

SOUTH YEO, POUGHILL, DEVON

(NGR SS 86402 08502)

Results of historic building recording

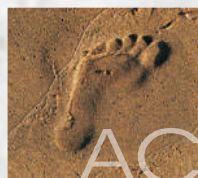
Mid Devon District Council Planning Reference 12/01119/LBC

Prepared by:
Andrew Passmore BSc MIfA

On behalf of:
Mr David Ross

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archaeology

SOUTH YEO FARMHOUSE, POUGHILL, DEVON

(NGR SS 86498 08502)

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Mid Devon District Council planning reference 12/01119/LBC

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Summary

Historic building recording was carried out by AC archaeology during repairs to the roof of South Yeo Farmhouse, Poughill, Devon (SS 86498 08502). South Yeo is a late medieval farmhouse that was altered in the 16th, 17th and 20th centuries. It is Grade II listed (National Heritage List no. 1250718), and the work was required as a condition of the grant of listed building consent.*

The building has a typical three-room and cross passage plan with an open hall. The lower room was floored over, probably from the start. Further first-floor accommodation was provided in the 16th-century with a jettied room over the hall and cross passage. The building was extended in the 17th-century with first-floor accommodation provided throughout. Changes were made to the roof in the late 17th or 18th century, and the covering was entirely replaced in the 20th century. During that century a new wing was added to the south of the main range.

1. INTRODUCTION (Fig. 1)

1.1 Historic building recording was carried out by AC archaeology on 4 August 2013 during repairs and alterations to South Yeo Farmhouse, Poughill, Devon (SS 86498 08502). The investigations were required under condition 8 of Listed Building Consent (planning reference 12/01119/LBC) granted by Mid Devon District Council (MDDC) for "alterations and construction of new roof, lowering of chimney tops, replacement porch, installation of new en-suite bathroom and erection of garage to replace existing", and were commissioned by the owner, Mr David Ross.

1.2 South Yeo is Grade II* listed (National Heritage List no. 1250718), described as a 16th-century farmhouse, extended in the 16th, 17th and 20th centuries. The property is situated 1km to the east of Poughill above Holly Water at a height of 110m aOD. The underlying geology is Carboniferous sandstone, siltstone and mudstone of the Bude formation.

1.3 The following description of the house is given in the listed building entry:

Farmhouse. Early C16 with major later C16 and C17 improvements, an early C20 extension. Plastered cob on rubble footings; rubble stacks with plastered brick chimney shafts; asbestos slate roof. Originally a 3-room-and-through-passage plan house built down the slope facing south with service room on lower right-hand (east) end. Early C17 1-room extension to inner room with early C20 wing projecting forward from extension. Lower end parlour has projecting end stack; hall has projecting rear lateral stack and stair turret projecting from front; small unheated inner room dairy; and front lateral stack to extension, now set between main range and wing. Now 2 storeys throughout. Irregular 3-window front. C20 bay extension to hall and C20 glass-roofed conservatory in front of inner room. 2 first floor windows to left of stair turret and windows at right end have late C17-early C18 frames. All are 3-light flat-faced mullion windows with shallow internal chamfers on first floor and shallow ogee-mouldings on ground floor right. They include iron casements and rectangular panes of thin leaded glass and ground floor right has iron stanchions. Stair turret has small C17 oak 2-light window with chamfered mullion. Passage door to right of stair turret has C20 slate roofed porch. North (rear) elevation has irregular and varied fenestration including a 3- light late C17-early C18 flat-faced mullion window with leaded glass similar to those on front, and inner room window right of centre is an early C17 oak 3-light window with ovolo-moulded mullions with vertical iron bars and rectangular panes of leaded glass. Passage door left of stack has C20 gabled and slate-roofed porch with trellis sides and another door at right end to extension with slate-roofed porch. Good interior of a house with a long and complex structural history. The oldest part is the early C16 2-bay roof over the hall carried on side-pegged jointed cruck trusses with

evidence of single sets of windbraces, one of which survives on rear side. This section of roof is heavily smoke-blackened from open hearth fire. Passage end of hall has C16 oak plank-and-muntin screen, chamfered both sides with step stops. It carries the passage chamber which jetties into hall. Lower end parlour has remains of late C16-early C17 fireplace built of volcanic ashlar with ogee-moulded jambs and roll stops but lintel replaced in mid C17 refurbishment of this end. Oak lintel is chamfered with scroll stops, and similar finish to end beam and oak plank-and-muntin screen to passage. Mid C17 fireplace to first floor and contemporary roof - an A-frame truss with pegged lap-jointed collar and dovetail halving. Another mid C17 oak plank-and-muntin screen at upper end of hall, the scroll stops here high enough for a bench. Hall floored about same time with moulded axial and 2 half-beams all with chamfer step stops. Large hall fireplace blocked by superior mid C19 chimney piece and cast-iron grate. Cupboard to right exposes end of lintel which is chamfered with straight cut stops suggesting C17 fireplace intact. Inner room has early-mid C17 chamfered and scroll-stopped axial beam. At that time corridor built along back of inner room connecting hall to extension suggesting its use as dairy or store. Doorframes from corridor to room and from corridor to extension are scroll-stopped. Extension has early-mid C17 features including 2 chamfered crossbeams with unusual stepped lozenge stops, and winder stair in front wall with crank-headed oak door frame to ground floor and low segmental headed doorframe to first floor. Fireplace is blocked and roof apparently replaced in late C17 or C18. An exceptionally well-preserved example of a typical multi-phase Devon farmhouse.

- 1.4 The evolution of the house, based on the listed building description and site observations, has been traced in the *Design and Access and Planning Statement* prepared by Louise Crossman Architects.

2. AIMS

- 2.1 The principal aim of the investigation was to prepare a record of the historic roofs of the main range during the repairs once the modern roof structure and covering had been removed. A secondary aim was to record any architectural features or fabric exposed during the refurbishment, with particular emphasis on identifying any historic fabric in the chimney stacks.

3 METHODOLOGY

- 3.1 The work was undertaken in accordance with a written scheme of investigation (Passmore 2013) and the Institute for Archaeologists *Standard and Guidance for the archaeological investigation and recording of standing buildings or structures*.
- 3.2 The roofs were recorded to Level 2/3 as set out in *Understanding Historic Buildings: a guide to good recording practice* (English Heritage 2006). The following methodology was employed taking into account architectural style and construction techniques, the development of the roofs, and their relationship with the structures below and any other surviving historic fabric:
 - A written description of the roofs and associated fabric (e.g. chimney stacks).
 - A photographic record showing the overall character and setting of the building, the overall roof layout and individual trusses, as well as any significant fixtures, fittings and architectural details. This comprised colour digital format only (minimum 10 megapixels), and where appropriate, all photographs included a photographic scale.
- 3.3 The recording took place after the removal of the modern roof covering across the building. This exposed the historic timbers below. Access was provided to the interior of the house, which allowed the lower parts of the roof structures and ceilings (which

were not removed) to be viewed. The remainder of the house was not recorded but interior features observed have been incorporated into the survey where necessary.

4. THE ROOFS (Plates 1-16)

- 4.1** The overall roof structure comprises elements deriving from several phases of construction and alteration (Plate 1). These are described below in chronological order.

4.2 The primary roof over the hall and cross passage

The oldest section of the roof is over the hall and cross passage where two and a half bays survive. The bays are divided by two trusses (of different designs) – one over the centre of the hall (Plate 2), and a second over the east end of the hall (Plate 3). The original ridge purlin displays evidence (in the form of a non-smoke-backed scar) for a third truss situated over the east end of the cross passage. The primary original truss is a jointed cruck and is partially exposed in the bedroom below. Here only one of the lower cruck blades survives. The truss has a halved high-level collar. This has been reinforced with the addition of an iron strap. The other early but secondary smoke-blackened truss has smaller dimensions than the primary truss and has a high-level socket and a chamfer on one side, indicating that it has been reused, possibly from a ceiling joist or screen. It has a collar above the present ceiling level, and a probable 18th-century halved nailed higher collar, presumably added to give extra support. It appears to be situated at the location of a primary truss, since there are scarfed joints on the side purlins at this location. (This is a common location on early roofs for the joints of purlins.)

The ridge purlin sits in a notch cut into the apexes of the rafters and continues eastwards to the location of the removed truss. There are two rows of through side purlins that are scarf jointed at the trusses, and elsewhere where necessary (e.g. on north pitch where there is a further join in the upper purlin over the hall). There are joints at their western end indicating that the roof continued over the inner room or parlour where it has been replaced. Over the lower eastern room, the side purlins continue to the gable elevation providing firm evidence that the building was originally constructed as a three-room and cross passage house. The purlins over the lower room are less smoke-blackened than to the west, which may be evidence that this end of the building was floored over from the start. Alternatively, the lighter smoke-blackening may reflect an early flooring over of this part of the house whilst the hall remained open longer. Within the house there is further evidence for a primary or early first floor above the lower room. On the ground floor the ceiling joists are set into the head beam of the screen, whilst the joists of the passage ceiling and hall jetty are at a higher level above these indicating the lower room had a floor prior to the jetty being added over the passage and hall (Plate 4). In the first floor bedroom over the lower room there is what appears to be a blocked spiral staircase built into the south elevation. This would have been accessed from the lower room adjacent to the cross passage and was lit by narrow squint window at first-floor level. The top of the presumed staircase now terminates in a cupboard set into one corner of the bedroom (Plate 5).

Over the hall and cross passage there was originally a series of straight wind braces set between the two rows of purlins; only one survives over the hall on the north pitch (Plate 6). Elsewhere, where not obscured, their positions were identifiable through the positions of pegholes in the purlins and mortice sockets in the jointed cruck.

Smoke-blackened common rafters are pegged onto the side purlins and their apexes are halved and pegged over the top of the ridge purlin. A total of eight pairs survive; all others are attached with nails (Plates 7-8). These would have supported a thatched roof, and remains of smoke-blackened thatch survive around the roof space. These are being left *in situ*.

In addition, a group of five roof slates with surviving wooden nails (measuring 13mm^Ø by 62mm long) were also present here (Plate 9). Two slate types are present – a mid blue hard slate, and fine-grained but hard blue-light grey slate. The slates are of varying sizes from 202 x 186 x 10mm down to 199 x 168 x 11mm. These slates display evidence of smoke blackening on their inner faces.

4.3 The roof over the lower room

The lower room has a 17th-century roof constructed with the same ridge line as the primary structure (Plate 10). It is supported on a single truss positioned immediately west of the removed primary truss. It is of A-frame construction with a pegged lap-jointed collar and dovetail halving. The side purlins are retained from the primary roof, but the ridge piece has been replaced with a smaller timber. The former would have sat on a wooden corbel set into the gable. The common rafters are also 17th century and are pegged reusing the original peg holes in the purlins. These support nailed battens, presumably for a slate tiled roof. The primary ceiling of the first floor over the lower room was originally at a high level, under the collar, and comprised lath and plaster painted black. In the 17th century it was lowered to its present height.

There are partitions above the east side of the cross passage, and in the east end of the hall that line up with the jetty over the hall, which relate to 16th-century first-floor accommodation. A timber at the top of the east partition (at the level of the top side purlin) contains a groove in one face, and may have been reused from an earlier screen (cf Blaylock 2004, figs 8.28 and 9.25, 240 (item 138) where similar carpentry from an early-mid 16th-century screen at Bowhill in Exeter is discussed).

4.4 Roof over the western extension

This roof was originally freestanding, but the purlins of the later roof over the hall extend onto the eastern truss. The east truss comprises an A-frame with an applied collar, all fixed with nails and pegs (Plate 11). It supported a lath and plaster partition (on its western side) that extended up to the collar beam. This has largely been removed but its position is visible as a scar. The western truss is a reused truss from the primary building, and comprises smoke-blackened rafters and collar (Plate 12). The south rafter rests on a narrow vertical post, but is not a jointed cruck in its original location. The remains of a lath and plaster partition survives on its western side, which indicates the current first-floor bedroom was formerly divided into two rooms. The trusses support a single row of large back purlins. The first-floor room below has a high modern ceiling, and any lower rows of purlins must have been removed during the 20th century. Trenches for purlins are visible in the exposed western truss within the bedroom, but these may be associated with the purlins of the original roof rather than the truss in its current location.

4.5 Replacement roof over the inner room (Plate 13)

This is a replacement for the primary roof. It is set at a higher ridge level than, and therefore separate from, the roof over the hall to the east, and comprises two trusses that are set into cob that is greyer in colour than the walls to the east. This must reflect raising of the wall levels to facilitate the provision of first-floor accommodation and the associated higher roof. Its pitch is gentler than the earlier roofs. The trusses are A-frames with applied collars and apexes. The ridge is supported on an extended

mortice. The timbers are joined with both pegs and nails, giving a late 17th- or 18th-century date for its construction. The structure is precarious and elements must have been removed during the 20th century. There are two diagonal braces on its north pitch representing historic strengthening, and both horizontal and vertical braces as well as metal plates added during the 20th century. The eastern truss also has an additional high-level applied collar for additional support. The present first-floor ceiling is modern but just above this there are applied collars, which are probably associated with the historic ceiling that would have been roughly at the same as the present one. There are two rows of purlins that continue west through a modern partition wall dividing this roof from that of the inner room beyond. The lower pair sit on the back of the rafters, whereas the upper pair are treenched to sit in the rafters.

4.6 The roof of the south range

This roof is entirely modern with no *in situ* historic (or earlier) timbers present. A single early timber has been reused as a brace.

4.7 Other observations at roof level

The building is constructed of local sandstone and pink-buff cob. As noted above, an area of greyer cob may represent a historic raising of the eaves level. The first-floor ceilings are modern and are associated with a further raising of the eaves. This has been achieved through the use of two skins of concrete blocks (and occasionally bricks and stones). The outer skin is rendered externally, whilst the inner skin supports the edges of the ceilings (Plate 14). The window reveals have also been rebuilt, with the opening changing from dormers to flush openings within the masonry. Some reused timbers have been incorporated within these features. In the west gable elevation, the concrete blocks also infill a central opening, a scar of which can also be seen at a high level within the bedroom. This probably represents the position of a former dormer window (Plate 15).

The chimney stack for the hall fireplace is constructed of stone masonry and projects out from the north elevation. It has a concrete weathering at the historic eaves level. Above this, it has recently been rebuilt in bricks laid in stretcher bond with cement.

The stack serving the lower room projects out from the east gable elevation. It is rendered but may be constructed of stone and cob. The concrete weathering at the historic eaves level is laid onto concrete blocks and is inscribed "J Waller 1963". Above this, the masonry comprises red bricks laid in lime mortar that appears to represent a 20th-century rebuild.

The stack serving the kitchen in the inner room is rendered with a red brick top. Its regular shape may indicate that it is fully constructed of bricks. It has been repointed but the exposed brickwork appears to be of 20th-century date.

A small iron Y-shaped object, possibly a glazing bar, was found during removal of the roof. This has been retained by the owners (Plate 16).

5. COMMENTS (Fig. 2)

- 5.1** South Yeo has origins as late a medieval three-room and cross passage house. This is put forward in the listed building entry, but the description is misleading in that the evidence for this is not described, and it only outlines the surviving fabric. This has been carried through in the recent *Design and Access and Planning Statement* where the origins as a smaller medieval house are suggested. It is clear from the details on the purlins that the house did include three rooms from the outset. The

first-floor arrangement can be partially understood. The smoke-blackening and the presence of wind braces indicate that the hall and cross passage were open to the roof and the former was heated by an open fire. The reduction in smoke-blackening over the lower room indicates that this was floored over from an early date. Given the later alterations, it is postulated that the lower room was ceiled from the outset with a narrow first-floor room over the eastern bay. Although the roof over the inner room has been removed, it is clear from the truss arrangement and the smoke-blackening of a replacement truss that the inner room was also open to the roof. The original thatch covering was smoke blackened, and some of this survives *in situ*.

- 5.2 During the 16th century minor changes were made to the building. First-floor accommodation was increased with the flooring over of the cross passage, and the room above supported on a jerry over the hall. Access to the first floor seems to have been from an enclosed stairwell or turret situated adjacent to the south elevation. This was lit by a window, now blocked whose opening is visible within a cupboard in the eastern bedroom. The remainder of the house remained unfloored, the evidence for this taking the form of a replacement truss situated towards the west end of the hall that is smoke-blackened. The smoke-blackened slates must date from this period, although it is not clear why, for a short period, the thatch was replaced.
- 5.3 Significant alterations to the house took place in the 17th century. An additional inner room (the present kitchen) was added with two first-floor rooms above. This extension was terraced into the hillside at a higher level than the rooms to the east, and correspondingly, this part of the building has a higher roof line that seems to have dropped down to meet the apex of the retained medieval roofline. The hall and inner room were floored over and accommodation provided above. The roof over the cross passage and lower room was partially replaced, although the medieval purlins were partly retained. The ceiling in these rooms was lowered to its present height. Given these alterations throughout the building, it is likely that the wind braces were removed at this time. The roof covering seems to have reverted back to thatch.
- 5.4 In the late 17th or 18th century further alterations were made to the roof. The west end of the medieval roof was replaced with new, taller trusses added to match the roofline to the west. This higher level seems to have been used across the remainder of the building, although there is no surviving evidence for this. A dormer window was inserted into the gable lighting the western room, whilst in the adjacent room a ceiling was added.
- 5.5 During the 20th century a new wing was added on the south side of the house, and corridors leading to it were added on both floors. The roof covering and supporting timbers were replaced, and new ceilings added over the western rooms and corridor. Here, the higher ceiling and the dormer window were removed. The eaves level was raised and existing 9presumably 17th-century) dormer windows converted into flush openings.

6. ARCHIVE AND OASIS ENTRY

- 6.1 The paper and digital archive is currently held at the offices of AC archaeology Ltd.
- 6.2 An OASIS entry has been completed under the unique identifier 160456.

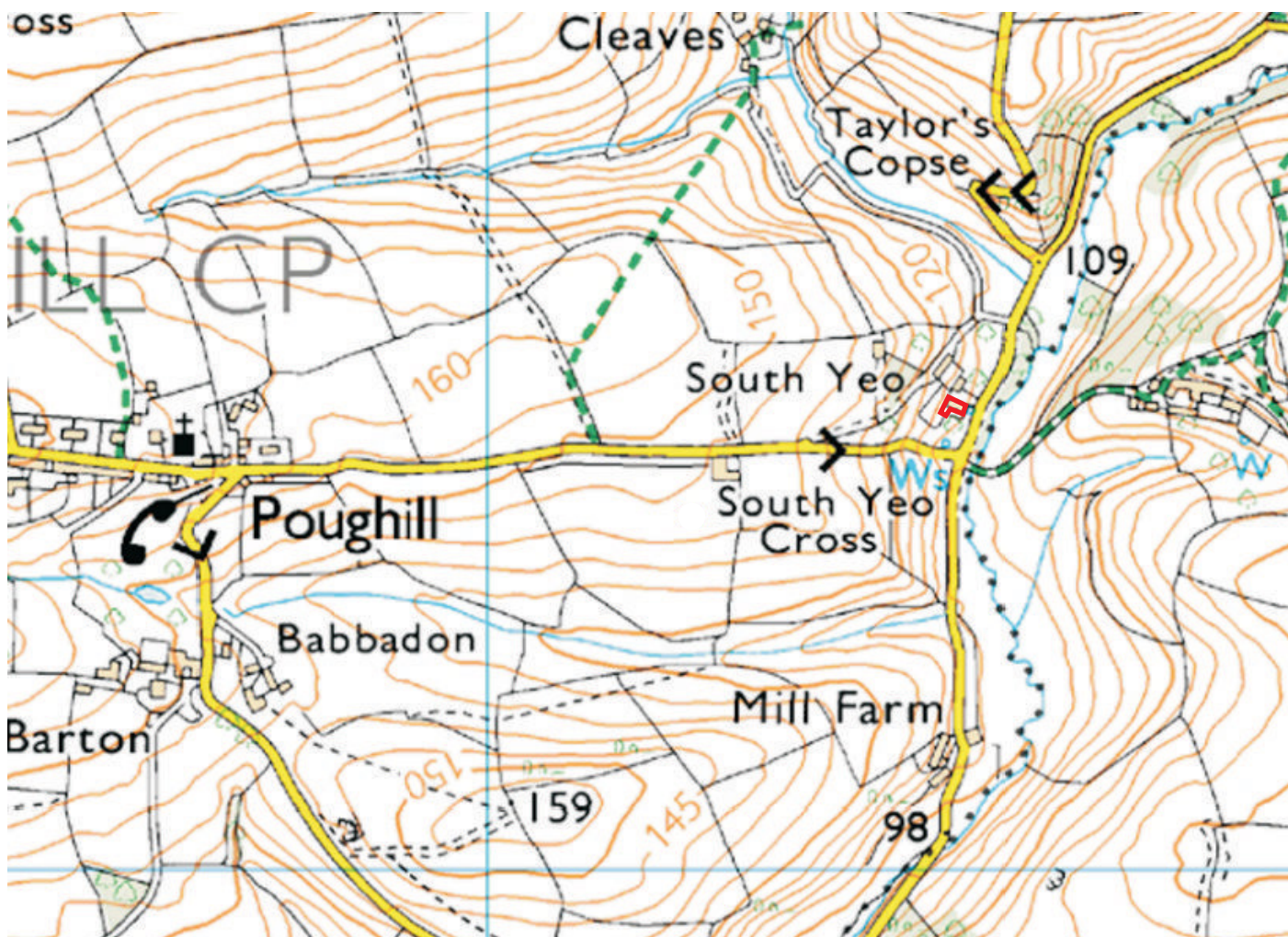
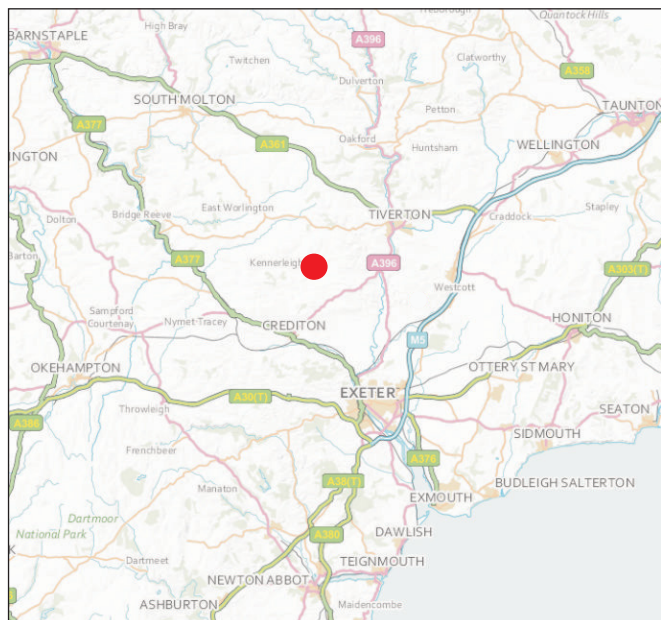
7. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

- 7.1** The survey was commissioned by Mr David Ross, and thanks are due to him for allowing full access to the house during the investigations. Andrew Passmore carried out the survey and prepared the report. Figure 1 was produced by Elisabeth Patkai.

8. SOURCES CONSULTED

Blaylock, S.R., 2004, *Bowhill, The archaeological study of a building under repair in Exeter, Devon, 1977-95*, Exeter Archaeological Report **5**

Passmore, A., 2013, *South Yeo Farmhouse, Poughill, Devon, (NGR SS 86498 08502), Written Scheme of investigation for Historic Building Recording, Mid Devon District Council planning reference 12/01119/LBC*, AC archaeology document no. **ACD7351/0**



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Scale 1:7500@A4

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 Location of site

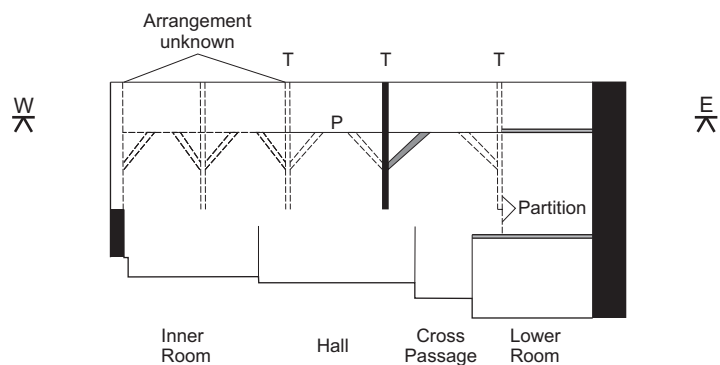
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South Yeo, Poughill, Devon

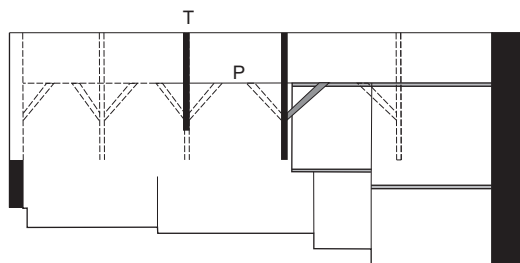
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Fig. 1: Site location

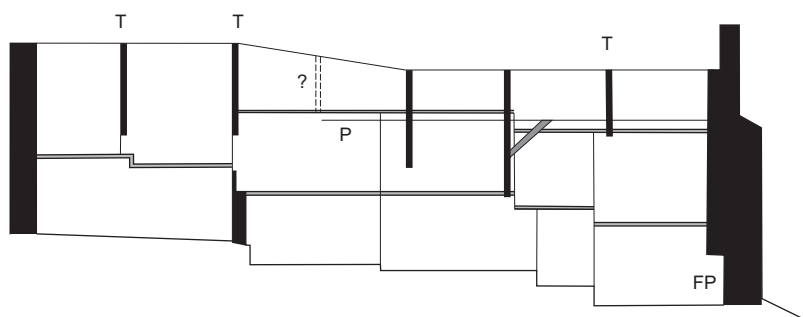
C15/C16



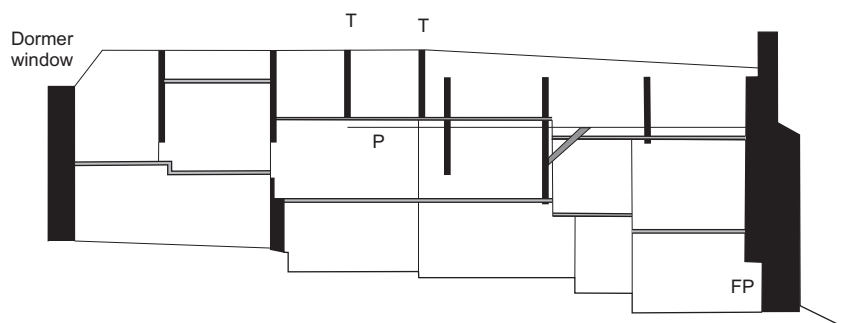
? mid C16



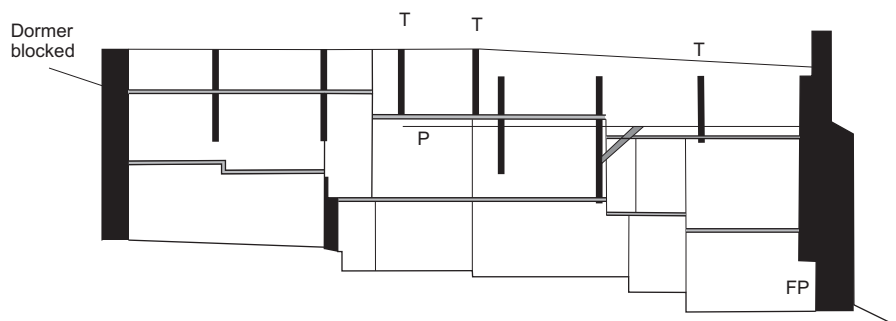
early-mid C17



Late C17/
C18



C20



- T New Truss
- Surviving wind brace
- Inferred position of structural element
- FP Fireplace
- Ceiling
- P Primary upper purlin

PROJECT

South Yeo, Poughill, Devon

TITLE

Fig. 2: Conjectural phased reconstruction of the farmhouse



not to scale



Plate 1: General view of the roof, viewed from the northeast.



Plate 2: The eastern truss in the medieval roof, also showing reused timber in partition beyond, viewed from the southwest.



Plate 3: The replacement medieval truss in the primary roof structure, viewed from the northeast.



Plate 4: The cross passage showing the floor joists over the lower room in the screen to the left and later joists over the passage above the screens, viewed from the north.



Plate 5: The stair turret or stairwell in the eastern bedroom, viewed from the northeast.



Plate 6: The surviving windbrace, and adjacent primary jointed cruck truss, inside the bedroom, viewed from the south.



Plate 7: The medieval roof showing purlin with pegs for windbraces and the overlying common rafters, viewed from the north. 1m scale.



Plate 8: Close-up view of the medieval common rafters, viewed from the northeast.



Plate 9: Slates from the roof, top side. 0.20m scale.



Plate 10: The replacement roof over the lower room, viewed from the northwest. 1m scale.



Plate 11: The eastern truss of the roof over the western extension, viewed from the southeast.



Plate 12: The reused medieval truss in the western extension, showing evidence for a partition, viewed from the east.



Plate 13: The replacement roof over the western end of the hall and the inner room, viewed from the southeast. 1m scale.



Plate 14: view of the northern pitch of the roof showing 20th-century raising of the eaves levels, viewed from the east. 1m scale.



Plate 15: The infilled former window opening in the western elevation, viewed from the west. 0.20m scale.



Plate 16: The possible glazing bar, recovered from the roof. 0.20m scale.

Devon Office

AC archaeology Ltd
Unit 4, Halthaies Workshops
Bradninch
Nr Exeter
Devon
EX5 4LQ

Telephone/Fax: 01392 882410

Wiltshire Office

AC archaeology Ltd
Manor Farm Stables
Chicklade
Hindon
Nr Salisbury
Wiltshire
SP3 5SU

Telephone: 01747 820581
Fax: 01747 820440

www.acarchaeology.co.uk