

NOTES ON THE ARCHITECTURE OF WHITTINGTON

(as recorded in October 1994 by David and Kay Cawsey)



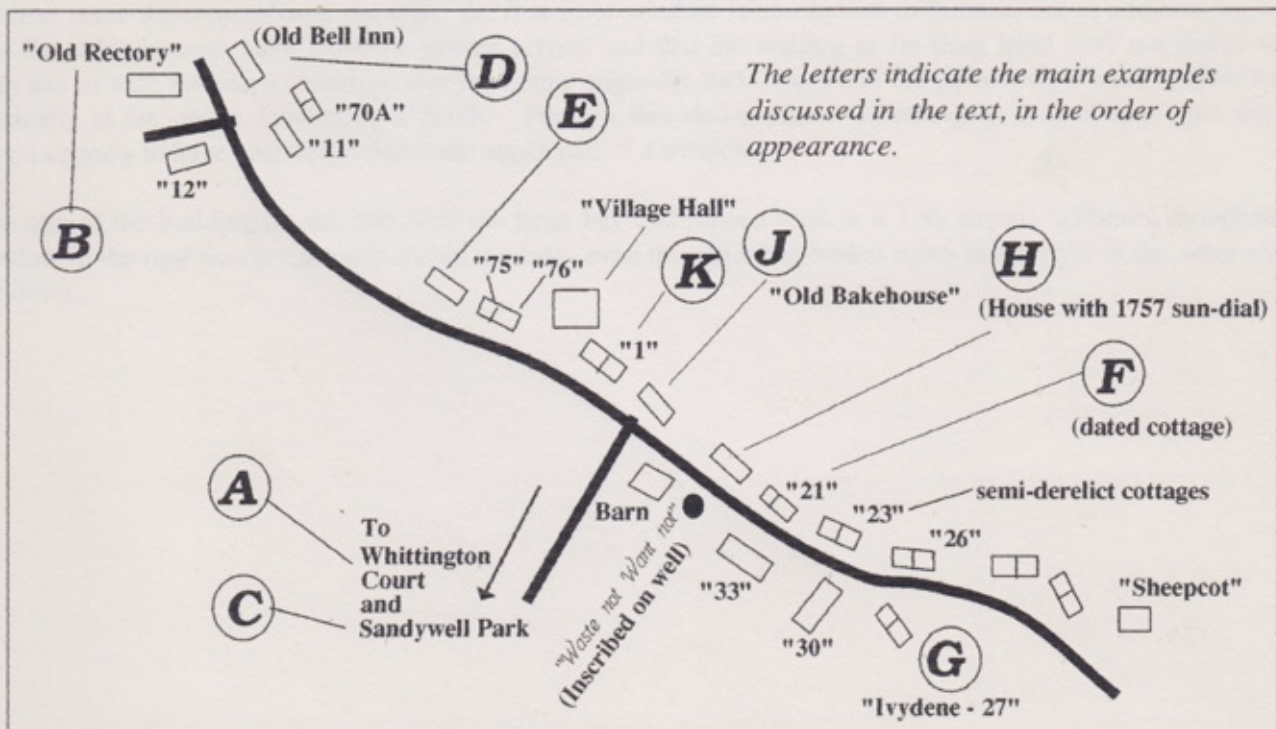
WHITTINGTON VILLAGE

For the purposes of this superficial study we selected the area around Whittington Court represented in the small map-section above, including the Whittington village street from "Sheepcot" as far as the "Old Rectory"; most of this stretch is shown in the photograph above, taken from a point close to Whittington Court itself. The survey area also includes Whittington Court itself, and Sandywell Park (across the A40, and actually in Andoversford parish), though we did not look at the various buildings at Sandywell which surround the main house.

Clearly the area has been occupied for a long time - from the "Roman Villa" and the "Medieval Village" indicated on the map. The present village dates from the 16th century or earlier and lies along a quiet lane which used to be a more important route from Cheltenham. The map also shows a disused quarry which was perhaps a source of building stone used for construction here.

In the pages which follow, we will begin with the large houses, and work down to the cottages and farm buildings. We end with some comparisons between Whittington and the nearby areas below the Cotswold escarpment.

The following diagram shows the locations of most of the 20 or so significant buildings along the street, with some identification; it will be seen that the house numbering system in the village is most inconsistent!. The village is a little unusual in that most of the houses are strung out along the north side of the single street.



I THE LARGE HOUSES (Houses "A", "B", "C")

The three large houses are: Whittington Court; The Old Rectory; Sandywell Park. The first two, whose oldest parts date from the 16th century, are superficially similar, though there are many differences in detail; the third, dating from the early 18th century is very different.



A. WHITTINGTON COURT

Whittington Court with steep gables over the 2nd floor windows, shows some resemblance to Upper Slaughter Manor. This gabled section of the building was originally 16th century, but the right-hand third of this section exhibits some differences from the rest; the first floor window is an obvious difference, but in addition we see that the string courses have not been carried across, and that the walling at 1st floor level does not match up. This ties in with Pevsner's statement that the house originally had 5 bays and the present right-hand section was originally at the centre, fronted by a porch. Perhaps this also explains the strangely insignificant front door, which appears to have been fitted under the upper part of a window.

The part of the building on the left, with the large bay and hipped roof, is a 17th century addition, though the window in the roof was presumably added recently- even though it has leaded lights in the style of the other attic windows.



B. OLD RECTORY, WHITTINGTON

The Old Rectory, at first glance, might appear to be an 'echo' of the Court - possibly planned this way in deference to the squire, or perhaps merely following the local style of the period. The frontage of the Rectory, like that of the Court, is built of ashlar stone (unlike the more modest cottages in the village), and this is consistent with the early 18th century, when major alterations were carried out (see below). The house is set off by a lovely and beautifully maintained garden - thanks to its present owners. They told us that the main part of the house (to the right) dates from the 16th century, the gabled wing to the left being an 18th century addition. The following discussion adds a little more based on documentary evidence, and our own observations.

We discovered an item in the 'Hockaday abstracts' (Gloucester Library) casting further light on the history of this house. In 1726 the vicar sought leave to rebuild and petitioned the Gloucester Consistory Court, gaining permission. His petition (partially transcribed in the attachment at the end of this essay) gave some dimensions of the old 'ruinous' 1½ storey building (no doubt the original 16th century part), and the proposed replacement. The description is consistent with the right-hand part of the existing house, and explains the slight asymmetry (more blank wall to the right). We conclude that the right-hand part was built just after 1726. According to the petition, the existing 3 storey section, 24' long, was to remain. This seems to be the basis for the left-hand part of the existing house, though the frontage may well have been altered, since the ashlar stone and the ornamentation on the gables matches the right-hand part.

The Court and the Rectory both have the vernacular 2½ storey gabled frontage of the time, though the Rectory has lower ceilings and the dormers provide less pronounced gabling. Both buildings have square chimneys and a decoration on the tops of the gables. The most obvious difference between the buildings is in the left-hand wings. They have slightly similar bay windows to ground and first floors, but whereas Whittington Court has a hipped roof over the bay, with a dormer window to the attic, the Old Rectory has a parapet above the bays and a full gabled end with an attic window. We also see a string course on this part of the frontage only.

Windows to both houses have the vernacular stone mullions and transoms though the Old Rectory now has large panes and not leaded lights.

The consistent frontage, the creeper-cladding and the fine lawn make the Old Rectory a most attractive house.



C. SANDYWELL PARK - EAST SIDE

Sandywell Park is described by Pevsner and in "Country Houses of Gloucestershire" and dates from the beginning of the 18th century (earlier than the rebuilding of the rectory). It sharply contrasts with the medieval architecture of the preceding houses; we are no longer seeing the "vernacular" architecture of Gloucestershire, the work clearly being that of an architect - bringing "polite" architecture to these parts at a time when the traditional architecture was being retained for the other local houses- and would be for another 150 years.

The view above puzzled us to start with, since it seemed inconsistent with the published descriptions. It is from the east side - the "rear". The original building (1702) is the dormered section, almost hidden by the nearer block with the door. The 1702 building is sandwiched between the two 3-storey wings (1720), only the tops being visible. On the left we see one of the 19th century two-storey wings (perhaps the blank wall indicates staff quarters). We then realise that the centre section of the nearest building must be the other wing (size, position, and parapet match but the windows are now different). We therefore suspect that the large windows, and the attached wings, are 20th century, perhaps built when the house was converted into flats!

Note the large chimney left of centre which appears to emerge from the original block, obstructing or replacing a roof dormer.



D. OLD BELL INN

II MEDIUM-SIZED HOUSES

Whittington contains several substantial houses - some, including Whittington House being beyond the Old Rectory and outside the study area. The two houses illustrated here show a close similarity in the design of the right hand block - only the position of the chimney is different. The left hand portion of House "E" is an earlier cottage, clearly much restored at a recent date.

Both houses have ashlar end-walls with copings. A number of other village houses also have similar copings on the end walls. The feature probably dates from the 17th to 18th century-



HOUSE "E"



Number "21" and the adjoining cottage, seen above, have some interesting features. Number "21" itself is the larger right-hand portion starting just to the right of the conspicuous door. The door to "21" itself is concealed behind the trees, and over the doorway is found this feature giving the date (There is a sketch of this in "Minor Domestic Architecture of Gloucestershire").

The windows beyond the door retain the original masonry, but all the other windows have been "modernised" with timber lintels over enlarged openings.



The adjoining cottage to "21" is unoccupied and semi-derelict., but the small bay window is an interesting feature. From the jointing in the stonework between the cottages (difficult to see in the picture) it looks as if the original cottage was extended.



G. "IVYDENE"

"Ivydene" and the adjoining cottage are seen above. The front wall shows evidence of 3 different sections. There are clear dividing lines on either side of the large gable; the cottage to the right is nearly symmetrical; the doorway is slightly cusped. "Ivydene" may originally have been the tiny cottage to the left of the gable - probably 16th century. The centre section has a lot of variation; was there a large window opening in the gable, and could there have been a doorway into a separate cottage?

The "House with Sun-dial" shown below is clearly larger than the cottages just described. The sundial (see next page) provides a date of 1757 which may be the date of construction of the main block (or it may just be the date of the sundial!); perhaps the parts to the left are older? Certainly the main block has features which are reminiscent of the portion of the "Old Rectory" c. 1730. Note also the coping on the end gable, and the signs of alteration to the end wall.



H. HOUSE WITH SUN-DIAL



SUN-DIAL ON HOUSE "H"



J. "OLD BAKEHOUSE"

The "Old Bakehouse" has dormers resembling those in 'G' above and the chimney looks original, but there may be little else left of the original architecture. Note the inconsistency in the stone-work - in particular the very large stone blocks at the bottom left which do not seem to match the rest of the masonry. And at the right the lean-to with the slit windows is clearly quite recent work, the slits themselves looking strangely unnatural.

Two houses with porches (below) stand between the old bakehouse and the village hall. These are perhaps from the late 18th century, and seem relatively unaltered. The imposing stone porch, with its unusual pediment, on the left-hand house is unusual, if slightly incongruous.



K. HOUSES WITH PORCHES

We now briefly mention a few of the remaining cottages. The semi-derelict cottages at No.23 are depicted in "Cotswold Stone Houses" (Hill & Birch) in the context of a major repair programme at Whittington. There is no sign of this at present, and these simple old cottages still have an unfortunate mixture of windows in various combinations of stone, iron and timber

Next door at No 26 we find another well-restored house with stone-faced dormers. It is somewhat similar to the sun-dial house, but the dormers are lower-set, and the end walls do not have copings; perhaps this house is a little older.

Continuing east we have two pairs of 20th century cottages, only interesting for their steep roof pitches and matching porches. Beyond this, "Sheepcot" is also 20th century.

Returning to the west, the remaining buildings are the village hall, and Nos. 75 & 76 - apparently 19th century, but built in the traditional style of the village.

IV FARM BUILDINGS

Whittington has three fine stone barns, two at Whittington Court, and one in the village. One of the Whittington barns is known to date from 1614. The village barn, shown on the next page, is unusual in being T-shaped, with a substantial rear-ward extension roughly opposite the doorway.



BARN AT WHITTINGTON COURT



V WEST OF WHITTINGTON

Returning towards Cheltenham via Ham Hill, it is interesting to note the sudden change in architecture in a distance of 3 miles. At the foot of Ham Hill there is just one stone house in the Cotswold tradition; a hundred yards further on is the 16th century Ham Court, Ivy Cottage, and Ham Square, all timber framed buildings with rendered in-fill. Continuing to Ryeworth (where there were brick-yards) we find a predominance of brick houses with slate rooves from the late 18th to 19th century. Curiously enough the only conspicuous stone house is a modern 'Bradstone' house. Perhaps this could be said to be a survival of the vernacular tradition, but here situated in the wrong place!

Gloucester Consistory Court.
Record of the petition by Rev John Walsh relating to Whittington Rectory
January 13th 1726

The following is an extract from the transcript in the 'Hockaday Abstracts' held in Gloucester Library (Gloucestershire Collection)

The dwelling house belonging to the said rectory is a building of about seventy-eight feet in front, one part of which is three storeys high and the other is only one storey and one half high, which lower part is about fifty-four feet long and eighteen feet wide in the clear. That the said lower part of the house was so ruinous and decayed that he prayed leave to pull it down entirely and rebuild it on the same ground and of the same wideness though shorter by fourteen feet or thereabouts. That he proposed to build the said lower part three storeys high by which there would be more room and conveniences though it would not be so long as before.

That there was on the right hand of the passage going into the house an arched cellar above ground of nineteen feet one way and eighteen feet another, and on the left hand of the said passage a pantry of seven feet one way and fourteen feet another or thereabouts and a kitchen of about thirteen feet square. That when the said lower part shall be rebuilt as proposed and designed there will be a hall or passage of about eight feet wide going into the house on the right hand side of which there will be a cellar underground fifteen or sixteen feet wide and eighteen feet long or thereabouts and over the cellar a pantry about fifteen feet wide and eighteen feet long and on the left hand a kitchen of thirteen feet square in the same place as before.

That the stable belonging to the said rectory was also ruinous and whereas one end of the said stable joined to the side wall of the dwelling house aforesaid he the said Mr Walsh prayed leave to pull down the said wall and to rebuild it at four or five feet distance from the said dwelling house whereby the said stable would be so many feet shorter but suffice to contain stalls or stands for so many horses as at present.

The record then continues with a list of the members of a commission (incumbents of five nearby parishes) who were to view the buildings concerned. It records that all were agreed with the proposal and that leave was given.

The description does seem to match the external appearance of the existing "Old Rectory" and its slight asymmetry (a longer stretch to the right of the door than to the left).

We have from left to right (see photograph on page 3):

The pre-existing 3-storey building	(a length of 24' in the petition)
The kitchen, to the left of the door	(a length of 13' in the petition)
The passage, behind the door	(a length of 8' in the petition)
The pantry, right of the door	(a length of 18' in the petition)