

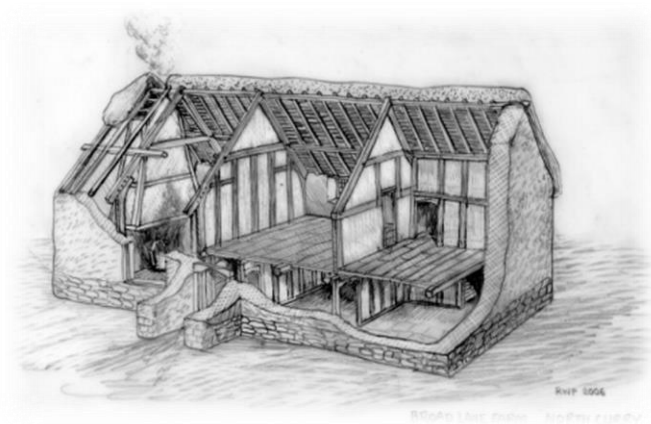
# Historic Building Survey

*Of*

**BERRYNARBOR MANOR HALL,  
BIRDSWELL LANE,  
BERRYNARBOR, DEVON**

*By R. W. Parker*

For The Manor Hall Trust.



**RICHARD PARKER  
HISTORIC BUILDING RECORDING & INTERPRETATION**

11 Toronto Road, St James, Exeter, EX4 6LE.

E-Mail: [rwparker@btopenworld.com](mailto:rwparker@btopenworld.com)

Tel: 07763 248241

01392 423233

**REPORT No. 2015.06**

© Richard Parker. July 2015



1.	INTRODUCTION	Page: 1
	<i>The archaeological works</i>	2
2.	HISTORICAL BACKGROUND (based on research by Lucy Browne).	3
	<i>Medieval</i>	3
	<i>Post Medieval</i>	3
	<i>Late 18th and early 19th century</i>	4
	<i>Mid-to-late 19th century</i>	7
	<i>The 20th century</i>	11
3.	BUILDING SURVEY	12
3.1	<b>The west wing: exterior</b>	12
	<i>East elevation</i>	12
	<i>South elevation</i>	16
	<i>West elevation</i>	17
3.2	<b>The west wing: ground-floor, interior</b>	19
	<i>The stair hall</i>	19
	<i>The school room</i>	20
	<i>the lean-to</i>	20
3.3	<b>The west wing: first-floor interior</b>	20
	<i>The smaller northern room</i>	20
	<i>The larger southern room</i>	23
3.4	<b>The west wing: roof structure</b>	24
3.5	<b>The parish hall: exterior</b>	27
	<i>South elevation</i>	27
	<i>East elevation</i>	27
	<i>North elevation</i>	28
	<i>West elevation</i>	28
3.6	<b>The parish hall: interior</b>	28
4.	DISCUSSION AND HERITAGE STATEMENT	31
	ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	36
	SOURCES CONSULTED	36
	CONDITIONS	37



## List of Illustrations

Fig. 1	Location of Berrynarbor on the north coast of Devon, between Ilfracombe and Combe Martin with (inset) the position of the Manor Hall in the village centre.	<i>Page:</i> 1
Fig. 2	Suggested early manorial enclosures at Berrynarbor.	2
Fig. 3	Anonymous pencil drawing of the manor house entitled 'An old manor house built for the Berry family in the time of Plantagenet; Berry Barton, Nr Ilfracombe, July 1861'.	2
Fig. 4	Extract from a plan of Court Barton and the Mill, Berrynarbor, surveyed in 1802, showing the house already substantially reduced (Z17/3/2 Devon Manorial & Estate Records: Plans of sundry farms in the parishes of Berrynarbor [and others]).	5
Fig. 5	Berrynarbor near Ilfracombe'. Steel Engraving by J. Thomas after J. Harwood, published by Fisher & Son & Co, London 1832. Reissued by P Jackson London & Paris 1849. (SWHT reference SC0107), showing the manor house and the church tower.	5
Fig. 6	Extract from the Berrynarbor Tithe Map, sealed 9 <sup>th</sup> May 1845, showing the properties.	6
Fig. 7	Extract from the OS 1st-edition map Sheet 5/2, 1:2500 (1889), showing the house before the late 19th-century demolitions of the porch and associated wing.	6
Fig. 8	Extract from the OS 2nd Edition Sheet 5/2, 1:2500 (1905) showing the house reduced to the west wing only after late 19th-century demolitions.	9
Fig. 9	Plan and elevation of the Village Room dating from 1909 (North Devon Record Office B170-1/184) showing the new Manor Hall on the site of demolished parts of the house.	9
Fig. 10	Archaeological drawings by Allen T. Hussell F.R.I.B.A, dated 1941, showing the plans, sections, elevations and details of the building as they were before alterations in the mid 20th century. From a framed drawing in the ownership of the Manor Hall Trustees.	10
Fig. 11	Extract from the drawing showing the ground-floor plan in 1941.	10
Fig. 12	Extract from the drawing showing the first-floor plan in 1941.	10
Fig. 13	Extract from Allen T. Hussell's 1941 drawing showing the east elevation of the west wing prior to 20th-century alterations.	13
Fig. 14	Extract from Allen T. Hussell's 1941 drawing showing the south elevation of the west wing prior to 20th-century alterations.	13
Fig. 15	Extract from Allen T. Hussell's 1941 drawing showing the west elevation of the west wing prior to 20th-century alterations.	13
Fig. 16	General view of the east façade of the west wing showing the striped stonework interrupted by mullioned windows and panels of decoration.	14
Fig. 17	Detail of one of the ground-floor windows showing inconsistencies in the jointing of the masonry, suggesting that the windows are inserted.	14
Fig. 18	Detail of the northern part of the façade showing the scar of the demolished porch and the modern entrance to the staircase.	14
Fig. 19	West elevation of the west range showing the two three-light windows at first-floor level and the large chimney breast serving the fireplaces at ground- and first-floor level. The lean-to probably dates from the 19th century.	17

Fig. 20	Detail of the modern staircase. The projecting baulk of masonry (right) is a relic of the demolished 17th-century stair, which rose in the opposite direction.	18
Fig. 21	Detail of the 15th-century four-centred archway opening through the west wall from the former stair hall. The date of the existing door is uncertain.	18
Fig. 22	View of the schoolroom on the ground floor. All historic features, including a fireplace and a large window embrasure are completely concealed by modern decorative finishes.	18
Fig. 23	View of the Billiard Room on the first floor, looking north, showing the lower ceiling in the bar area beyond the 'arch'. The upper part of the wall above the arch retains early fabric and evidence of historic plaster.	21
Fig. 24	View of the roof structure, looking west, showing the evidence for historic partitions and plaster finishes to the smaller first-floor room; also the complete rebuilding of the northern gable above this level.	22
Fig. 25	View of the fireplace in the west wall of the Billiard Room, featuring a moulded and stopped stone frame partially concealed by a 20th-century timber mantelpiece.	22
Fig. 26	View of the roof structure over the west wing showing the inserted flat ceiling in the southern part of the first floor and the evidence for lath and plaster forming a high, canted ceiling.	25
Fig. 27	Detail of the ashlar pieces at the base of each truss showing the small pegged ties linking the timbers and the square wall and eaves plates.	25
Fig. 28	Detail of the short dovetail ties linking the wall and eaves plates across the wall tops. Note the apparently good condition of these members.	25
Fig. 29	Detail of the truncated rafters at the centre of the roof showing sockets for the collars, now sawn short, inserted purlins and re-shaped ends to each rafter allowing them to rest against the chimney.	26
Fig. 30	Detail of the south façade of the early 20th-century Manor Hall.	26
Fig. 31	View of the eastern gable of the hall, showing red brick dressings to the windows.	29
Fig. 32	View of the western gable of the hall, showing white brick dressings, and (top centre) a reused carved stone.	29
Fig. 33	Detail of the reused carved stone in the western gable representing a cusped 'mouchette wheel', a Gothic decorative detail common in the 14th century, but regaining popularity in the late 15th and early 16th-century, possibly through the influence of Continental 'Flamboyant Gothic' architecture.	29
Fig. 34	View of the hall looking east, showing the character of the roof.	30
Fig. 35	The fireplace in the hall with the portrait of Edith Basset Williams	30
Fig. 36	Suggested reconstruction of the layout of the medieval house, based upon historic plans and maps of the buildings and upon Gentry houses of similar date and status.	33
Fig. 37	Suggested phasing of the West Wing, based on the layout of the interiors as recorded by Allen T. Hussell F.R.I.B.A. in 1941	34



Fig. 1 Location of Berrynarbor on the north coast of Devon, between Ilfracombe and Combe Martin with (inset) the position of the Manor Hall in the village centre, just north-west of the church.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Berrynarbor Manor Hall is a community hall lying in the centre of Berrynarbor village (SS 56003 46752). The building is run by the Manor Hall Trust, a registered charity, who hold it in trust for the benefit of the inhabitants of the parish. The building currently serves as a venue for a wide variety of groups and activities, from the local pre-school classes to upholstery groups, Pilates classes, theatre groups, art exhibitions and also for school and community groups such as the Men's Institute (<http://www.berrynarborvillage.co.uk/manorhall.html>). The hall is unusual among such facilities in that it occupies the remains of the historic Manor House of Berrynarbor. The property is a Grade II Listed building of medieval origin, once part of a larger complex of manorial structures lying in Birdswell Lane, immediately west of the Parish Church of St Peter. Berrynarbor village (Fig. 1) lies to the east of Ilfracombe within the North Devon Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The centre of the village, including the site of the manor house, was designated as a conservation area in February 2011.

In 2013 the Manor Hall trustees commissioned a condition survey of the building and a summary maintenance and repair management plan. The report (Ledgard 2013) was prepared by the surveyors SmithsGore and identified a number of structural and maintenance issues with the building. The trustees determined to seek listed building consent for the refurbishment and restoration of the building and the improvement of the facilities for continued community use. The current archaeological report has been prepared with the aim of understanding the site, the historic structures, their development and their significance, and to serve as a heritage statement or statement of historical significance in support of the trustees' planning application and also in support of an application to the Heritage Lottery Fund for grant aid to enable the refurbishment of the buildings.

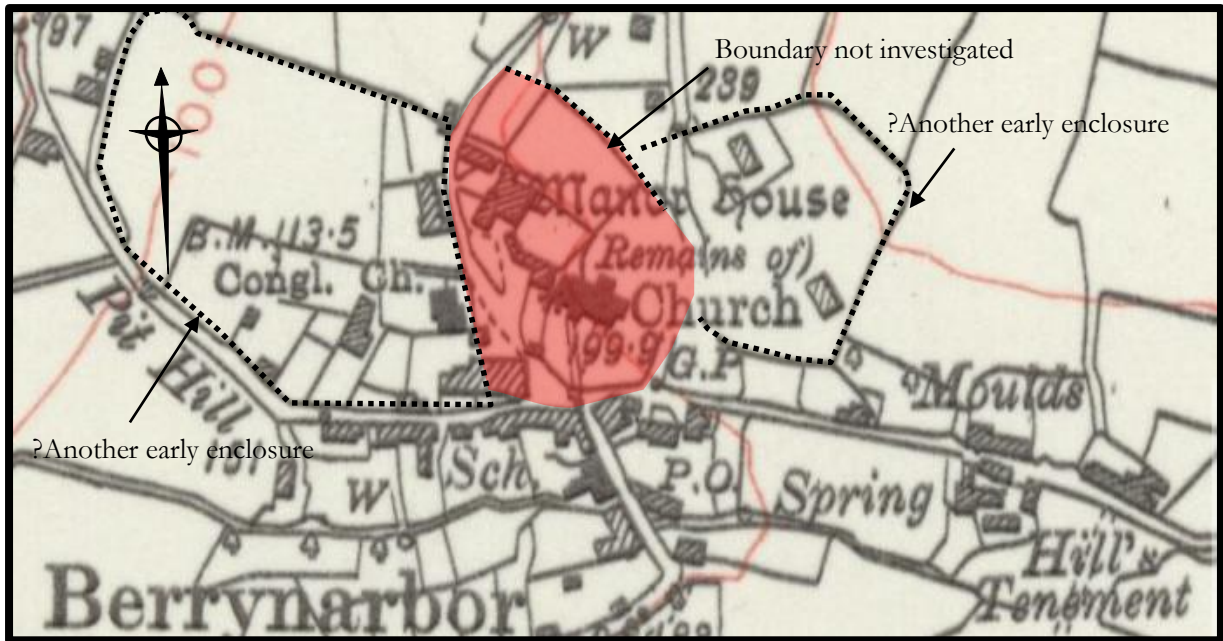


Fig. 2 Suggested early manorial enclosures at Berrynarbor (shown in pink or with dashed lines).



Fig. 3 Anonymous pencil drawing of the manor house entitled 'An old manor house built for the Berry family in the time of Plantagenet; Berry Barton, Nr Ilfracombe, July 1861'. The drawing shows the surviving west wing (left), and the demolished porch alongside it, during occupation as a farmhouse.

#### *The archaeological works*

The archaeological works described here were undertaken by Richard Parker Historic Buildings Recording and Interpretation in December 2014. They consisted of a non-invasive site survey of the buildings, during which a photographic record and manuscript notes were produced to provide a visual and descriptive record of the building. Historic plans of the building currently held by the Manor Hall trustees were annotated to show the presumed development of the buildings, the probable date of the fabric and the locations of any architectural or archaeological features of significance. These form the basis of the illustrations reproduced here as Figs 36 and 37. Documentary research was also undertaken, including a map regression and research into the



tenurial history of the site, exploring both published sources and unpublished records held at local record centres. As no opening up was undertaken it remains possible that some features and dating evidence may be obscured by plaster finishes, panelling and render. The conclusions of the report may thus have to be modified in the light of future works.

## 2. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND (based on documentary research by Lucy Browne).

‘Berry’ is a place name derived from the old English ‘*burh*’, signifying a fortified place (Weddell 1991, 20). The name suggests the existence of an important settlement in the area from an early date. This name could refer to the Iron Age hillfort at Newberry Camp, to the north west, though the oval form of the village centre, defined by Birdswell Lane and Barton Lane, with the high banks and raised ground surrounding the church and the manor house, and a similar field boundaries to the east and west are perhaps suggestive of early manorial enclosures (Fig. 2).

### *Medieval*

By 1086 the place was known as *Hurtesberia* (Reichel 1896), or ‘*Hertesberry*’, and appears to have formed a small Saxon Hundred which was suppressed and joined to Braunton after the Norman Conquest, when the lands were given by the Conqueror to Walter of Douay. In his paper *The Parish and Church of St Peter, Berrynarbor*, published in the *Exeter Diocesan Gazette* in the early 20th century (undated cutting, South West Heritage Trust, Berrynarbor Parish Cuttings folder) Chanter writes that the name ‘Berrynarbor’ is apparently derived from the name of a subsequent owner, William Nerbert who was given the property in 1196; however, Nerbert did not hold the property long. In the reign of Henry III (1216-1272), the manor is recorded as being held by “Jhn De Lidiford, William de Bykeleghe and Henry de Altaribus...” (*ibid.*). In subsequent generations the local ruling family seem to have taken their name from the place, rather than the other way round. A family called Berry first came to prominence at Berrynarbor in the reign of Edward I (1272-1307) and flourished there, retaining Berrynarbor “for fourteen or fifteen generations” (*ibid.*). The Berrys are likely to have built the present house, and improved it by successive rebuildings in the late middle ages and early modern period. The original medieval house appears to have been an architecturally ambitious building, and was improved by the addition of rich ornamental features which survive both in the existing building and *ex-situ*, elsewhere. Only the western wing now stands, but the remaining physical and documentary evidence suggests that the house conformed to the usual medieval plan for high-status houses, with a western service end and projecting wing (containing some impressive rooms), separated by a screens passage with a porch entry from a central great hall and a further eastern wing beyond this containing the main state apartments.

### *Post Medieval*

The Berrys held the house at Berrynarbor until the early 18th century when the last male, Thomas Berry, died intestate in 1708 leaving a widow and an only daughter, Dorothy Francis Berry. The lands had by that time been mortgaged to a Bideford merchant, John Davie of Orleigh (a large house in the parish of Buckland Brewer), who subsequently purchased the estates in 1713. After this the last surviving Berry, Dorothy, married Francis Kirkham Esq and resided at Watermouth (*ibid.*). It is not unlikely that the beginning of the slow decay of the manorial buildings dates either from the period of occupation by the negligent Thomas Berry, or perhaps as a result of dilapidations during the period before and after the sale of the property. At any rate the house seems to have been abandoned as the principal residence of its owners, in favour of Orleigh or Watermouth, from the early 18th century. A 19th-century drawing of the house (Fig. 3) made in 1861 shows the condition of the building when it was occupied as a farm. This shows a relatively small building and it is likely that a substantial part of the house, including everything east of the screens passage, including the hall and state apartments, had been demolished after its abandonment in the early 18th century, though no record of this demolition is known.

*Late 18th and early 19th century*

Following the abandonment of the manor house in the early 18th century, the house at Watermouth was rebuilt as a small Palladian mansion. This was described by the Rev. John Swete on one of his tours of Devon undertaken in 1796. At this time Watermouth was still the seat of “Mr Davie Esq.”, and improvements were in hand which were ultimately to lead to its rebirth as ‘Watermouth Castle’, a new mansion superseding the old manor house as the principal dwelling in the parish. Swete produced a small watercolour drawing of the classical house at Watermouth but, despite his interest in antiquities, on his visit to Berrynarbor village he commented only on the church and appears not to have noticed the ancient manor house (Gray & Rowe 1999, 86-8).

The old manor house must have been sold by the Davie family during the 18th century, since the house can be identified in the Land Tax Assessments for the parish in 1783 as ‘Court Barton’ and was then both owned and occupied by a Mr Charles Thomas, who paid: £20, 7s and 8d for ‘Court Barting’. The property may have been subdivided into several parts, since ‘Court Barton’ and ‘Barton Ground’ are identified as separate properties, with different tenants or owners; the latter paying a smaller rent (Devon Heritage Centre. Land Tax Assessments. Microfilm copies: 1780 – 1832).

The Rent Roll For ‘Berry-Narber’ at Michaelmas 1783 and Lady Day and Michaelmas 1784 records Charles Thomas being charged £13,13s,0d half yearly for Ruggaton & Rosey, Parks and Berry Barton (Devon Heritage Centre: 1698M/E4). However, by 1788-91 Thomas Barbar is listed as the owner and occupier of Court Barton, paying £15, 5, 9d., and James Harris is listed as the owner of Barton Ground, which was then occupied by Thomas ?Lahiman, paying a rent of 4s. Court Barton next passed to Mrs Sarah Parsons and by 1794-8 her tenant was Richard Marle. By the end of the 18th-century Court Barton had been acquired once again by the Davie family, with Richard Marle continuing as the occupier. At this time Barton Ground remained the property of James Harris. Joseph Davie, of Watermouth Castle and Orleigh, seems to have acquired Court Barton in around 1800-1803 and Barton Ground in c.1820.

The foot print of the house at this time is known from an estate map of 1802 (Fig 4). This map, entitled “Court Barton and the Mill, Berrynarbor” (Z17/3/2 Devon Manorial & Estate Records: Plans of sundry farms in the parishes of Berrynarbor [and others] surveyed in 1802), shows that the present Birdswell Lane actually formed an integral part of the manor courtyard, entered by a narrow gateway at the south-eastern corner of the churchyard, to the rear of Dormer House. This narrow opening, which still survives, may have been the site of a gatehouse to the manorial complex. The outbuildings continued in a long narrow range to the west of the churchyard, corresponding with the present Tower Cottage (though this appears to be a largely modern building). The range to the west of Dormer House, including Ye Olde Globe Inn, is also shown on the map as part of the complex and may also have originated as one of the manorial buildings. Two smaller buildings lie along the western boundary of the site, one occupying the site of the Congregational Chapel on Birdswell Lane and the other corresponding to Old Court, further north. An island building in the centre of the yard may well represent a granary.

The footprint of the manor house itself is complex, though the surviving west wing can be easily identified projecting into the court. To the rear of this is a large wing, aligned east/west which presumably represents the remains of the porch, screens passage and service rooms, with a rectangular projection beyond it to the north. The eastern part of the house seems to consist of a small wing parallel with the west wing; this is probably identical with the gabled wing shown alongside the porch in the 19th-century drawing (Fig. 3) and may represent an addition made after the demolition of the eastern parts of the medieval house in the 18th century. A steel engraving entitled “Berrynarbor near Ilfracombe”, engraved by J. Thomas after J. Harwood and published by Fisher & Son & Co in 1832, shows a distant view of the house (Fig. 5) as an ‘L’-shaped structure, representing the west and porch and service range, with the lower gabled range alongside this, but the view does not show many details of the architecture and may be rather stylised.

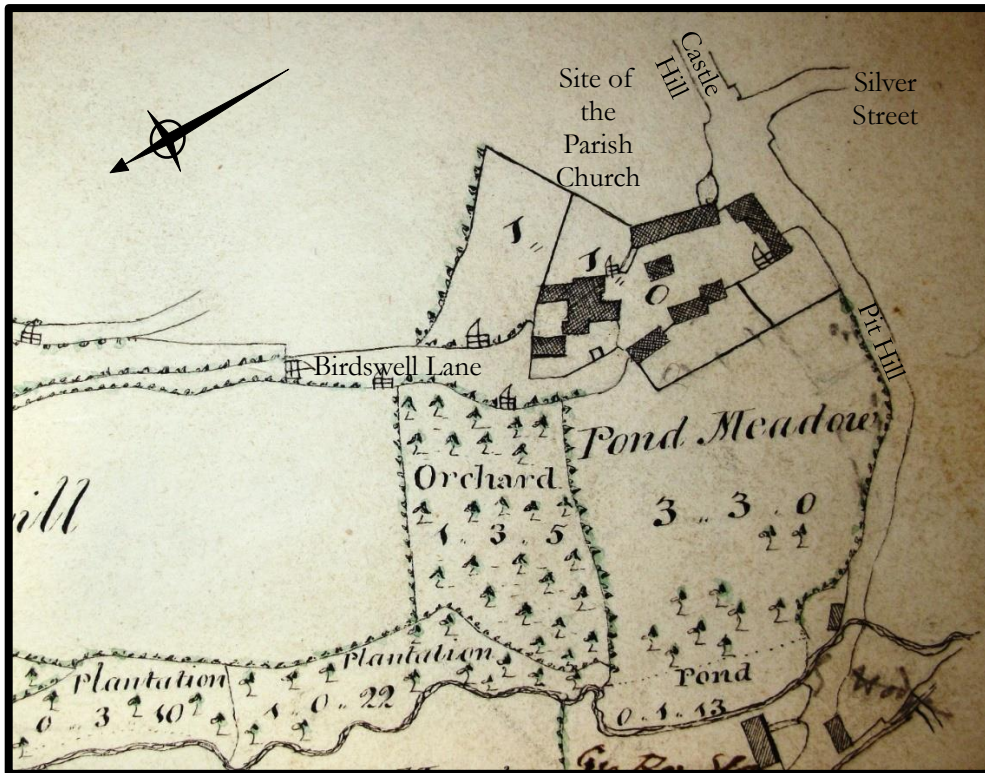


Fig. 4 Extract from a plan of Court Barton and the Mill, Berrynarbor, surveyed in 1802, showing the house already substantially reduced (Z17/3/2 Devon Manorial & Estate Records: Plans of sundry farms in the parishes of Berrynarbor [and others]).



Fig. 5 'Berrynarbor near Ilfracombe'. Steel Engraving by J. Thomas after J. Harwood, published by Fisher & Son & Co, London 1832. Reissued by P Jackson London & Paris 1849. (SWHT reference SC0107), showing the manor house and the church tower.

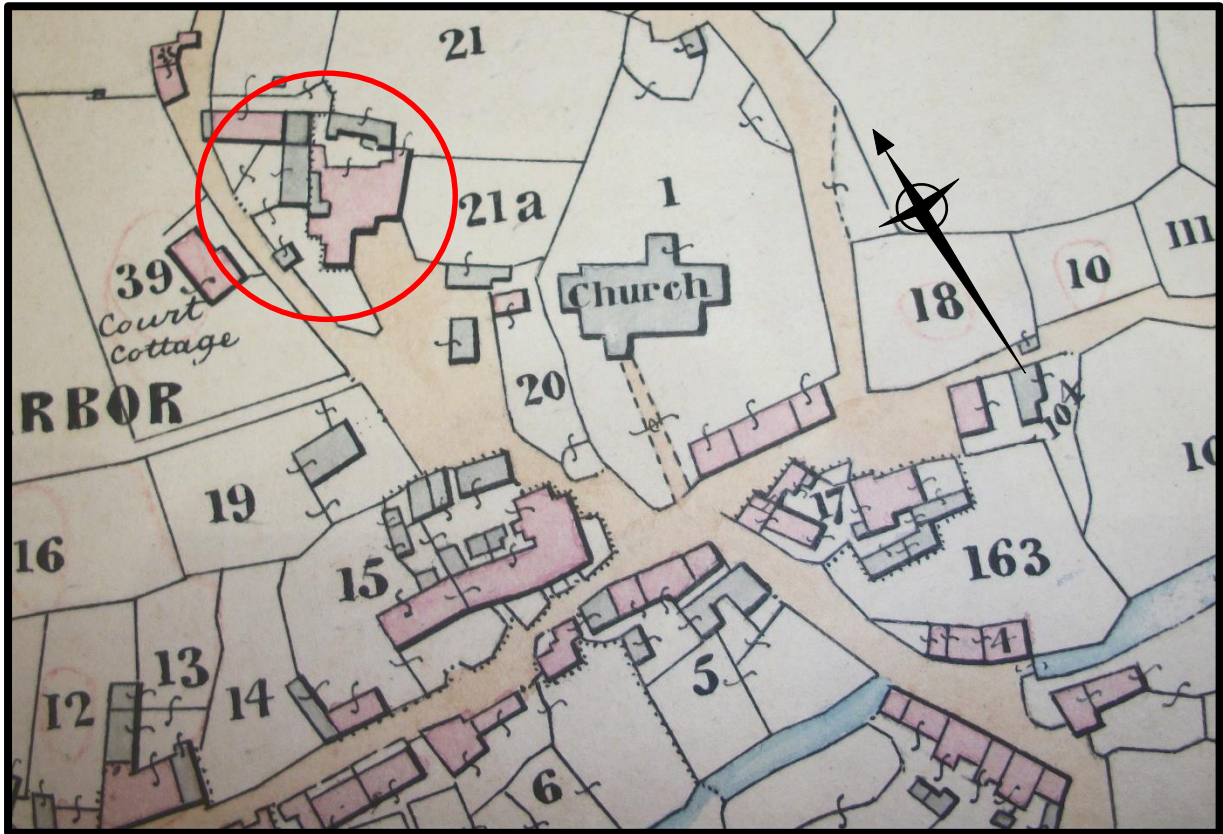


Fig. 6 Extract from the Berrynarbor Tithe Map, sealed 9<sup>th</sup> May 1845, showing the properties.

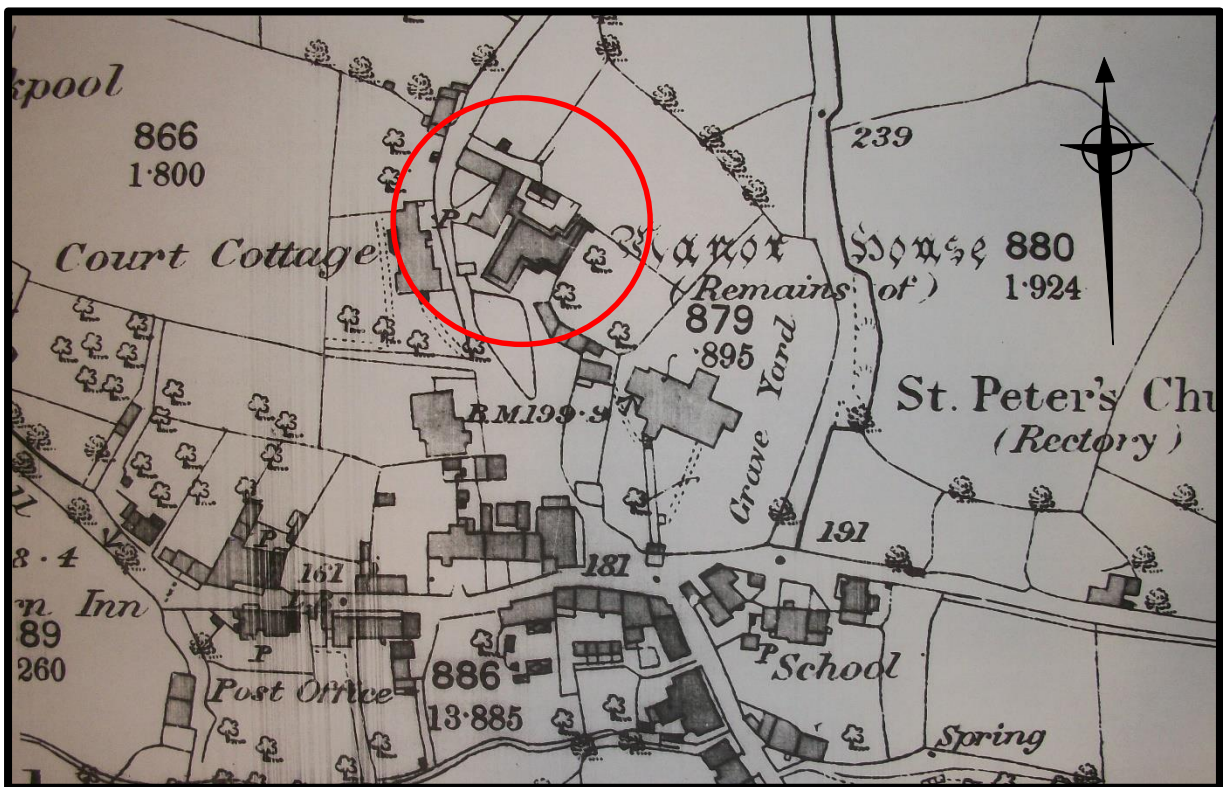


Fig. 7 Extract from the OS 1st-edition map Sheet 5/2, 1:2500 (1889), showing the house before the late 19th-century demolitions of the porch and associated wing.

Joseph Davie appears to have acquired the property at a time when he was consolidating his land holdings in the area, after succeeding to his uncle, Francis Basset's, estates. Francis Basset had died unmarried, whereupon the Devonshire branch of the Basset family became extinct in the direct male line (*Sir Francis Bassett, Knt: Pedigree*, Volume 3, page 110). In 1803 Joseph Davie took the surname Basset in addition to his previous name, and adopted the Basset arms. He soon began a programme of rebuilding and enlargement of Watermouth Castle as the principal family seat and it is probable that at this time many of the carved ornaments of the manor house were removed to Watermouth Castle along with fragments from the ancient Basset manor house at UMBERLEIGH; this in order to support the Basset's dynastic ambitions and reinforce the character of the castle as a Gothic Ancestral seat. The present castle was begun in 1825 and subsequently enlarged and completed after Joseph's death in 1845, by his heir, Arthur Davie Basset, under the direction of the distinguished architect George Whitwick (Cherry & Pevsner 1989, 890).

The Tithe map and apportionment of 1839 presents a further detailed view of the property and an outline description of the buildings. The map shows residential buildings as coloured pink, including the range comprising Dormer House and Ye Olde Globe, and agricultural buildings in grey. The long range adjacent to the churchyard and some of the buildings on the west side of the court have been demolished, leaving only a small residence, possibly a labourer's cottage, on the site of Tower Cottage. The manor house has much the same footprint as previously, but buildings to its north west have been remodelled and extended to provide a further dwelling. The tithe apportionment describes the properties as follows:

**Plot 21** [the Manor House]: Owner: Bassett, Joseph Davie Esq

Occupier: John Dyer

Name/Description: House and Garden

State of Cultivation: Garden

Quantities in Statute Measure: 2 Roods, 28 Perches

Amount of Rent charged apportioned and payable to the Rector: 3s, 6d

**Plot 21a** [the eastern part of the site]: Owner: Bassett, Joseph Davie Esq

Occupier: John C. Headon

Name/Description: Garden

State of Cultivation: Garden

Quantities: 24 Perches [No information about rent charged]

**Plot 22** [land to the north]: Owner: Bassett, Joseph Davie Esq; occupier, John Dyer

Name/Description: House and Garden

State of cultivation: House and Garden

Quantities: 1 Rood, 12 Perches. Rent: 1s, 9d

John Dyer also occupied plots 27 – 36: meadows, orchards, gardens, two houses and a mill.

The 1841 census records Berrynarbor Court House as occupied by John Heddon, aged 65, Army Pensioner, Ann Heddon, aged 65 and Elizabeth Ray, aged 5. There are three more households in the area: Richards, an agricultural labourer and family, Ann Johns and children, Richard Corner [occupation] and his household, John Dyer, aged 30, Maltster, Jane, 30, John, 4, William, 2 and two female servants.

Joseph Davie Basset died in 1846 and his will, proved in 1847, required that he be buried, simply, at the Independent Chapel in Berrynarbor (probably the Congregational Church in Birdswell Lane). A monument erected in Berrynarbor Parish Church to his memory assumes a very archaic style more typical of the 17th century, which may betray his antiquarian leanings.

#### *Mid-to-late 19th century*

The condition of the house does not seem to have changed greatly during the mid 19th century and its footprint, as shown on the OS map of 1889 (Fig. 6), remained much as it had been in 1802.

It is possible that the house had now been divided into two properties since, in 1851, the census records William Hicks aged 43/9, Carpenter, his wife and five children living at 'Court

Barton' and John Chichester Hiddon, aged 77, pensioner from Chelsea and his wife Ann at 'Court House', though this may of course be another name for Court Cottage (now Old Court), or for the slated house opposite. Hicks is also described in White's *Devonshire Directory* as a tailor (White 1850 581). Later occupants of the house, now known as Barton Farm, include John Hancock, farmer and lime merchant and his wife, Mary (1871); Richard Smith, Farmer Master, his wife and children (1881) and George Hookway, farmer, his wife and a servant in 1891. Kelly's *Directory of Devonshire* (1883) notes: "The old manor house, now converted into a farmhouse, the exterior of which was once ornamented with the arms of Plantagenet, Bonville and others" (Kelly 1883, 46).

The most detailed description of the building prior to the demolition of the porch and eastern wing is given by the Revd. Mr Treasure Hawker in a paper entitled *The Manor House, Berry Narbor*, read at Ilfracombe in July 1879. This is worth quoting at length, though interpretation with reference to the surviving remains is fraught with difficulty, since Hawker does not describe the rooms in a logical sequence:

"... The building itself is passing away with its "fractured arches" and its damaged roof. What is still left is extremely interesting; the more so, because the "unimaginable touch of time" is playing such havoc with what remains. Another twenty years ... will find nothing save utter heaps of ruin unless steps are taken to preserve the present fragments...

The ground rooms occupied by the present tenant are internally devoid of interest, the panelling and ornamentation of the walls having been almost entirely removed. I am told that the bedrooms have still vestiges, in their coloured cornices &c., of former wealth and magnificence. There is nothing in the downstairs apartments to notice beyond their fair proportions and loftiness. The largest in the part which fronts one probably served in days of yore for a sitting or withdrawing room. To form an idea of the fair stateliness of the building in its palmy epochs a stranger must pass under the archway, still beautiful even in decay and ruin, running at right angles to the front. The door has remains of what I believe is called the napkin-pattern carving. He will be led through a passage – rooms on the right hand being now occupied by the appurtenances of a farm – "To what base uses may we come, Horatio!" – into a court, the shape of nearly a parallelogram. There on his left is the wreck of a fine room, which I should imagine to have been the banqueting or dining-hall with a large fireplace, of the same length with the open space. There is a date on the wall above, 1634; but that does not ... say more than that in 1634 something was done to the building either in the way of repairs or additions. There are the remains of small apartments at the other end of the court; probably superior offices and servants' rooms, with small windows, picturesque but not suggestive of much light. The greater part of the present building is [he is told] not earlier, and probably later than James the First's time. There is a slanting loophole just inside the arch of which I have spoken...of the same character as the hagioscopes we see... in many churches. The buildings that now obscure the view are undeniably modern. Within the recollection of the oldest inhabitant there was an uninterrupted path, leading up from the house to the churchyard, and there is still the mark in the wall where the entrance has been closed up. The dwelling was occupied, I am told, for three winters by the grandfather of the present owner, i.e. within the last hundred years.

There are spaces where escutcheons and coats of arms once were and at the finials of some of the windows there are monograms or letters B – referring no doubt to the family of Berry or Bury. The roof has been raised by placing brickwork on the original wall. Why bricks, which are not common, should have been used, I do not know. The stone of which the rest of the building has been built must have been carefully chosen, for a great deal of it is in excellent preservation; the corners are as sharp as when first chiselled. The arches are still pleasant to the eye from the beauty of their lines, although "dissolution" is sinking them "from high to low" and chance-sown flowers crown them at their will ..." (Hawker, 1879, 494-496).



Fig. 8 Extract from the OS 2nd Edition Sheet 5/2, 1:2500 (1905) showing the house reduced to the west wing only after late 19th-century demolitions.

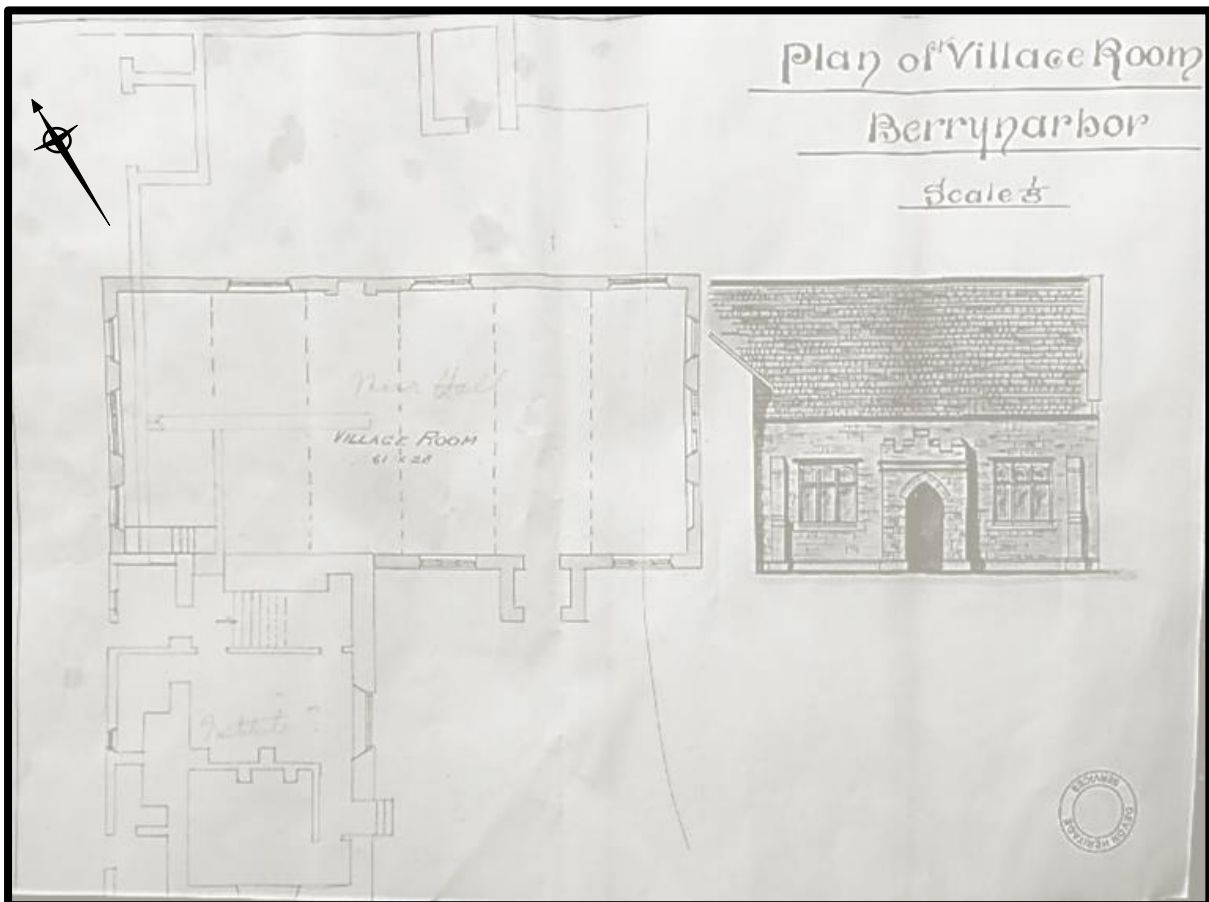


Fig. 9 Plan and elevation of the Village Room dating from 1909 (North Devon Record Office B170-1/184) showing the new Manor Hall on the site of demolished parts of the house.

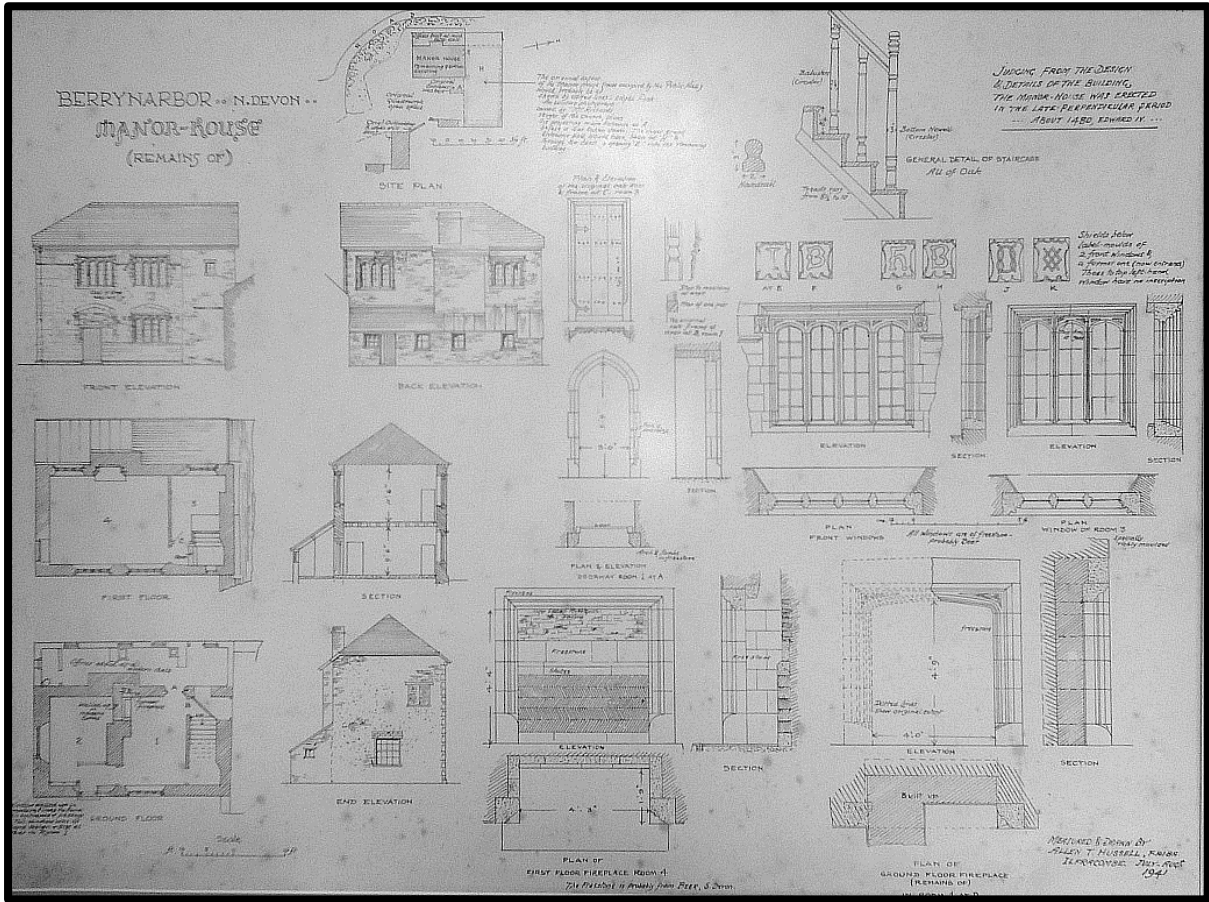


Fig. 10. Archaeological drawings by Allen T. Hussell F.R.I.B.A, dated 1941, showing the plans, sections, elevations and details of the building as they were before alterations in the mid 20th century. From a framed drawing in the ownership of the Manor Hall Trustees.

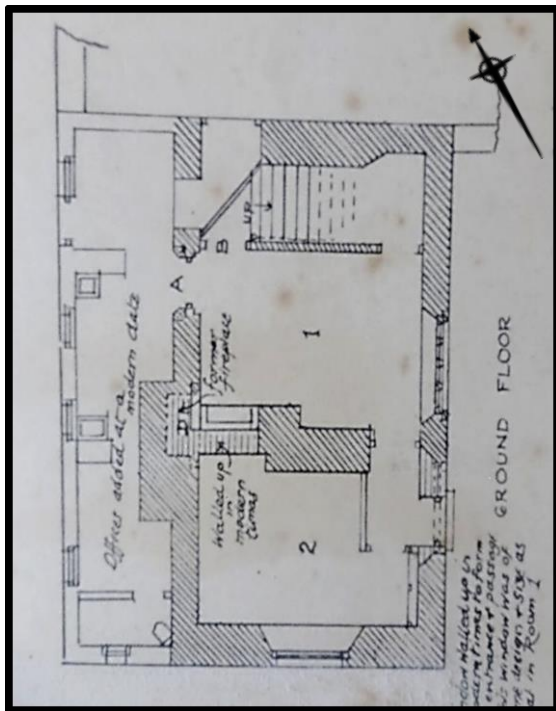


Fig. 11 Extract from the drawing showing the ground-floor plan in 1941.

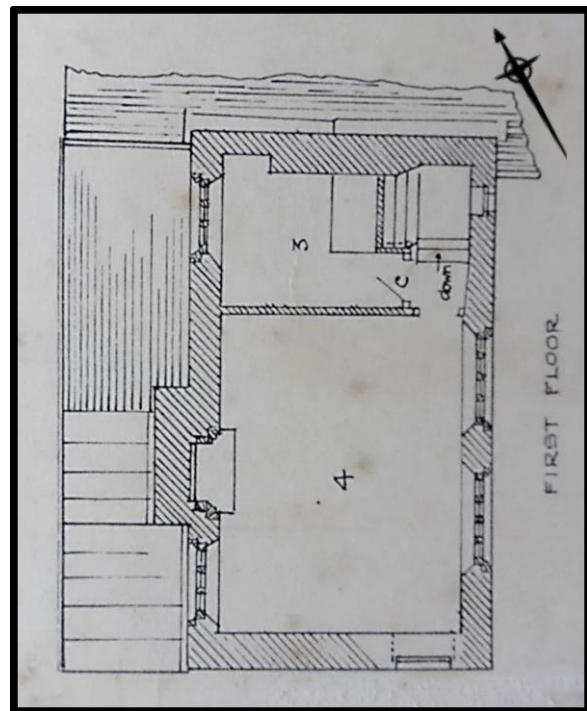


Fig.12 Extract from the drawing showing the first-floor plan in 1941.



In 1880 the Revd. Mr Arthur Crawford Davie Basset died unmarried and with him the direct male line of the Davie-Bassets also died out. The heir to the estates now was his sister, Harriet Mary Basset, who in the 1850s had married a local Conservative MP, Charles Williams, of Pilton House and Westaway, near Barnstaple. As a condition of his wife's inheritance Williams was required to take the name Basset. Shortly afterwards in 1889 the porch wing and adjacent buildings at Berrynarbor were demolished and removed to Westaway, where they remain. This may have been intended to reinforce Williams' claim to the Basset ancestry, but it also ensured the preservation of the porch; the future of the house at Berrynarbor being perhaps uncertain.

Only the west wing of the original building and some elements in the boundary walls now remained standing above ground at Berrynarbor. The truncated house is shown on the OS 2nd-edition 1:2500 map Sheet 5, 2 dated 1905 (Fig. 8), with only a short surviving section of the west wall in place. The demolition of the porch was noted in Kelly's *Devonshire Directory* in 1893: "part of the front, including the porch was taken down in 1889 and the porch has been re-erected at Westaway near Barnstaple; the exterior was formerly ornamented with [arms] and elaborate carved work, all of which has been removed to Watermouth Castle, the seat of Mrs Basset, lady of the manor and principal land-owner" (Kelly 1893, 53). Other commentators were less sympathetic: Sabine Baring Gould in his guide to Devon describes Watermouth Castle as "modern, in good situation; has some carved stonework, moved to a garden gate and built in without much order, from the dismantled mansion of Berrynarbor. The porch of this same manor house was carried away and re-erected at Westaway near Barnstaple. In fact this fine old manor house, built in the reign of Edward IV, has been shamefully pillaged" (Baring Gould 1931, 100).

#### *The 20th century*

Prebendary Chanter's paper in the Exeter Diocesan Gazette (see above) gives a glimpse of the house in the early 20th century before its reconstruction as the Manor Hall, when part of the building was still in ruins: "Part of the old manor house of the Berry family, just outside the walls of the churchyard, still exists. From the squire's mansion it descended after the death of Thomas Berry to be a farm house, and now there is nothing but a few ruins and a labourer's cottage. It had been rebuilt in Elizabeth's reign or early James I, enlarged again in 1634 and was through the centuries the home of the family; now it is only a ruin..." (Chanter n.d.).

In the early years of the 20th century the remaining building was extended and restored for use as a Village Room and Parish Institute. The original drawings, dated 1909, survive at the North Devon Record Office (NDRO B170-1/184) and show the new hall pretty much as built, superimposed upon the plan of the ruins of earlier structures (Fig. 9). No architect for these works has been identified, but the plan shows the main area identified as 'Main Hall' and the surviving west wing as 'Institute'. The older part of the building seems not to have been significantly altered at this time and retained many of its historic features, both from its manor house and farmhouse phases. The new part of the building was designed in a simplified Gothic or Old English Style and may have been completed in 1914, since this date appears carved in the keystone above the main porch. The long delay in realising the building may have been due to the need to collect subscriptions for the building, though it is understood that the Bassets contributed generously. A portrait of Edith Basset Williams, who inherited the estates in 1908 and who may have been either one of the instigators of the project or a generous contributor, painted by ?B. Bright, and dated ?1894 still hangs above the fireplace in the Manor Hall to this day.

In the mid 20th century, like many gentry families of the period, the Bassets began to dispose of their rural properties. At about this time an architect named Allen T. Hussell visited the building and made a detailed record of the west wing. The drawings survive in the possession of the Manor Hall Trustees (Figs 10, 11, 12) and show that the west wing remained little altered from its farmhouse condition, with the principal ground floor room still divided with a large chimney serving two fireplaces. This was clearly an addition since it cut across a late medieval fireplace in the rear wall with a four centred arched head, only half of which remained visible (Fig. 10, bottom

right). The chimney stack above this level had perhaps been removed during the conversion of the building to a Parish Institute and the fireplace at this level, with a flat arched head, was wholly exposed (Fig. 10, bottom centre). The drawings are significant because they show that many original features survived at this stage which have since disappeared. These include a mid-to-late 17th-century staircase (Fig. 10, top right) and a 17th-century door in an elaborate frame with urn stops, which may have been contemporary with the staircase (Fig. 10, top centre). At this date one of the ground-floor windows still retained its mullions with arched heads, since replaced with a modern window, but the corresponding ground-floor window had been blocked up and converted into a doorway (Fig. 13). The drawings also show the south wall with a two-light window at first-floor level and a modern sash at ground-floor level (Fig. 14). Although the date of these features is uncertain, these observations seem to show that the west wing did not extend further south than it does at present. All these features are now obscured by modern render.

The rear elevation is also shown without modern render (Fig 15). The middle arch of one of the first-floor windows had been destroyed; this has since been repaired in cement render. This window is also noted as having particularly elaborate mouldings internally (see Fig. 10), which suggests that it formed part of a different internal volume from the first-floor rooms to the south.

The context of Hussell's record of the building is not known. It is possible that it was made at a time when the whole future of the building was uncertain, as a record in case of future demolition. Alternatively it may simply have been made out of antiquarian interest. A rapid internet search shows that Hussell was a local architect operating from Ilfracombe in the early part of the 20th century. He was a keen antiquarian and took a particular interest in historic building surveys, including (most unusually for the period) surveys of Victorian buildings in Ilfracombe ([http://homepages.which.net/~gk.sherman/ilfracombe/jb98\\_10.htm](http://homepages.which.net/~gk.sherman/ilfracombe/jb98_10.htm)). A collection of his articles have been published by the Ilfracombe Museum as a volume entitled *Ilfracombe's Architecture 1837-1900*. Hussell also produced *North Devon Churches, Studies of some of the Ancient Buildings* in 1909.

The hall was purchased by the Parish Council and placed in trust for the parish, in the care of the Manor Hall Trust, in 1947 (<http://www.berrynarborvillage.co.uk/manorhall.html>). Unfortunately alterations either at or after this date have led to the removal of most of the internal features shown by Hussell, including the staircase and historic doors. The ground-floor and first-floor rooms are now single spaces, with a small separate area at the north end of the building containing a modern staircase, kitchen, lavatory and store. These alterations may have been made between 1950 and 1970, probably in the context of the addition of a stage area at the west end of the hall, which necessitated alterations to the access between the two buildings, including the removal of the 17th-century stair.

The Edwardian hall has since been extended to the north to provide new lavatories and a store room. The implications of this for the archaeology of the site are not known, but there is evidence that the raised ground immediately to the north of the hall still retains fragments of ancient masonry *in situ*. These areas may retain features which would help with both the dating and the interpretation of the medieval house.

### 3. BUILDING SURVEY

#### 3.1 The west wing: exterior

##### *East elevation*

The east elevation of the west wing was one of the principal elevations of the house, facing the court alongside the main entrance to the house, which must have led through the demolished porch into a screens passage running through the demolished parts of the building. It is remarkable for the quality of its stonework, especially the carved work and the decorative detail, though much of this has unfortunately been removed. This elevation is of two bays under a pitched roof and

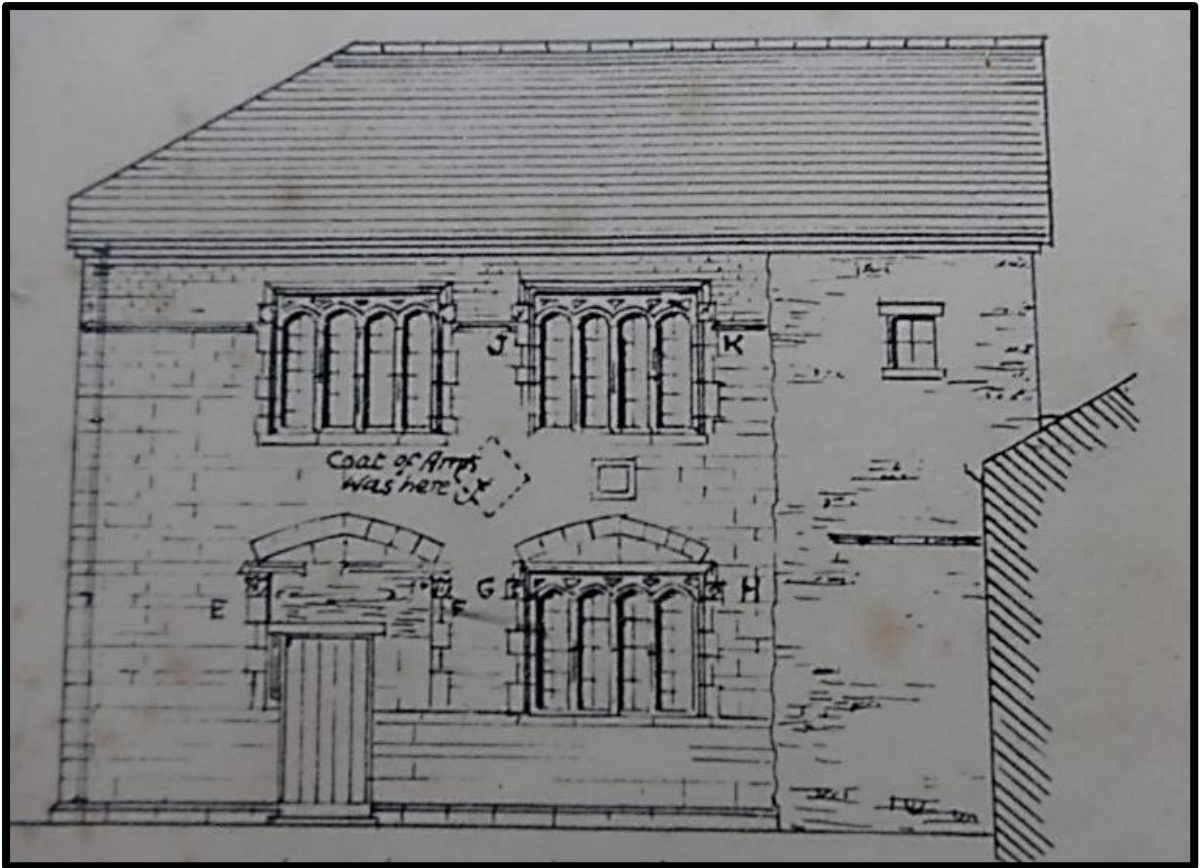


Fig. 13 Extract from Allen T. Hussell's 1941 drawing showing the east elevation of the west wing prior to 20th-century alterations.

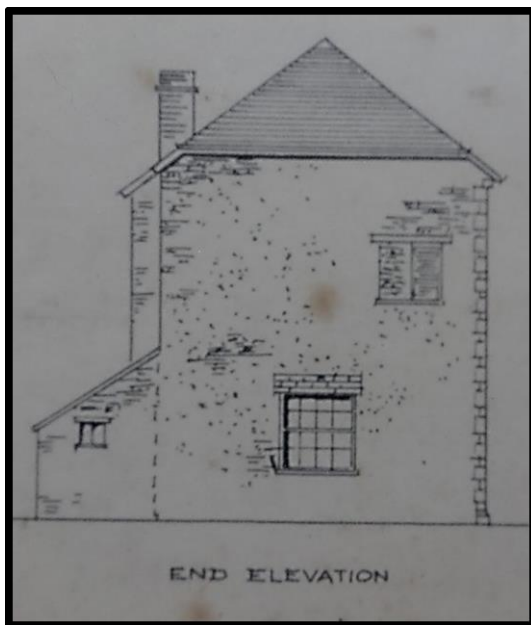


Fig. 14 Extract from Allen T. Hussell's 1941 drawing showing the south elevation of the west wing prior to 20th-century alterations.

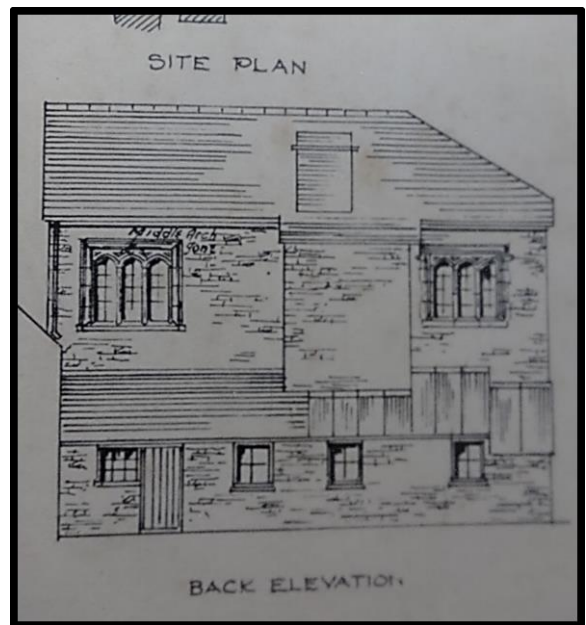


Fig. 15 Extract from Allen T. Hussell's 1941 drawing showing the west elevation of the west wing prior to 20th-century alterations.



Fig. 16 General view of the east façade of the west wing showing the striped stonework interrupted by mullioned windows and panels of decoration.



Fig. 17 Detail of one of the ground-floor windows showing inconsistencies in the jointing of the masonry, suggesting that the windows are inserted.



Fig. 18 Detail of the northern part of the façade showing the scar of the demolished porch and the modern entrance to the staircase.

originally had four four-light mullioned windows, two on each storey, lighting the ground- and first-floor rooms. The windows of the first-floor room survive intact, with hollow-chamfered mullions, decorated with an external roll-moulding, and depressed four-centred heads with sunk spandrels, all worked in a grey limestone, possibly Beer stone. The mullions of the ground-floor windows have unfortunately been removed and the window frames renewed in the late 20th century. These windows have relieving arches over them but, nevertheless, both lintels show signs of sagging, no doubt as a result of the removal of the mullions. Each window is contained under a moulded drip course with a pair of label stops in the shape of shields. These are of the complex decorative scalloped shape common in the 15th century. Some of the shields are asymmetrical, with 'bouches' cut out as though to accommodate a tournament lance. Four of the shields are emblazoned with initial letters: 'H' and 'B', 'T' and 'B', respectively; no doubt the initials of members of the Berry family. Two other shields are embellished with curious knot-work motifs of interlacing bands or cords; one forming a 'granny knot' or a 'square knot', the other a saltire cross interlacing with a lozenge. The former motif occurs on Renaissance church bench ends at Landcross, near Bideford, and both motifs are used in bench ends at Weare Giffard, but their significance either in those churches or at Berrynarbor is not known. The label stops of the fourth window, at the south end of the first floor, are not decorated with either initials or carving.

The ashlar masonry of the façade is of exceptionally high quality, faced with almost immaculately squared blocks banded in alternating broad and narrow courses of pale grey and light brown stone (Fig. 16, 17, 18). Stone banding like this is unusual in domestic buildings in Devon, though it very occasionally appears in churches. It is rarely as consistent as it appears here. Close examination of the banding in fact seems to show that the windows and decorative elements of the façade are inserted. The relationship of the dressings of the windows with the bands of the ashlar work, for example, involve many awkward junctions where stones are cut into or notched by adjacent stones, which must imply that the window frames are cut into earlier masonry (Fig. 17). The banding of the façade is most consistent in the lower part of the elevation, but appears to break down in the upper part. The jambs of the first-floor windows, in particular, seem to cut through both the banding and through a horizontal string course which runs across the façade several feet below the eaves line (Fig. 18). Above first floor level at the centre of the façade, between the tiers of windows, the banding is particularly compromised, which may perhaps show that the relieving arches of the windows and the decorative elements formerly in this position are also inserted features. The large lozenge-shaped patch at the centre of the façade may have been occupied by an escutcheon or Coat of Arms (now presumably removed to either Watermouth or Westaway) and the rectangular aedicule or frame beneath the northern first-floor window may also have framed carved work. These areas seem to employ a stone of similar texture but different colour to the grey and brown ashlar banding, which has weathered to a reddish hue. The same stone was also employed for the label stops. From this we may conjecture that the original façade was plainer than it now appears, though still striped with banding, and that its decorations were enhanced at a later date by the addition of decorative carved work and larger windows. The style of the shields bearing the owners initials suggests a date for these alterations in the late 15th or early 16th century.

The string course below the eaves certainly seems to be interrupted by the first-floor windows and might initially be interpreted as an earlier eaves line, above which the roof has been raised over nine or ten courses of red brick. Revd Treasure Hawker (see above) noted this and assumed that the roof had been raised at some period. The fact that the first-floor windows extend into this brick coursing might suggest that they are contemporary with the brickwork, though the use of brick would be very unusual in north Devon in the late-medieval or early post-medieval period. In fact the roof has certainly not been raised, as shall be demonstrated below, and there must be another explanation for the insertion of brick courses at the top of the façade. The brickwork does not extend into the area formerly occupied by the porch (Fig. 18), as would be logical if the roof of the whole wing had been raised. It seems more likely that the building

survives to its original height, but that the façade was formerly crowned with a deep ornamental frieze of carved work which, like so many of the decorative elements of the building, has perhaps been plundered for reuse elsewhere. The windows cut into the area of this frieze, which again points to their being inserted, though it is clear from the neatness of the jointing that effort was expended to make the façade appear homogenous. Examination of the architectural *spolia* at Watermouth might identify blocks of the right size and shape to have formed such a frieze and might both settle this question and allow for a tentative reconstruction of the original appearance of the façade. Chickets (semi-dormers or gablets) above the windows are also a strong possibility and these may have been very ornamentally treated.

The most likely date for the robbing of such a frieze is the early 1800s, when material such as carved stonework and armorial bearings are known to have been removed to Watermouth Castle. The use of red bricks for refacing the robbed masonry would certainly be consistent with such a date and we may speculate that these bricks are leftovers from the construction of the castle which, like many 18th and early 19th-century buildings, was probably constructed with a brick carcass faced with stone.

The northern part of the façade, which was formerly obscured by the porch now reassembled at Westaway, is not faced with ashlar bands but constructed of very small flat pieces of rubble bonded with a white lime mortar. It is uncertain whether or not the façade of the porch and adjacent buildings were also banded, though this seems very likely. At first-floor level is a horizontal projecting feature resembling a plat band. The function of this feature is uncertain, but it is probably a relic of either the first-floor level of the west wing, or the demolished porch. It might represent the infilling of a beam slot for the first floor of the porch, or perhaps some attempt to provide a weathering for the roof of a replacement porch after the demolition of the original.

The dating of the façade and its inserted decorations is not easy. Revd Treasure Hawker's account of the building prior to the demolition of the ruins of the northern ranges suggests that the door of the main entrance featured linenfold carving (at least this is one possible interpretation of his description of 'napkin-pattern carving'). Alternatively he may have been describing a dense repeating pattern such as diaper-work. Both types of decoration were common in the 15th and early 16th century. Hawker also noted the date '1634' on a wall somewhere within the ruins, either in a room with a large fireplace or in the rear courtyard but, as he notes, 'that does not ... say more than that in 1634 something was done to the building either in the way of repairs or additions' (Hawker 1879). This date may perhaps refer to alterations within the building, perhaps contemporary with the 17th-century staircase and doorway with urn stops, recorded by Hussell but no longer extant, inside the west range.

#### *South elevation*

The south elevation is today entirely featureless and covered with render. Fortunately the elevation was recorded by Hussell prior to the application of the render. His drawing (Fig. 14) shows a large window at ground-floor level, apparently a modern sash window with a couple of brick courses over. Though this may have been cut into earlier solid walling, it might also replace a 16th-century window with stone mullions and a drip-moulding, the generous splayed embrasure of which survived into at the time of Hussell's record (Fig. 11). It seems likely that the sash window was inserted in the early 19th century, perhaps when the original was removed (?for reuse at Watermouth). On the first floor Hussell records a smaller, two-light window, apparently blocked. This is no longer visible either internally or externally, but it might also be of 16th-century date. Alternatively, as it is not central to the elevation, this window may be a later insertion. The roof was originally gabled, but this has been replaced with a hip.



Fig. 19 West elevation of the west range showing the two three-light windows at first-floor level and the large chimney breast serving the fireplaces at ground- and first-floor level. The lean-to probably dates from the 19th century.

#### *West elevation*

Much of the west elevation (Fig. 19) is now concealed by a low lean-to structure. This is not easily dated but is certainly an addition to the building. It is presumed to have been added in the 19th century, either after the northern parts of the house fell into ruin *c.*1870 or perhaps after the final truncation of the house in 1889. The lean-to masks the evidence of a relieving arch in the south end of the façade, which must formerly have crowned a large ground-floor window corresponding with that on the floor above. At the northern end of the west elevation, at ground-floor level, is a small doorway with a four-centred arched head which now opens into the main ground-floor room, but formerly into the space at the foot of the stairs. This has a simple chamfered frame without stops or, apparently, a drip moulding. The doorway may well be a primary feature dating from the late 14th or 15th century.

At first-floor level the very large chimney breast serving the fireplaces at ground- and first-floor level can be seen rising above the lean-to roof (Fig. 19). On either side are two three-light windows with uncusped depressed arched heads. The northern window is particularly richly moulded and may have lit the 17th-century staircase. It has lost its central light, which has since been reconstructed in cement. The southern window retains its drip moulding. As the façade is rendered it is not possible to see whether the brick coursing beneath the eaves extended onto this façade. Hussell's drawings show no hint of brickwork in this position and it may be that the fine quality banded ashlar and other decorative elements, including the putative frieze, were reserved for the decoration of the façade facing the entrance court.

The 19th-century drawing (Fig. 3) shows that, in addition to the large chimney stack attached to the rear wall, a further large chimney stack protruded from the centre of the ridge. This rose from the centre of the existing range and must have divided the interior into separate rooms. This stack survived at ground-floor level only in 1941, but had been truncated to first-floor level above. The drawing also shows a further stack at the north end of the surviving range. This has also been demolished, but may have served a fireplace in the northern of the first-floor rooms.



Fig. 20 Detail of the modern staircase. The projecting baulk of masonry (right) is a relic of the demolished 17th-century stair, which rose in the opposite direction.



Fig. 21 Detail of the 15th-century four-centred archway opening through the west wall from the former stair hall. The date of the existing door is uncertain.



Fig. 22 View of the schoolroom on the ground floor. All historic features, including a fireplace and a large window embrasure are completely concealed by modern decorative finishes.



### 3.2 The West wing: ground floor interior

The interior of the west wing has been much altered in the 20th century and none of the partitions or historic features shown by Hussell in his plans of 1941 now survive. The original plan of this part of the building is difficult to determine due to the extent of the 20th-century alterations (Fig. 22) but, we may conjecture from the survival of a large fireplace (now concealed within the west wall) and from the position and configuration of the windows, that the wing contained a large room of high status, with a smaller room at its northern end. This room probably served as a circulation area or a stair hall, and certainly had been converted to that use by the 17th century, when the staircase recorded by Hussell may have been inserted. The partition between these two rooms probably lay at a distance of about 2.75m from the inside face of the north wall, allowing for a broad stair with ample circulation space around it. Though no evidence of this partition now remains visible, it is likely that some evidence of sockets for timber studs or screen work may survive in the ceiling of the ground-floor rooms, and a partition on this line remains extant in the roof space. It is probable that this partition formerly rose the full height of the building.

#### *The stair hall*

Today, the building is entered by a modern doorway in the east wall, cut through the west side of the former porch. This gives access to a small lobby at the foot of the modern staircase, which rises from east to west alongside the north gable wall. All these features are modern.

The staircase replaces an earlier one which is shown on Hussell's plan, probably of 17th-century date and rising in the opposite direction. The remains of the support for the half-landing of the staircase, together with the splay of a first-floor doorway, survive as a truncated baulk of masonry and a splay above it on the north side of the foot of the modern stair (Fig. 20). Hussell records the balustrade of the staircase (Fig. 10, top right) as having turned balusters of 17th-century character and newel posts with ornate turned ball finials. The stair must have risen towards the east, dividing at the half landing into two branches, one rising northwards to link with the adjoining buildings and the other to the first-floor rooms by a similar short flight rising southwards, which survived when Hussell drew the building (Figs 11, 12).

The partition wall to the left of the modern staircase is also entirely modern and replaces an earlier wall, shown on Hussell's plan of 1941, which rose close against the balustrade of the demolished staircase. It seems likely that the balustrade was designed to be fully displayed and it may therefore be conjectured that the wall built against the balustrade was a later addition (Hussell shows the staircase with an open string, which would be unusual for the period, but it is, of course, possible that the stair had been altered when the wall alongside was built). The wall was perhaps added after the truncation of the house in the 18th century and was no doubt intended to separate the staircase from one of two rooms inserted within the shell of the earlier wing.

The ground-floor opening near the base of the stair communicating with the Manor Hall is almost certainly a modern opening made in the mid 20th-century. It was probably cut through the medieval fabric to improve the circulation after the construction of a stage at the west end of the hall. This must have led to the abandonment of earlier circulation patterns and, probably, necessitated the destruction and replacement of the historic staircase.

The stair hall would have been entered from the demolished parts of the house by a doorway in the western part of the north wall and from the exterior by the small four-centred arched doorway which survives in the west wall of the building (Fig. 21). This has a simple chamfered frame and a substantial door; however, since the door is clad with modern fireproofing it is hard to be certain whether or not the door also survives. No other historic features are visible in this area, but it is considered possible that a fireplace might survive in the north wall, concealed by the modern stair. This would have to have gone out of use after the 17th-century stair was inserted and might therefore date from the medieval building. If its existence could be established this would help clarify the plan of the house before the addition of the staircase.

*The school room*

The large schoolroom on the ground-floor (Fig. 22) was created after 1941 by the demolition of the earlier ground-floor partitions and also the large central chimney stack rising through the building. This had presumably been added to divide the wing into two heated rooms after the truncation of the house, and may have dated from the 18th century. It blocked and probably superseded a late-medieval fireplace in the west wall. The removal of the stack allowed almost the whole ground-floor area to be thrown into a single large room, rather larger than the original room since it annexed part of the putative stair hall.

The removal of the stack also seems to have exposed at least part of the medieval fireplace, though this was subsequently blocked and masked by a dado of tongue-and-grooved panelling. The fireplace (Fig. 10, bottom right), had richly-moulded jambs rising into a four-centred arch with indented spandrels carved with foliate decorations. Only half of the carved surround was visible at the time of Hussell's survey and the embrasure may have remained blocked. It is uncertain to what extent the fireplace remains preserved in the rear wall, though Hussell's drawings seem to show the northern half surviving in good condition. As Hussell saw only its outer face, historic decorative treatments such as herringbone masonry or, perhaps, sgraffito patterns might yet remain within the opening.

The room was clearly of high status and may once have been richly ornamented with panelling, plasterwork and, perhaps, wall paintings. The Revd Treasure Hawker noted that the downstairs rooms had been stripped of panelling, though 'vestiges, in their coloured cornices &c., of former wealth and magnificence' survived upstairs (Hawker 1879, see above). No decorations are now visible, but their survival behind the existing plaster and timber cladding cannot be ruled out. The ceiling may well retain evidence of moulded beams and fragments of painting might survive behind the dado, or within the large blocked window embrasure in the south wall.

It is uncertain to what extent the ceiling and joists were replaced when the floor was strengthened and the void accommodating the demolished chimney was patched. This might be explored by lifting a floorboard in the room above. For a summary of the probable phasing of the ground-floor rooms see Fig 37.

*The lean-to*

The lean-to extension at the rear of the house appears to have developed in a series of phases during the 18th and 19th centuries; the walls are rendered and dating of the fabric is not possible. The lean-to was clearly not a part of the original building since it lies against a facade which formerly contained window openings. The present lean-to appears to have been built in two phases but its fenestration bears little relation to the lean-to shown on Hussell's plan, or to the footprint of the buildings shown on earlier maps. It may be conjectured that the buildings recorded by Hussell represented late 19th-century reconstruction of the lean-to to create new service rooms for the labourer's cottage within the west wing. This has since been severely altered after 1941, and no obvious historic features now remain.

**3.3 The west wing: first-floor interior***The smaller northern room*

The interior of the first floor has also been altered to form one large room, now a billiard room for the Village Institute (Fig 23). This room was created by the partial removal of the small room with the 17th-century moulded doorway shown on Hussell's plan of the building, and the replacement of the wall of this room further north against the modern staircase. Only the lower



Fig. 23 View of the Billiard Room on the first floor, looking north, showing the lower ceiling in the bar area beyond the 'arch'. The upper part of the wall above the arch retains early fabric and evidence of historic plaster.

part of the wall was removed, and the upper part of the original partition survives to a depth of about 1.5m below the ceiling, forming a low and wide 'arch' over the bar area, which has a lower, modern, ceiling. Investigation of the upper part of the partition, above this ceiling, shows a large beam running at the level of the higher ceiling, with the remains of a partition of vertical studwork above it. These studs are of oak, squared, and contain some redundant sockets suggestive of reuse, they are unrelated to the structure of the roof and are simply applied to the side of one of the trusses. There are traces of lath and plaster on the south side of this partition, facing the larger room, but no marks on the north side, showing that the larger room was ceiled at a higher level with a canted ceiling rising to collar level, and that the smaller room had a flat ceiling at the level of the eaves. This was suspended upon joists (now removed) crossing the building from west to east and simply resting on the wall plates between the rafters. Below the level of the beam a plaster surface remains facing north, and this continues along the west wall, demonstrating that the walls of the smaller room were also well-finished with plaster (Fig. 24). The ceiling structure has been largely removed and replaced by a modern structure of very slight joists. No trace remains of any plaster mouldings or painting, though the latter might be revealed by examining the plaster layers in detail and there is some evidence that the remains of rich plasterwork survived at the time of the Revd Treasure Hawker's visit in the 1870s (Hawker 1879, see above).

It thus appears that the arrangement of the rooms at first-floor level, shown by Hussell, dated from at least the 17th century and that the rooms and ceilings had been inserted into the shell of an earlier building. The smaller first-floor room with the elaborate door frame oversailed the lower section of the stair and stopped several metres short of the east wall, allowing the stair to rise beneath it, probably within a boxed enclosure intruding into the room, to allow headroom.

This room was lit by an especially richly-moulded three-light window, which still survives, though much repaired, now shared between a small lavatory and the staircase. The room may have been of high status and it is probable that it was heated by a fireplace in the north wall, now concealed by modern fabric. Removal of a loose panel below the sink in the east part of the small



Fig. 24 View of the roof structure, looking west, showing the evidence for historic partitions and plaster finishes to the smaller first-floor room; also the complete rebuilding of the northern gable above this level.



Fig. 25 View of the fireplace in the west wall of the Billiard Room, featuring a moulded and stopped stone frame partially concealed by a 20th-century timber mantelpiece.

lavatory revealed an offset in the wall which is suggestive either of a further doorway to the north, or an alcove, perhaps for a cupboard. The lower part of the masonry to the east of this recess is covered in plaster, but has been truncated at a height of approximately 0.3m above floor level. This may mean that the whole gable wall has been rebuilt, removing any evidence for fireplaces or openings at a high level; certainly the whole northern gable above the ceiling of the lavatory bears no traces of historic plastering and it must thus be a late 19th-century rebuild (Fig. 24). It was probably reconstructed after the demolition of a chimney in this position during the 19th-century alterations.

*The larger southern room*

The large southern room is now ceiled above eaves level by a structure of joists running across the roof at the level of the top of the ashlar pieces in each truss. The structure seems to be patched in the middle where the large central chimney stack formerly rose through the ceiling, which shows that many of the joists and beams forming the ceiling structure may predate the demolition of the chimney stack. The traces of coloured cornices and ‘vestiges..... of former wealth and magnificence’ noted by Hawker (Hawker 1879) must either have appeared below this ceiling (where they no longer remain) or were perhaps associated with the older, canted ceiling rising into the roof structure. Hawker’s observation is important: painted decorations to walls and ceilings were fashionable in the late 17th and early 18th-century, and this may provide dating evidence for the insertion of the flat ceiling and large chimney at the centre of the building. Alternatively, if Hawker meant that parts of an elaborate, painted plaster ceiling remained in the roof space, as part of the canted ceiling pre-dating the early 18th-century flat ceiling below, this would provide some evidence that the ceilings of Devon Gentry and Merchant houses in the 17th century were sometimes, perhaps originally, coloured. It is generally assumed that Devonshire decorative plasterwork (at least on ceilings) was left uncoloured or lime-washed white to allow for the play of effects of light and shade (Thorp 1990, 138). Hawker’s observation may show that it was the custom from an early date to decorate some plaster ceilings with colour.

The larger southern room must also have been a high-status chamber, as it was exceptionally well lit by a large number of windows, all richly moulded and with arched heads to each light. The two windows in the east wall are of four lights and the single window in the west wall has three. In addition, there was formerly a further window in the south wall, of two lights, which features on Hussell’s elevation drawings but has since been entirely blocked and obscured. The position and detail of this window differ from the other windows of the room, which may suggest that it was a modification. It might have lit a small, first-floor closet. The possibility remains that this window was inserted within the embrasure of a larger window, facing south, which had been blocked when the interior of the room was subdivided. The room has a modern dado which does not appear to mask any earlier panelling, though this might conceal evidence of wall paintings of either medieval or 17th century date, which might survive behind the later plaster.

Although the high canted ceiling of this room no longer exists, the room does retain a large and impressive fireplace which still bears witness to its former grandeur (Fig. 25). This fireplace was presumably exposed and displayed in the early 20th century after the demolition of the upper part of the central stack during the conversion of the building to a parish institute. The fireplace is large, with jambs of moulded stone featuring mirrored ogee-mouldings separated by a hollow. At the base of each jamb the mouldings are terminated by cleft, domed stops (colloquially known as ‘Bum’ stops). These can be dated as late-medieval as they appear in some pre-Reformation buildings, such as the gatehouse of Cornworthy Priory, in the South Hams. The lintel of the fireplace is square, rather than arched (as formerly on the floor below) and it is likely that there is a large relieving arch built into the wall above. Given the elaborate decoration of the building there is a possibility that the fireplace was further ornamented with a projecting mantelshelf, or perhaps carved heraldic decorations, though these are now concealed by later plaster and may, of course, have been damaged or dressed off when the plaster was applied. The

rear elevation of the fireplace embrasure is well constructed of dressed stone above a chamfered string course, below which the fireback is formed of herringbone slates laid in five courses. This treatment is also found in local late-medieval buildings, such as the ‘Corrodian’s Lodgings’ on the ground floor of the 15th-16th-century refectory wing of Cleeve Abbey, Somerset or early post-medieval buildings such as Woolhanger at Lynton (Passmore & Parker 2004, 15). It must pre-date the fashion for plastered and sgraffito-decorated fireplaces in the 17th century and known from many examples in the region (Adams 2007). The jambs are all of ashlar blocks, now painted.

### 3.4 The west wing: roof structure.

The entire west wing is covered by a common-rafter truss roof of a single phase of construction. This survives in very good condition, considering its early date and the absence of any lateral bracing. The roof consists of 24 common-rafter trusses, each consisting of a pair of rafters of small scantling (measuring approximately 0.15 x 0.11m) tenoned and pegged together at the apex. The rafters are linked by a collar at a high level, of similar scantling to the rafters and with no hint of cambering or chamfering (Fig 26). The collars are tenoned and pegged into mortices in the soffits of the rafters and secured with single pegs. They contain no evidence of sockets for *soulaces*, arch bracing, a crown purlin or any other reinforcement or lateral bracing of the roof.

At the base of each rafter couple are short ashlar pieces, tenoned and pegged into the soffit of the rafter with two pegs, and tenoned, but apparently not pegged, into square, unmoulded wall plates resting on the wall tops (Fig. 27). The feet of the rafters and the rear face of the ashlar pieces are linked by short, insubstantial ties in the form of ‘slip-tenons’ measuring about a third of the width of the rafters, and pegged into the timbers at either end.

The wall and eaves plate on both sides of the roof are linked by short ties at intervals, of similar scantling to the ties previously mentioned and with dovetail terminals housed in the upper surface of the plates. The rafters do not appear to be jointed into the eaves plate, as might be expected, though this detail may simply be obscured. In places sections of the wall plates are scarfed together with a half lap joint.

The north wall is not at right angles to the building, which suggests that the wing was added to an earlier structure on a slightly different alignment. The trusses are therefore not parallel to the end wall, and bare sections of the wall and eaves plate extend further north, without showing any sockets for further ashlar pieces, nor any sign of other trusses. The first truss from north was therefore always the first in this section of the roof; it contains six small sockets for ties linking it over the stonework of the modern gable to a roof structure beyond which no longer exists. The present ties are modern. There must have been a partition on this line, perhaps not structurally connected to the roof timbers, and perhaps only of timber. Unfortunately there is no obvious sequence of carpenter’s marks; in fact the only marks are to be found in trusses 9, 10 and 11 (counting southwards from the north end). These are incised at collar level with chisel marks: ‘I’, ‘I’ and ‘II’, on the east side of the roof and ‘II’ and ‘II’ on trusses 10 and 11 only on the west side of the roof. The absence of such marks on other trusses makes it difficult to determine whether or not the roof continued any further north, as seems likely, and whether the roof beyond was of different or similar form.

There are no purlins either above or under the rafters, and no evidence of a *sous-faitage* structure, such as a crown post assembly, supporting the trusses at the centre of the collars. This means that the roof would be vulnerable to racking. It is possible that such a structure may have been removed and evidence for it destroyed, though one would expect the survival of sockets, or at least staining on the soffits of the collars, to show that such a structure had existed. Alternatively the roof may have been given stiffness by a covering of sarking boards. These do not survive and the roof has indeed begun to rack, especially at the northern end of the wing (Fig. 24).



Fig. 26 View of the roof structure over the west wing showing the inserted flat ceiling in the southern part of the first floor and the evidence for lath and plaster forming a high, canted ceiling. The 'purlins' on either side are modern insertions.



Fig. 27 Detail of the ashlar pieces at the base of each truss showing the small pegged ties linking the timbers and the square wall and eaves plates.



Fig. 28 Detail of the short dovetail ties linking the wall and eaves plates across the wall tops. Note the apparently good condition of these members.



Fig. 29 Detail of the truncated rafters at the centre of the roof showing sockets for the collars, now sawn short, inserted purlins and re-shaped ends to each rafter allowing them to rest against the chimney.



Fig. 30 Detail of the south façade of the early 20th century parish hall.



The roof timbers are clean, without any trace of smoke blackening, and were therefore clearly never employed over an open hall, but must always have been part of a storeyed building. Despite the anomalies mentioned above at the north end of the roof, there is no evidence that the roof has been disassembled and re-erected; it is consistent in its carpentry throughout and must presumably have been constructed for this building.

The roof has been subject to some alteration, probably during the 18th-century alterations following the truncation of the house. The central parts of four trusses at the centre of the roof have been cut away, preserving most of the original common rafters, but removing their collars and cutting their ends to a triangular form to butt against the demolished chimneys stack which formerly rose through the roof structure at this point (Fig. 29). The sawn off tenons of the original collars are still in place, and short clasped purlins have been inserted to bear their truncated ends against the sides of the stack. At the south end of the roof, trusses 20-24 have been cut away at the apex to allow for a hipped roof instead of a gable. There is no evidence to suggest that the roof space was ever inhabited and the wing may be understood to have been always only two storeys high. The roof shows no evidence of being cut for chickets or gablets over the windows; however this evidence might well have been removed along with the putative decorated frieze or parapet. At the north end of the roof, on the east side, the walling below the wall plates has clearly been rebuilt, probably at the removal of the porch, and the wall plate has sunk. This, no doubt, has contributed to the racking of the roof at this end of the building.

### 3.5 The parish hall: exterior

The early 20th-century parish hall replaced the demolished buildings to the north of the west wing and probably occupies the site of the hall, screens passage and service rooms of the medieval house. The building appears to have been completed in 1914, and was designed to reflect, but be easily distinguishable from, the architecture of the early manor house. It is a one-storey building, containing a single volume, but has been extended to the north in the late 20th century. The building is well-constructed of stone rubble, with handsomely-moulded stone dressings to the windows in the principal façade, but less ornament on the other elevations, no doubt to save on the expense of the building. It appears to have contained a single volume, but to have been altered and extended in the 20th century to add to its facilities and increase its usefulness.

#### *South elevation*

The south elevation (Fig. 30) projects to the east of the surviving wing of the original manor house and has a symmetrical façade featuring a central projecting porch flanked by a pair of mullioned-and-transomed three-light windows with stone dressings. These are designed in a Jacobean style with transoms at two thirds the height of the window openings. The dressings are richly moulded with chamfers and hollows, but appear to be of early 20th-century date and do not reuse elements of the earlier buildings. The porch has a Gothic pointed arch, decorative scalloped barge boards and a keystone bearing the date '1914'. Close examination of the masonry has not revealed any evidence of reused or retained masonry from the earlier building and it may be assumed that the site of the ruins of the earlier ranges was completely cleared for the construction of the hall.

#### *East elevation*

The east elevation of the hall is dug deeply into the raised ground levels on the site of the former hall of the medieval house. This is a gabled elevation of two bays (Fig. 31). Both ground-floor windows have red-brick relieving arches over the openings, partially covered with grey render, but the original fenestration of the openings has been replaced with modern oriels. The smaller window in the gable also has red-brick dressings and has also been replaced. There is no evidence of any retention of early fabric in this elevation. The east wall of the hall is unlikely to lie on the line of a medieval wall, though it might conceivably have been built on the foundations of the

gabled wing shown, on early drawings, as occupying part of the site of the hall. No medieval or post-medieval fabric is known to have been preserved here and it is likely that the whole structure is of early 20th-century date.

#### *North elevation*

The north elevation of the hall is now abutted by a modern lean-to structure containing facilities for the hall. This structure was probably built against the earlier north wall of the hall in the late 20th century and entirely masks this elevation. The wall of the older building is entirely concealed by modern decorative renders but, as it is the same thickness as the west wall, it is considered unlikely that it retains any historic fabric. In the narrow space between the northern extension of the building and the north wall of the site, a few fragments of earlier masonry can be seen protruding from the ground, including a high wall now forming part of an outbuilding to a neighbouring property. This is pierced by putlog holes and is clearly part of the medieval house. It is evident that much early fabric survives in this area, concealed by the bank and foliage. It is possible that, when the site of the hall was cleared, debris and earth were piled up here, burying elements of the early buildings. Archaeological deposits and even standing remains of the medieval and post-medieval buildings are clearly preserved here and in the boundary walls of the site with the churchyard and with neighbouring properties.

#### *West elevation*

The west elevation of the hall is similar to the east elevation, with a broad gable, a pair of ground floor windows and a single window in the gable (Fig. 32). Unusually, these openings have dressings of white brick, rather than the red brick or stone of the other elevations, the reason for this difference in treatment is not known. The fenestration consists of timber units with some decorative mouldings which suggests that, though altered, elements of the original fenestration may survive. Above the central window in the gable is a reused block of red stone, very elaborately carved with a cusped mouchette wheel within a square frame (Fig 33). This must have been reused from the earlier mansion and gives a clear impression of the kind of decorative qualities it must have possessed.

### **3.6 The parish hall: interior**

The parish hall is a relatively simple and modest building, containing a single large room under a high, open roof, stained dark brown or black (Fig. 34). The roof is the principal feature of the interior and a very handsome one, supported by wide ‘A’-frame trusses with king-posts and diagonal struts above the collars. The trusses are further reinforced by iron tie rods linking the feet of the trusses with the centre of the collars. The entire structure is displayed, including two levels of purlins and all the common rafters and also the sarking boards running over the backs of the common rafters. There are no obviously historicist elements such as mouldings, bosses or pendants. Although this may be due to economy, it may also have been a deliberate choice on the part of the designer; the exposure of the whole structure and its dark colouring is clearly intended to evoke the open roof of a great medieval hall such as may formerly have existed on this site.

In the north wall of the hall is a single, rather small fireplace for such a large volume, within a tongue-and-grooved boarded dado. This has a richly-decorated chimneypiece (Fig. 35), painted to resemble black marble and incorporating decorative bands of egg-and-dart moulding and a narrow rope moulding. This chimneypiece has the look of a feature contrived from reused elements and it may be that it preserves fragments of decoration from the lost mansion, unified and homogenised by the marbling. Above the fireplace still hangs a portrait of Edith Basset-Williams, who may have encouraged the creation of the hall as a community facility.



Fig. 31 View of the eastern gable of the hall, showing red brick dressings to the windows.



Fig. 32 View of the western gable of the hall, showing white brick dressings, and (top centre) a reused carved stone.



Fig. 33 Detail of the reused carved stone in the western gable representing a cusped 'mouchette wheel', a Gothic decorative detail common from the 14th century, but regaining popularity in the late 15th and early 16th-century, possibly through the influence of Continental 'Flamboyant Gothic' architecture.



Fig.34 View of the hall looking east, showing the character of the roof.



Fig. 35 The fireplace in the hall with the portrait of Edith Basset Williams.

#### 4. DISCUSSION AND HERITAGE STATEMENT

The Manor Hall at Berrynarbor preserves a fragment of a gentry mansion dating from the late-medieval period, but with some unusual features which may suggest the survival of elements of earlier date. The carved decorations seem to show that the house was refurbished with the addition of high-quality ornaments in the early 17th century. A great deal of the house is sadly missing, but what remains bears traces of an unusual level of decoration which implies a wealthy family with considerable architectural and social ambition.

The layout of the village centre seems to preserve the remains of several enclosures which might represent lands pertaining to an early manorial complex. A detailed topographical study was not possible given the constraints of the project, but it does seem that at least three distinct ovoid enclosures may be preserved (Fig. 2) from which the other hedge boundaries in the area radiate, perhaps representing the remains of strip fields outside the manorial enclosures. Chief among these compounds is a large area west of the churchyard, incorporating the manor house site and that of other buildings in the southern part of Birdswell Lane. It seems likely that this area was formerly enclosed by walls and by outbuildings, possibly including a gatehouse at the south-western corner of the churchyard, where a constriction in the width of Birdswell Lane seems to preserve evidence of such a barrier. Birdswell Lane probably developed after the manor house fell into decay and early maps show it enclosed with gates. Many of the buildings on the edge of this area, such as those now facing south and east towards Pit Hill, Birdswell Lane and the village square outside the lych gate of the churchyard may have originated as manorial structures, or at least occupy the sites of these buildings. This is suggested by the 1802 map of the area (Fig. 4), in which the relationship between the manor house and the peripheral buildings is particularly convincing. Archaeological investigation of these houses and buildings might show that, despite the loss of the greater part of the mansion, the peripheral buildings of the complex survive at Berrynarbor to a degree unusual elsewhere.

The only part of the former manor house to survive is the west range. The probable layout of the other parts of the house can be reconstructed from the surviving remains and from what is known of the demolished parts of the house. An attempt to reconstruct this layout is given in Fig 36. The building would have been entered by a porch and screens passage lying alongside the surviving wing, to the west of which, within the demolished parts of the house, would typically have been the buttery, pantry and the kitchen, with a kitchen court to rear. To the east of the screens a large open hall probably occupied the central wing of the building and, beyond this, to the east, would have been the solar and chamber ranges, the highest status parts of the house. The side of these now lies under the playground to the east of the building and west of the churchyard, where the rising ground may imply the build-up of earth through dumping and the collapse of ruined buildings. This might well have ensured the good preservation of buried archaeological remains, and the area is thus rich in archaeological potential.

The surviving wing is probably a medieval building, which on a superficial examination would appear to be of late-medieval date or early post-medieval date, since it features typical late Gothic features such as very depressed arched heads to the windows and four-centred arched heads to the fireplaces and doorways. The roof structure of this building is, however, most unusual for a building of this type and date. The usual form of roof for a high-status secular house of the period is one divided at wide intervals by principal trusses into several bays, separated by purlins bearing the common rafters. This form of roof has been recorded in buildings in north Devon

and the Exmoor area dating from the end of the 13th century (Parker forthcoming) and may have superseded earlier forms of roof based upon closely spaced common-rafter trusses. In the earlier type of roof each couple of common rafters was complete with principals and collars, and lateral bracing was provided not by purlins separating the trusses, but by either clasped purlins linking the collars or by a *sous-faitage* structure, such as a crown purlin supported by a crown-post structure. Common Rafter roofs of this type are now rare in Devon, though an example, dated by dendrochronological sampling to c.1300 survives at the Bishop's Palace Gatehouse in Exeter (Parker, forthcoming) and the high roofs of Exeter Cathedral (from c.1280) are also of this type. A common-rafter roof of this kind has also been observed at Stonehayes Farm, Combe Raleigh, though this remains undated.

Common rafter roofs continued in use during the later medieval period in Devon in the context of churches, where arch-braced common-rafter trusses survive in countless numbers, supporting the characteristic west-country 'wagon roof', but they appear to be very rare in secular contexts. Ecclesiastical wagon roofs are of quite a distinct form, with integral arch bracing in each truss, and bear little resemblance to the roof of the manor house at Berrynarbor, which consists simply of closely-spaced 'A' frames, with no lateral or axial bracing at all. Earlier examples of church wagon roofs are often without horizontal ribs or purlins for lateral bracing and are thus vulnerable to racking. The roof at Berrynarbor is also entirely without lateral bracing. The wall-top assembly, utilising ties in the form of slip tenons and half-lapped dovetail ties to link the wall and eaves plates, is also paralleled in church roofs in Devon, such as those in the chancel aisle at High Bickington, near Barnstaple (Parker 2013, 15).

Examination of the roof of the west wing has not identified any other particularly archaic features, such as the use of notched-lap joints, or 'saddles' or yokes at the apex to bear a ridge purlin. Neither are there any datable decorative features, such as mouldings or applied ornaments or bosses. Nonetheless, the use of a common rafter roof for this wing may suggest that this roof is of earlier date than the architecture of the surviving building suggests. As the roof structure shows no signs of having been dismantled and re-erected, it is suggested that the west wing is perhaps earlier than it appears and that the late-Gothic features and decorations from which it derives much of its character are later additions which have disguised its early date. For these reasons, the roof cannot be dated with any confidence other than to say its character is that of an earlier medieval, rather than a later roof, and it is therefore probably a rare survival. The roof retains some 'Bark edge' and possibly also some sapwood, and may be suitable for dendrochronological sampling, though the small scantling of the timbers may be a problem.

The eastern façade of the surviving wing of the manor house is also highly unusual as an example of structural polychromy; utilising bands of coloured stone to decorate the façade. This treatment is rare in Devon, though there are some possible examples in north Devon in the east end of the chancel at the parish church in Ilfracombe (where alternating freestone and rubble quoins may suggest striped side elevations now obscured by later side chapels) and in the south porch of the same church. The east end of the aisle at Instow and the south wall of the chancel at West Down also show some evidence of striping with bands of contrasting stone. All these examples are very crude or fragmentary, whereas the banding at Berrynarbor is remarkably consistent except where it has been disturbed by refacing or the insertion or removal of ornaments.

Perhaps the finest examples of polychromatic treatment of elevations are in west Devon, as in the towers of Tetcott church and Stowford church and the east end of the nave and aisle at Lifton and Sampford Spiney. These buildings are presumably all of late-medieval date. Striped or patterned masonry in secular contexts occurs in several late-medieval or early post medieval examples in Devon, as in the chequerboard treatment of the elevations in the Court of Sovereigns at Cadhay, Ottery St Mary (which is probably of late 16th or early 17th-century date) and the elaborately stripey Old Grammar school, Plympton St Maurice, dating from 1664.

There are several earlier examples of structural polychromy, dating from the 12th and 13th centuries: for example, the alternating voussoirs of the arches of Exe Bridge, Exeter (c.1200); the

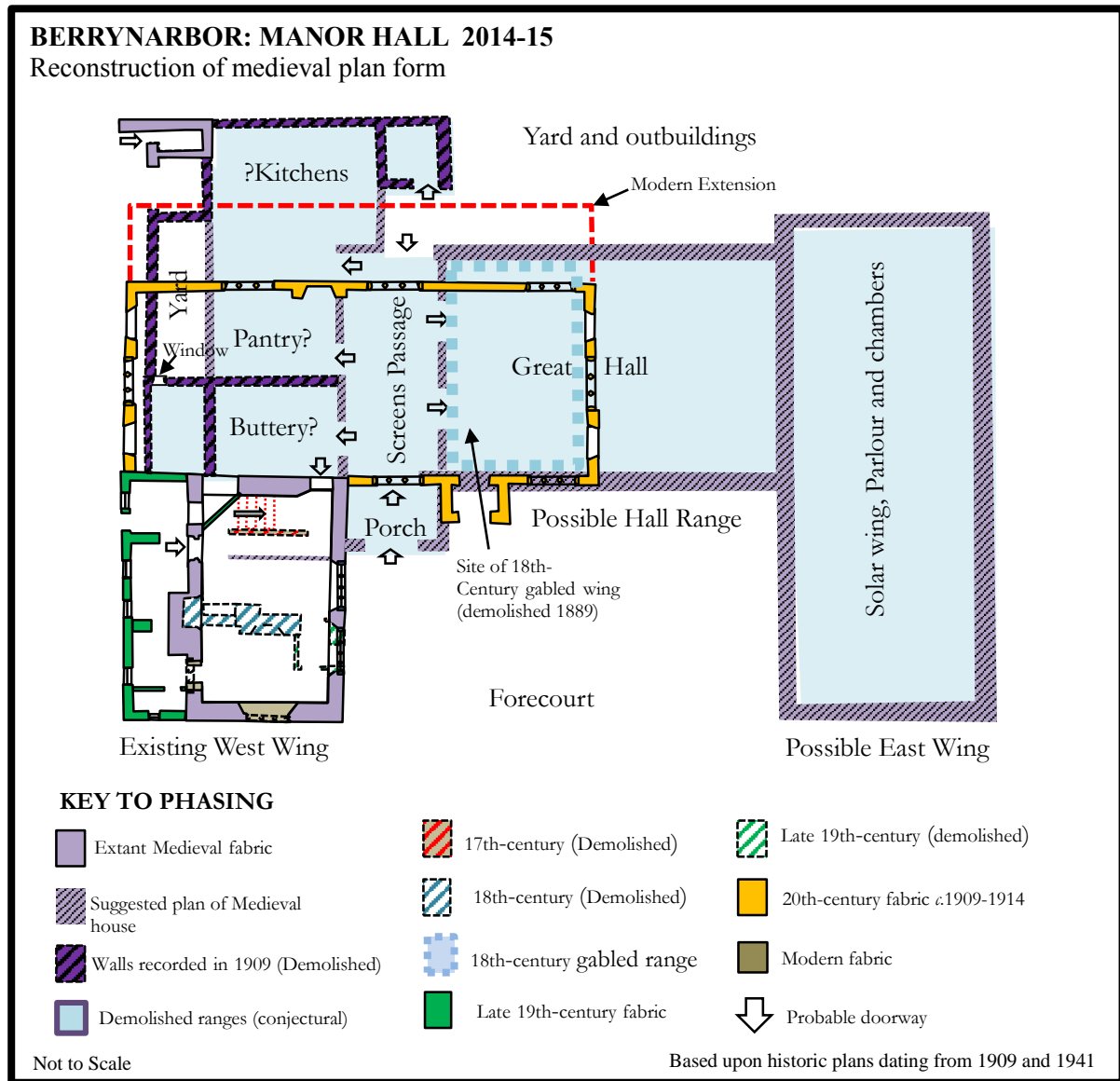


Fig. 36 Suggested reconstruction of the layout of the medieval house, based upon historic plans and maps of the buildings and upon Gentry houses of similar date and status.

jamb of the 12th-century west doorway at Paignton Church; and the banding of the 12th-century responds in the naves of Exeter Cathedral and Plympton Priory. It is thus possible that the west range of the building was constructed at a much earlier date than is at first apparent, and that it retains its original, early roof. On balance, since the elaborate treatment of the façade appears to have been reserved for a single elevation of the surviving wing, it may represent refacing. It is uncertain whether the same decorative banding extended over the front of the hall range also, and perhaps over the high-status buildings in a corresponding wing to the east. The existing window frames and much of the ornamental detail appear to have been cut into this stripey façade, albeit with considerable care, which reinforces the conjecture that the shell of the building may be earlier. The inserted windows bear typical late Gothic detail, including label stops bearing elaborate initials, in the shape of jousting shields. The windows have elaborate mouldings and uncusped four-centred arched heads to the lights which again suggests that these are late-medieval features, perhaps of 16th-century date.

The reused block carved with a mouchette wheel, though now *ex-situ*, is also a pointer to an early 16th-century date. This sort of dynamic Gothic motif was common in Gothic architecture in England during the 14th-century, but from the middle of the 14th-century was superseded by

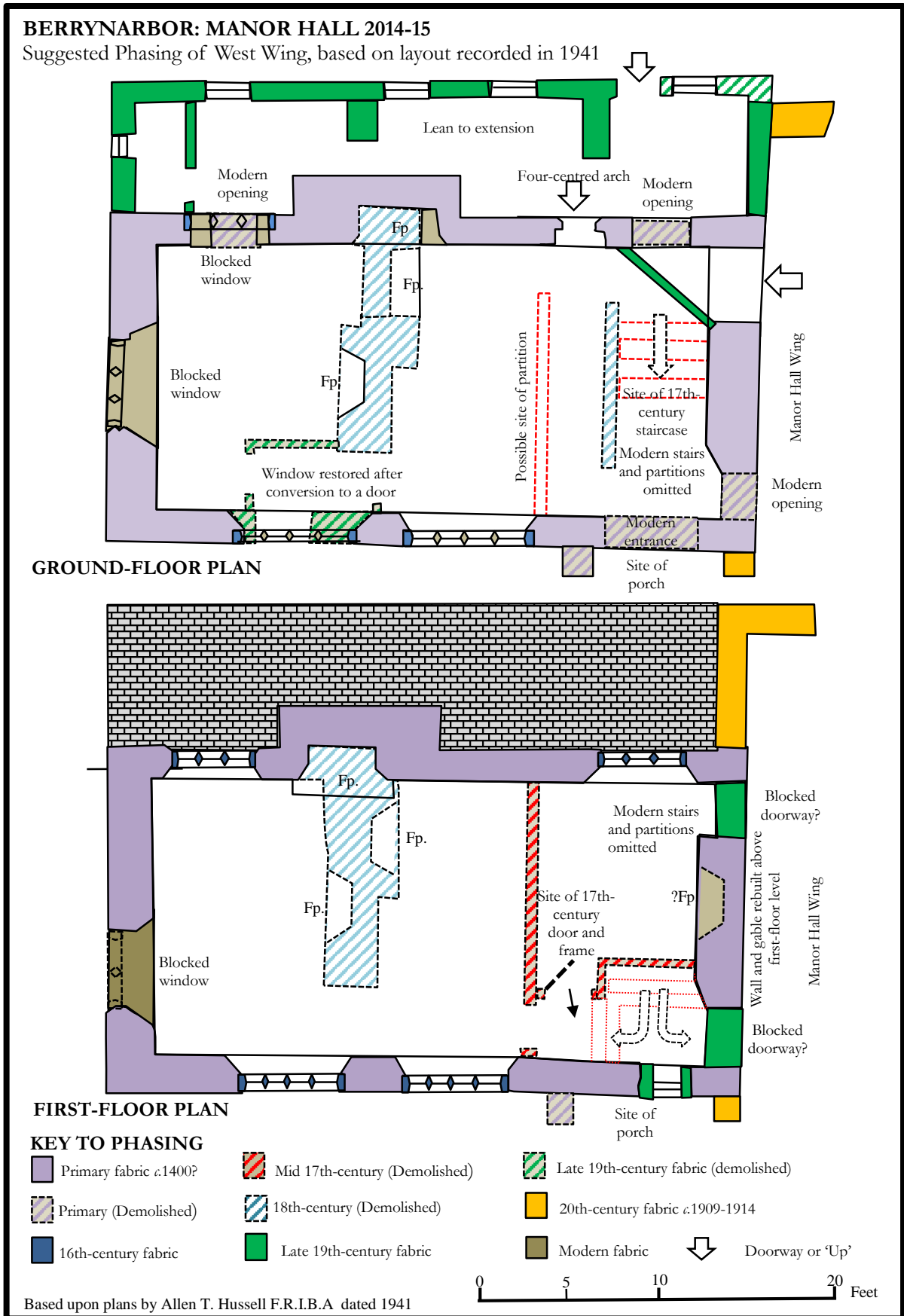


Fig. 37 Suggested phasing of the West Wing, based on the layout of the interiors as recorded by Allen T. Hussell F.R.I.B.A. in 1941



the more restrained rectilinear forms of 'Perpendicular' Gothic. On the Continent, especially in northern France, the development of Gothic design took a different turn, and flame-like, dynamic forms dominated by patterns of interlocking mouchettes such as these continued in use for longer, giving rise to the 19th-century name 'Flamboyant Gothic' for late medieval French architecture. In the late 15th and early 16th century there is much evidence of the importation to England of Flamboyant forms in the fantastic decorations of church screens and other elaborate furnishings.

Many such church screens, as at Colebrooke, Coldridge and Brushford utilised repeating mouchette patterns and also linenfold panelling. They are generally believed to date from the early 16th-century and to have been either designed by or influenced by Breton craftsmen working in England (John Allan, *Pers. Comm.*). From these parallels we may conjecture that the mansion house at Berrynarbor was substantially remodelled in the early 16th century.

Most of the evidence of later phases of alteration to the building were removed during various late 19th and 20th-century refurbishments. The internal partitions and the staircase were fortunately recorded in detail by Hussell in 1941, which allows some attempt at the reconstruction of the phasing of post-medieval structure. The staircase and the doorway recorded by Hussell had decorations typical of the 17th century, including urn stops to the door posts and the turned balusters of the stair. These decorative features suggest that the building was still of high status, but that it was remodelled with a staircase hall and a pair of large chambers, one of which had an elaborate canted ceiling extending up into the earlier roof structure. The refurbishment appears to have utilised the two late-medieval fireplaces and thus may have been a relatively sympathetic upgrading of the medieval house. The addition of grand staircases (probably to replace earlier medieval newel stairs) and ornate plaster ceilings into the volumes of earlier houses, seems to have been a common way of upgrading earlier buildings in the 17th century.

Later alterations were less sympathetic and probably represent the contraction of the dwelling house into its western portion, possibly following the abandonment of the medieval hall and east range. The most likely context for this is the death, intestate, of Thomas Berry in 1708, though it is also possible that the hall range and east range were lost through a disaster such as a fire, for which no evidence now remains. The hall appears to have been demolished and replaced with a smaller two-storey wing with a gabled frontage lying alongside the former screens passage, and the large chambers in the west wing were each divided into two apartments by the insertion of a large chimney right through the middle of the house, blocking the earlier fireplaces. At this time the high, decorative ceiling of the upper room was either demolished or concealed by a flat ceiling inserted beneath it, and new window openings may have been made to light the rooms and corridors formed by the new partitions.

The house continued in this condition until the early 19th century, when many of its decorative features were robbed to decorate the new house at Watermouth. The northern parts of the house subsequently fell into decay and in the late 19th century the house contracted still further. Later depredations included the demolition and re-erection of the porch at Westaway, and finally, the demolition of the remaining ruins for the construction of the new hall. This intervention probably saved the remaining building, by utilising it for a new purpose, and although further unsympathetic alterations have been made, such as the removal of the mullioned windows on the ground floor, and the removal of the 17th-century partition and stairs, the shell of the building still remains and still betrays its high architectural quality in the neatness of its stonework and the outstanding decorative detail. Continued community use provides continuity and hope for the sympathetic restoration of the building, which despite its chequered history, is now once again at the centre of village life.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This report was commissioned by The Manor Mall Trustees in December 2014. The archaeological work was carried out by Richard Parker Historic Buildings Survey and Interpretation in 2014 and the Documentary research by Richard Parker and Lucy Browne during the early months of 2015. We are grateful to the staff of the Devon Heritage Centre, the North Devon Record Office and the Devon and Exeter Institution and to Len Narborough and the Manor Hall Trustees for sharing useful material, for their hospitality on site and for their patience during the production of this report. Thanks are also due to David Beadle, John Allan and Richard Feltham for support and advice during the production of the report.

## SOURCES CONSULTED

**Published Sources**

- Adam, J. 2012 *The Book of Berrynarbor, a biography of Devon Life from 1920* (Wellington).
- Adams, A. 2007 *Painted and Sgraffito Decorated Plaster on Fireplaces* Devon Buildings Group Newsletter No. **25** (12-25 (Kennerleigh).
- Beacham, P. (ed.) 1990 *Devon Building: An introduction to local traditions*. (Exeter)
- Chanter, Preb. J. (nd, early 20th century) 'The Parish and Church of St Peter, Berrynarbor', *Exeter Diocesan Gazette* (undated cutting, South West Heritage Trust, Berrynarbor Parish Cuttings folder)
- Cherry, B & Pevsner, N. 1989 *The Buildings of England: Devon* (London). Dunsford, M. 1790
- Gray, T. & Rowe, M. (Eds.) 1999 *Travels in Georgian Devon: The Illustrated Journals of the Reverend John Swete, 1789-1800*, vol.3, (Tiverton).
- Hawker, Revd T. 1879 'The Manor House, Berry Narbor' *Rep. Trans. Devonshire Ass.* Volume **XI**, 493-496 (Plymouth).
- Ledgard, M. 2013 *Survey Report, Berrynarbor Manor Hall* Smiths Gore Survey report No. ML/MJ-BL-PW/1043630 (Exeter).
- Parker, R. W, 2013 *Historic Building Recording of Roof Structures At St Mary's Church, High Bickington, Devon* Richard Parker Historic Buildings Survey and Interpretation Report No. 2013.04
- Passmore, A.J. & Parker, R.W. 2004 *Archaeological Recording at Woolhanger Manor, Parracombe, Barnstaple*. Exeter Archaeology Report No. **04.43** (Exeter).
- Thorp, J.R.L. 1990 'Town Houses of the Late Seventeenth and Early Eighteenth Centuries' in Beacham (ed.) 1990, 117-128.
- Weddell, P.J. 1991 'The Origins of Newton Abbot' in *Devon Archaeology*, **4** 19-28. (Exeter).
- White, W. 1850 *History Gazetteer and Directory of Devonshire*. (Newton Abbot).

*Directories:*

- Kelly's Directory of Devonshire 1883 (London)
- Kelly's Directory of Devonshire & Cornwall 1893, (London).

*Census Returns*

- 1841 census
- 1851 census:
- 1861 census
- 1871 census
- 1881 census

## Unpublished Sources

DHC Devon Heritage Centre

Berrynarbor Parish Cuttings folder.

Sir Francis Bassett, Knt: Pedigree, Volume 3, page 110 (manuscript in the Devon & Cornwall Record Society collection, 1924).

Will of Joseph Davie Bassett 1847 (IRW B414).

Rent Roll For Berry-Narber (DHC: 1698M/E4)

Tithe Apportionment for Berry Narbor, 1839

*Land Tax Assessments:*

DHC LTA Microfilm copies: 1780 – 1832

DHC LTA 1853 DD23883 -33999 and LTA 1856 DD 35058 – 35398.

NDRO North Devon Record Office

Mortgage, Berry Narbor manor, 3<sup>rd</sup> April 1702 (NDRO 1239 F/T11) :

Miscellaneous Estate material (NDRO 821 B170)

## Map Sources

C & C Greenwood: Map of the County of Devon, 1827

Berrynarbor Tithe Map sealed 9<sup>th</sup> May 1845:

Court Barton and the Mill, Berrynarbor Z17/3/2 Devon Manorial & Estate Records: Plans of sundry farms in the parishes of Berrynarbor [and others] surveyed in 1802.

OS 1<sup>st</sup> Edition Sheet 5/2, 1:2500 (1889)

OS 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition Sheet 5/2, 1:2500 (1905)

OS Sheet SS 5446/SS 5546 1:2500 1962 A [western part of site]

OS Sheet SS 5646/SS 5746 1:2500 1962 A [eastern part of site]

OS Sheet SS 5646 1:2500 1995 [Sheet 5546 to the east not available]

Reichel, O. *Domesday Map of Devonshire*. 1896

## Illustrations

Anonymous pencil drawing of the manor house entitled ‘An old manor house built for the Berry family in the time of Plantagenet; Berry Barton, Nr Ilfracombe, July 1861’. In Adam, J. 2012, 53.

Berrynarbor near Ilfracombe. Steel Engraving, 95 x 155mm by J Thomas after J Harwood, published by Fisher & Son & Co, London 1832. Reissued by P Jackson London & Paris 1849. (South West Heritage Trust reference SC0107)

## Web Sources

Berrynarbor manor hall website (<http://www.berrynarborvillage.co.uk/manorhall.html>). Accessed 22.06.2015.

Grant Sherman;’s homepage, Articles on the historic buildings of Ilfracombe and its environs ([http://homepages.which.net/~gk.sherman/ilfracombe/jb98\\_10.htm](http://homepages.which.net/~gk.sherman/ilfracombe/jb98_10.htm)) Accessed 22.06.2015.

## CONDITIONS

*This report has been prepared for the use of The Manor Hall Trustees and their professional advisors and should not be used or relied upon for any other project or purpose without the prior written authority of the author. Richard Parker Historic Buildings Recording and Interpretation accepts no responsibility or liability for the consequences of the use of this document for any other persons or purpose other than that for which it was commissioned. Any person/party using or relying on the document for such other purposes agrees, and will by such use or reliance be taken to confirm their agreement to indemnify Richard Parker Historic Buildings Recording and Interpretation for all loss or damage resulting therefrom. No copies, in whole or in part, may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, without the prior written authorisation of Richard Parker Historic Buildings Recording and Interpretation. © Richard Parker Historic Buildings Recording and Interpretation July 2015*