

THE ANCIENT DOMESTIC BUILDINGS OF SEAVINGTON St MICHAEL & SEAVINGTON St MARY

Apart from the two churches, there is little evidence in the remaining buildings of the occupation of the two parishes before 1800. The 1840 tithe maps show about 80 dwellings but many of these have now disappeared. The existence of two churches dating, in the case of St Michael's, back to the Norman period indicates a fairly substantial population from early times. However as late as 1563 there were only 11 households in St Michael and 27 in St Mary so it is not surprising that little evidence of early ancient domestic buildings remains. (The earliest surviving domestic building in Somerset has been dendro dated to 1278)

A number of buildings have been listed by the Department of Culture Media and Sport as being of special historical or architectural interest. Listing of buildings was often made as the result of a brief external examination without the listing inspector seeing the house internally. (This applied to many of the houses listed in the Seavingtons) As a result there are many older buildings in Somerset which have been missed from listing as their age is only apparent on internal inspection. Even where included, the listing often fails to reveal the true age of the building or list all the interesting features. It may well be that some of our village houses said to be 17th century may well be older (as Southernways has proved to be) and that unlisted buildings are of ancient origin.

Only four of the domestic listed buildings have been subject to any significant architectural investigation. These are Middlefield Farm, Swan Thatch and Southernways in the two Villages and what is now a barn at Hurcott. Middlefield Farm and Southernways are listed as of 17th century origins but are in fact both rather older. Except for Middlefield Farm and Southernways the descriptions below have been compiled from the Statutory Listing details. The descriptions of these two are based on the survey reports of the Somerset Vernacular Building Research Group. The listing details for all the buildings can be found on the Images of England website www.imagesofengland.org.uk

Being close to Ham Hill which has been quarried for good quality stone at least since Roman times all the buildings described below are built Ham stone. The quality of the stonework ranges from coarse undressed stone through to ashlar – that is well dressed stone of regular rectangular appearance. Many of the houses retain good ham stone mullioned windows. These were produced in large numbers at the quarries at Ham Hill and then assembled on site.

The listed buildings are:

HURCOTT

BARN ABOUT 50 METRES EAST OF HURCOTT FARMHOUSE



This single storey barn is possibly a conversion of an earlier farmhouse of the 16th & 17th centuries. The ovolo-mould mullioned windows of 4 lights certainly indicate that this has been a house in earlier times. There remain traces of timber-framed wattle and daub partitions. In the west half of the barn there is a jointed cruck roof with windbracing with parts smoke-blackened. The whole may represent a single-storey

house of C16, updated in C17 by the insertion of new windows and the extension to the east. The roof form of the western end indicates that this was a house of good quality when built and the smoke blackening of the timbers supports a late medieval date for the original building, making it one of the oldest buildings in the parish of Seavington St Mary.

HURCOTT FARMHOUSE



This detached two storey farmhouse is of the late 17th /early 18th centuries has ovolo-moulded mullioned windows of 4-lights and from the exterior appears to be based on the medieval three room cross passage plan

There are stone barns and other buildings attached to south side of Hurcott Farmhouse which are probably C18.

SEAVINGTON ST MICHAEL

BUCKRELLS



Known as a farmhouse by 1640 this detached house was reduced in size in the 1960s cutting back the western end of the house to make way for road widening. The house is of an 'L' shaped plan with a cross wing to the main range at the eastern end. The main range follows the traditional three room cross passage plan. Though not inspected internally when listed, the house retains a fine plank and muntin partition in the cross passage and two fine ham stone fireplaces.

SWAN THATCH



Formerly the village bakery later serving as a Post Office, Swan Thatch is the oldest identified building in Seavington St Michael.

Originally a detached cottage of a three room cross passage plan cottage, probably of a single storey dating from around 1600. The stair and main fireplace are alongside the cross passage. The fireplace has one side timber-framed, with timber-framed smoke hood above. The smoke hood is a forerunner of the modern chimney. The central room has a 6-panel framed ceiling. The roof trusses are of an early collar and tie beam type.

THE ROW OF COTTAGES BETWEEN THE VOLUNTEER AND SWAN THATCH



These five cottages were originally 7 or perhaps 8 date from the late 18th or /early 19th centuries. Some of the originally small cottages have been joined together to make larger dwellings.

SEAVINGTON HOUSE



This grand 3 storey detached ham stone house dates from the early 19th century 1839. The front windows are all 16-pane sash, the size diminishing on each storey. The main door is Regency style door, the open stone porch having Tuscan columns on panelled plinths. Against south gable there is a single-storey extension; a matching north wing was demolished in 1960s/1970s for road widening. By 1839 this house was at the centre of the largest farm in the parish.

FORMER OUTBUILDINGS TO SEAVINGTON HOUSE



These buildings are probably 18th or early 19th century despite the datestone inscribed "AHP 1855" on the western end of the north range. The long north range has a shallow pitch to the roof indicating that it was probably always tiled. The steeper roof to the south range was probably thatched originally.

SEAVINGTON ST MARY

MIDDLEFIELD FARMHOUSE



Perhaps the oldest house in the two parishes, Middlefield Farmhouse is of late medieval origins, evidenced by the "post and truss" structure of part of the roof. It is difficult to ascertain the original form of the house but it has been clearly added to at various stages. At first it would have had a single storey open to the roof and around the late 16th century the upper floor and hall fireplace inserted. The northern end of the house (part of which is now a separate residence) was in existence by the time of the 1841 tithe map and is likely to be of late 18th or early 19th century build. The

wing at the rear of the southern end (and at a slight angle to it) is mid 19th century and the low extension to the rear of the main range is later.

COURT FARMHOUSE



Court Farm is a substantial two storey farmhouse which has an eroded 1702 datestone in the east gable end wall. This may correctly date the house and its apparently symmetrical façade denies a much earlier date. The ham stone windows have ovolo mouldings. The upper windows have separate drip moulds whilst the lower openings have a continuous string. The interior of the house is (only partially seen by the listing inspector) is apparently little altered.

THE OLD RECTORY



The most imposing house in the parish is of 17th century origins but was very substantially remodelled in the 18th. It now has two storeys with attics, and the main range is square in plan. The windows are 12-pane sash on the two main floors. The attic rooms are lit by 20th century flat-roofed dormer windows. Above the main door is a fine semi-circular arched 24-pane sash window with 'Y' tracery to its head. From the front this is very much an 18th century house but the rear (north side) of the house reveals its earlier origins. This has two 5-light ovolo-mould mullioned windows with drip moulds.

UPTON HOUSE



Originating around 1700 this substantial detached farmhouse of two storeys with attics was extended to the north in the 19th century. Now with a clay pantiled roof, the stepped coped gables show that it was originally thatched.

THE PHEASANT



The Pheasant (formerly known as Water Street Farm House) is, as its old name suggested a former farm house. Probably built in the 18th century the house retains its thatch. The cross wing at the north end of the building is probably of later date.

The house was converted into a hotel and restaurant in 1971 but is once again a dwelling house.

THATCHWAY HOUSE



A detached cottage dating from the 17th century and modified in the 20th. It still retains its thatched roof and attractive ovolo moulded ham stone mullioned windows and drip moulds

SOUTHERNWAYS



Listed as a pair of two storey thatched cottages dating from the 17th century, Southernways is an early 16th century farmhouse which was later divided (perhaps in the 19th century). Although this now a two storey ham stone building, it has undergone many alterations in its life.

When built it the main rooms were open to the roof and the rooms heated by fires contained by a smoke bay and a timber framed smoke hood. As such the building shows the transition from rooms heated by open fires to those heated by inglenook fireplaces with smoke vented through

chimneys. The roof construction is of particular interest, being pairs of jointed crucks with three tiers of trenched purlins.

The house was substantially upgraded in the 17th century with floors inserted into the rooms open to the roof, stairs built to access these new rooms and windows put in to light them. A framed ceiling was put into the hall (the main room). The kitchen was updated to include an oven and a curing chamber. At the same time the original cob walls would have been replaced with stone.

THE BEECHES

A detached two storey house, probably eighteenth century, with attics. Thatched, it has later extensions. To the east of the house there is a wagon shed of similar age to the house together with other outbuildings.