

# EAST HOLME, NEWTON ST. CYRES, DEVON

## HISTORIC BUILDING RECORDING AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF



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NOVEMBER 2011

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By  
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*SUMMARY*

*East Holme Farm is a Grade II\* listed building dating from the late 14<sup>th</sup> or early 15<sup>th</sup> century with a smoke-blackened jointed-cruck roof. A programme of archaeological works was carried out in August and September 2011 whilst development was in progress. The house originally had a three-room-and-cross-passage plan. It was extended at each end in the late 16<sup>th</sup> or early 17<sup>th</sup> century with two-storied additions, leaving the hall and kitchen open to the roof. In the 17<sup>th</sup> century, first the kitchen was floored over and then the hall. Alterations were made in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, including a new front entrance at the upper end and a new kitchen fireplace with oven at the lower end.*

*Excavation within the house uncovered three 12<sup>th</sup>- or 13<sup>th</sup>-century shallow pits interpreted as tree-holes associated with initial clearance of the site. One of the tree-holes cut through one side of a pit containing sherds from a prehistoric pottery vessel and a lithic blade. The tree-hole also produced a sherd from another prehistoric vessel and a lithic flake.*

THE PROJECT

East Holme Farm is a Grade II\* listed building dating from the late 14<sup>th</sup> or early 15<sup>th</sup> century. Planning consent was granted to the owners Peter and Janice Kay for development of the lower end of the house on condition that a programme of archaeological works was carried out (Appendix 1). The works began in August 2011 and comprised historic building recording during repair of the standing fabric and an archaeological watching brief during groundworks for new below-ground services a new floor in the cross-passage and lower end. The building works were confined to the cross-passage and lower end. Modern plaster was stripped from the walls in places up to first-floor level. Bearings for floor beams were opened up, inspected and replaced where necessary. Roof timbers including cruck posts were exposed in order to inspect their condition and repaired. Many timbers in the roof structure were consolidated and repaired. Trenches for new services were dug across the yard to the front of the house, around all three sides of its lower end, and along the length of the cross-passage, branching into the former hall. Later extensions to the house were terraced into the natural W-E slope of the ground at each end so that the building now has a lower floor in its lower (east) end than in its upper (west) end.

Natural subsoil is red gravelly clay. Bedrock was not seen. The site lies close to the geological boundary between outcrops of Permian red sandstones and breccias-conglomerates (St. Cyres Beds) and Carboniferous shales and sandstones (Crackington Formation). Volcanic stone of the Exeter Trap Series appears in the rubble wall footings of the house and farm buildings, evidently having come from one or more outcrops in the vicinity.

An earlier archaeological assessment of the building with documentary history was undertaken for Mr & Mrs Kay in 2008 by Keystone Historic Building Consultants (Thorp et al. 2008). Much more of the fabric of the house was visible during the 2011 works than was the case in 2008 when Keystone produced their report. A great deal of the interpretation

presented in this account borrows from Keystone's report whilst some has been re-assessed in the light of fresh evidence.

The owners kindly allowed Stewart Brown access to the occupied, west end of the house to take photographs of internal features and accessible parts of the roof. Observations and photographs relating to the west end of the house have been included in this report in order to compile a more complete picture of the house and its development.

The plans accompanying this report are based on a survey of the east end of the house and surrounding area by Tor Surveys Ltd. (2009), and partly on a ground plan by Keystone (2008). The levels shown on the drawings are arbitrary and refer to a temporary bench mark used by the Tor Surveys survey of 50.00m on the concrete floor immediately outside the (kitchen) doorway at the east end of the front (north) wall.

## THE STANDING BUILDING

The standing structure (Plates 1 and 2) retains elements from six different building phases dating from the late medieval period to the late 20<sup>th</sup> century (Fig. 1, Phases 1-5; Fig 2, Phase 6).

### **Phase 1** late 14<sup>th</sup>/early 15<sup>th</sup> century (Fig. 1, Phase 1)

None of the fabric of the Phase 1 walls was exposed during the development building works. Some of the walls of the former hall probably date from Phase 1 but this area was not affected by the development. The Phase 1 walls to the east of the cross-passage do not survive since these were swept away in Phase 2 when the lower end was rebuilt (Phase 2 below). Building work undertaken beneath the walls to each side of the cross-passage exposed only natural clay, showing that the Phase 1 cob walls had been built directly on the ground (Excavations inside the house, below).

The Phase 1 roof survives largely intact. It was originally five bays long containing three side-pegged jointed cruck trusses and one other truss which appears to be a true cruck, all with wall posts extending to the ground. The arrangement of original closed and open trusses shows that the house followed the usual late medieval three-room-and-cross-passage plan (Fig. 1, Phase 1). The most westerly truss is a closed truss forming a full-height partition. This would have separated the hall from a smaller inner room at the west end. The next truss to the east is an open one which spanned the hall. This appears to be a true cruck truss. The next truss is another closed truss with full-height partition which divided the cross-passage at the lower (east) end of the hall from the kitchen. The most easterly truss is an open one which spanned the kitchen. At the east end of the roof, the purlins continue some 0.3-0.5m further than the length of the bay. This shows that the end purlins were longer than the others so that they could be set into the east gable end wall. They cannot have been tenoned into the side of a truss like the rest. This also shows that there was no end truss in the original roof. The present truss in this position is later in date (Phase 2, below). It is uncertain how the purlins terminate at the other end of the roof since this part of the roof was not inspected closely, but it is likely that there is, or was, a similar arrangement.

The jointed cruck trusses have a mortise and tenon joint at the elbow with a long tenon on top of the curving head of the cruck post and a corresponding mortise cut into the underside of the principal rafter which extends to the apex (Fig. 3a; Plate 3). The cruck truss appears not to

have a joint at the elbow (Plate 4). The principals meet at the apex with a vertical butt joint and are held together by a triangular yoke tenoned and pegged into their undersides (Plate 5). There is a diagonal ridge piece which is pegged into a mortise cut into the two ends of the principals. The collars are either straight or slightly cranked and have a mortise and tenon joint at each end held by two pegs. The open trusses have chamfered arch-braces (Plate 6). The lower parts of the bracing are fashioned from the cruck posts, with decorative corbel stops at their base (Plate 7). The upper parts are separate timbers tenoned into mortises cut into the undersides of the principal rafters and collar. These rise to a small block beneath the middle of the collar which usually in such roofs is carved from the collar itself, but here is a separate piece tenoned into the collar's underside. The roof has two sets of butt purlins, the main set placed about half-way up the principals just below collar level, and an upper set placed between collar and ridge. The butt purlins extend from truss to truss and have end tenons set into mortises cut into the sides of the truss principals. The lower purlin was braced from beneath by curved wind-braces, two in each bay (Plate 8). Where the cruck posts are exposed, it can be seen that they comprise two separate timbers joined together with unpegged mortice-and-tenon joints.

The roof is smoke-blackened throughout, including the original base coat of thatch (Plate 9). There must have been an open hearth in both the hall and kitchen, and the house must have been open to the roof. The timbers making up the full-height partitions are jointed and pegged to the trusses (Plates 10 and 11), apart from the ground-floor stud and panel screen in the partition between the passage and kitchen, which is not smoke-blackened like the timbers above and therefore later in date (Phase 3, below). The original partitions have wattle and daub infilling. The Phase 1 cross-passage would have been separated from the hall by a low screen some 2m high. The present stud and panel screen in this position is almost certainly not the original one since it is not smoke-blackened and is built in a matching style to the Phase 3 screen on the other side of the passage (Phase 3 below).

Curiously, there is a fifth jointed-cruck truss which is different from the others and set tightly against the side of the westernmost one, which has lost one of its wall posts. The different truss appears to have been salvaged from elsewhere and re-used in this position in a later phase to lend support to a damaged or failing truss (see Phase 2, below).

Where the roof timbers are exposed they appear to be of oak, although smoke-blackening makes identification difficult.

### **16<sup>th</sup>-century hall fireplace**

The hall fireplace may well date from the early or mid 16<sup>th</sup>-century. It has volcanic stone monolithic jambs with wave mouldings ending in rounded pyramid stops (Plate 12). The present timber lintel may be a replacement (Phase 4, below).

### **Phase 2 Early 17<sup>th</sup> century (Fig. 1, Phase 2)**

In the early 17<sup>th</sup> century the house was enlarged by erecting a two-storied extension at each end, leaving the hall and passage of the original building intact, together with the entire roof structure. The new additions were set in terraces dug into the sloping ground. The western addition was set in a terrace some 1m deep at its western end so that its floor level corresponded with that in the hall. The new layout took in the previous inner room which was replaced by an arrangement similar to that of the present lobby with stair projecting from the



south wall. The room to the west would have been a heated parlour. The present fireplace in the west gable wall has been rebuilt in modern times but retains a moulded timber lintel dating from about this time. At first-floor level, there would have been a master bedroom above the parlour and probably a smaller bedroom above the lobby.

Rebuilding at the east end extended almost as far west as the cross-passage, including the kitchen. The new kitchen was set in a terrace 0.6m deep at its west end. The house had in effect become divided into two distinct ends with different floor levels. The reduction in level of the lower end meant that the Phase 1 walls had to be taken down and rebuilt. The new walls were built in cob with stone rubble footings set in trenches (Plates 13 and 14). The ground level at the east end of the new building was however too low, so had to be made up by 0.2m to provide a level floor throughout (see Watching brief during excavation of service pipe trenches, below).

The present window openings in the lower end date from this phase, apart from the most easterly one in the north wall which dates from the 19<sup>th</sup>-century (Phase 5, below). The timber lintels above the windows are built into the Phase 2 cob walls. A small wooden window, part of which remains in the south wall, probably also dates from this phase (Plate 15). The window was damaged and infilled when the present first-floor beam was inserted above it (phase 5, below).

The phase 1 medieval roof was extended at each end in order to cover the new additions. The original cob gable end walls were taken down and replaced by full-height timber partition walls rising to closed A-frame trusses. The A-frame truss at the western end still survives together with a partition wall beneath it extending down to ground level. Further west is an open A-frame truss with principals visible from the master bedroom. At the east end, there is an A-frame truss with remnants of the original partition beneath it (Fig. 3b; Plate 16). The truss was inserted beneath the medieval roof structure to provide support. The A-frame truss is built of fast-grown, knotty timber, almost certainly elm, and has suffered a far greater degree of worm damage than the original medieval timbers. Sockets survive in the undersides of the principals and collar for stud and wattle-and-daub infilling. Some of the wooden studs survive. An upright timber forming part of the original partition wall is still in place. It is tenoned and pegged into the underside of the collar. The remainder of the partition wall has been rebuilt in modern times (Phase 6, below). The present beam at first-floor level in the partition replaced a phase 2 beam in much the same position. A hollow impression of the phase 2 beam was visible in the cob of the south wall during building works. A short horizontal timber used as a bearing for the beam survived (now replaced). The purpose of the phase 2 beam would have been to carry a first floor in the new eastern extension. The eastern addition probably contained a service room at ground-floor level with a first-floor sleeping chamber or chambers above. The present 19<sup>th</sup>-century truss to the east of the phase 2 closed A-frame truss doubtless replaced an earlier open A-frame truss similar to that surviving at the west end.

The roof with A-frame trusses at the west end was seen only at a distance in this recording project but was observed more closely in 2008 by John Thorp whose report includes a description. ` *The roof over the parlour extension is three-bays, with two new A-frame trusses....The apex has a plain mortise and tenon joint held with a peg. The collars have dovetail-shaped lap-joints to the principals and are fixed with a single peg each side. They carry one set of trenched purlins and a diagonal ridge in a notch at the apex.* `

The surviving A-frame truss at the east end is similar, but the collar has mortise and tenon joints rather than dovetail-shaped lap-joints. The pitch of the truss is shallower than the medieval roof and its apex considerably lower. The phase 2 roof nevertheless maintained the same ridge line as the earlier medieval roof in order to prevent leaking, as the modern roof still does today. It was therefore necessary to raise the roof up above the surviving phase 2 A-frame truss. Wooden struts some 1m long were nailed to its principals rising upward to support the phase 2 purlins and ridge (Plates 17 and 18). The struts have specially fashioned V-shaped notches at their top to carry diagonally-set timbers. The present purlins and ridge are 19<sup>th</sup>-century replacements and much cleaner in appearance but still use the phase 2 struts for support. The struts on the south side of the roof were removed in modern times during re-thatching.

The A-frame truss at the east end is smoke-blackened, showing that the new phase 2 kitchen had an open hearth and was open to the roof. The smoke-blackening of the A-frame truss is however not as intense as that on the medieval roof timbers which had far longer exposure to smoke.

The present cob wall extending northeastward from the northeast corner of the house dates from about this time. It has stone footings and is similar in construction to the house walls. It probably formed one side of a range of outbuildings or farm buildings flanking the east side of a yard to the front of the house. The opposite, west wall of the range no longer survives but its footings were located by excavation 4.5m to the west (see Watching brief during excavation of service pipe trenches, 55 and 59, below). The presence of a well in the part of the range nearest to the house would suggest that the well was dug originally to serve the phase 2 kitchen, and that it was set within a roofed well house.

### **Phase 3** Early/mid 17<sup>th</sup> century

This phase comprises the insertion of a first floor above the old kitchen and the insertion of the present stud and panel screens to each side of the passage (Fig. 1, phase 3; Plates 19 and 20).

The present floor beam spanning the former kitchen was set in place in the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Phase 5, below), but it probably replaced an earlier phase 3 beam in the same position. There was certainly a first floor above the old kitchen when the present screen on the lower side of the passage was inserted, since it contains a stair doorway leading up to the first floor (Plate 21). The stair doorway must be an original feature of the screen since if it been inserted at a later date there would be evidence in the head beam for a former stud in this position. There is however no downturn in the chamfer on the head beam as there would have been for a stud, and no peg or peg hole like those for the surviving studs (Plate 22). The head of the stair doorway is set a little higher than that of the other doorway in order to compensate for the rise of the first step. The screen is clean on both sides and not smoke-blackened, although unfortunately it has been stained in recent times in places. The screen must be a replacement for the lower part of the original medieval partition in this position, the upper part of which still survives in its smoke-blackened condition (Phase 1, above). The Phase 1 upper part is tenoned and pegged into the associated cruck truss whereas the Phase 3 lower part is not, which accounts for the present displacement of the head beam eastward.

The screen on the opposite, west side of the passage matches the eastern one closely in style and must be contemporary in date. It was not sited beneath one of the roof trusses so stood

independently as a low screen dividing passage and hall. There was a doorway leading from the passage into the hall toward the middle of the screen which has since been blocked and an internal window inserted (Plate 23). The present doorway at its south end is modern. A doorway which once existed at its north end belongs to the subsequent phase (Phase 4, below). The screen is very likely to have replaced an original one in the same position. Both present passage screens are built of fast-grown elm.

It is probably in this phase that the kitchen was moved to east end of the house. The old kitchen with its open hearth clearly could no longer function, and there is no trace of a replacement ground-floor fireplace in either side wall. The present brick kitchen fireplace at the east end dates from the 19<sup>th</sup> century but incorporates a chamfered timber lintel from an earlier, wider fireplace, quite possibly dating from the 17<sup>th</sup> century.

#### **Phase 4** Mid 17<sup>th</sup> century

The last parts of the house to be floored over were the hall and passage (Fig. 1, phase 4). The present floor beams are of fast-grown elm. They have very deep chamfers and stepped stops, the step being rounded rather than sharply angled (Plate 24). The first-floor joists are covered by a flat plaster ceiling but clearly pass over the phase 3 screen between the hall and passage and are seated in the head beam of the screen on the further side of the passage. This shows that the hall and passage were floored over at the same time.

Alterations made to the fireplace probably date from this period. The original lintel was seemingly replaced by one with a hollow chamfer along its bottom edge which is aligned with, but does not match, the mouldings on the two original stone jambs. The replacement of the lintel may have been associated with the insertion of the first-floor beams and the construction of a narrow newel stair to the east of the fireplace. The new stair was tucked tightly into the corner of the room and was probably a service stair leading up to new chambers on the first floor. Access to the stair from the passage was provided by a doorway forced through the passage screen at its north end, which removed one of the screen's upright studs. The doorway is now blocked by later infilling (Plate 25).

#### **Phase 5** Early/mid 19<sup>th</sup> century

A number of alterations date from the early or mid 19<sup>th</sup> century (Fig. 1, phase 5). The main entrance and lobby in the upper, western end were refurbished and a new wooden stair inserted (Plates 26). The kitchen at the east end was largely rebuilt. Its north and east walls were rebuilt above foundation level with brick and cob. The north wall was rebuilt narrower than it had been before with a new window and doorway. The fireplace was rebuilt largely in brick, with a side oven for baking. The wooden lintel from the previous earlier kitchen fireplace was re-used (Phase 3, above). At first-floor level a new cast-iron fireplace with brick hearth was inserted into the north wall (Plate 27). The easternmost truss of the roof was replaced at this time with the present, crude A-frame truss made up of barely trimmed timbers (Plate 28). The truss has lap-jointed collar and apex with diagonal ridge and back purlins, fixed with pegs and large nails.

Another area of 19<sup>th</sup>-century rebuilding is evident in the north wall to each side of the cross-passage doorway. This is rubble masonry set in earth and lime mortar which appears to have been inserted at ground-floor level to strengthen a part of the structure which had become weak (Plate 29). The extent of the masonry is shown in Figs 1 and 2. It underpins the north

end of the present first-floor beam to the east of the cross-passage. The beam also belongs in this phase, having replaced an earlier phase 3 one. The beam is a re-used chamfered floor beam from a different, wider building. It has run-out stops which are deeply embedded in the walls and at least one empty joist socket encased within the north wall. Further rubble masonry similar to that in the north wall underpins its south end, in this instance including a brick (Plate 30). The present floor joists to each side of the beam date from this period, although some have been replaced in more recent times.

Another contemporary alteration was the removal of the lower part of the cruck post in the north wall next to the passage, which was cut off and removed when the rubble masonry was put up. It would appear that repairs became necessary following some kind of structural impairment, possibly partial collapse of the cob walls following the insertion of the new floor beam, which is deeply seated in the wall. In addition, the repairs seem very likely to have been associated with the sideways movement of the head beam in the adjacent passage screen, although which came first is unclear.

The rubble masonry in the north wall continues as far west as the west side of the cross-passage, showing that the front entrance into the passage was largely rebuilt at this time. The present timber lintels above the opening probably belong to this period.

The phase 5 rubble masonry is covered by contemporary red/brown haired plaster, which was used to re-plaster much of the lower end, such that it covers earlier cob walls too.

The present first-floor beam in the eastern part of the lower end dates from this time or later.

The well house projecting from the northeast corner of the house was narrowed at this time. Its west wall was taken down and a new open-fronted structure erected a little further to the east with posts along its west side and a king-post roof (Plate 31).

### **Phase 6** Late 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century

Recent alterations to the house include all the ground- and first-floor internal partitions in the lower end and a new stair to the first floor (Fig. 2). The present windows are modern, set in earlier openings. The parlour fireplace has been rebuilt in very recent times. The two-storied extension to the rear of the house with bathroom on its first floor is also a modern addition.

## ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF

### **Excavation inside the house**

The lower end and passage had modern concrete floors. These were lifted by the contractor's staff, leaving the ground below undisturbed. Archaeological cleaning of the surface beneath the concrete revealed natural clay in many places but also a number of archaeological features dating from prehistoric, medieval, and later periods. No stratified archaeological deposits such as floor levels survived.

#### *Prehistoric* (Fig. 4)

A small rectangular pit contained sherds from a prehistoric vessel and a lithic blade (pit 9; Plate 32). The pit had been disturbed on one side by a later feature (8, below) so its full size is

uncertain. The surviving part measured 0.6m by more than 0.5m, and was 0.35m deep. The pit was probably originally square or nearly so. The vessel had been broken into large sherds before these were placed in the pit in an apparently structured manner. The sherds were stacked one against another and lay in an inverted position. The sherds represent approximately one half of the original vessel.

As per section 3.4 of the WSI for this project, the Mid Devon District Council Conservation Officer, and Devon County Councils HES were informed of this significant archaeological find. Upon consultation with Steve Reed of HES and the property owners, it was decided that the assemblage of pottery sherds, which were in a very fragile condition, should be carefully lifted from the pit intact within a block of the surrounding soil by staff from the Conservation Lab. at Exeter's RAM Museum. The block of soil was then transported to the museum where the sherds were carefully excavated and then conserved. A report on the vessel and other prehistoric finds from the site appears below (Appendix 3).

#### *Medieval (Fig. 4)*

Three irregularly-shaped features which pre-date construction of the house are interpreted as medieval tree-holes resulting from tree clearance (7, 8, 10). These lay for the most part below the formation level for the new floors so were not excavated in full. Evaluation trenches were dug across features 7 and 8 respectively in order to investigate their depth and fill (Trenches 1 and 2). Both pits proved to be less than 0.3m deep and to have uneven bottoms. Both were filled with gravelly clay with concentrations of charcoal along their bottom. Feature 7 produced 11 sherds of medieval pottery dating from the 12<sup>th</sup> or 13<sup>th</sup> century and a few fragments of burnt bone plus one fish bone. Feature 8 produced a prehistoric lithic flake and a sherd of prehistoric pottery with large grits in its fabric. The sherd was much thinner than those in pit 9, so came from a different vessel. The outline of feature 10 was very difficult to establish since its fill was almost identical to the surrounding natural gravelly clay, except on its north side where it was a little darker in colour.

A stone-lined drain probably dating from the medieval period was uncovered at the south end of the passage (6; Plate 33). The drain was built of thin pieces of local shale set upright along each side of a narrow trench 0.26m wide and laid flat along its bottom. One thicker piece of shale had been used as a capstone. Elsewhere, traces of rotted wood close to the top of the fill suggest that a plank had been used as a cover, perhaps when the original capstones were removed at a late date. The drain had a thin layer of greenish/white cress 10mm thick along its bottom. This was covered by gravelly clay resembling the surrounding natural deposits but looser. The drain evidently carried effluent away from a garderobe or latrine in the upper end of the house and was later intentionally infilled. It passed through the south doorway of the passage and must have turned eastward down the slope and alongside the house since it was not located in trench 6 further south (below).

It would appear that the medieval (phase 1) cob walls were built directly on the ground. Building works beneath the north wall in the vicinity of the former cross-passage and for a distance of at least 0.7m to its east revealed only natural deposits rather than stone footings. This would mean that the phase 1 cruck posts in the lower end would also originally have been set up directly on the ground, the present stone footings beneath them representing underpinning dating from phase 2 and later. The absence of stone footings in the construction of the medieval house would explain why none were found crossing the lower end where the east gable wall of the medieval house once stood.

## *Post-medieval*

Two areas of rubble were uncovered which had been used as make-up deposits for the modern concrete floors (2, 3). Deposit 2 comprised largely cobbles which probably came from an earlier cobbled floor. Deposit 3 contained large pieces of mortar from an earlier mortar floor. The two earlier floors had evidently been broken up to raise the level for the new floors and possibly to alleviate dampness. The date of the earlier floors is uncertain but likely to lie between the 17<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century.

A shallow linear trench extending along the west side of deposit 3 was clearly associated with an internal partition wall dividing two rooms in the lower end (4). It probably once contained stone or brick footings for a timber-framed wall. The trench had been emptied and backfilled with modern concrete. A modern concrete floor filled a sunken area between feature 4 and the passage. Modern masonry bonded with cement had been used as underpinning beneath the eastern screen of the passage and to infill a window recess in the north wall. A deposit of red sand infilled another shallow sunken area beneath the present modern stair in the southwest corner of the lower end (5). This had been used to level a modern concrete base for the stair. The sunken area however might originally have contained timbers associated with an earlier stair.

### **Watching brief during excavation of service pipe trenches**

A watching brief was maintained throughout the excavation of trenches for new services extending from the road to the north to the house, and along the north, east, and south sides of the lower end (Fig. 6, trenches 3-6). Trench 3 was excavated using a small mechanical digger, Trenches 4-6 were excavated by hand. A number of modern features were exposed (51, electric cable; 52, 19<sup>th</sup>-century ceramic land drain; 58, post-hole; 63, iron pipe; 64, drain - not fully excavated). Other features were older and of archaeological interest.

Features 55 (trench 3) and 59 (trench 4) were wall robber trenches with a few of the original stone footings surviving in places. The features aligned with one another so are likely to be remnants of the same wall. They represent the west side wall of the 17<sup>th</sup>-century range of outbuildings extending northeastward from the house and containing the well house, as mentioned above (Standing Building, phase 2). The robbing fill of feature 59 produced two pottery sherds dating from the late 17<sup>th</sup> or 18<sup>th</sup> century, so the wall was probably taken down in the 18th or 19th century, perhaps when the well house was narrowed. Both features had patches of distinctive yellow clay along their east sides, probably a remnant from the infilling of the original construction trench. Feature 55 retained two courses of rubble footings at one point (Plate 34).

Feature 6 (trench 6) and feature 60 (trench 4) were two drains of probable medieval date. Feature 6 has been described above (Excavations inside the house, medieval). Drain 60 was built in a similar manner. Its alignment suggests that it passed out of the house through the nearby doorway at the north end of the passage, like drain 6 did at the opposite end of the passage. No trace was found of the drain during excavation of the passage however, so it may lie beneath the west jamb of the doorway which was rebuilt in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Feature 57 (trench 3) was another stone-lined drain. Its walls were bonded with white mortar, which would suggest a later date, possibly in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Feature 56 extending alongside the drain was a modern feature. It was a trench infilled with cobbles, bricks and lumps of concrete.

Trench 5 and the easternmost parts of trenches 3 and 4 exposed a uniform deposit of gravelly clay 0.1- 0.2m deep containing charcoal flecks. The deposit was confined to the area surrounding the east end of the house and directly overlay natural. The clay appears to have been spread across this part of the site in order to make-up the ground level, quite possibly when the house was extended in this direction in the early 17<sup>th</sup> century. The deposit produced no finds so is not closely datable. It was overlain by 19<sup>th</sup>-century and modern deposits.

Features 61 (trench 4) and 62 (trench 5) were probably remains from stone footings, but so little of them was exposed that interpretation is difficult. Both comprised more than one course of rubble set in clay. Neither produced dating evidence.

Feature 54 (trench 3) was a scarp marking the edge of a wide sunken area extending southeastwards as far as feature 55. The sunken area was not bottomed but was more than 0.5m deep. The lowest observable fill was dark brown claysilt which appears to have accumulated whilst the sunken area remained open for some time. The upper fills were cleaner clay dumps containing stone rubble, broken roofing slates, and brick fragments dating from the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The sunken area flanked the 17<sup>th</sup>-century range of outbuildings extending northeastward from the lower end of the house. It is likely that it became a sunken feature through constant use and erosion. The upper fills contain building demolition material dating from about the same time that the south end of the range, which contained the well house, was narrowed and its west wall demolished (features 55 and 59, above). The demolition material was probably simply tipped into the adjacent sunken area in order to level the yard.

## DISCUSSION

### **Prehistoric**

The prehistoric finds uncovered beneath the house adds to the growing body of evidence for prehistoric settlement in the Newton St Cyres area. Devon County Council's Historic Environment Record lists a number of prehistoric sites in the locality. A discussion of the pottery and lithic finds appears in Appendix 3 below.

### **Medieval**

The three closely-spaced tree-holes provide evidence for the area having been cleared in the 12<sup>th</sup> or 13<sup>th</sup> century. The site might perhaps have been cleared for agriculture first and settled later, or there could have been an earlier house than the present one in the vicinity. The first documentary evidence occurs in 1407/8 when the farmstead can be identified in a list of farmsteads held by free tenants in the manor of Newton St Cyres, which belonged to Plympton Priory (Thorp et al. 2008, 5). Tenancy by free-hold in medieval times meant freedom from customary service such as helping the landlord with his harvest for so many days, and more independence generally to farm and make profits, although accordingly, rents were high. Often, free-hold properties were located around the edges of manors, away from the manor house and village which were overseen and managed more closely by the manorial lord. Monasteries often held manors located some distance away, so in order to reduce the burden of management, they allowed more freehold than usual.

The earliest phase of the present house has been shown to have followed the standard late medieval plan for farmhouses in Devon comprising three rooms and a cross-passage (Fig. 1, Phase 1). Departure from this arrangement was very rare before c. 1600 (Alcock and Carson 2007, 31). The most important room was the hall in the middle, which was the main living and eating room, also designed to impress visitors with the size of its enclosed space and lofty roof. To its east was an inner room which may have been a ground-floor chamber for sleeping. These two rooms constitute the 'upper end' of the house, which was separated from the 'lower end' by a cross-passage or entry. The lower end contained services, in this case a kitchen.

Remarkably, the smoke-blackened roof of the house survives substantially intact, complete with smoke-blackened base coat of thatch, an important survival. Smoke-blackened thatch is a rarity in Devon, which has far more than any other county, and exceptional outside the South West, where only a handful are known (Cox and Thorp 2001, 38-42). The roof can be dated on stylistic grounds to the late 14<sup>th</sup> or early 15<sup>th</sup> century (Thorp et al 2008, 33-4). It contains three jointed-cruck trusses and one which appears to be a true cruck, although much of the latter is not presently visible. The house was unusual in having two open hearths, one in the hall, the other denoting use of the lower end as a kitchen. A single heart in the hall was more common, when this would be used for cooking as well as heating. There are however a number of other farmhouses which are known to have had two hearths such as at Middle Clyst William, Plymtree (Child 2001, 39).

The walls of the house appear to have been of cob built directly on the ground, a method known from an increasing number of examples in Devon, even amongst houses of considerable standing (pers. comm. John Thorp). The introduction of a fireplace in the hall to replace the open hearth is a fairly common feature of the 16<sup>th</sup> century (Child 2001, 40).

### **Post-medieval**

The 17<sup>th</sup>-century saw an enlargement of the house at each end and the insertion of first-floor rooms. These were common developments for the time in farmhouses across Devon and elsewhere in the country. More rooms meant greater flexibility to meet changing social conditions, and families increasingly desired greater comfort and privacy. Rooms such as the parlour came into being - the best living room, usually heated - whilst sleeping accommodation was moved from the ground to the first floor. The open hall, which had been such a prized symbol of status in earlier times, was by c. 1700 almost totally abandoned in domestic arrangements. Extensions to houses were made in many different ways, but it was common to make additions at either or both ends, since it was easier to extend the roof than build completely new wings or annexes. This did however result in an inconveniently long linear arrangement of up to five rooms not including the passage, as at East Holme. Because the extended house stood on sloping ground, the two ends of the house had to be part-terraced into the slope. They therefore had different floor levels. Consequently, there is also a difference in the level of windows and eaves at the two ends, seen most clearly in the front elevation (see front cover illustration).

A number of features suggest a date for phase 2 at about the beginning of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. A-frame trusses with dovetail-shaped lap jointed collars like those surviving at the west end generally date from the early or mid 17<sup>th</sup> century. In Keystone's report, John Thorp cites comparable roofs at Manor House, Cullompton (1603); Hackland Farm, Cullompton (1605); and a late example at Chaffcombe Manor, Down St. Mary (1670-75) (Thorp et al. 2008, 44).



The A-frame truss at the east end has a collar with mortise and tenon joints, a feature generally associated with medieval and early post-medieval roofs rather than later ones.

It is not certain when the present arrangement of front doorway, lobby and stair projecting from the south wall came into being, but it seems likely that it formed part of the early 17<sup>th</sup>-century alteration to the upper end, since the 17<sup>th</sup>-century parlour would otherwise have been very long, much larger than the hall which would still have been the main focus of the house.

The presence of smoke-blackening on the roof truss over the early 17<sup>th</sup>-century kitchen is perhaps a little surprising in view of the date, since from c. 1600 onwards, many houses had large kitchen fireplaces inserted into their lower ends. This would support a date in the very early part of the century for the phase 2 alterations. Other examples of kitchens of probable 17<sup>th</sup>-century date with smoke-blackened roofs are the back block at 80 Pilton Street, Pilton, and at Clifford Barton, Dunsford, which also have A-frame trusses (pers. comm. John Thorp).

The last room to be floored over was the hall, as is often is the case in the development of Devon farmhouses. The beams used as ceiling beams when the hall was floored over are fast-grown knotty timber, almost certainly elm. The two passage screens are also of elm (pers comm. Oliver Bosence), as is the early 17<sup>th</sup>-century A-frame truss over the lower end. The assessment made in 2008 for tree-ring dating identified much elm in the house (pers. comm.. John Thorp). It would seem that much if not all of the timber used in the post-medieval phases of the house is elm. The medieval roof timbers by contrast appear to be oak, although their intense smoke-blackening makes positive identification difficult.

Later modifications to the house are minor, assuming that the 19<sup>th</sup>-century brick kitchen fireplace at the east end replaced an earlier 17<sup>th</sup>-century one sited in the same position and of about the same size. Suggested dates for different parts of the house surviving up to 2011 are shown in Fig. 2.

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thanks are due to Peter and Janice Kay for allowing access to their home, and for their interest taken in the archaeological project. Many thanks also go to Oliver Bosence, the building contractor, and his site staff who were very helpful throughout. John Thorp kindly agreed to visit the house and discuss interpretation of the evidence exposed by the 2011 works. Steve Reed of Devon County Council visited the site and gave advice regarding the lifting of the prehistoric pot. Alison Hopper-Bishop of the Conservation Laboratory at

Exeter's RAM Museum supervised the lifting and conservation the prehistoric vessel. Henrietta Quinnell kindly dealt with recording, dating and reporting on the prehistoric vessel. John Allan identified medieval and post-medieval pottery finds and kindly gave an initial assessment of the the prehistoric vessel - at 8 o'clock in the morning. Mary Dale generously gave up two days of her time to assist with the excavations.

APPENDIX 1  
WRITTEN SCHEME OF INVESTIGATION FOR HISTORIC BUILDING  
RECORDING AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF AT EAST HOLME  
FARMHOUSE, NEWTON ST. CYRES, DEVON

Stewart Brown Associates, October 2010

Location: East Holme Farm, Riscombs Hill, Newton St Cyres  
Parish: Newton St. Cyres,  
District: Mid Devon  
County: Devon  
NGR: 287642,97577

Planning Application no: **10100326/LBC**  
Historic Environment Service ref: **Arch/dc/rnd/16165**

## 1. INTRODUCTION AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

1.1 This WSI has been prepared on behalf of Peter and Janice Kay, owners of East Holme farmhouse, by Stewart Brown Associates with regard to an archaeological programme of works required as a condition of planning consent for the above works. It is a response to a brief supplied by Devon County Council Historic Environment Service (HES, 10/9/10)

1.2 East Holme Farm is a Grade II\* listed building dating from the late 14<sup>th</sup> or early 15<sup>th</sup> century. An historic and archaeological assessment of the building was made for Mr & Mrs Kay in 2008 by Keystone Historic Building Consultants. The assessment included a documentary history, a written account of the medieval open hall house and later alterations, a ground-floor plan showing the medieval layout and some later insertions, a drawn elevation of truss 7, and photographs.

1.3 The principal objective of the programme is to make a record of the historic building prior to the commencement of the development and to record previously obscured historic fabric and architectural features exposed during the works. A recent survey of the building made by Van der Steen Hall Architects will be used as a base for archaeological record drawings.

1.4 Proposed works which may reveal features of archaeological importance include: removal of 19<sup>th</sup>-/20<sup>th</sup>-century partition walls and water-damaged ceilings; extensive repairs to the medieval roof and screens; opening up of wall tops and other fabric wherever roof timbers need to be inspected; opening up of three doorways; groundworks for new foundations, floors, and services.

## 2. PROGRAMME OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL WORKS

### 3.1 Desk-based assessment

Prior to commencing on site, the results of the historic building assessment undertaken by Keystone Historic Building Consultants will be viewed (Keystone Report K741 April 2008).

### 3.2 Historic building recording and watching brief

A record will be made of the historic fabric of the building affected by the development conforming to Level 2-3 of recording levels as set out in *Understanding Historic Buildings: A guide to good recording practice* – English Heritage 2006. This work will be carried out in accordance with the IFA *Standard and guidance for archaeological investigation and recording of standing buildings*, 2008, and will supplement that already undertaken by Keystone Historic Building Consultants. A watching brief will be maintained during groundworks in accordance with the IFA *Standard and guidance for an archaeological watching brief*, 2008. Archaeological features will be cleaned and excavated by hand, recorded and fully recorded by context. All features will be recorded in plan, with sections where appropriate, at a scale of 1:20 or larger.

3.3 A photographic record will be made in B/W print supplemented by colour digital for use in the report. The drawn and written record will be made on appropriate media for archiving.

3.4 Should significant archaeological and/or architectural elements be exposed by the development works, the Mid Devon District Council Conservation Officer, English Heritage, and the HES will be informed. The owners will ensure that any such exposed elements remain undisturbed until their significance can be determined and to allow consideration for their retention *in situ*.

## 4. MONITORING

4.1 Monitoring arrangements will be agreed with the County Historic Environment Service and the District Conservation Officer. Two weeks notice will be given of commencement of the fieldwork.

## 5. REPORTING.

5.1 The reporting requirements will be confirmed with the HES on completion of the site work.

5.2 A written report on the building's historic fabric and features will be prepared containing illustrations and photographs. The report will include scaled plans, cross-section drawings and elevations. The report will include written, drawn, and photographic records of any features of archaeological significance uncovered during groundworks. An overall interpretation will be made of the findings in relation to the 2008 assessment made by Keystone, a copy of which will be included within the archive. A draft of the report will be submitted to HES for comment prior to its formal submission to the Local Planning Authority.

5.3 A copy of the brief supplied by HES will be included in the report.

5.4 The report will be produced within three months of the completion of fieldwork unless the production of specialist reports takes longer, in which case an interim report will be produced.

5.5 One hard copy and one digital copy of the completed report will be supplied to HES, on the understanding that the report will be made available for public reference in the HER and on a future web-based version of the HER. A further copy of the report will be supplied to the Mid District Council's Conservation Officer.

5.6 An online OASIS form will be completed and a digital copy of the report uploaded to the OASIS database. The report to the Historic Environment Record will include the OASIS ID number.

#### 5.7 Publication

Should particularly significant historic fabric, architectural features, below-ground remains or finds be encountered, publication requirements -including any further analysis that may be necessary - will be confirmed with the HES.

### 6. PERSONNEL

6.1 The recording work will be carried out by Stewart Brown who is a member of the Institute of Field Archaeologists. Finds will be identified by John Allan (Exeter Archaeology) or by one of the other specialists listed below (9).

### 7. DEPOSITION OF ARCHIVE AND FINDS

7.1 A site archive will be compiled and deposited with Exeter RAM Museum – accession number 208/2010. The museum's guidelines for the deposition and long-term storage will be followed.

7.2 Archaeological finds from the investigation will either be retained by the owners, in which case time will be allowed for analysis and recording by appropriate specialists, or passed into the care and ownership of Exeter Museum.

7.3 Finds of no particular archaeological interest dating from the late 18<sup>th</sup> century and later will be recorded and discarded.

### 8. HEALTH AND SAFETY

8.1 Archaeological work will be carried out in accordance with guidelines issued by the Health and Safety Executive. Unless specifically agreed otherwise, the owners or their agents will be responsible for general safety on the site.

### 9. LIST OF SPECIALISTS WHO COULD ADVISE OR CONTRIBUTE TO THIS PROJECT IF REQUIRED:

Roman finds - Paul Bidwell (Tyne & Wear Museums, Arbeia Roman Fort);

Prehistoric lithic finds - John Newberry (Paignton);

Prehistoric ceramic and lithic finds - Henrietta Quinell (Exeter);

Bone artefacts - Ian Riddler;

Clay tobacco pipes – David Higgins (Liverpool);

Coins and tokens - Norman Shiel (Exeter);

Finds conservation - Exeter RAM Museum Conservation Service (contact Alison Hopper-Bishop);  
Environmental sampling - Vanessa Straker (English Heritage, Bristol);  
Faunal remains - Southampton University Faunal Remains Unit;  
Plant remains - Julie Jones (Bristol);  
Geological identification and mineral analysis – Roger Taylor.

## 10. INSURANCE

10.1 Stewart Brown Associates has insurance cover in the following areas: Public Liability, Employers Liability, Professional Indemnity, All Risks, and Personal Accident.

10.2 Stewart Brown Associates will not be liable for any damage caused to the site which unavoidably results from archaeological site operations being carried out within the agreed scope of works.

## 11. PERMISSIONS

11.1 The owners, Mr and Mrs Kay, or their agents Van der Steen Hall Architects, will be responsible for obtaining all necessary permissions and/or consents required for the purpose of archaeological recording and excavation.

## Archive Assessment

The project largely comprised building recording but included a watching brief regarding service trench excavations of limited scale. In view of the simple stratigraphy it is considered appropriate that the record compiled in the present report is sufficient, and that a site archive is not required apart from storage of the prehistoric and medieval pottery finds. All site records have been reproduced in the report. The other finds, while useful in providing dating of particular late post-medieval features, are of little value otherwise so have been discarded. They were identified and assessed by John Allan, a local archaeological ceramics expert. The photographic record of the building and excavations is adequately represented in the report.

APPENDIX 2  
MEDIEVAL AND POST-MEDIEVAL FINDS  
Identifications by John Allan

Context no.	Description	Date
2	2 fragments English green bottle glass Neck with double string	c.1730-80*
Pit7 (evaluation trench 1)	11 sherds E Devon/S Somerset cooking pot Upper Greendand derived, nr Donyatt c. 3+ vessels	12 <sup>th</sup> /13 <sup>th</sup> cent
59 (robber-trench fill)	2 sherds S Somerset coarseware	late 17 <sup>th</sup> /18 <sup>th</sup> cent*

\* discarded

APPENDIX 3  
PREHISTORIC POTTERY AND LITHIC FINDS  
By  
Henrietta Quinnell

This report was produced as a published account in Proc. Devon Archaeol. Soc. 71 2013,  
reproduced below.



## A PIT WITH A MIDDLE BRONZE AGE VESSEL AT EAST HOLME, NEWTON ST CYRES

By HENRIETTA QUINNELL

with contributions by Dana Challinor and Roger Taylor

Parts of a Trevisker-related vessel were found in a pit discovered during works to a Listed Structure in 2011. A radiocarbon determination of 1439–1301 cal BC was obtained from charcoal within the pit.

### INTRODUCTION

East Holme Farm (NGR SX 877 975) is a Grade II\* listed building dating to the late 14th or early 15th century. Planning consent was granted to the owners for alterations on condition that a programme of archaeological works was undertaken. These were carried out by Stewart Brown of Stewart Brown Associates in August 2011 and involved a detailed structural study (Brown 2011). A watching brief and excavation were also carried out on parts of the interior of the structure where the floor was to be lowered and service trenches dug.

East Holme lies on the side of the small valley of the Shuttern Brook which runs down

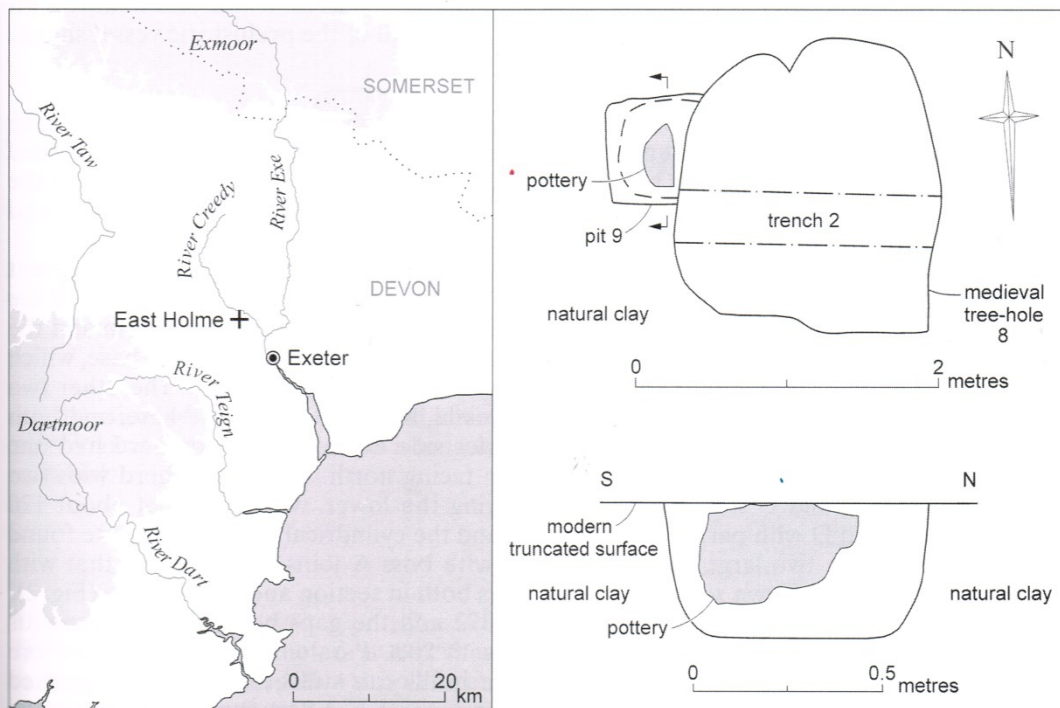


Fig. 1. The location of the site and details of pit 9 containing the vessel.

to join the Creedy, a tributary of the Exe, a kilometre to the east (Fig. 1). The subsoil was red gravelly clay: bedrock was not reached but the site lies close to the junction of Permian red sandstones and breccia conglomerates (St Cyres Beds) and Carboniferous shales and sandstones (Crackington Formation).

## EXCAVATION

### **Inside the house**

The lower end of the house had had concrete floors which were lifted by contractors. The subsoil beneath the original kitchen was revealed and cleaned by archaeologists, revealing a number of features which were partly excavated when in areas that were likely to be damaged. Three of these were 12th or 13th century pits interpreted as tree holes associated with the initial clearance of the site and were dated by the medieval sherds they contained. One of the pits, No. 8 (Fig. 1), excavated by Trench 2, had cut through a pit, No. 9, containing sherds of a prehistoric vessel.

The full size of Pit 9 is uncertain as its east side was destroyed by medieval pit 8. Its surviving dimensions were 0.6 m by 0.35 m with a depth of 0.35 m. Its fill was a red clay. About half of a vessel was present. When sherds were first noted, Steve Reed of Devon County Council Historic Environment Service was informed, as was Alison Hopper-Bishop, Conservator at the RAM Museum, Exeter. It was agreed that the pit-fill containing the sherds should be lifted as a block and transferred to the Museum for excavation and consolidation.

Only one sherd of the prehistoric vessel was found in the medieval pit No. 8 and it is uncertain how far the contents of the exploratory trench 2 were representative of the whole feature. It is therefore not clear how much of the prehistoric vessel may have been removed by this pit. The block of sherds from the vessel did not extend as far as the junction with pit No. 8 and it is quite possible that this represented nearly all of the prehistoric vessel sherds.

### **Excavation and consolidation of the vessel**

Micro-excavation and consolidation were carried out by Kayleigh Fuller, an intern working at the RAM Museum, under the supervision of Alison Hopper-Bishop. Ms Fuller compiled a detailed report on her work which is held with the vessel, for which a five year loan to the Museum is now being negotiated between the Curator of Antiquities, Tom Cadbury, and the owners, Peter and Janice Kay.

The remains of the vessel were found as three sherd groups, which appeared to represent three large sherds when buried, and some smaller fragments. The pieces within each of the large sherd groups had become somewhat displaced, probably through root action and the disruption caused by the removal of the tree which had occupied pit No. 8. The base, which was largely complete, was buried bottom downwards at the base of the pit. The other two original large sherds were from the side of the vessel, from the rim to the base, and both had 'lugs' or bosses attached. Both were laid outer side down. The lower sherd had one surviving boss A (Fig. 2) and lay with its rim top facing north. The upper sherd with two surviving bosses B and C was laid partly overlying the lower, with its rim at about 120 degrees to it. Sherd D with part of a perforation and the cylindrical fragment E were found close to boss C. The two large sherds join: that with boss A joins to the left of that with bosses B and C and is drawn so that lug A appears both in section and in side view (Fig. 2).

The sherds were consolidated with Paraloid B72 and the gaps between the fragments making up the three large sherds were infilled with 20% Paraloid in Acetone and Fibre Tech glass balloons surfaced with acetone: these infills can still be clearly distinguished on the sherds and are indicated by light grey shading on Fig. 2. The fractures showing the junction of lugs and body wall were left unfilled, as these showed information about the



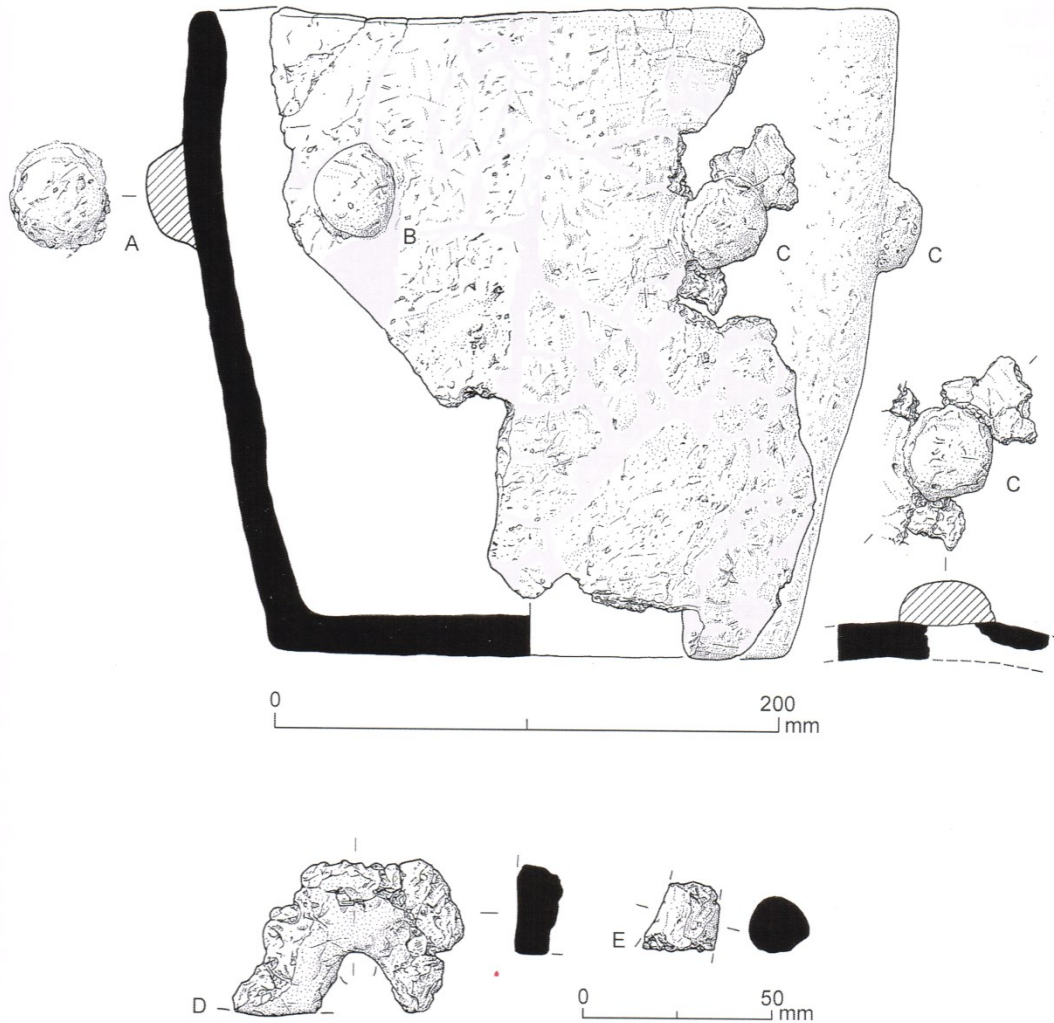


Fig. 2. The vessel: grey indicates areas of surfaces now infilled after consolidation. Scale 1:3 (drawing by Jane Read).

construction of the vessel. Several sherds were left unconsolidated both for immediate petrological examination and as a long term demonstration of the nature of the untreated material.

## FINDS

### The vessel

The vessel as reconstructed is c. 250 mm high, 205 mm across the base and 280 mm external rim diameter, with a simple open shape. It is slightly irregular in height and, due to conditions of preservation and reconstruction, is not really circular. The rim is slightly flat-topped. It is generally oxidised, 5YR 6/6 yellowish red, with some slightly reduced patches

5 YR 5/2 reddish grey, with much of the core similarly reduced. The surface is roughly smoothed. There are three surviving bosses, A–C, all roundish clay pads which have been attached directly onto the exterior of the vessel, without any extension worked into its wall: the inner side of boss C was clearly seen and showed no trace of any extension. All three are worn on their outer surfaces. Their dimensions are: A, 41 x 37 mm; B, 38 x 34 mm; C, 37 x 35 mm; all are 16–18 mm thick.

The distances between the bosses, centre to centre, are 185 mm between A and B and 160 mm between B and C. The circumference of the vessel is about 866 mm at the position at which the lugs are set, which would allow, unusually, for five projections spaced fairly evenly apart to have been present. The capacity of the vessel was approximately 35 litres.

Small sherd D with part of a perforation 14 mm across was found near boss C but did not join any surviving sherd: it had split down its centre so that the outer surface did not survive. A smooth edge, shown at the bottom on Fig. 2, is likely to represent part of a coil edge rather than of a rim. Small sherd E, found close to D, appeared to have been part of a rounded cylinder some 20 mm in diameter.

#### ***Vessel Fabric*** – Roger Taylor

A sherd from the vessel was examined under the petrological microscope. *Quartz* – abundant transparent to translucent colourless, to white and brown stained angular, sub-rounded and some rounded grains, 0.4–1 mm, rarely 3.2 mm: *feldspar* – scatter of white soft altered grains, 0.2–0.5 mm, some angular grains showing cleavage surfaces, 0.1–0.8 mm: *tourmaline* – sparse black glossy vitreous angular to rounded grains, 0.1–0.5 mm: *rock fragments* – fine granitic quartz/feldspar, angular fragments, 3 and 3.2 mm, aplite rounded and altered, 3 mm, volcanic, grey angular fragment with elongated feldspars, 4.5 mm: *limonite* – soft reddish brown, rounded grains, 0.8–2 mm: *matrix* – finely sandy clay.

*Comment.* A granite-derived fabric with predominant quartz. Local to the area of the find on the Permian Newton St Cyres Breccia. The Breccia is formed in part from minerals derived from the Dartmoor Granite and debris from other local rocks; it is distinguished by its feldspar content.

#### **The flint**

One small flake was found in pit 9 and a second in medieval tree hole 8. Both were of grey flint, with no distinguishing characteristics regarding date or use.

#### ***Charcoal*** – Dana Challinor

All charcoal from Pit 9 was submitted for the selection of suitable material for radiocarbon dating. The material derived from both flotation and from individual pieces recovered during the conservation of pottery sherds. A selection of the flot charcoal and all of the charcoal from the latter group was identified (where possible). It was not generally possible to confirm species in most fragments without destruction.

The ideal selection criteria for dating (immature twigs or very short-lived species) were not available in these samples, but there were some pieces of relatively short-lived taxa suitable for dating. The most promising fragments were considered to be of *Prunus* (cherry/blackthorn) or *Salix/Populus* (willow/poplar). Other fragments were identified as of *Quercus* – a total of 13, and *Alnus glutinosa* and *Alnus/Corylus* – both single samples.

### THE RADIOCARBON DATE

The sample of *Prunus charcoal* identified by Dana Challinor was submitted to SUERC (Scottish Environmental Research Centre) for accelerator mass spectrometry dating (AMS). The date obtained was SUERC-49294 (GU32049) 3104 ± 30 BP. This calibrates to



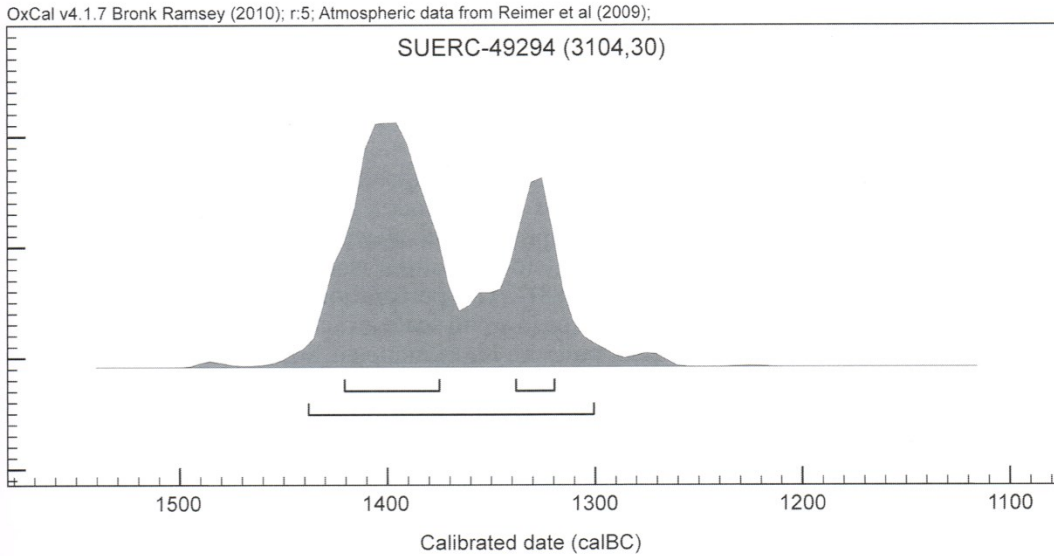


Fig. 3. Probability distributions of the radiocarbon date.

1439–1301 BC (95.4% probability) and to at 68.2% probability to 1421–1376 BC (51.1%) and 1339–1320 BC (17.1%) following OxCal v4.1.7 (Fig. 3).

#### COMMENT

There are no close comparanda for the East Holme vessel, with its suggested five decorative bosses. The radiocarbon date, 1439–1301 cal BC, firmly fixes the vessel to the Middle Bronze Age. At this period the Trevisker ceramic style was in universal use in Devon and Cornwall and the term Trevisker-related may be used for vessels such as East Holme which are rather different to mainstream vessels with incised or cord impressed decoration on their upper parts and, sometimes, functional lugs (Quinnell 2012). The largest assemblage of Trevisker-related material is that from the field system and settlement at Castle Hill, Honiton (Laidlaw and Mephram 1999, fig. 24) but material has also been found on a range of sites on the periphery of Exeter such as Old Rydon Lane (Raymond 2012) and the Royal Naval Stores Depot (Pearce *et al.* 2011).

The vessel is described as having bosses rather than lugs, partly because these additions were not securely fixed, partly because they number five (more than the usual two or occasional four lugs found on some Trevisker vessels) and partly because they are round rather than of the oval form usual on Trevisker lugs. There is no close parallel for these lugs but there are some similarities with No. 21 from Castle Hill ((Laidlaw and Mephram 1999, fig. 24).

The overlapping deposition of the sherds is strongly suggestive of the structured deposits found on Middle Bronze Age domestic sites. There is nothing to suggest that the pit might have been in any way connected with burial. Most of the data on structured deposition on domestic sites in the South West comes from the infill of the hollow-set houses of Cornwall, best demonstrated at Trethellan Farm, Newquay (Nowakowski 1991). In Devon such houses are absent, post-ring round houses without floors being usual away from the stone-walled hut circles of Dartmoor. One such house, at Langage in South-West Devon, had sherds of a Trevisker vessel packed into a post-hole after house demolition (Salvatore and Quinnell

2011, 59). But often deposition occurs in field ditches, as at the Exeter sites of Old Rydon Lane and Royal Naval Stores depot referred to above: at both of these sites sherds were probably covered by the pulling down of material from the accompanying bank. There is currently no other evidence for Middle Bronze Age settlement in the Newton St Cyres area, but the Devon HER holds extensive data from aerial photography, some of which is likely to relate to fields and houses of this period.

One additional feature may perhaps relate to depositional practices, the presence of sherds D, with a perforation, and E, part of a cylinder, close to boss C. The fabric is similar to that of the main vessel but it is impossible to say whether these sherds were ever part of it. (Small perforations do occur occasionally in the walls of Trevisker vessels, most commonly in South Wales (Savory 1980, 88)). The perforation and the cylinder with an apparently decreasing diameter are, perhaps in small scale, exactly what might be expected in the secure fixing of a lug to a vessel wall: the lug is made with an extension formed as a cylinder which is placed through the vessel wall and then worked into the main fabric of the vessel wall. Here we have part of a cylinder and of a perforation put close together, placed by a boss which did not use this secure method of attachment. Could this placement in some way be an emphasis on the difference of the bosses to lugs, marking the importance of the bosses on the vessel to those who made and used it?

#### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This report was commissioned by the Historic Environment Service, Devon County Council; warm thanks to Steve Reed for his support and advice. Thanks also to Stewart Brown for providing the data on which the description of the excavation is based, to Alison Hopper-Bishop and Kayleigh Fuller for conservation work on the vessel, to Jane Read for the illustrations, to the owners Peter and Janice Kay, and to Dana Challinor and Roger Taylor for their contributions.

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*This paper is published with the aid of a grant from Devon County Council.*



Fig. 1 Phase plans showing suggested development of the house up to the mid 19th century, including roof trusses.



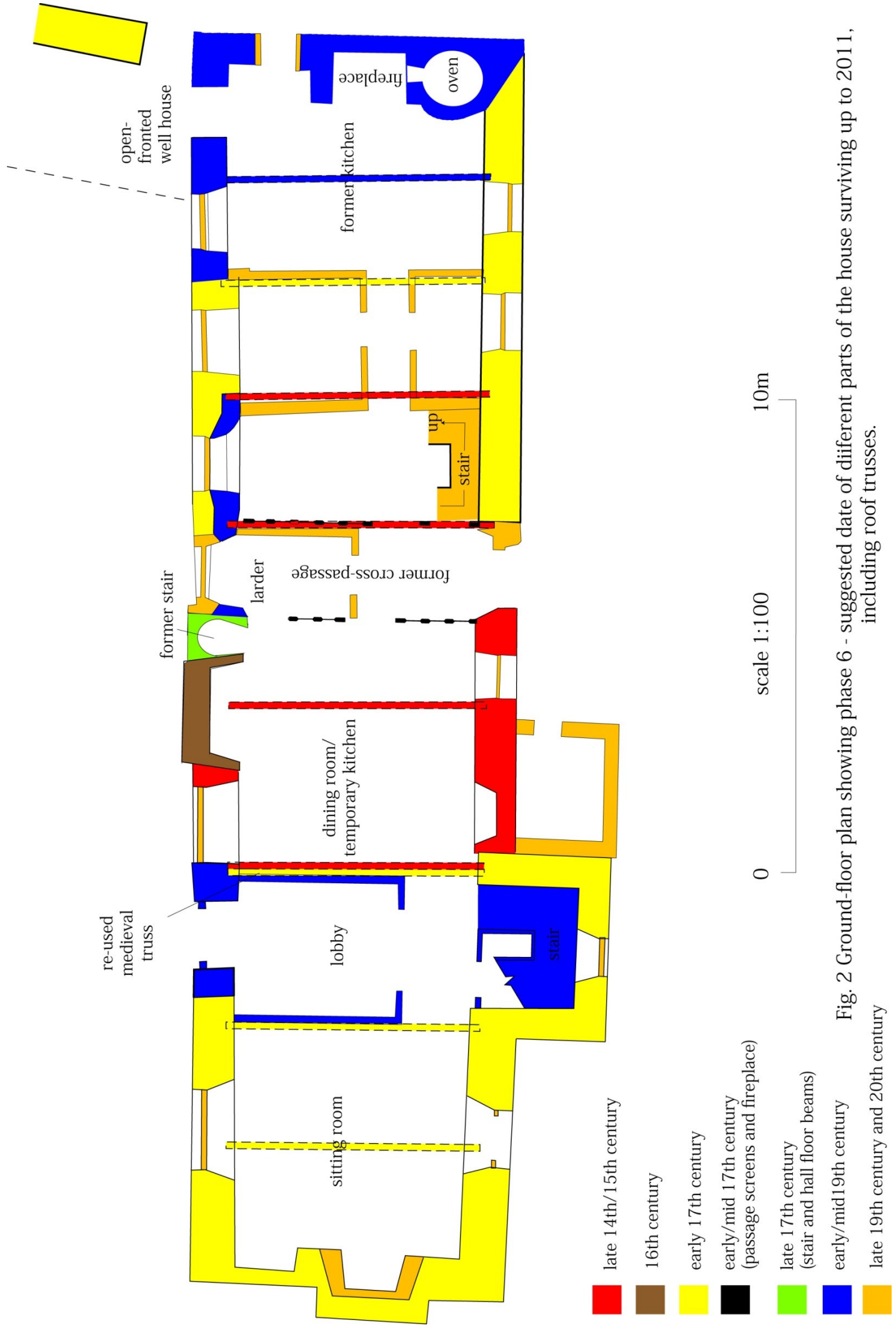
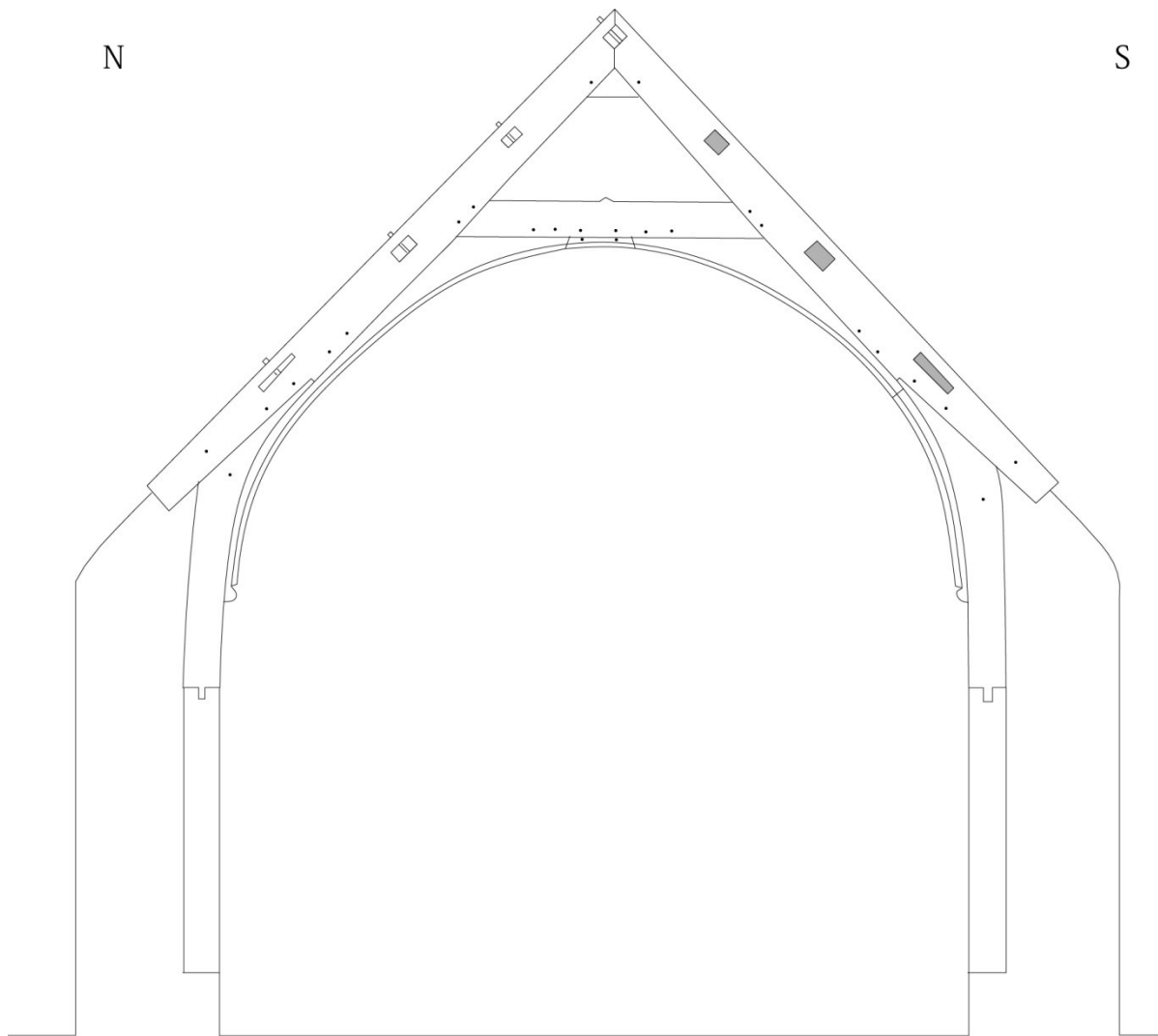
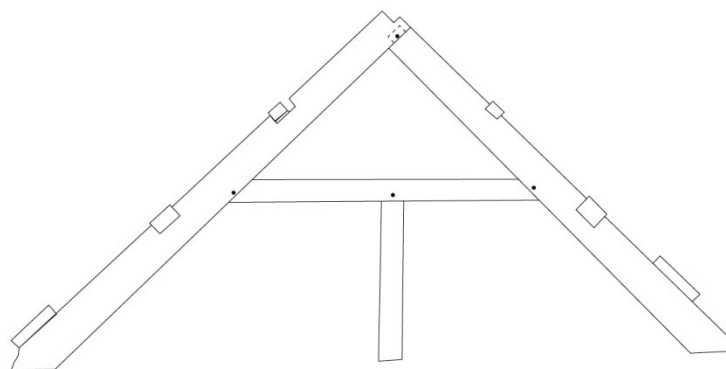


Fig. 2 Ground-floor plan showing phase 6 - suggested date of different parts of the house surviving up to 2011, including roof trusses.





a)



b)

0 scale 1:50 5m

Fig. 3 a) elevation of jointed-cruck truss above former kitchen (after Keystone 2008);  
 b) elevation of closed A-frame truss supporting the east end of the medieval roof.

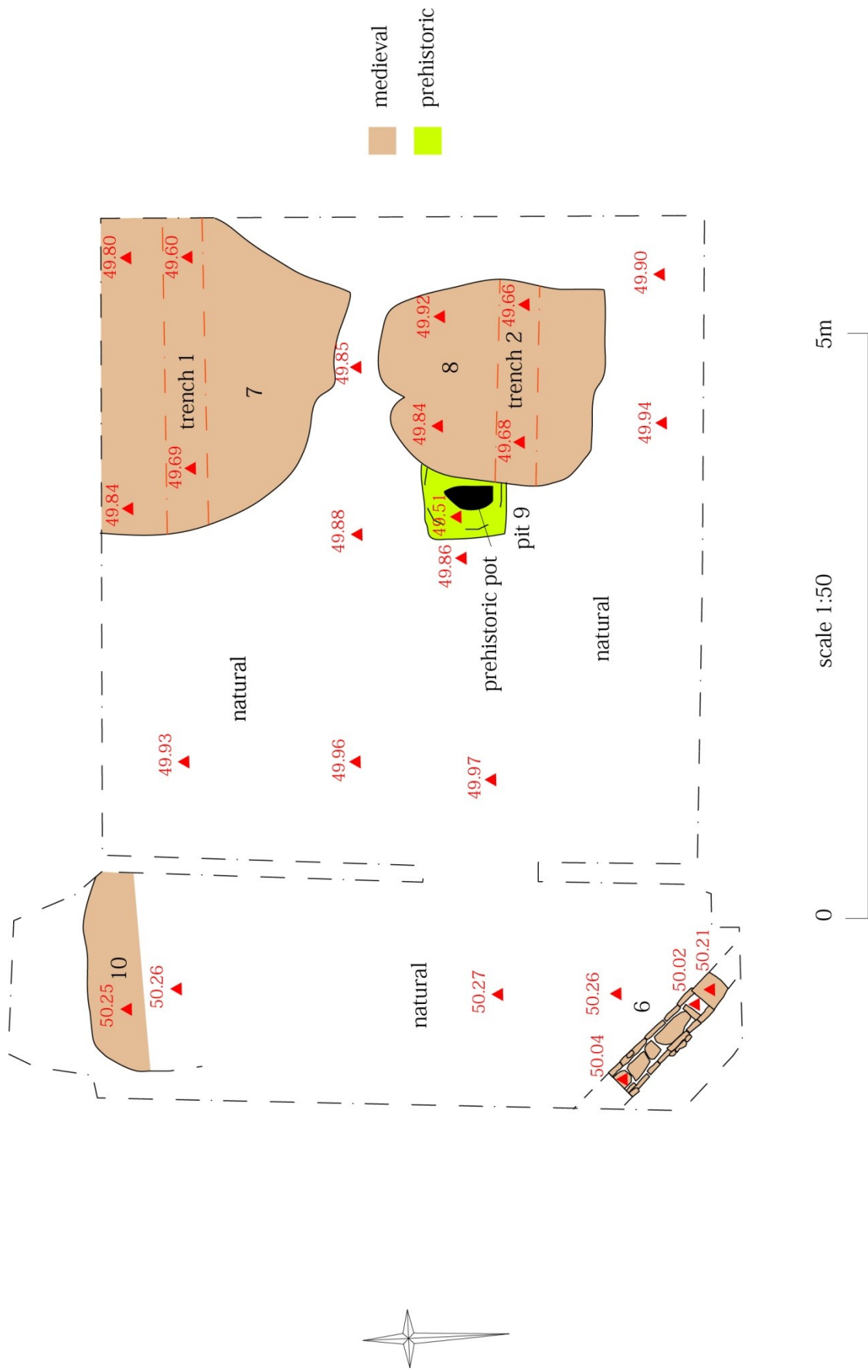


Fig. 4 Plan of excavations inside house showing prehistoric and medieval features.



Fig. 5 Plan of excavations inside the house showing post-medieval features.

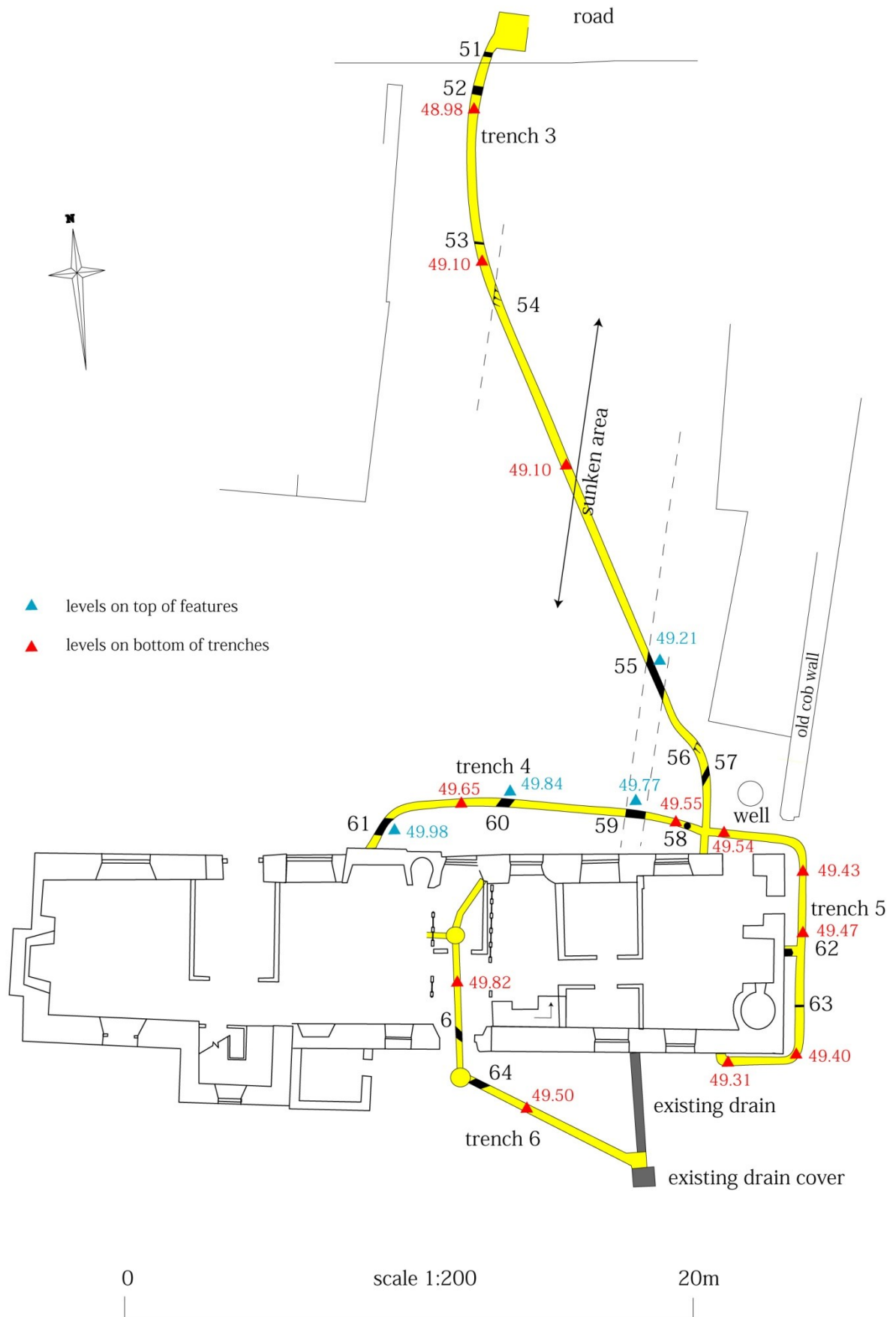


Fig. 6 Plan showing archaeological features exposed in trenches dug for new services.





Plate 1 The front elevation of the house, looking northeast.



Plate 2 The rear elevation of the house, looking north.





Plate 3 Elbow joint of jointed cruck truss over former kitchen, looking west.



Plate 4 Elbow of probable true cruck truss over former hall, looking west.





Plate 5 Triangular yoke and diagonal ridge of the medieval roof, looking west.



Plate 6 Arch braces beneath collar of the medieval roof, rising to separate block tenoned into the underside of the collar, looking west.





Plate 7 Decorative corbel stop at the base of the arch braces, looking northeast.



Plate 8 Windbraces beneath lower purlin, looking south.





Plate 9 Smoke-blackened thatch above the former kitchen, looking southwest.



Plate 10 The full height partition between the passage and lower end, showing top rail pegged to the truss, looking southwest.



Plate 11 Screen at the bottom of the full height partition between hall and inner room, showing pegged joint to truss (to right), looking southwest.



Plate 12 The hall fireplace, probably of early or mid 16th-century date, looking north.





Plate 13 Trench-dug stone rubble footings exposed beneath the south wall, looking south.



Plate 14 Trench-dug stone rubble footings exposed beneath the north wall, looking north.



Plate 15 Remains of wooden window in early 17th-century south wall, looking south.



Plate 16 The early 17th-century A-frame truss supporting the east end of the medieval roof, looking east.





Plate 17 The early 17th-century A-frame truss supporting the east end of the medieval roof, showing struts nailed to its east side to support the phase 2 purlins and ridge, looking west.



Plate 18 Close-up showing east end of medieval purlin supported by early 17th-century A-frame truss, and strut with v-shaped notch at its top supporting lower purlin of the later roof, looking northwest.



Plate 19 The screen on the upper, hall side of the passage, looking northwest.



Plate 20 The screen on the lower, kitchen side of the passage, looking northeast.





Plate 21 The kitchen and stair doorways through the screen on the lower side of the passage, showing the higher door head of the stair doorway, looking southeast.



Plate 22 The door head of the stair doorway, looking east.



Plate 23 The screen on the hall side of the passage showing the original doorway toward the centre blocked by a later window, looking southeast.



Plate 24 Phase 4 floor beam inserted into the formerly open hall, showing deep chamfer and stepped stop, looking northeast.





Plate 25 The screen on the hall side of the passage showing blocked Phase 4 doorway to rear, looking northwest.



Plate 26 The 19th-century stair associated with the present entrance and lobby of the upper, east end of the house, looking southwest.



Plate 27 The first-floor 19th-century cast iron fireplace in the north wall of the lower end, looking north.



Plate 28 The 19th-century truss at the east end of the present roof, looking east.





Plate 29 19th-century rubble masonry to each side of the north end of the former cross-passage, looking north.



Plate 30 Rubble and brick packing beneath the 19th-century first-floor beam to the east of the cross-passage, and showing damage to the former wooden window in the south wall, looking south





Plate 31 19th-century king-post roof over well house, looking north.



Plate 32 Prehistoric pot sherds buried in pit beneath the lower end floor, looking west.





Plate 33 Medieval underfloor drain 6, looking northwest.



Plate 34 Remains of rubble footings for a wall of the range of 17th-century outbuildings to the northeast of the house, looking northwest.