse, Captain, took possession of the Stable it became one of the most realistic displays.

Following the drainage of the Fold Yard, the building of the Plough Terraces greatly improved the layout and display area creating a more defined inspection route which now, if followed correctly, is a circular tour.

Removal of the wooden hut covering an electric pump and rebuilding it to make the stall is a great asset on Open Days. Later, rusty sheet iron was cleared away and a roof of stone tiles and wood from the garden erected over a portion of the little yard by the back door as an architectural specimen. In doing this a wash-house was created and furnished.

Students from the Polytechnic College, Wolverhampton enlarged the Picnic Area by fencing in part of the orchard, a very much used and appreciated facility for visitors. They also made the Herb garden.

These are some of the more clearly visible developments when looking back, others are not so easily noticed.

Methods of cleaning, storing, recording, preserving and display have developed considerably since our early days. Recording was described in an earlier Report. General Workshop practice has improved by much learnt from visits by Mr Jewell, Reading University, and other experts and Museums, and by adapting methods to suit our own particular needs, even by learning from our own mistakes.

The number of accessions has continued to increase in great variety. Some have been refused as out of our field of subject and none received that research does not prove have been here in the past. This year one or two of the bigger items have been completed. After years of treatments the Bamford Hay-loader, started in 1968, has been at last finished by Susan Jones doing the finishing touches of sign writing copying Bamford's original lettering from a stencil of it made in 1969. Because of the size of the Hay-loader she had to do the work outside in the bitter cold at the top of a pair of steps!

A little ponytub bought in a sodden very dilapidated condition 5 years ago took 2 years to dry, was remade by Mr Shuter and then finally given various coats of paint etc. by Stephen Reynolds, and Susan finished it off with red lines. It is now completed with leather cushions made by Mrs Duerdin.

Our Montgomery Haywain is still without its wheels, the bed is finished and wood and iron treated, but the wood filling of the wheels has not been successful, probably due to the very dry summer, also right type and colour of paint is difficult.

An interesting recent accession is a Self-delivering Reaper, at present receiving its initial cleaning. A rail car also received this year has had a number of chemical treatments and looks well in the Cart Shed. The Threshing Drum has crowded the granary but is a perfect companion for the Winnower - children enjoy them.

Derek Edwards

1975 - 1976

Extract from Chester branch National Trust Newsletter, prior to their visit. It is unlikely that there are many houses of which the actual skeleton is everywhere exposed and presented as part of the lived-in house.... This presentation of the building has been undertaken patiently and carefully over the last ten years by the owner, architect and builder. Maintenance has always been carried out by voluntary helpers who range from OAP's to a six-year-old who turns up every Saturday with his slightly younger brother. These are the only two who are paid for their work, a bar of chocolate apiece!

Architecture

1976 has seen another piece of extensive and expensive repair and maintenance. At the west side of the fold yard is a 17th-century solidly built stone building - in stone from the quarry across the land as all the White House buildings are. The west gable contains built-in nesting holes forming a dovecote right to its apex. These nests are only 9' deep and are square L-shaped so differing from the round Norman ones. This building contains a fully equipped Cider House. Its beautiful

mill, the millstone of ocean conglomerate, came from Wyson in Herefordshire, its equipment complete in every detail. At the east side of this building is the old cartshed, at one time modernised to a garage but now housing traps. Above is the granary where a winnowing machine and barn drum stand side by side. Originally it was approached by a flight of stone steps with dog kennel underneath - unfortunately removed in 1946.

The gale of January 2nd blew the tiles and laths of this roof, leaving it in such a dangerous condition that our architect forbade anyone to go inside. Everything had to come off that roof and be entirely renewed, which unfortunately was not finished until May.

Veronica Bamfield

Visitors

Many people are found to be re-visiting the White House, 2 ladies from Southampton have been 3 times. 3776 visited, in spite of open days being reduced by one half day each week.

Museum

As the gate closed on 1975, pressure was brought to bear for our entry in National Heritage Museum of the Year Award 1975. 6 weeks of frantic effort against time somehow got the mass of material together, but had it not been for Mrs Bamfield's 12 hour non-stop co-operation on the crucial last day the parcel would never have caught the post with 15 minutes to spare.

Hitherto, the White House has remained in its age old seclusion, its fame carried far and wide by those who visited, now, for the first time that parcel took it out into the cold world of criticism to find its place among the professionals and those with trained staff backed by public finance. There was no thought of award, the fact we were assessed worthy to enter was encouraging, and compiling the presentation good experience.

The most noticeable fact during 1976 is the change in financial climate - what has previously been a continual pattern of several hundreds deficit on running costs annually is turned into a profit.

Constance Purser

1976 - 1977

Broth Mornings

The last week of 1976 brought the first event of the White House 1977 year. On Tuesday 28th December the Broth Mornings began when visitors, Press photographers and helpers gathered round the log fire in the old kitchen.

For some days before Christmas, Miss Purser had been collecting various vegetables, and of course, herbs from the garden, also fetching in venison and hens for the big pots. Gallons of this rich beautiful brew had been slowly gaining flavour as the ingredients simmered slowly during the previous day. The vegetables had been shredded in a vegetable shredder used a hundred years ago on a farm where 14 farm workers 'lived in', sleeping in upper rooms above the stables and fed on Broth twice every day. Chunks of wholemeal bread made in 4lb loaves by the village baker accompanied the broth.

Helpers were kept busy filling wooden bowls from the steaming cauldron hanging over the fire. About 52 people came on the first day to join the feast.

The White House Exhibition at Bear Steps hall, Shrewsbury

The Bear Steps, Shrewsbury, itself a restored medieval building, was the obvious place for a White House exhibition, held for a fortnight in March-April. As gates closed at the end of 1976 season, Volunteer Helpers settled to a winters work of planning and preparation.

The house itself could of course only be shown in plans and photographs. Scheme of display, selection and preparation of the items involved the Helpers in detailed checking of coding, recording, and careful packing. There were a quantity of articles from the house itself, including the Welsh Spinning Wheel, and a great number from the kitchen and dairy - and of course historic documents. It was not possible to take the bigger agricultural implements though the little pony plough attracted interest and admiration. The political posters from Local History were a particular anxiety but made the journies without mishap. All the items were privately transported but the moves would not have been made possible without the horse box loaned by and driven by Mrs Duerdin, and of course the cars of other Helpers.

There was just one day to mount the exhibition - this would have been an impossible task without the help of Derek Edwards, who came back for the day from Hereford to help, and Mr Unwin who came from Wolverhampton. These two scaled ladders to considerable heights to hang such unhandy items as an 8ft long pit saw, Chain measure, long panels of documents and erect the Posters. The work was completed by Sunday evening. The Exhibition was not formally opened, but in the evening of the first day Miss Purser gave a part to invited guests. The whole venture can be counted to have been a great success. Visitors during the fortnight amounted to over 500.

Mrs Bamfield

(No more reports have been found)

The White House Exhibition

at

Bear Steps, St. Alkmunds, Shrewsbury

Monday, 21st March — Friday, April 1st, 1977

"Shropshire is a County where the dignity and beauty of ancient things lingers long".....so wrote Mary Webb in 1924.

One records, with gratitude that now, almost two generations later, this remains true.

The White House, at Aston Munslow was the home of one Shropshire family for 600 years, and it remains a unique record of domestic building development during that time. Its farm buildings and the service bay of the house, now form a Museum of Agricultural Implements and bygone domestic and dairy equipment.

It will be possible to see some of these exhibits during March 1977 at Bear Steps—itself a restored medieval hall—in Shrewsbury. Obviously size will prohibit large machines being moved, but it is hoped the selected objects together with plans and photographs of the notable construction of the different periods will convey the essence of an earlier, simpler way of life, and inspire in visitors a renewed regard for, and a determination to protect our own ancient things in Shropshire.

Admission to the Exhibition will be FREE—daily 10 a.m. to 4-30 p.m.

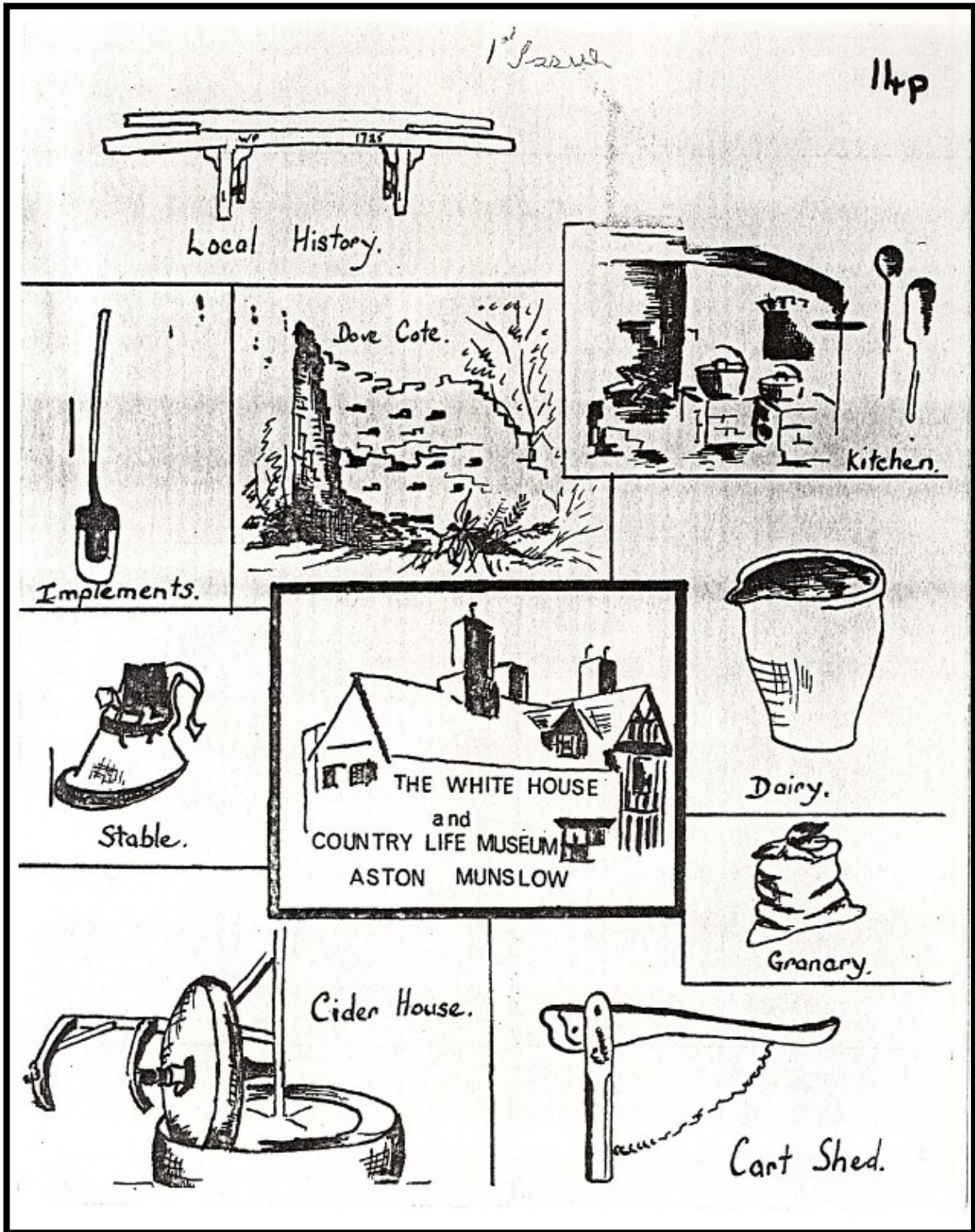
*Miss Purser and the White House Helpers
request the pleasure of your company
in Bear Steps, St. Alkmunds, Shrewsbury
at 8 p.m. on Monday, March 21st, 1977
for the Opening of The White House, Exhibition*

Speaker : F. W. B. Charles, M.A., F.S.A., F.R.I.B.A.

Wine and Cheese

R.S.V.P. to Miss Purser,
The White House,
Aston Munslow,
Salop.

The White House Museum of Buildings and Country Life



The White House Museum of Buildings and Country Life

This complex of buildings and their comprehensive equipment is not just a dwelling surrounded by the usual compliment of farm buildings of various types and ages containing exhibits of implements, tools and domestic utensils of bygone days in considerable variety. It is a Homestead, lived in continuously through the centuries, equipped with those things used in days gone by in their functional positions.

There are no glass cases—no barriers—the minimum of notices and restrictions—each visitor is its guardian for the period of their visit, on them depends its preservation.

On the site of the early Saxon Township of Estune—East Town—recorded in the census of Edward the Confessor, 1042 A.D. as “held by Lord Elmund”—no gap in its history from that time to the present day stand buildings— not taken from somewhere else and reerected but in their original position in functional relation to each other—constructed of natural materials in harmony with their environment. “Historic Documents” recording century by century reality of family life, knit with the earth upon which all depend.

The Homestead itself 4 houses in 1—An undercroft of a Manor House to which the Dotecote was granted early in the 13th century. Crucks & Spere Truss still in situ of a 14th century Cruck Hall built against it with massive chimney introduced in 2 parts and the upper part of the earlier house adapted as solarbay. The home of the Stedman family 1335 to 1946.

An Elizabethan cross-wing of box framing replaced the upper structure of the earlier Manor House in 1570AD—a fashionable modernisation for the marriage of Michael Stedman to Margery Crowther, grand parents of Fabian Stedman the famous campanologist. The added Georgian wing to some extent replaced damage by fire in 1780 but by no means restored the beauty of the destroyed part of the cross wing with its central porch and chamber above.

A smaller dwelling house beside the lane, later converted to barn—now known as “The Stable Block”—was another open bay hall with passage and steps down into the lane. In 1580 A.D. this too was a typical house of its time, with a partial upper floor at the S.E. end, possibly another bay at the north end of the hall which became a cobbled floored stable in 1680 A.D. and is now as it was then.

The Cider House of mid 17th century with another Dovecote in the south gable—complete with stone mill and massive timber press and all the paraphernalia of cider making. The other side of this block is the Cart Shed with Granary above—unfortunately the stone steps were removed in 1946.

Other buildings of various periods, each for a special function are about the original farmyard where horse drawn implements stand around. The pasture field above was the Open Fields of the village with the Potato Patch in the left hand corner. Below the drive gate the junction of lanes is called “The Arbour” where deer were driven down from the wilds above, that kids could be caught to provide meat for the family table.

So much for the site and buildings, but timber and stone buildings are meaningless, ghostly and cold without life.

All of this complex throbs with vitality, its very being is alive—through the centuries at no time has it been forsaken—generation by generation of family life has added to and adapted to their own requirements. Lives of skilled craftsmen still persist in the timbers they have fashioned and erected—stones cut by hand with crude tools—tiles carefully trimmed to fit a particular place—every detail a personal contribution that lives on and continues to satisfy because it is real in harmony with its natural environment.

Storms and gales may rage, but the crucks erected over 600 years ago never tremor, smoke from log fires curls up as it always has, here is relaxation, security and satisfaction—the past continues, serving the present—looking to the future.

Each detail of this 6½ acres of England has a purpose and meaning because things are in their functional positions many may be overlooked; naturally some are more spectacular than others.

Just as each generation has adapted dwellings and buildings to suit their needs so too have many different types of implements, tools, utensils and domestic impediment a been used for cultivation and husbandry of a well established home.

MUSEUM SECTIONS

CART SHED

Pony Tub 1920-30
 Dog Cart 1910 complete with Foot warmer, Umbrella, etc.
 Governess Cart about 1920.
 Thistler 1935-45.
 Various Whipple Trees, Yokes, Jacks, Hubs, etc.

GRANARY

Above Cart Shed. Kibbler and Crusher, late 19th century.
 Winnowing Basket
 Hand turned Winnow 1870-80.
 Threshing Drum
 Flail. Steelyards. Platform Weighing Machine.
 Range of Dry Measures, etc.

CIDER HOUSE

Equipped for complete process of Cider Making.
 Shaking Hook for shaking apples from trees.
 Washing Tub and Stick.
 Horse powered Stone Mill for crushing—its massive stone basin 8ft. 4in. diameter weighing 6 tons.
 Its companion wooden Press equally huge, its timbers great limbs of trees. With set of 6 Hairs beneath the single screw manipulated by 7ft. long lever to press out the juice to run into trough below, then bucketed to funnel on top of Butt. Rows of Cider Jars and Costrels. Barrels. Taps. Funnels. Fruit Picking and Cultivating Equipment.

WORK SHOP

Reception. Cleaning. Repairing. Preservation and finally Recording.
 Where a small band of helpers, Saturday by Saturday, winter and summer, work on the mixed medley of objects before they are fit to take their place in their appropriate position for display. Like our collection, working equipment started from scratch in 1966, one hammer, pincers and a saw (since stolen) were the only tools. Thanks to generous friends and Green Shield Stamps most urgently necessary equipment is now safely hidden from light fingers in a donated cupboard.
 Also like our collection, helpers are varied, of all ages and professions, from many directions far and near, every kind of job is undertaken not only on accessions but garden and general upkeep, each detail important, each vital to the whole.
 This may seem irrelevant in the middle of a list of exhibits, but far from it, it is the core and heart of our Museum. It is those who do not fail week by week who have made it, just as craftsmen 600 years ago cut and erected the graceful crucks, so these helpers today are adding their skill and lives to live on through the centuries—the Past, in the Present, to the Future.

STABLE

Original, cobbled floored, dry stone walls and upper loft as in 1680. Its wooden manger and hay rack reduced to admit later types.
 Harness for many purposes hanging from brackets around the walls—this is changed from time to time.
 "Captain," a scale model of a 15½ hand heavy horse harnessed for shaft work, demonstrates the contrast to riding tack as illustrated by the Lady mounted side saddle wearing habit of the Croome Hunt.
 An early method of riding for ladies is shown in the Pillion Cushion 1800.
 Pony Boots for mowing lawns contrast with Surgical Boot.
 Horse Shoes, Bits, Nose Bag, Muzzle. Grooming Equipment.
 Surgical utensils. Farrier's Box and Tools.

TOOLS

Hand Tools displayed in subject order.
 Garden. Field Cultivation. Harvesting Corn, Hay.
 Animals—Veterinary and management.
 Estate Forestry. Trapping. Lamps.
 Wheelwrights. Blacksmiths. Miscellaneous.
 Root Cutter hand turned. Chaff Cutter hand turned.
 Seeds barrow to sow 12ft., man powered.
 Seeds Fiddle Broadcaster. Precision Drill.
 Note Iron shod wooden Clay Spade as used by the Romans when in this country, the pattern persisted until 1914.

LOCAL HISTORY

Election Posters of 1910, thought to be unique, none similar have been traced, found on a partition wall in an upper room in the house.
 Photographs of deserted villages of the Corvedale.
 Crown Post and Arch Brace of the Lych Gate at Munslow, demolished 1968.
 Church Bier from Westbury 1725.
 Church Bier from Rushbury 19th century.
 Complete set Filler-Gears made in Saddlers Shop, Aston (now gone)
 Local Item from now gone sites 1890

WASH HOUSE

Roof hand cut stone shingles or tiles from the 2nd roof of the house following thatch—note tapered wooden nails or pegs and graduated tiles to relieve weight.
 Mangle. Rocking Washer 19th century. Dolly. Posser, variety of Pegs.
 Lading Bowl. Rubbing Board. Draining Board

KITCHEN

Original Service Bay of the 1335 Cruck Hall.
 Chimney introduced 1600, filling up the Passage of the Hall fire on earth floor. Salt Cupboard high on left. Cream Oven at left side now gone.
 Roasting Beam to carry Spit. Fire Crane, etc.
 Modernised about 1800 when Bake Oven was built on.
 Rack and Tools for Bake Oven above Roasting Beam.
 Victorian Roaster, lifted in front of fire, meat basted through door at back.
 Draught excluding Settle. Cauldron. 3-gall. Fountain. Pots and Pans.
 Daisy Vacuum Cleaner 1907.
 Irons. Knife Cleaners, etc. Bed Warmers, etc.
 Preserving Kettles. Storage Jars. Cooking Equipment

DAIRY (a)

Milk and Butter. Various Churns. Box Churn 1823.
 Milk Cooler. Milk skimming Pans. Cream Jars. Butter Jars.
 Cream Separator. Butter Worker. Mitt.
 Variety Butter Boards and Hands. Butter Scoops and Prints.
 Milk Measures, Cans and Buckets. Carrying Yoke.
 Crocks and Puncheons.
 Vinegar, Wine and Storage Jars, variety of Bottles.
 "Food produced without chemicals and stored without Energy."

DAIRY (b)

Bacon Curing. Cheese and Storage.
 Salting Slab. Dripping Hooks. Butchering utensils.
 Cheese Press. Moulds or Arts. Curd Mill. Curd Knife.
 Patters. Storage crocks and contents.

Displayed around Car Park—original Farmyard:

TRANSPORT

Montgomery-Shropshire Border Hay Wain, 1891.
Farm Float for animals, not milk, date not known yet.
Butcher's Delivery cart, date not known yet.
Heavy Farm Cart
4-wheel Dray with end thripples, 1920-40.
Smallholders Cart
Estae Hand Cart, 1893.

PLOUGH TERRACES

Single furrow Plough. Ransoms 1890.
Ridging Plough. Howards Northumberland 1849.
Match Plough. Ransoms 1865.
Turn Wrest or Reversible Plough.
One Horse Hoe, extra duckfoot Foot. Howards 1874.
Potato Digger. Howards 1874.
Beet Lifter or Mole Drainer. Ransoms.
Ridge Harrows.
Spike Harrows.
Cultivation and Harvest.
Root Seed Drill, 2-furrow
Woods Corn Drill, Wheat or Oats.
Potato Planter, pipe method.
Potato Planter, cup chain method.
Albion 3ft. 6in. one-horse Mowing Machine.
Albion 4ft. 6in. Binder.
Albion 4ft. 6in. Binder.
A. W. Wood Self Delivering Reaper
Hay Rake. Ransoms.
Swath Turner. Blackstones.
Hay Tedder. Blackstones.
Hay Trusser.
One horse Wooden Roller.
Hay Sweep-tumbler. The Bristol 1930.
Hay Loader, 1915. Bamfords.

For information of Open times consult leaflets and widespread publicity.

Telephone is not answered between 8.30 a.m. and 9.30 p.m.

It is this equipment of Homelife in its self supporting surroundings that comprises a Country Life Museum that may be viewed apart from the house itself—likewise the house at special times can be visited without the Museum—hours may be spent in the peaceful garden, happy family picnics enjoyed in the picnic area where the benches and tables for your convenience were made from a sycamore tree that overgrew the Dovecote by willing volunteers.

It is not possible to list the entire collection. The following are main features in each section for the benefit of those wishing to study special subjects.

All Agricultural Equipment has been listed by Reading University for inclusion in the National Index of Agricultural Equipment in this Country. Hand boards are in each section listing the objects displayed with corresponding numbers on each to aid identification. Each object is coded. Record Cards may be inspected on request.

(c) Constance Purser, May 1974.

W. R. Crowe, Printer, Presteigne

The Dovecote, White House, Aston Munslow, Extracts from *A Book of Dovecotes* by A.D. Cooke, published T.N. Fowles, 1920

Cannot this vaunted Shropshire show us dovecotes dating from a period prior to Elizabethan times?’ exclaims some reader, eager for the hoary stones of Norman work. The Whitehall dovecote, beautiful in form and decoration, easily accessible to visitors to Shrewsbury who are pressed for time, was chosen for our early notices upon that account, and it has led the way to others of its age and style. But there are far older dovecotes to be found in Shropshire and in quest of one of these we may betake ourselves to the most pleasant garden of the White House, Aston Munslow, a place lying north-east of that important local junction, Craven Arms.

The White House dovecote is a round stone building very obviously Norman in date; fairly large, with a circumference of seventy-five feet and a height to the eaves of fifteen feet. One of its points of greatest interest is the thickness of the walls - four feet, while those at Garway, it will be recalled, are but three feet ten inches. The entrance is a very narrow one.

There is no potence now remaining, but we can still see the socket-hole in which the lower end was placed; also a remnant of the beam itself. The nest-holes, numbering about five hundred are L-shaped. There is a string-course placed unusually low-down - some two feet only from the ground.

Unhappily, during the owner's temporary absence from the property, the roof fell in; but some of the stone tiles which covered it have been preserved, together with the wooden pegs that held them in their place. These tiles were of a small size on the upper portion of the roof, becoming larger towards the eaves.

The fall of the roof was, unfortunately, followed by disaster to a section of the walls themselves; an accident not very frequent in a dovecote of this shape and massive build, which usually proves capable of standing not a little buffeting from time and weather without giving way. It would be a very serious loss to Shropshire if this dovecote were allowed to disappear, since, judging from the thickness of its walls and other signs, it can be little later in its date than that of Garway. But happily the owner of the White House is now the occupier also, keen to check all chance of further harm.

The Dovecote at Shipton

Not differing greatly in regard to style, nor probably in age, is the fine dovecote standing in the grounds of one of the most charming of old

Shropshire mansions, Shipton Hall, in the Much Wenlock district. Shipton itself, once a seat of the Myttons, is a fine Elizabethan house, restored - and well restored - in George II's reign.

Disaster has been busy with the dovecote here. The roof, which bore a cupola, has fallen in. The walls still stand - four feet in thickness, with a doorway which, though wide, is little more than four feet high.

Inside is a potence, and, still more interesting, about four hundred nest-holes, thirteen inches deep, and rounded at the back, a form but seldom seen. Surely such shape, though doubtless giving extra trouble to the builder, meant additional comfort to the birds. These rounded nests alone would be enough to date this dovecote from a long-past day, when time and trouble were nothing as compared with the result desired.

'The Whitehall (Shrewsbury) dovecote is beautiful in form and decoration, but there are far older dovecotes in Shropshire. The one in the garden of the White House, Aston Munslow, is a round stone building, very obviously Norman in date, fairly large, with a circumference of 75 feet and height to the eaves of 15 feet... One of its points of greatest interest is the thickness of the walls, 4 feet, while those at Garway, Herefordshire are but 3 feet 10 inches.'

'It would be a serious loss to Shropshire if this dovecote were allowed to disappear, since, judging from the thickness of its walls and other features it can be little later than the one at Garway in date.'

Structurally, the dovecote at The White House was 75 feet in circumference, height to eaves of 15 feet, a conical roof on stone tiles, with entrance for the pigeons built out from it to the South East. Attendant's entrance very narrow with a door at the top and bottom of the steps, heavily bolted.

Approximately 600 nesting holes, each with a separate landing platform, tending in opposite directions in alternate rows. Projecting cornice 2 feet from floor level to prevent rats climbing to the nests. A central revolving potence extending from a socket in the stone floor to the point of the roof, on which a movable platform could be adjusted to enable the attendant to reach each row of nests when collecting the squabs for the Lord's table. Pigeons were introduced to England by the Normans.

'A dovecote was always manorial, the absolute thoroughness with which the pigeons were associated with supreme land ownership is indicated by the fact that pigeons never entered early medieval records of any kind of rent or dues.'

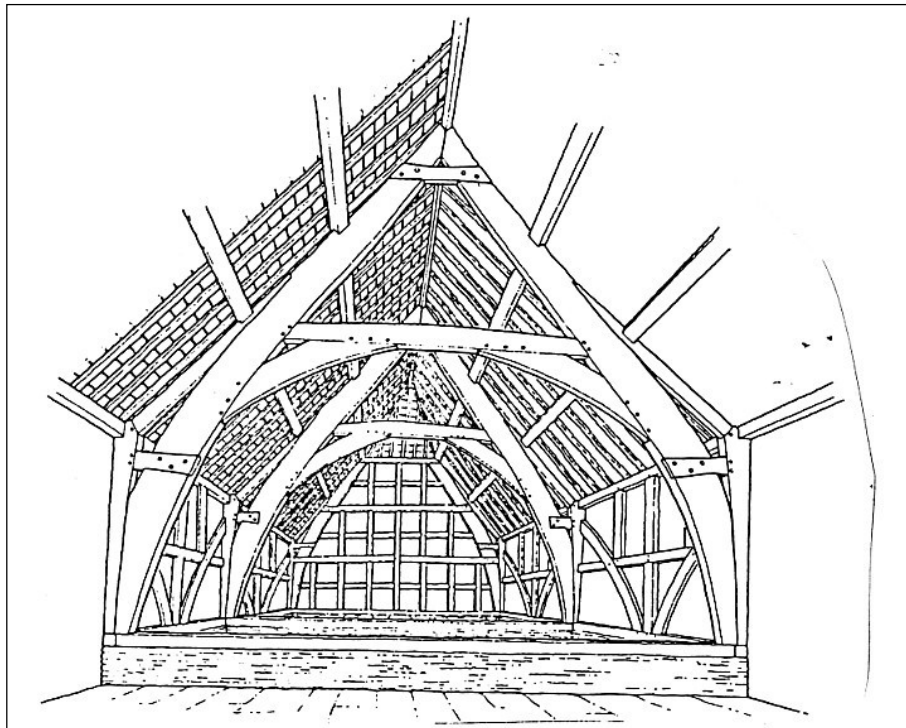
'These, first hovering round the heights of castle keeps, were as inalienable a mark of sovereignty as the hawk that perched upon the noble's glove' (154)

'We pray that no man under the degree of a knight or esquire keep a dovecote, except it be of ancient custom.'

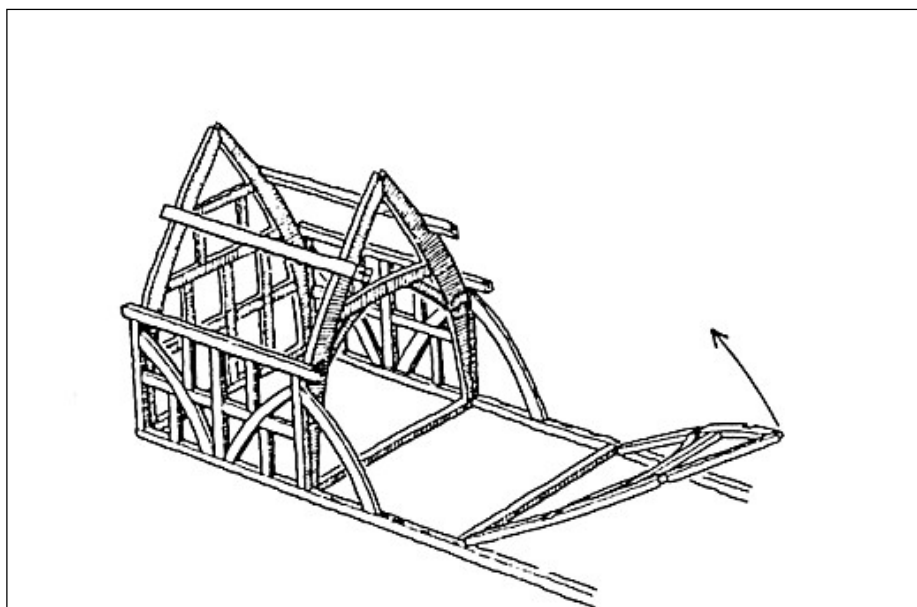
(Extracts from a book 'The Dovecote' by Smith)

It was customary for the medieval dovecote to be built very near the dwelling house for the sake of protection. Two nests were available for each pair of pigeons to allow time for the young squabs to mature. Feeding was always done at sunrise, however early that was, so that birds fed and then flew off. Otherwise they would remain round the homestead all day. The pigeon in early times was a delicacy for the Lord's table, and a very valuable source of food during winter. They were cooked on specially made pigeon spits, on which twelve birds were hung at a time before the open fire.

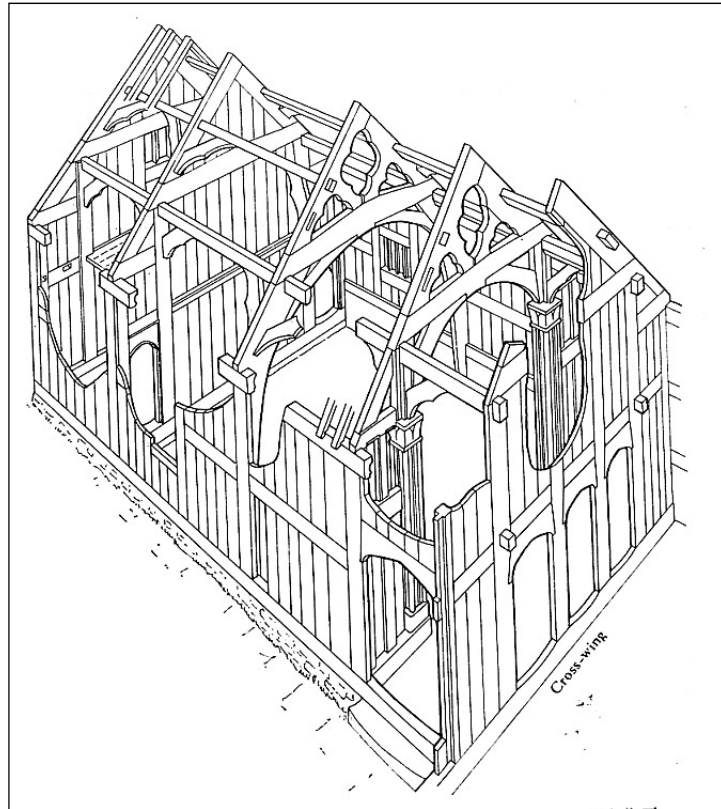
The following are from *Houses from the Welsh Countryside*,
Peter Smith/RCAHM, 1975



Interior of a cruck built barn



Rearing a cruck-framed building



Two very grand cruck halls, both with spere trusses, one with, and one without a ridge beam, as at the White House. Pen y bryn, Denbighshire (above) and Plas Cadwgan, now at Avoncroft Museum of Buildings (below).

