

# Devon County Council Historic Environment Record

<b>Civil Parish &amp; District:</b> Beaford	<b>National Grid Reference</b> SS 54340 14374	<b>Number:</b>
<b>Subject:</b> Recording at Beaford Mill		<b>Photo attached?</b> Yes
<b>Planning Application no:</b> 1/1010/2008/LBC, 1/1111/2008/LBC and 1/1110/2008/FUL	<b>Recipient museum:</b> Museum of Barnstaple and North Devon	
<b>OASIS ID:</b> exeterar1-58105	<b>Museum Accession no:</b> NDDMS:2008:109	
<b>Contractor's reference number/code:</b>  EA6699	<b>Dates fieldwork undertaken:</b>  January and February 2009	
<p><b>Description of works.</b></p> <p>Beaford Mill, which is referred to as Beaford Mill House in the listing description (no. 91625), is a 16th-century three room and cross-passage building, that possibly originated as an open-hall farmhouse (rather than a miller's house), with a 17th-century rear kitchen range and later additions including a possible dairy or buttery (Figs 1 and 2). A record of the roof of the main range was prepared, and a watching brief was undertaken during lowering of the kitchen floor and construction of a new conservatory. An initial appraisal of the roof of the main range was carried out by Exeter Archaeology in November 2008 and that report is attached to the end of this entry.</p> <p>The area of the new conservatory (Figs 2, 3) was reduced by 0.80m and this exposed natural subsoil that sloped downhill from east to west. The natural deposits were overlaid by levelling and modern make-up for the former patio. In the NE and NW sections of the excavation, the cob walls of the main range and kitchen range were exposed and were found to have been laid onto stone footings. Modern concrete make-up layers for the stone surfaces within the house were also uncovered. A test pit within the kitchen exposed natural subsoil at a depth of 0.15m from the surface, overlain by a 0.05m of redeposited soil and modern gravel and concrete supporting the present slate floor.</p> <p>The roof structure comprises six primary A-frame trusses constructed of pairs of principal rafters, all except one truss having applied collars (Fig. 4; Pl. 1). At the west end of the building a seventh (intermediate) truss has been inserted using a mixture of sawn timbers and poles. This may have been added to counteract the racking south-eastwards of the trusses, caused by the lack of longitudinal support (see below). The apexes of the rafters are lap-jointed with wooden pegs, and the timbers cross indicating they may have been designed to support a ridge purlin although such a feature is not currently present in the roof. There are no side purlins to the roof and no evidence (for example sockets or trenches) were observed on the rafters for positions of former purlins. The high level of the collars relative to the length of the purlins indicates that they were designed for a building with a first floor. The current lath and plaster ceiling is positioned 0.25m above the top of the adjacent walls. However, in the south elevation there is evidence, in the form of joist sockets, for an earlier, slightly higher ceiling. The roof is covered with thatch, and this is supported on rows of small poles used as thatching batons (Pl. 2).</p> <p>The chimney stacks serving the former hall and service room are constructed of dressed blocks of pale grey limestone bonded in orange-yellow gravelly lime mortar and covered with modern cement. They are topped by rows of red brick, and white bricks from nearby Peters Marland, with modern rain covers.</p> <p>In summary, the recording has enabled further observations of the roof to be made. As put forward in the appraisal there is no evidence that any of the roof structure is contemporary with the original building, i.e. that it is a smoke blackened roof or was intended for display above open rooms below. The high-level collars are indicative of a roof over a building with two floors, and there is evidence for two phases of ceilings over the first floor. The trusses are probably of 17th- or 18th-century date. The latter might be more appropriate due to the extensive use of poles rather than sawn timbers as thatching batons, although these could relate to a later episode of rethatching.</p>		
<b>Recorder:</b>  Andrew Passmore, Exeter Archaeology		<b>Date sent to HER:</b>  4th August 2009



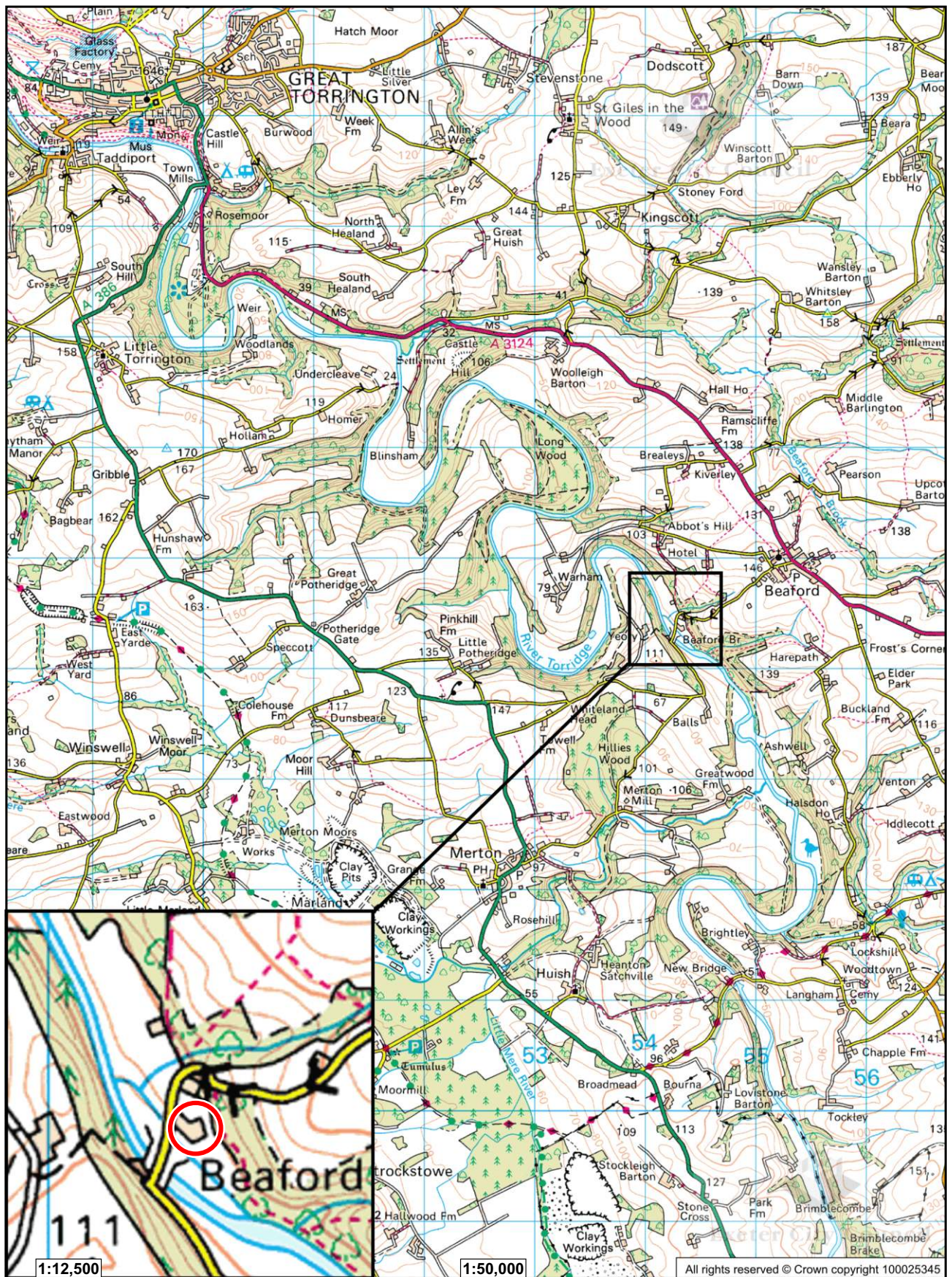


Fig. 1 Location of site.



## Ground Floor Plan

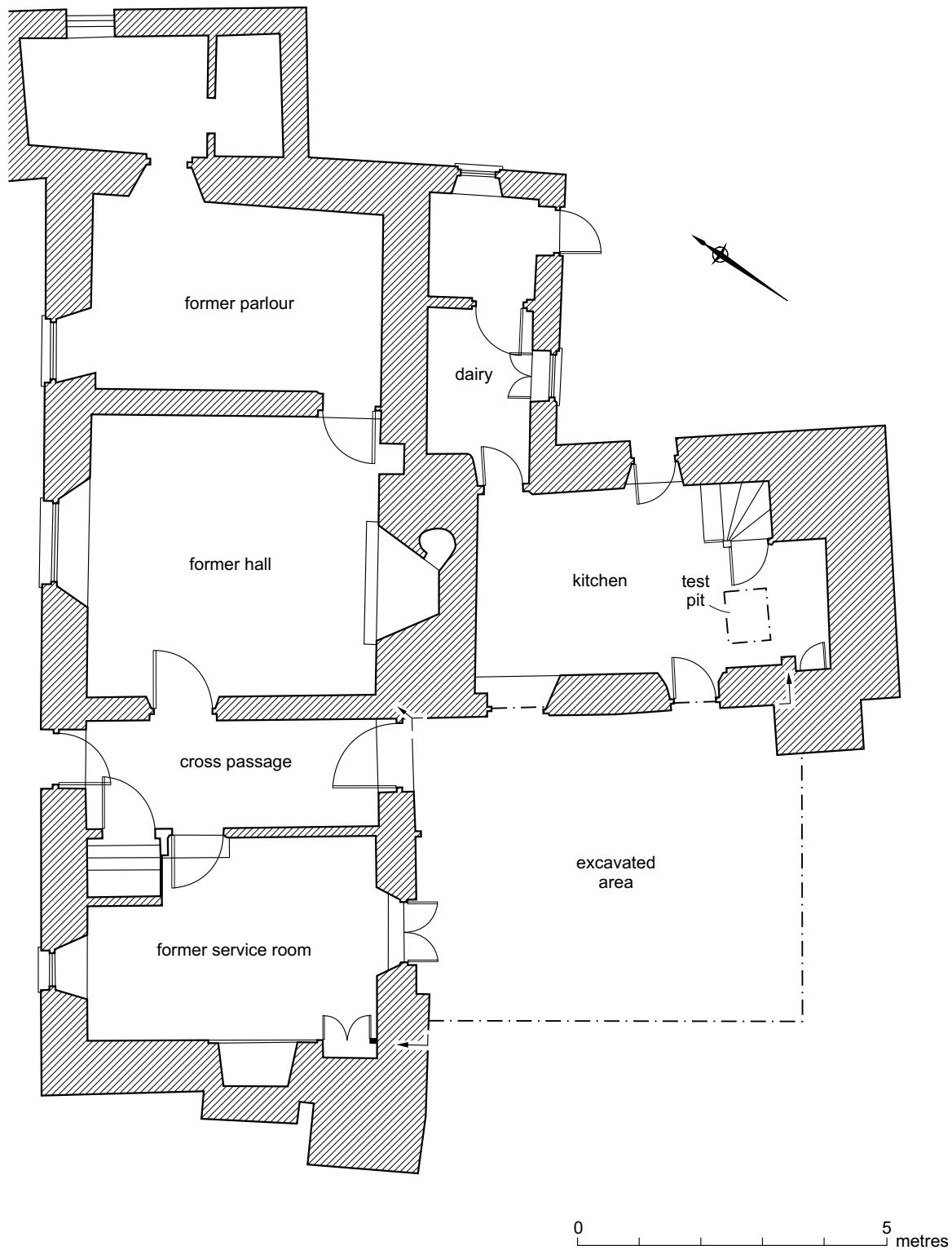


Fig. 2 Plan of ground floor.

## Elevation

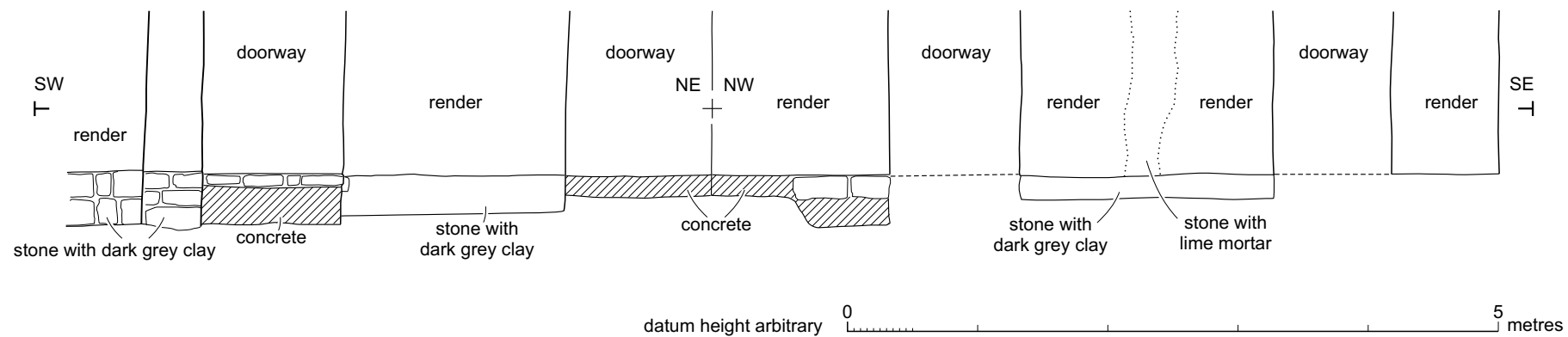
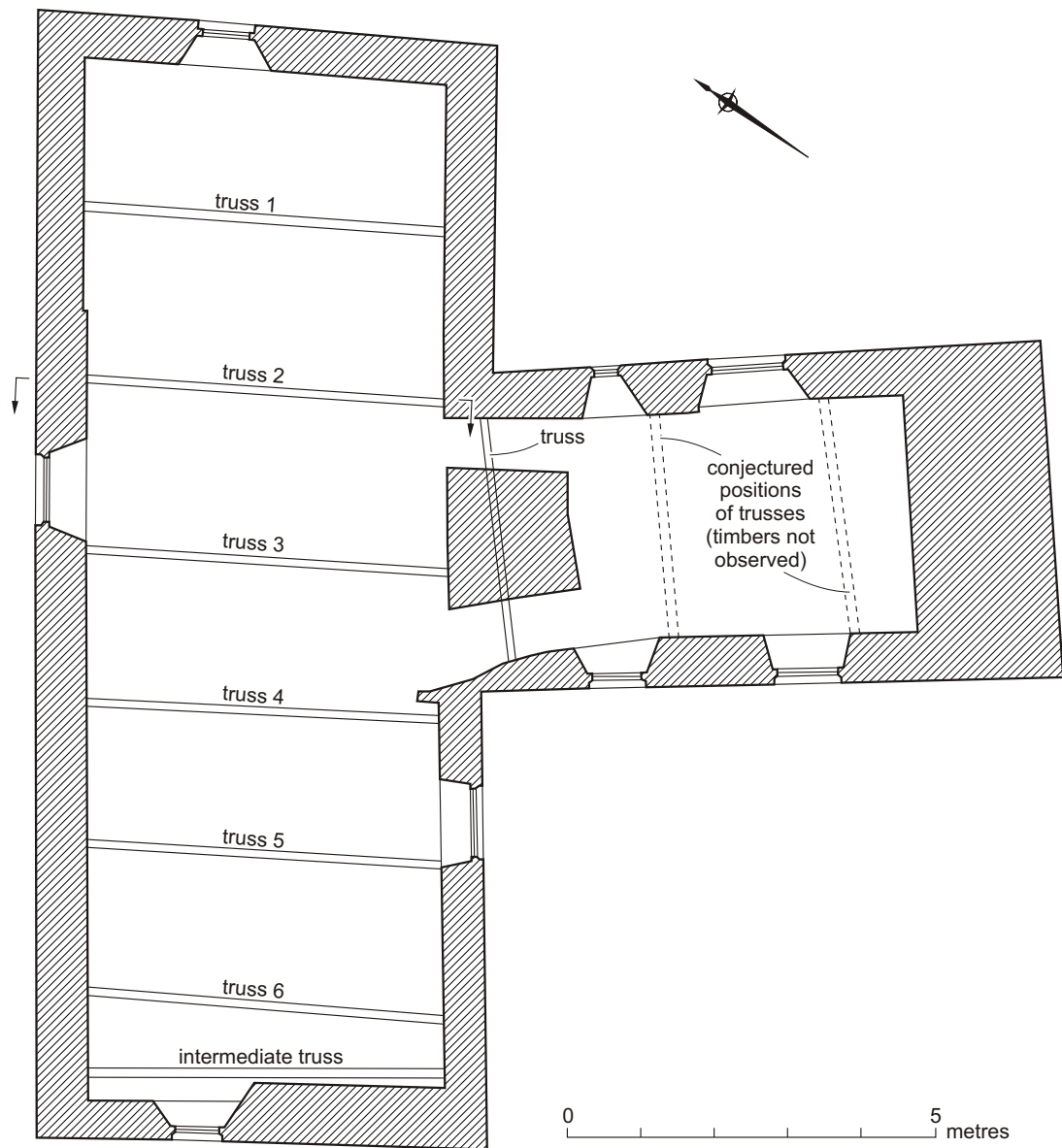


Fig. 3 Elevation through excavated area.

## First Floor Plan



## Section: truss 2

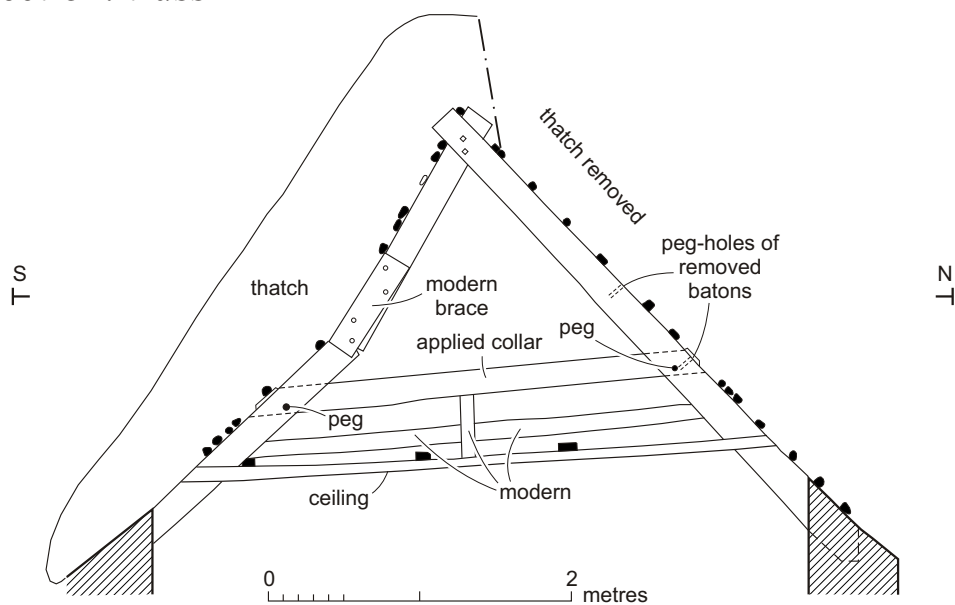


Fig. 4 Plan of first floor and section through truss 2.



Pl. 1 The north side of the roof following removal of thatch, looking south-west.



Pl. 2 The roof between trusses 2 and 3 showing thatching batons, looking south. Scale 0.25m.

## **Beaford Mill**

### **Appraisal of the Roofs – November 2008**

#### ***Introduction***

Beaford Mill, which is referred to as Beaford Mill House in the listing description (no. 91625), is a 16th-century three room and cross-passage building, possibly originally housing an open hall, with a 17th-century cross passage kitchen range, and later additions including a possible dairy or buttery. The house is detached from the mill and is set to the east of this building away from the floodplain. To the east of the house are several former agricultural buildings. The present mill is 19th-century in date, and it is unknown whether an earlier mill stood on the site. The house is typical of a rural Devon farmhouse, and was probably constructed for such a purpose rather than as a miller's house. Although not the grandest (in terms of architectural details) of three room and cross-passage houses in the county the building clearly demonstrates the wealth of former occupiers.

The appraisal was undertaken by A.J. Passmore on 7 November 2008. The appraisal of the roof of the main house was limited to an inspection from the loft hatch due to the presence of wasps within the roof space. There is no access to the roof of the kitchen range.

#### ***The roof of the main range***

The roof structure comprises six A-frame trusses constructed of pairs of principal rafters with collars. The apexes of the rafters are lap-jointed with wooden pegs, and the timbers cross indicating they were designed to support a ridge purlin although such a feature is not currently present in the roof. The trusses are braced with high-level applied collars fixed with wooden pegs. Their high level relative to the length of the purlins indicates that they were designed for a building with a first floor. Several of the collars are wavy probably reflecting the nature of the timber used, and consistency in this patterning indicates that some of the collars were cut from the same tree. There are no side purlins to the roof and no evidence (e.g. sockets or trenches) could be observed on the rafters for positions of former purlins. The roof is covered with thatch, and this is supported on rows of small poles that act as 'purlins' or batons.

The roof is currently ceiled at a height that differs throughout the range, and the rafters project below the ceilings into the first floor rooms. Immediately above the ceiling the trusses have been braced with the application of further collars fixed using bolts. These timbers may also act as a support to the ceilings.

Several recent repairs, probably carried out by the last owner, were noted. In the centre of the roof horizontal timbers have been added as braces between the collars with smaller vertical batons added between the original and later, lower collars. These timbers have presumably been added to counteract racking of the trusses caused by the lack of, or historic removal of, horizontal purlins. At least two of the purlins have snapped, possibly caused by the weight of the thatch above, and have been 'stitched together' using metal plates.

### ***Discussion***

The listing description puts forward a development sequence where the house may originally have contained an open hall, which was later ceiled over to create a first floor. This event that would have necessitated the construction of the lateral and axial fireplaces, and could have coincided with the construction of the kitchen range. A cursory observation of the joists supporting the first-floor in the building appear to suggest that this flooring over of ground floor rooms may have occurred over a period of time, possibly with the service room (current dining room) initially left open and only ceiled over at a later date.

There is no evidence that any of the roof structure is contemporary with the original building, i.e. that it is smoke blackened roof or was intended for display above open rooms below. The trusses are probably of 17th- or 18th-century date. The high-level collars are indicative of a roof over a building with two floors, although it is unclear whether the present roof structure dates to the original insertion of the first floor, or is a later replacement.

The roof of the kitchen range was not inspected. However, the layout including provision of (servant's) stairs indicates that the range was two storied from the outset. The roof could therefore be similar or identical to that in the main range.

### ***Mitigation and recording***

*The roof of the main range:* draw a sample truss, prepare a better photographic record than could be undertaken as part of the appraisal, along with any necessary further written notes on its construction.

*The roof of the kitchen range:* Assess the nature of the roof once access is available during rethatching or removal of ceiling. Since no alterations are proposed, recording could take the form of a written description and a basic photographic record, along with a drawn record (e.g. sample truss and annotation of architect's plans to show positions of trusses) if deemed appropriate.

A.J. Passmore  
Exeter Archaeology  
7 November 2008  
Proj. No. 6691