



DBRG NEWS

November 2023



St Peter ad Vincula, Wisborough Green, West Sussex
Traceried mediaeval timber window head
(see p. 4)

Contents

From the Editor.....	1
Group Matters.....	1
.....	
Research topics.....	
Fitting carved medieval window and door heads, by Martin Higgins.....	4
Building comparisons from Bruges, by Martin Higgins.....	7
West Horsley Place – surprise revision of conjectural development, by Martin Higgins.....	11
Visits.....	15
Dorking walk, by Ian West.....	15

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DBRG Newsletter No. 155
2023/3 November 2023

From the Editor

Dear Members

Welcome to a rather belated DBRG News, I regret that two cataract operations and a broken bone in my hand have rendered my computer off limits for more than three months.

We have three interesting articles from Martin, one on medieval timber window tracery, one on how they did things differently in Bruges plus more exciting news on West Horsley Place. We also have a report on the Dorking walk, which was enjoyed by those who attended.

Rosemary Hughesdon

Group Matters

Subscription Contributions 2024

You will recall that for 2023, the DBRG moved from a conventional fixed annual membership subscription to a voluntary annual donation as a means to support the continued work of the charity. This has gone well so it is intended that this will continue for 2024. The benefits of this are that it minimises the workload of the committee in terms of checking, recording and chasing up subscriptions and allows a greater focus on our charitable aims of researching the domestic architectural history of Surrey and sharing our findings with the wider public.

As this is a donation you are free to support the DBRG's work by contributing as much or as little as you wish. Last year an individual annual donation of £15 or a joint annual donation of £20 was suggested to ensure that we could cover the charity's costs and for the year ahead we are not changing this suggestion and the committee is very grateful for your continued support. Don't forget that, depending on your tax situation, your donation may be eligible for Gift Aid that the DBRG can claim. If you can, do please register for this if you have not already done so.

For ease of administration we would prefer payment by Standing Order and many of you already have this set up so do please continue with

this. Alternatively, you can make your donation directly to the charity's bank account (details below) or by making a donation via our website.

Ways to make your donation:

Direct to the charity's bank account:

CAFBank account name: DBRG (Surrey)

Sort code: 405240

Account no.: 00007645

Reference: Please use your name

For other ways to pay please contact the Membership Secretary (details below) if:

- you would prefer a form to send in the post to your bank, or
- you would prefer to send a cheque payable to the DBRG (Surrey), or
- you have changed any of your details, especially postal or email address, or
- you wish to make sure that you have confirmed that you are willing and able for us to claim Gift Aid on your contribution

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Email: sarah@hallville.net

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Newsletter

Along with the change to our membership model this year, we also changed to a digital format for the Newsletter. I hope this is working out satisfactorily for you. We have still been printing a few newsletters for those who are not online and will continue doing so in 2024.

Rosemary Hughesdon

Research Topics

Fitting carved medieval window and door heads.

While on a church bell ringing outing over the Summer I came across a splendid example of a traceried mediaeval timber window head. These are rare survivals in houses in Surrey, but the housing/rebate for the window heads are sometimes seen so I have illustrated their construction below.

The tracery 'windows' that impressed me are screens forming the walls of the timber north porch of the church of St Peter ad Vincula (Saint Peter in chains) at Wisborough Green, West Sussex.

The porch is traditionally dated to the 15th century although much of the church is 11th or 12th century. Durns in Surrey houses are more commonly 14th century, although dated examples both in Surrey and neighbouring counties extend to 1525. The external archway to the porch is formed by book-matched durns. In the photograph you should be able to see the matching grain of the pair formed by halving a single, enormous carefully-selected timber. The heads of these are pegged multiple times into the tie beam immediately above it.



The north porch of St Peter ad vincula, Wisborough Green

The window tracery is carved out of boards the thickness of the mullions (say 75mm / 3 inches) and can run over several mullions to form multiple window lights. Once carved, the boards are tenoned horizontally between main uprights and the appropriate number of mullions installed below. Here, half mullions are used at each end of the run but these mouldings are sometimes cut 'out-of-the-solid', i.e. carved out of the adjoining post. The carpenter knew the boards would shrink across their width, so to prevent a crack appearing the top the board was rebated into the soffit of the structural timber above. Note that this long edge is not pegged, and the rebate is shallow. I have illustrated this rebate on the 'deconstructed' diagram on the next page.

Note that moulded door heads, both internal and external, were also fitted into rebates in a structural horizontal, so if you see a long rebate consider this alternative as well. The rebate will have a mortice for an upright at each end if it is for these decorated window or door heads.

Two other early features at the porch are the carved barge boards and the moulded cornice set between the tie beams, extending the

moulding of the wall plate. Tapering ends of wall plates or side purlins

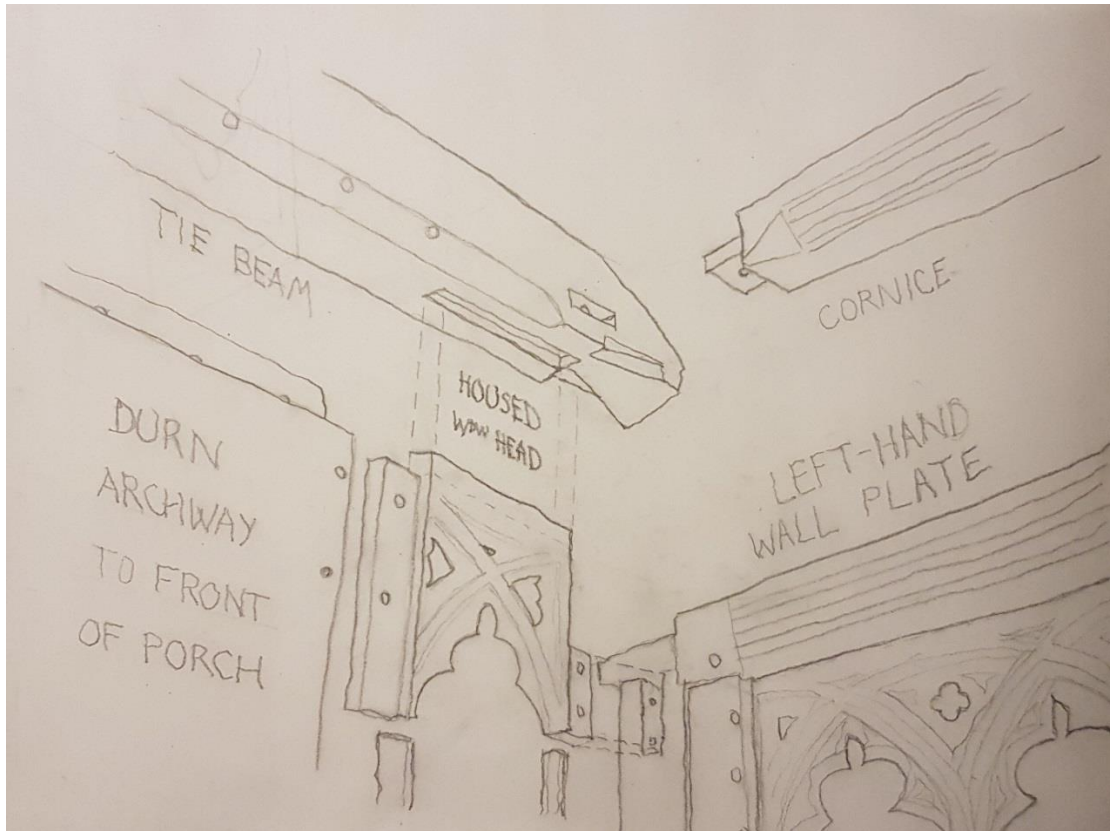


are a sign that barge boards once existed. Empty mortices in tie beams diagonally above wall plates indicate cornices have been removed. Both of these features occur in

churches and high medieval status buildings in Surrey.

P.S. The porch at St Peter's was restored in 1867 and the left-hand side of the porch that is illustrated may be a repair because it is double-framed against the durn post. It's otherwise faithful to the original right-hand side. Indeed, the difference may be original, and simply have been due to this side being built against an earlier stone wall.

Martin Higgins



*The north porch of St Peter ad vincula, Wisborough Green
Photograph and interpretive exploded detail*

Building comparisons from Bruges.

A brief break in Bruges/Brugge gave me a chance to catch up on comparative vernacular architecture. It was useful to be reminded that stepped gables are Flemish whereas Dutch gables are curved. Similar stepped gables are common in Scotland where they are described as crow or corbie stepped. The curved Dutch gables are more common in mid 17th century buildings in Surrey.

Brugge is deservedly a World Heritage Site. The cohesive nature of the urban landscape is remarkable, with very early brick buildings and spectacular urban spaces. Fortunately for the building historian there was a fashion for displaying the date of a building (or perhaps its refurbishment) in the late 17th and early 18th century. This was done using large metal numerals, which may act as pattresses to metal tie rods restraining the front walls of the new or refronted buildings.

The Church of Our Lady boasts the second tallest brick building in the World, at 115.6 m (379.27 ft), a height only exceeded by a smelter stack in early twentieth century America. The church tower was complete by 1340 and raised in height during the 15th century. The famous municipal Belfry, also of brick, was rebuilt in 1280 after a fire destroyed the previous one. Its uses included fire-watching and the fear

of fire is probably why the city is built of brick and stone.



A side street in the NW quarter of Brugge, homes of clothmakers.

I have not shared here photos of the three-or-more-storey buildings that line the canals, beautiful as they are, as these will be familiar to all. Instead, here are a few images of the humbler buildings in the cloth-makers quarter, away from the standard

tourist trail.

Houses here are better described as cottages, with a single room on the ground floor and sleeping garrets in the pantiled roofs. At interesting quirk is the way downpipes disappear into a slot in the front

wall to prevent any obstruction to the narrow streets. There is no timber framing on show anywhere, but modest jetties are created in some taller buildings by off-setting the masonry.

The folk museum has displays of 19th and early 20th century life and trades in eight restored cottages (only labelled in Flemish). I hoped this would be a chance to learn more about the buildings but the trades were the focus of the museum. Each



Restored cottages house the folk museum (Volkskundemuseum).

The brick drum in the background is a private church (open to the public)

cottage had a single ground floor room with a broad fireplace in the party wall. The similarity suggests the terrace was built by a speculator either for rent or sale.

The fireplaces were mostly similar to Surrey cottages with timber lintels over brick jambs. One fireplace had single-piece slender stone jambs and stone lintel, like others seen in higher status buildings elsewhere in Brugge. There was no sign of bread ovens but there was a shared building in the communal back yard where an oven could have existed, or given the urban location commercial ovens could have been used.

There was no obvious sign of trimmers for staircases or ladders so it was not clear how the garrets were reached.

Many of the fireplaces had been restored, and it is quite possible that brick jambs had been standardised by the restorers. The back corners of the fireplace were curved as might be the case in late 17th century Surrey fireplaces. The timber bressumers were all thin, front-to-back, and sat on timber spreaders in the same way ours would. Above the

bressumer the brickwork arched out to meet a framed-in trimmer which shows there had been first floor fireplaces from the outset.

So, what makes me think they have been restored? Well, note the taper burns – one over each jamb and a third towards the middle. Now look at the following two pictures from other display cottages. These taper burns, and therefore both

bressumers are clearly upside down. The restorers had apparently not been paying attention when dismantling the original fireplaces!



A restored fireplace in the carpenter display house.



Upside down taper burns in two other display cottages, showing the bressumers have been reset.

We stayed in a hotel that during the English Commonwealth had been the house of the future Charles II. His time on the Continent introduced him to all kinds of art, architecture and gardens that found their way to England after the restoration. Brugge was of course a centre for art and textiles and Flemish tapestries still feature in many English country houses.

One final feature to share with you came from the Chocolate Museum (yes, really!). This is in a traditional multi-storey building closer to the centre and on the standard tourist route. The museum houses an

impressive collection of early South American pottery related to the preparation and consumption of chocolate, but that is not what concerns us here. The roof of the building has impressive timberwork, but on a more modest scale are the complex internal window shutters (shown on the next page). These are like nothing I have seen in England. Two hinged shutters close against an upright by means of an ornate latch. Each shutter has within it two further hinged sections, one or both of which may be opened. This arrangement generated multiple options for ventilation.

The outer frame of the shutters needed metal corner brackets to retain their structural integrity. ('Horns' were introduced into British sash windows for the same reason when fewer glazing bars were used once large panes of glass became available). These brackets, like all the metalwork, are finished decoratively in an ostentatious show of wealth. Note how the delicate hinges thicken at their hinge point to provide greater support against sagging. Three sets of hinges are used for the same reason. The top glazed window always allows light in but keeps out the weather. The shutters are now behind glass but the lower lights may originally have been unglazed, as is often seen in Flemish paintings of the period.

Not wishing to reduce your enjoyment if you visit Brugge, I should say the perfect medieval character of the city was deliberately enhanced in the late 19th century to promote tourism. The urge to restore buildings to an imagined ideal was found throughout Europe, not just in England. Smaller buildings were stripped of render to reveal the brickwork. Larger buildings were rebuilt in neo-gothic style or given extensive makeovers. The best is probably the splendid stone gothic town hall completed in 1421. This was given a neogothic make-over with stunning Burne-Jonesesque murals completed in 1905. The bell tower carillon was mechanised to sound every quarter of an hour and the bells increased to 48 in number.

All in all, I would wholeheartedly recommend visiting Brugge for the art and buildings. Did I mention the medieval city gates....?



Ornate shuttered window in the Chocolate Museum, Brugge.
There are two vertical planks within each of the shutter frames.

Martin Higgins

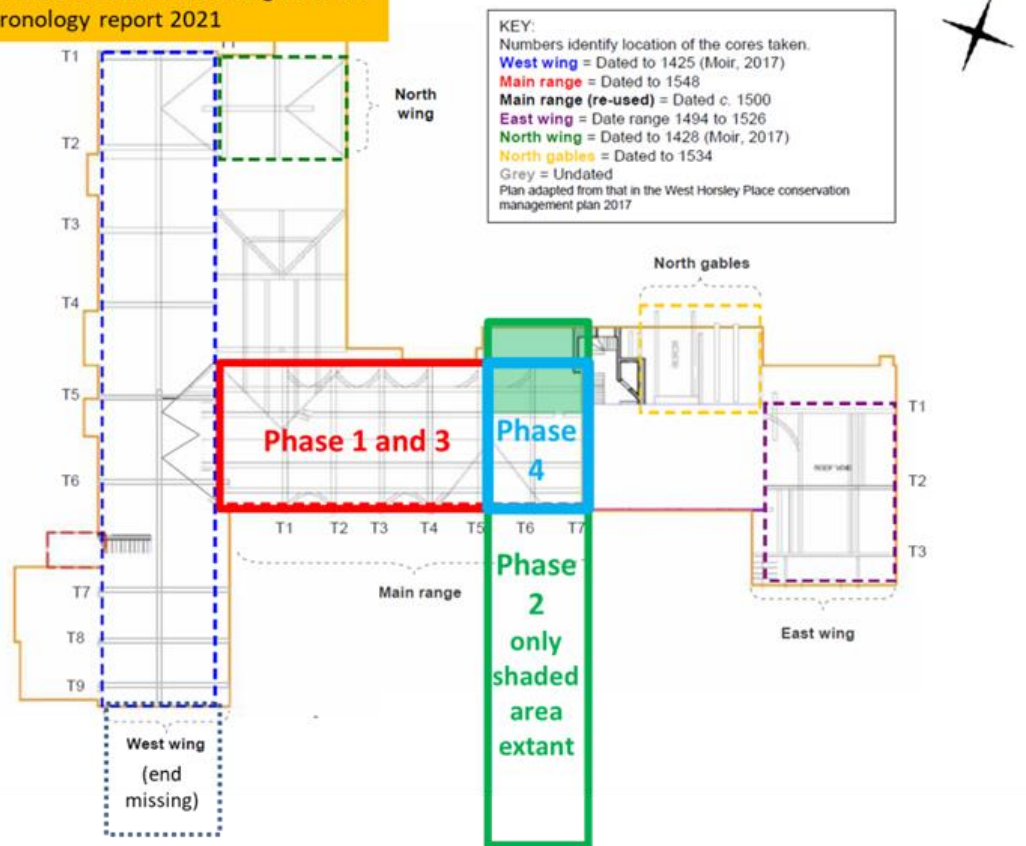
West Horsley Place – surprise revision of conjectural development.

In the June NEWS I set out four newly identified phases of development of West Horsley Place, and confidently stated they were predated by the west and north ranges of 1425 and 1428 respectively. The phase numbering, in relation to one another, is shown in the repeated plan below. A date of late 15th century was anticipated for phase 2.

West Horsley Place

Phasing key for Main Range West

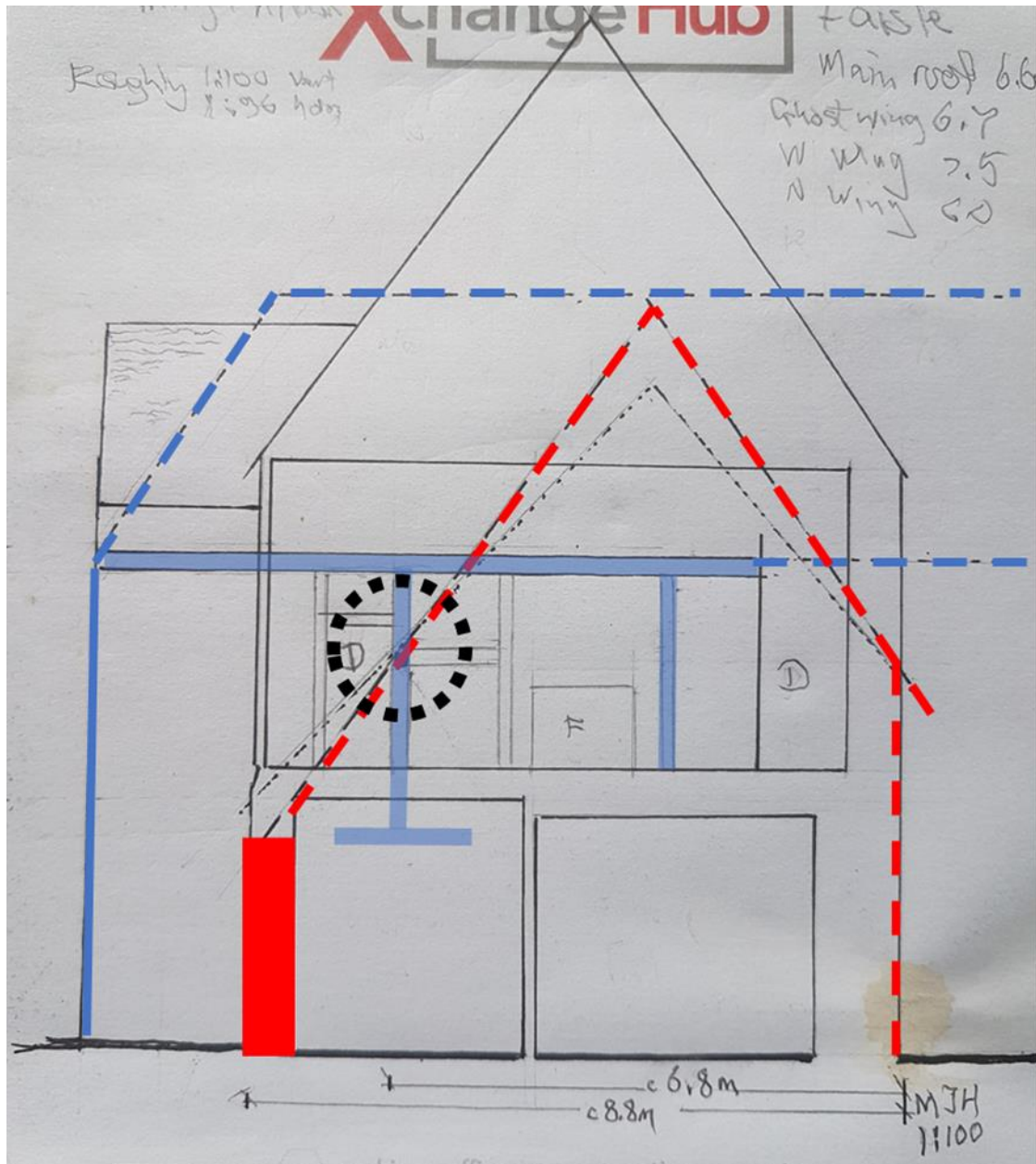
(base plan and dates from Tree-Ring Services dendrochronology report 2021)



Well, I was proved wrong. Within weeks of the NEWS going to press the dendrodate that DBRG had commissioned came back – the wing dated from 1382! This makes it the earliest positively dated fabric at the mansion. So, what I referred to as phases 1 and 2 last issue are in fact chronologically the first and second phases of the building.

The early date was an incentive to think more about these early phases. The current working theory is that phase 1, the solid red line above, was a single-aisled (or single base cruck) hall and phase 2 (green) was a contemporary extraordinarily long low-end wing. There would of course have been something at the upper end, but there is no evidence as to what form it took.

The aisled form, shown dotted red below, is suggested because the span of 8.8m is larger than would be expected for a single span; there is a single storey stone wall to the rear (solid red); and there is a redundant mortice (dotted black circle) in the right place to take an arcade plate.



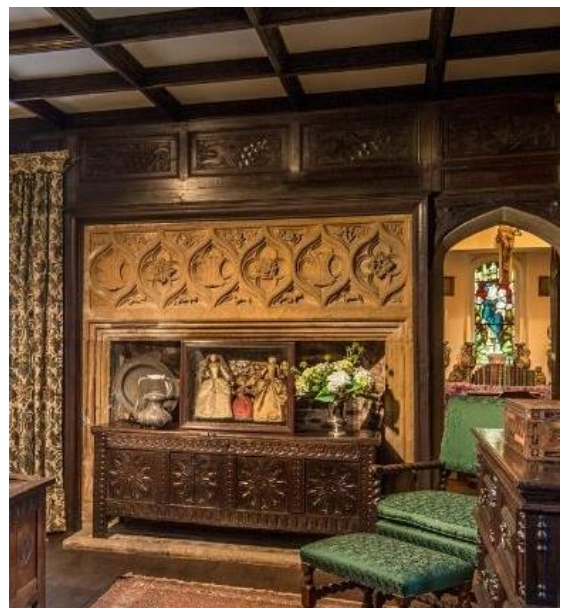
West Horsley Place: conjectural original form. The 1382 wing is blue, the hall red, and both are dotted where conjectural. Black is surviving fabric.

So, the order of these early phases has not changed, it's just that we now know they predate the large west wing, and we might have an aisled hall.

A carved stone came out of the chimney stack associated with the wall shown red when the stack was repaired. This is half an octofoil (think quatrefoil and double it). It is hollow chamfered like the mouldings in the 1425 wing and has a thoroughly 15th century look.



Grand fifteenth century fireplaces sometimes have stone friezes like this, and this may be part of the hall fireplace which this stack serves. This broadly similar example is at Athelhampton, Dorset.



Martin Higgins

Visits

Dorking Walk Sunday, 4th June 2023

This walk had been specially prepared for members of the DBRG by Alan Smallwood on behalf of Dorking Museum. On the walk Alan was assisted by Wendy Foley another volunteer at the Museum. Sadly 3 people who booked for the walk did not notify me that they were not attending resulting in members who had requested to take part in this event being unable to do so owing to restricted numbers. A financial loss was made owing to payment being made prior to the walk by bank transfer as the Museum remains closed owing to a fire in an adjacent property.

The 4th June was a hot day and for a town centre Dorking had few shoppers. We assembled at the Museum at 2pm and after a short introduction by Alan walked into West Street to look at 58-61 William Mullin's House. The timber framed building behind the 17th C brick façade has been dendro dated to 1589. Mullins bought the property in 1612 when it comprised of 4 timber framed houses with the ground floor as shop/workshop. He only occupied one of these letting out the remaining 3 properties to provide income. In 1619 he sold the properties at a small loss and invested the assets in the company that would fund the Mayflower voyage. He travelled as a "stranger" (investor) taking some of his family with him and a young weaver from Dorking. In 1620 he sailed for America and died 3 months after arriving. His daughter Priscella was the only member of his family to survive in America. She married John Alden a cooper from Horwich, they had 10 children and their descendants include: President John Adams, Calvin Coolidge, Poet Longfellow, Dick Van Dyke, Marilyn Monroe, Orson Wells and Vice President Dan Quayle.

We then continued down West Street to the Kings Arms public house. The gabled "wing" on the left of the façade is two bays in depth, has a crown post roof and was originally jettied towards the street. It is probably the remains of a mediaeval house the rest of which has been replaced with the existing two bay structure to the right of the above having a Queen strut roof, dating from the second half of the 16th C.

Retracing our steps up West Street we stopped to consider 'One Wood Floors' (No. 49) a former Malthouse of which 3 bays remain, the right hand end having been demolished to provide access to the rear. The first floor has been removed in the two left bays but remains in the right

hand one where a 3 diamond mullion window that would have ventilated the sprouting floor remains. Slanting and vertical Queen Struts are used in the roof of this 18th C building.

As we continued our walk we noted the bell motif on the ends of the brackets at the “Bell” public house (No. 57) an 18th C building that is jettied towards the street.

At the ‘top’ of West Street we entered the High Street to see the former ‘Wheatsheaf’ public house (Nos. 37 – 45). This building consists of a range of 3 No. two bay structures at right angles to the road with a carriageway to the left. The middle section consists of an open hall with a crown post roof c1500. Behind this is a building with a side purlin roof that may have had a smoke hood. Towards the road is a structure with jowelled wall posts and a side purlin roof. It is from the cellar under this part of the building that access is gained to a complex of cellars/passages cut into the sandstone.

We then made our way to North Street where we noted the early 17th C brickwork of the former Old Kings Head public house. The capitals on the pilasters and the cornice are well detailed in moulded and cut bricks. On the opposite side of the road is No. 1, formerly ‘The Gun’ public house. This is an early 17th C jettied timber framed town house with a side chimney stack accommodated in the attic. There are three bays forming this property that has two storeys with a cellar below and attics above. The roof has side purlins supported by Queen struts. On the side elevation of the rear wing is an oriel window that would be more appropriate to the front elevation and could have been relocated.

A group of weatherboarded cottages (13 – 16) with slate roofs (probably built after the railway arrived) are set back from North Street reminding us that “workers” homes were provided adjacent to the main areas of activity in our towns.

When recorded by the DBRG in 1977 Attlee’s Malthouse (No. 10) was in use as a seed store and retained traditional machinery. This is a brick structure with lighter bricks around openings. The builder W. Attlee and dated July 1st 1894 are recorded on the building.

At the junction of North Street and Church Street (formerly Back Lane) is an interesting quadrant corner with window and gutter matching the curved wall.

Leslie Cottage is located further down North Street this part of which was referred to in 1649 as “the way to the washing place”. The left hand part of the property is a two bay structure with a brick chimney and Queen strut roof of late 17th C date. Adjoining this is a two bay “wing” framed at right angles to the above and possibly earlier in date. It has a lower wall height than the building to the left of it and may have extended beyond the two bays surviving.

We returned to the High Street via the Churchyard where we were told that Stane Street passed throughout the town where the Romans had established a settlement. Once in the High Street we were shown a picture of 134 – 138 (the Old Dutch House) a 3 bay, 3 storey building now rendered over but previously faced with early 17th C brickwork.



The Old Dutch House

The rainwater pipes and hopper heads are in the same position now as on the early 19th C drawing. The gables were removed about 1820 and the mansion divided into 3 dwelling houses. By 1875 shops had been provided on the ground floor. There was a short discussion about the Whie Horse once one of the principal hostelries in the town.

We then entered Dene Street where we paused to look at No. 38 which is a 2½ storey dwelling with its gable on to the road and a cellar. The roof has cambered collars that clasp the side purlins in order to maximise the headroom on the top floor. Numbers 41/42 are a pair of weatherboarded cottages with brick chimneys on the side walls. Although much of the original weatherboarding has been replaced some of the 18th boards remain showing a “roll” moulding on the lower edge of each board.

The last official building on our tour was Pear Tree Cottage (27 – 29) where we speculated about its development. Pear Tree Cottage is a 2½ bay dwelling with the smoke bay on the right. There is a Queen strut roof with clasped purlins and the original entrance was into the side of the ½ bay. A date in the second half of the 16th C is suggested for this building. In the 17th C a wing was added at the left hand end of the building and fish scale tiles (now sadly painted) were hung c1800. Later a brick stack with a bread oven projecting out of the rear wall was constructed in the smoke bay.

Those of us returning to West Street benefitted from viewing the backs of some of the High Street properties, the Rose Hill Arch and Rose Hill House in South Street.

Our walk lasted 2 hours and we were most grateful to Alan and Wendy for giving up their time to share with us their most interesting town.



A happy group of members after the walk
(photographed and reproduced with permission)

I. J. West

DOMESTIC BUILDINGS RESEARCH GROUP (SURREY)

Surrey is rich in the smaller mediaeval timber-framed buildings. The Domestic Building Research Group (Surrey) is a voluntary group that has recorded, analysed and reported on more than 4,000 domestic and farm buildings, mainly in Surrey, over the past fifty years.

The DBRG has a few remaining publications for sale

George Howard, *The Smaller Brick, Stone and Weatherboard Houses of Surrey, 17th to mid 19th century. A statistical analysis*

Peter Gray, *Surrey Medieval Buildings An analysis and inventory*

Joan Harding, *Granaries in Surrey - An Obituary.*

Currently available from Rod Wild, 01483 232767

and

Marion Herridge & Joan Holman, *An Index of Surrey Probate Inventories.*

Available from Martin Higgins, 01737 842625)

For an index of recorded buildings, glossary and membership forms,
visit www.dbrg.org.uk

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I would welcome items for the next Newsletter
to reach me by 20th December, please

Please send them to me at
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If it is possible, it is always very helpful if contributions could
be sent by e-mail, as an attachment, to
rosemary.hughesdon@virginmedia.com
Illustrations as separate jpegs please – you can always indicate in the
text approximately where they should go.