

THE BRANSCOMBE PROJECT – HISTORY SNIPS 20

Barbara Farquharson: Farm Outbuildings in Branscombe

In the 1950s there were still twenty farms in Branscombe – large, small, viable and not-so-viable ...Now there are three...

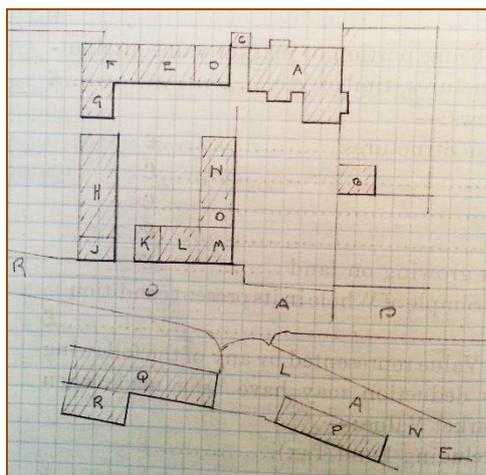
Over the years, the Project looked at old maps and archival material, took photographs, talked to the farming families, and put up exhibitions. But we forgot to pay attention to the outbuildings.

As the farms got sold, the old farmhouses, often listed as historic buildings, remained relatively intact, but most of the outbuildings were not listed and many were demolished.

A few years ago, Penny Lawrence from Hemyock gave a short presentation at a meeting of local history groups. With some excitement she said she'd found a survey of all the farms *and their outbuildings* in the National Archives at Kew. It was part of a Land Tax Valuation undertaken in 1910 by the Inland Revenue. It has sometimes been called The 1910 Domesday!

Phil Planel and Annie Pfingst went to London and photographed the Branscombe entries; Chris Bass began to photograph what remained of the outbuildings; I went back over old conversations with the farmers and talked with them again. John Torrance put together boards on seven of the farms (Lower Weston, Berry Barton, Woodhead, Manor Mill, Higher Bulstone, Higher House, and Church Living). There are a few that still remain to be completed (Great Seaside, Woodhouse, Gays). The exhibition was

supposed to go up in 2020, but Covid intervened. Now it will be on show on Saturday April 23rd.

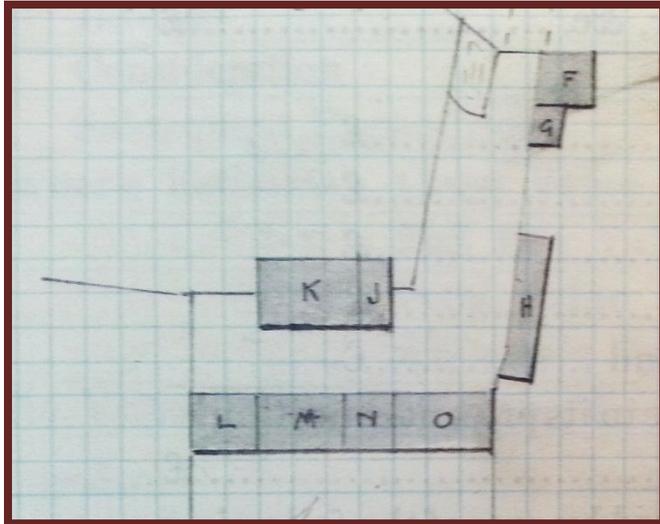


Here's just a taste of things we were told by people with long memories. Mark White, looking at the plan of the Berry Barton outbuildings and remembered:

J - next to the road was the bull pen up to the 1960s when artificial insemination came in ... *G* - the milking barn, three times six abreast in there ... *D* - the calf shed. Previous to that it was a farrowing house for pigs. We got rid of the pigs when we started the caravan site, about 1974 ... *P* - used to be a cart linhay with both ends open so you could bring the cart in and drive it out the other way. It's just storage now ... *R* - that's where they used to keep the hay wagons. Now it's offices and shower room and toilets for the caravans.

Doreen Franks at Lower Weston walked round some of outbuildings:

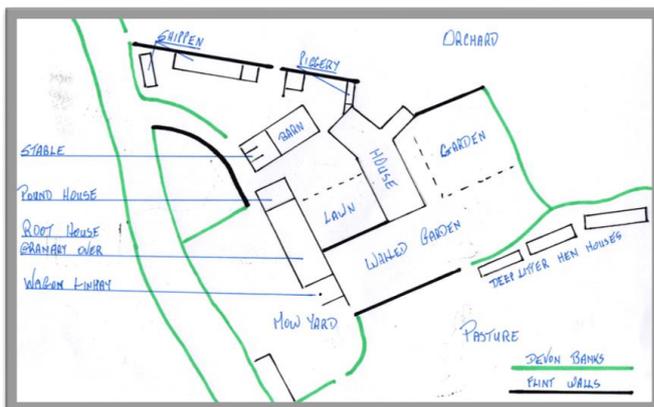




J - has been called a slaughterhouse all my life. Apparently my great-grandfather was the village slaughterman and used to slaughter pigs and sheep and the like ... The windlass

that the animals were strung up on is in the roof now! ... K - always a cowshed. Latterly we gutted it and used it for lambing with individual pens for ewes and their lambs ... I - was the hackney stable - two horses for private use or towing the cart if you were going shopping ... M - were where the cart-horses were stabled, five or six ... Pre-tractors, back in the thirties... You can see white square tiles which were traditional flooring in the stables and you can see where the horses stood over the years and scraped the floor in boredom or just for something to do ... L - was just an open linhay for cattle that were not in milk but needed some shelter ...

Most of the outbuildings at Higher Bulstone have been



demolished. But Ralph, in his mind, could walk you round the buildings. In fact he drew his own plan which (as you'll see in the exhibition) ties in with the one from 1910:

***The Pound House** – the cider press was originally worked off a shaft from the engine in the corner; later, it was powered by a tractor ... **The Barn** – had the original threshing floor with big doorways back and front so carts could be driven in. Later, a threshing machine came to the fields from Parnells of Sidbury. There was a winnowing machine in the corner of the barn ... **The Root House** – was used as a dry store for potatoes, turnips and swedes. The floor above was used to store reed for ricking, and apples. **Thatched stable** – in the nineteen twenties there were three shire horses, Victory, Tom, and Darling, who had a foal, Prince. Prince and Smart were the last two working horses ... **Mow Yard** – the first tractor, a second-hand green Standard Fordson, acquired in the middle forties, was kept in a shed in Mow Yard.*

Edwin Purchase, at Woodhead, remembered the old cow house and loft:

George Salter was a dairy farmer and so the main buildings were two cow stalls. One is still standing today. It would have been built around the turn of the [20th] century. I can remember an old carter, Jim Burnell, saying he knew who had hauled the stones with a horse and cart ...



Edwin was more comfortable talking about his tractors and old cars which found their place in the old outbuildings:

There's a pit under there where I could stand and work on the underside of a car. I dug the pit out by hand many years ago. In the background there's an electric welding set and a gas welding set ... Three engines – the two

on the left were tractor engines, and then on the right a single cylinder stationary engine ..

On one memorable occasion, when I brought a Greek visitor to Woodhead, Edwin stood by one the tractors and regaled him with the famous Blackbird song!