THE DARTMOOR HOUSE

AFTER the period of the hut-circles, the remains of which are so numerous on Dartmoor, there is a long gap in the record of the habitations of man on the moor. It is true that certain camps on the moorland borders date, probably, from the Early Iron Age, as, for example, Cranbrook with its stone-faced ramparts. But nothing is known of the dwellings which must, presumedly, have been within the ramparts.

The first evidence of residential occupation during the historic period lies in the place-name *worthy*. This, as a suffix to personal names, is common in the area surrounding the Forest, and is found also within the Forest bounds; it cannot well be later in origin than Saxon time. But at none of the many *worthys* are there any buildings, erect or ruined, which can be assigned to so early a period.

What is probably the oldest building of a domestic character still standing is at Yardworthy (I) in the parish of Chagford. This may have been erected early in the fourteenth century. It is now roofless, and one end wall has been removed; the quoins have not, however, been disturbed. We are thus able to say that the internal length of the building was 32 ft (or two 'bays' of 16 ft) and the width 14 ft 6 in. Its principal architectural feature is the porch, a massive granite structure, a view of which, showing also the window, is given on Pl. 81. A full description of the building will be found in Vol 67 of the *Transactions of the Devonshire Association*, pp. 127–30.

In considering the age of buildings, seemingly early, and certainly primitive in the inconveniences which they present as dwellings, there is one criterion which in itself will serve to dismiss all claims to real antiquity. If the stones have been split by means of drilled holes, then the building can be but few years earlier in date than 1803, in which year the earliest known local use of this method was made.

Before the use of the drill the custom was to employ a pointed hammer, known as a 'pick', with which to form a series of grooves along the line of the intended parting, and into these grooves wedges were driven. With the coming of the drill, round holes took the place of the grooves, and a tapered iron or steel cylinder replaced the wedge, a few strips of steel being placed to line the hole before the tapered cylinder was

inserted, to reduce friction. Certain guide-stones, placed on the moor in 1699–1700 (pp. 397–400), were cut by the groove-wedge method, which certainly remained in exclusive use for many years after that date. Indeed, the Rev. Edward Atkyns Bray, an observant man, and a native of Tavistock, saw the drill in use for the first time within his experience on 17th May 1831, when he visited the quarries at and near Swell Tor (Mrs. Bray, *Borders of the Tamar and the Tavy*, 1st ed., Vol. 1, p. 280). The quarries had then been some years in existence, and no trace can be found among their waste of the use of the older method of working. Doubtless the local men retained their accustomed habit and method for a not inconsiderable time after the introduction of the drill, and there is evidence that the new way of working was not generally established until several years after its introduction. The one safe conclusion is that where it occurs it marks a date not earlier than 1800.

On the other hand, there are two features which, if found, are both jointly and severally presumptive evidence for a date not later than 1600, and are both consistent with a possibly much earlier date. These are, the 'broad-and-narrow' quoins, and the stone sockets in which doors have turned in place of hinges.

Broad-and-narrow quoins are not to be confused with the better-known form often called *long-and-short*, which is by some assumed to mark Saxon work, but is certainly in places of much later date. The two structural methods have this much in common, both are in theory unsound, but both afford examples which have stood the test of centuries. An apparently unsound design may often prove satisfactory if the workmanship is adequate.

In broad-and-narrow work the quoin stones are mere 'shiners', showing a considerable area on the face of the wall, but presenting a trivial depth in its thickness. A stone may show a face of 20 superficial feet on one face of the quoin, and but 3 sq. feet on the other face; five feet in length and four feet in height on the one face, and nine inches in length and four feet in height on the other. That is to say that the bed on which it sets may extend no more than nine inches into the wall. The photo (Pl. 80B) of an old building at Challacombe in the parish of Manaton will serve better than an extended verbal description.

The south gable of the old Yardworthy building (Pl. 80A) provides another example. See also Fig. 117, drawn from a different building in the same parish (Yardworthy II): here it will be seen that an internal quoin at a door opening has been similarly treated.

Holed-stone hangers for doors and shutters in domestic buildings are rarely found. Examples are described in the Twelfth Report of the Dartmoor Exploration Committee, *T.D.A.*, Vol. 67, p. 127. Inside the porch of the first Yardworthy cottage the door had no frame, nor hinges in the ordinary sense (p. 360). Two projections from the back style of the door engaged, the one in a hole in the slab which forms

the roof, and the other in a hole in the stone sill, and on these two pivots the door turned. A window shutter was similarly hung (there is no evidence of glazing).

Much more common are similar, but larger, hangers for barn doors, yard gates, and field gates. Within the past few years one such gate hanging has been in use in Wormhill, in the parish of North Bovey,

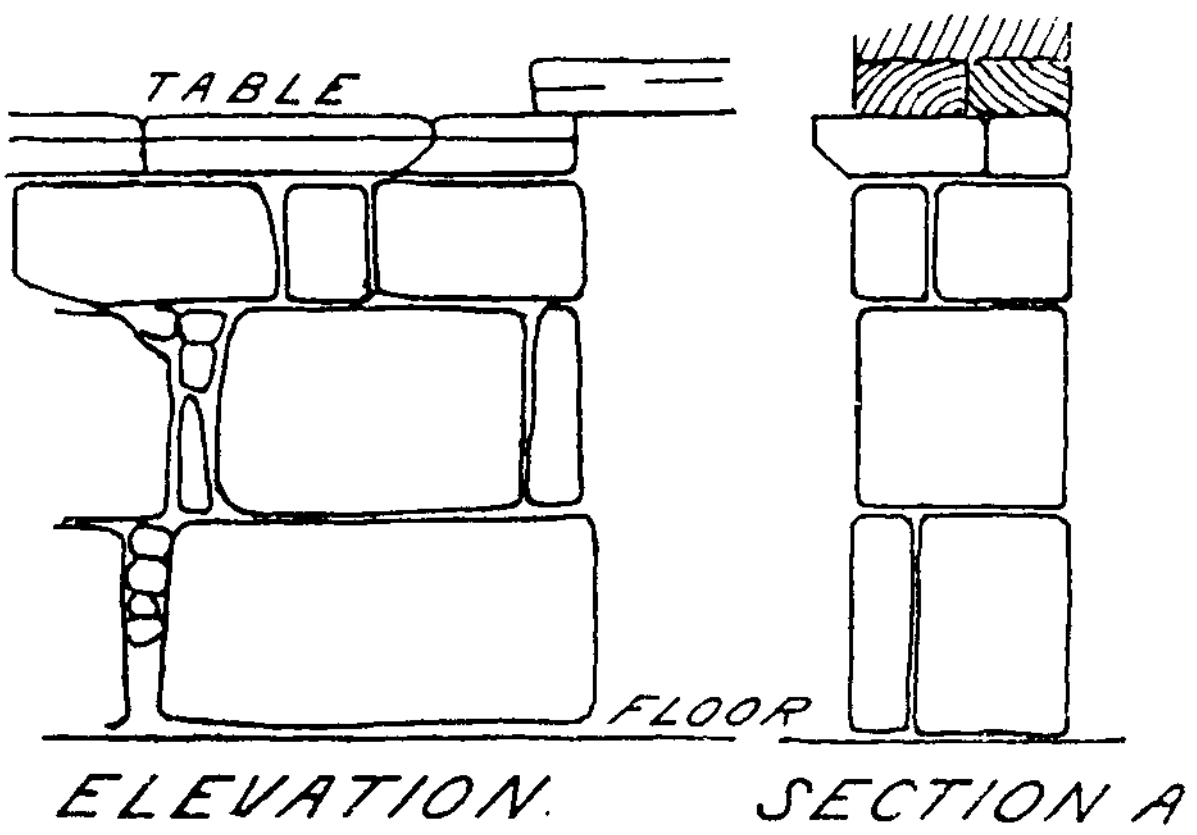


FIG. 117. Broad-and-narrow work, Yardworthy II.

and another at Peck Farm in the parish of Lustleigh; while at Cox Tor Farm, in Petertavy parish, a gate so hung may still be seen (see p. 356 and Pl. 72, 73). As to yard gates, a good specimen of such a hanging may be seen at Forder, near Throwleigh (see Fig. 103, p. 360). This hanger, although still in place, is not in use. Stone hangers for barn doors, not now in use, may be seen at Foxworthy and Peck Farm, both in the parish of Lustleigh.

I doubt whether any of these hangings for house doors have been made since the middle of the fifteenth century; or for barn doors at a later date than 1600; while the gate-hangings are probably all datable before 1700. But these figures are admittedly of somewhat uncertain validity, as clear evidence is wanting.

This much can be said: during the last years of the sixteenth century, the whole of the seventeenth and the early years of the eighteenth, there was a fairly general habit of dating new buildings; in addition to which stray evidence is at times available, as when Robert Furse of Moreshead writes for the information of his heirs that he "made the porch and entereye and seled the hall and glaste all the wyndoes". He must have written this not earlier than the year 1573, nor later than 1593. He inherited the house in 1573, which dates the building as earlier than that year; and it can still be seen that Furse had some little difficulty in fitting the new work to the old. In none of these dated buildings is there any broad-and-narrow quoin work, or any holed-stone hanger for a door.

The most primitive in appearance of all the houses or ruined houses on Dartmoor are the small cottages which were erected for their own use by workmen and smallholders in the nineteenth century, mainly between the years 1800 and 1871. Apparently the rage for making the desert blossom as the rose spread from the large-scale 'improvers' to a class which had but its labour to expend to waste, and no capital to endanger. But in some instances these buildings were undoubtedly erected by workmen attracted to the moor by the newly opened quarries, and by the opportunities of employment afforded by the larger enclosures then made or making.

One of the earliest of these cottages of which we have knowledge stood to the north of the Tavistock-Moretonhampstead road near Over Tor. Bray records that, in 1802, at this spot he found a man engaged in building a hut; on inquiry he was informed that the man had a grant, from Mr. Lopez, of several acres around, and intended to reside there with his family. The foundations yet remain, but no enclosure except a small garden plot. Since, however, the house and garden adjoin a prehistoric pound, it is very possible that the intention was to restore the walls of the pound (p. 139; Fig. 35), and make this the first of the intended enclosures.

Other huts, equally primitive, were later erected near Rundlestone, and were occupied within my memory. Further afield the house at Nuns Cross was built in or about 1871 by Richard Hooper, who also enclosed the land of Nuns Cross Farm. This house still stands, but is now used as a cattle-shed. I remember Richard Hooper when he still occupied the house; and shortly after its abandonment as a dwelling I took a photograph (Pl. 83, 1). If it be questioned how men and their families could live in such structures, I can only say that they still do

so live in Ireland, and tell you a tale of Dartmoor. When a cottage at Fox Tor, a structure of no great age, was falling into grievous disrepair, it was occupied by Eden the moor-man, and its roof was patched in any and all ways, including turves. A visitor to the moor took shelter there during a thunderstorm, and found the roof leaky, and the shelter but partial. He asked Eden why he did not thatch the roof. Said Eden: "Who's going thatching in this weather?" Eden was told he could thatch when it was fine; but replied: "Who's to waste fine weather filling holes that ain't hurting?" On Dartmoor the more part of us have a share of that logic which has raised some to eminence in the law.

Some of the settlers' houses were of a better type. There was John Bishop, a strong man, proud of his strength and gladly spending it in labour. You may be fortunate enough to hear tales of him, always told with pride. He lived at Swincombe, and a view of his house, now no longer a dwelling, will serve as an example of the more comfortable sort (Pl. 83, 2.).

Between the end of the twelfth and the beginning of the nineteenth centuries all the houses within the Forest of Dartmoor would appear to have been either cottages or farmhouses, if one excepts a possible inn. In the border parishes the same was in effect true. Even the manor houses had either developed from farms, or were occupied by lords of the manor, who were themselves farmers; of many it might be said that they belonged to both classes. When the class of yeoman farmers came into being it will be found that they followed two pursuits, that of agriculture, and that of judicious matrimony. It was by the latter industry that estates were aggregated, and the yeomen transformed into minor landed magnates. Once established in the marriage market, a run of male heirs secured the fortunes of a family. Failure of heirs male meant heiresses or co-heiresses, and, in the game of 'beggar my neighbour', heiress and land alike went to enhance the importance of another name.

Few of the families neglected agriculture. I have elsewhere referred to such combinations as landowner-councillor-at-law-farmer-and-tinner; that was in Cornwall. In Devon, Robert Furse rightly sets marriage as the chief foundation of his family fortunes, but he does not neglect agriculture. He writes of his ancestors John and Mary Furse: "God did so prosper thym that before she dyed they hadde cccc bullocks and grate store of monye and other quyche stuff" (see Carpenter, 1894). It is not surprising that the needs of the farm left their mark on the structure of the house. Little by little, it is true, a certain aloofness arose between the parlour and the cowshed; but it never became very pronounced. It was fortunate that the cowshed odour was held to be healthy, for of a certainty it was never absent.

In the 'black house' of Lewis, within living memory, the humans and

the kine dwelt under one roof, in the several undivided moieties of one apartment, and having one common means of access. During the winter the manure accumulated, so that one went up a step at the entrance. In the spring, when the dung was carried to the field, one went down two steps on entering. Nothing as primitive can now be found on Dartmoor, but the house-and-shippen under one roof is still common in various forms. These may best be illustrated by means of diagrams, no one of which will be the plan of a building actually in existence, but none of which will contain any detail which cannot be found in some one or more of the existing houses. The following types may be recognized (see Fig. 118 *A*, *B*, *C* and *D*: it may be noted that in all types the houses are, with few exceptions, one room deep):

(*A*) Dwelling-house and shippen form together a single rectangle, of the same depth throughout its length. The house-part is enclosed by four masonry walls, and hence a complete structure were the shippen removed. It is convenient to consider the shippen as built up against the end of the house. The means of entrance, to shippen and house alike, is a doorway opening into the shippen hard by the house. Often, in the back wall of the shippen, another doorway was formed immediately opposite the front door; traces of this will always be found unless the structure is built against high ground at the back; but sometimes, in the course of alterations, the back door has been built up.

Men and animals[1] both use the front door, the men more usually turning to the right after entry, and obtaining access to the house by a door in its side wall. Thus the way to the house is through the shippen. Two practical advantages are secured by this arrangement, on the one hand access can be had to the animals in their stalls without leaving the shelter of a roof; and, on the other, the house has no door leading directly into the open, a matter making for the comfort of those who occupy a living-room with an open-hearth fire.

For the further avoidance of draughts the fireplace is constructed in the wall between house and shippen, and there also will be found the brick or stone oven.

The open hearth as a focus of domestic and social life is a favourite subject with writers on country matters. Sentiment aside, it is the meeting place of all the winds of heaven in conspiracy to waft the domestic circle up the chimney. It is not surprising that a wooden screen was constructed at right angles to the wall, between the door and the hearth; usually with a seat on the fireward side. This may have been the precursor of the 'settle', which was by no means a mere article of furniture, but often a fixture.

The room entered from the shippen is the living-room; beyond this lies the dairy on the far side of a front-to-back partition, which in

[1] It may be well to remember that draught oxen, as well as milch cows, horses, and, at times, sheep needed housing and care.

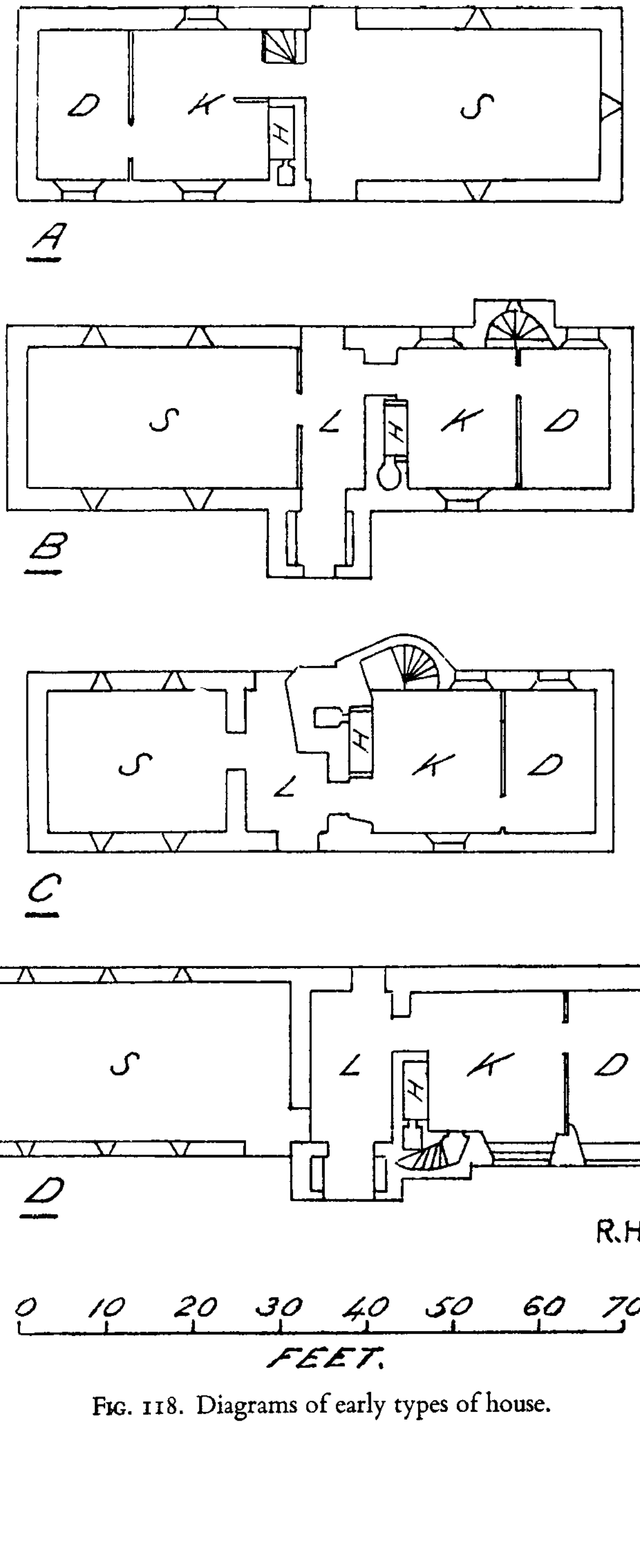


FIG. 118. Diagrams of early types of house.

earlier work is a panelled oak screen extending from floor to ceiling; in later years many of these dairies were diverted from their purpose and became parlours; a new dairy being built, usually in the form of a lean-to. From the living-room a spiral stairway, in the thickness of the wall, there thickened for the purpose, leads to the upper floor. The stairs are in granite, or, comparatively rarely, in solid oak. A feature in all original work is the entire absence on both floors of any passages or corridors; the rooms open out, each from each.

The plan of such a house is shown in diagram *A*. Certain qualifications are necessary: the house does not always lie to the right of the building; sometimes the house is to the left and the shippen to the right. The door from the shippen to the house may be, and usually is, immediately within the entrance, but it may be on the other side of the hearth, between the hearth and the back wall. The stairway may be in either the back or the front wall, more frequently in the back wall.

An example is provided by Colliehole Cottage, Chagford. The shippen is not now used for animals, but the stalls are still in place, in every way a perfect example.

Another, at Higher Godsworthy, Petertavy, is interesting as showing the changes which were at times made as social requirements became more exacting (Pl. 82). A good porch, with seats, leads into the shippen or barn. Originally, on passing through the porch into the barn one turned sharply to the right to enter the house through a door in the party wall between house and barn. At some later, but not recent date, this door to the house was built up in thin masonry, a new door to the house made in the front wall immediately adjacent to the porch, and a small pent roof projected to make a shallow porch to this new entrance. We thus get one of the features of type *D*, the separate entrances, but no lobby, nor any direct access, nor access through the lobby from house to shippen or barn.

(*B*) The first modification of the scheme outlined under *A* was the construction of a wooden partition, parting off some six feet from the floor space of the shippen at the end next to the house, and thus forming a lobby between shippen and house. A neutral space, if you will, but still used by both men and animals. In the same way in which an inner door from the shippen gave access to the house, in this type another internal door or opening, through the wood partition, gave access for the stock from the lobby to the shippen. It is very possible that this alteration was intended solely to shelter the stock from the draughts of the front and back doors, which now opened into a lobby. Certain it is that the improvement in the access to the house can have been but slight, with the animals still coming in at the front of the lobby, and the manure still, presumedly, taken out at the back.

(*C*) The next change was merely in material as far as the ground floor was concerned. A masonry wall was substituted for the wooden par-

tition dividing the lobby from the shippen. But this made possible an alteration on the first floor; by supplying support for a partition over; whereby a space equal to that covered by the lobby was taken from the loft over the shippen, and converted into a room. Coincident with this change the lobby was usually made wider, eight feet or more in width. This type is represented at Old Belliver. Here what was once the shippen became a parlour with a room over, to serve which an additional stairway had to be constructed.

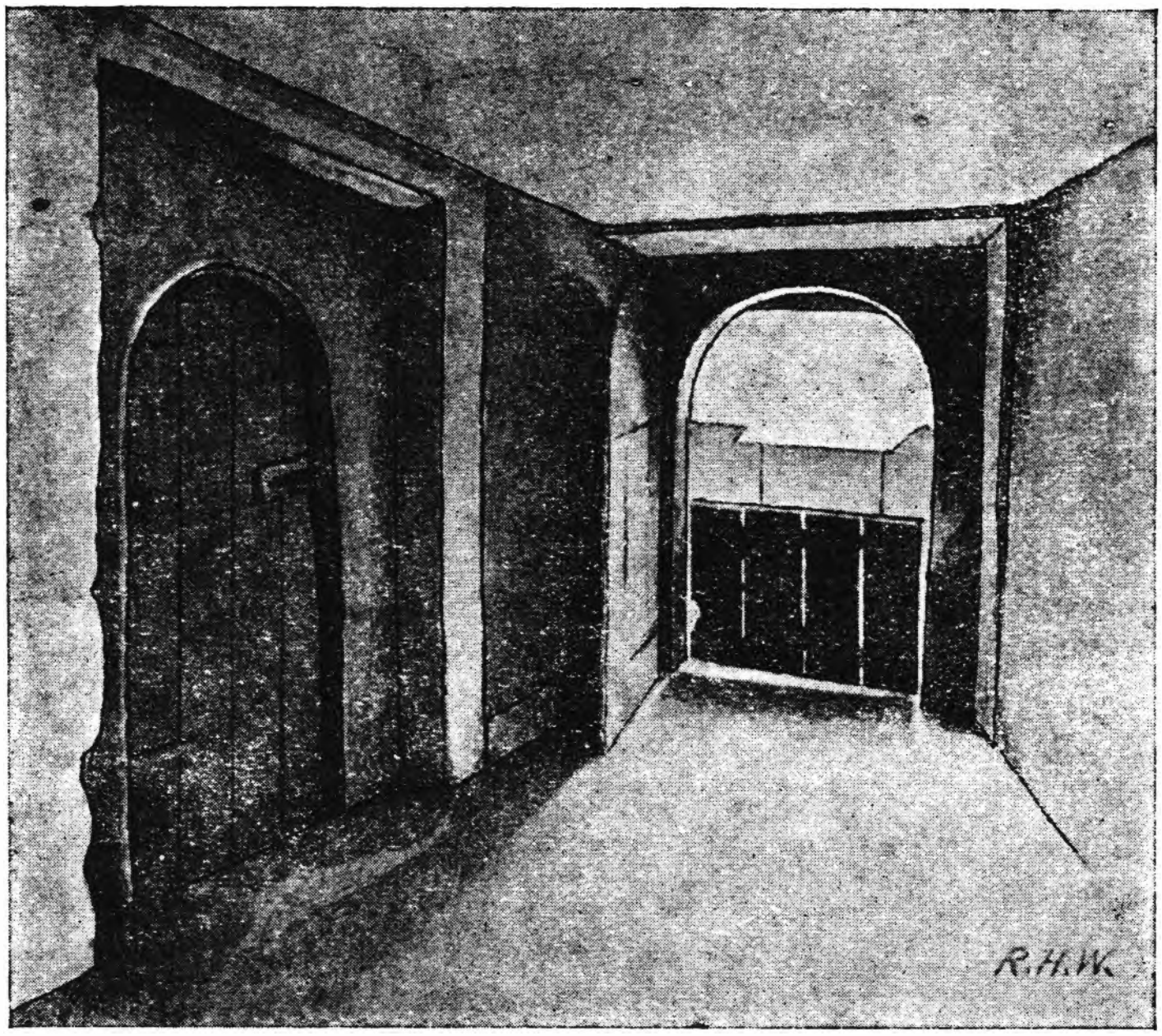


FIG. 119. The lobby, Shilston, Throwleigh, looking to main entrance.

Types B and C are represented by Warne's Kitchen, Eastontown, Sampford Spiney, a building at the back of Eastontown house; and by Higher Shapley, Chagford, in its original condition, before the addition of the rather elaborate porch in 1776, a structure now in precarious condition. With that addition and other alterations it passed over to type *D*. It would appear that the partition between the shippen and the lobby has always been in masonry; and there is a table or course on the house wall to carry the joists of the floor above, which are notched down upon it.

(*D*) Finally the animals were excluded from the lobby, and given a separate entrance to the shippen from the outside. This entrance was by a door alongside what had now become the house door; an entrance

from the lobby to the shippen was still retained, but solely for the purpose of access to the cattle without necessity for leaving shelter. With this change the lobby, at last, becomes a part of the house.

Perhaps the finest example of Type *D* is Shilston, Throwleigh. The house is dated 1656. In this building the house part lies to the left. (See Pl. 84A and Fig. 119.)

Hole, Chagford, is little if any less in standing than Shilstone, from which it differs by the presence of a porch, and the fact that the house-part is to the right, while there are no outside steps to the loft. The main staircase has solid oak stairs. Slight alterations in the interior have been made comparatively recently, and the back door of the lobby has been built up. Lightly incised upon the porch is the date, 1668.

All these types have been liable to subsequent alteration, and it is common to find houses where the shippen has been converted into an extension of the house room.

It is not surprising to find the house-entrance of type *D* provided with a porch, but there are instances of the single entrances of types *A*, *B* and *C* having porches; it is possible that in some of these examples the building was a barn and not a shippen.

It would seem that the shippen almost always had a loft over, although that loft might be a mere space in the roof. When, in consequence of the provision of a room over the lobby, or a more commodious loft, it became necessary to support the upper floor joists on the wall at the back of the main fireplace of the house, our ancestors were wise in their precautions against fire, and the joists did not enter the wall, which might have brought them dangerously near the flue; but a dressed stone table projecting on the lobby side of the wall served as a support (see Fig. 117, on page 405). I, who remember when an oak beam in Foulston's 'Freemasons' Hall', in Cornwall Street, Plymouth, was found burnt nearly through at a hearth, can appreciate that good building construction is not peculiar to more recent years. I remember also the builder's apprentice who was asked: "What would you do if a joist were so placed that if it bore on the wall it would enter a flue?" and who replied: "Well, Mr. X (his employer) nails a slate on the end of en."

The desire to reach the animals without leaving the cover of a roof was met in more ways than one. Thus at Cholwich Town, in the parish of Cornwood, the door to the shippen does not connect with the passage entered from the main door of the house, but with another passage entered by the door leading to the yard. The shippen is still used as a cowshed, but the door has been built up.

The changes made at Higher Godsworthy have already been described. At Morshead, in Dean Prior, the plan may formerly have closely resembled that of Shilston, but changes were long ago made. There, however, subsequently to these changes, a door was formed between an inner apartment and a stable, now a cowshed, that too has

since been built up. The house, once the home of Robert Furse, has now been partly demolished.[1]

Examples might be cited from every moorland parish, but the above can be accepted as characteristic. Changed ideas and altered manners have brought new needs; in most instances the shippen will now be found to have been converted to form part of the dwelling. But the typical Dartmoor house is no more than one room in depth. It can be conveniently enlarged by the conversion of the shippen, to which there is access from the passage, it cannot be enlarged otherwise by extension of length, except the new rooms are approached through the older rooms. In this dilemma a frequent expedient is to build on 'outshots' with pent roofs as extensions of the ground floor. These outshots can rarely be added at the back of the house, without considerable excavation. Old Belliver affords instances of such outshots, they are certainly later than the main building, against which they may be seen to have been built; and one, the dairy, has necessitated the closing of a former window. Good instances of similar outshots were formerly to be seen at Headland Warren, now spoilt by recent alteration, and may still be found elsewhere.

The space between two such outshots, one on either side of the door, if roofed over makes an effective porch, and this is often found. It might be thought that on the moors a porch was almost an essential; indeed some of the hut-circles even are supplied with flanking walls to the entrances. But where a large passage or lobby lies between the entrance and the living-room the need for a porch is scarcely felt. It is quite true that, notwithstanding settles and other devices for shelter, the neighbourhood of a wide hearth with its great chimney appears to be the home of the winds, but no porch cures or can cure that defect.

None the less, porches are frequent, are roomy, and are often distinct embellishments of the house. From the ample seats which are usually found it would appear that they largely served as summer-houses or garden rooms.

The second half of the seventeenth century was a great period of house building on Dartmoor, in which many, if not all, the houses were dated and signed by their owners. Around Chagford and Widecombe the hallmark of houses of this period is the semicircular granite arch of the entrance door; on the western side of the moor the four-centred arch held its own. The older form, the segmental arch, was not entirely abandoned in either area, but was rarely used.

Although a little earlier than the period, the old house at Longstone,

[1] For further information on the Furses see Carpenter (1894), who gives an account of the manuscript history of the family left us by Robert Furse. It will be noted that when he came into the Morshead property, in 1573, some at least of the windows were not glazed.

Sheepstor, was a fine example of the free use of the four-centred arch. Built in 1633 by Walter Elford and Barbara his wife, it was unfortunately modernized in Georgian days, and has since, in consequence of the construction of the Burrator Reservoir, become a ruin. The very pig's-houses had good granite dressings. Some of the old doorways from Longstone have been removed to the grounds of Burrator Lodge, the residence of the foreman of the waterworks, and with them the date stones of the house and of the windstrew, as well as the cider mill (Pl. 76) and cheese press.

On the other hand, Lower Tar, Widecombe, is the latest of the round-arched type of house, it is dated 1707 (Pl. 84B). It has the characteristic porch with a room over, and a dressed granite doorway, the head semicircular with the letters 'I.T.', and the date '1707' in the spandrils, on shields flanked with oakleaves. The porch is central to the building, but, as we face it, the house-part lies wholly to the left and to the right are farm buildings.

There is an outshot, but it is built on to the farm buildings, and not to the house.

The water supply was twofold, by means of a pump from a well, the pump in a pump-house which will be seen in the view, and by means of a potwater leat conducted from a moorland stream, and running in a gutter which passes under the pump-house and across the court. This gutter is also shown.

The use of potwater leats was general; many served more than one house, and many still in use are some miles in length. Sometimes, as at Ditsworthy Warren, the waters of the leat are conducted into the house and there is a chute in a room or chamber adjoining the living-room. The distribution of the water with due regard to the rights of the several users has always been a matter of import. A frequent arrangement was to insert a 'bull's-eye' in the side of the leat where a branch left it for a farm near its course. One such bull's-eye may be seen near Meavy village, where it is inserted in the bank of a mill leat. It consists of a round hole, about one and a half inches in diameter, drilled in a granite slab, eight inches in thickness. Another may be seen on the Sortridge leat, near Windy Post; here the hole is a little over an inch in diameter, a more usual dimension. Warleigh, in Tamerton, was formerly supplied through a bull's-eye inserted in the bank of the Plymouth leat at Roborough. The aperture at Windy Post is more scientifically arranged than is usual, being provided with a weir on the leat, whereby the head over the aperture is rendered more constant. But it must be admitted that no such device wholly removes the risk of neighbourly unpleasantness: it is on the one hand so easy to persuade floating obstacles to enter the aperture and cause a partial blockage, and on the other hand so tempting to pond up the leat by the aid of a few turves and so get a greater head and consequent discharge. At times both parties to the use

of the water resort to these devices, while still maintaining absolute good humour, each to each.

Masonry is the material of the Dartmoor house as we know it, and it is probable that it has ever been so. There is an ample supply of rock, while timber would need to be fetched from a distance. Cob, so freely used elsewhere in Devon, is practically unknown within the granite area, where the soil and subsoil are alike unsuited to that form of construction. It is found on the borders, and there only.

Our ancestors, with open hearths, wide chimneys, wood and peat fires, and some at least with thatched roofs, had learned a wholesome fear of fire. The precaution which that fear induced, already indicated, is further evidenced by a number of small buildings still standing near moorland farms—the ash-houses. The ash-house was a small building,

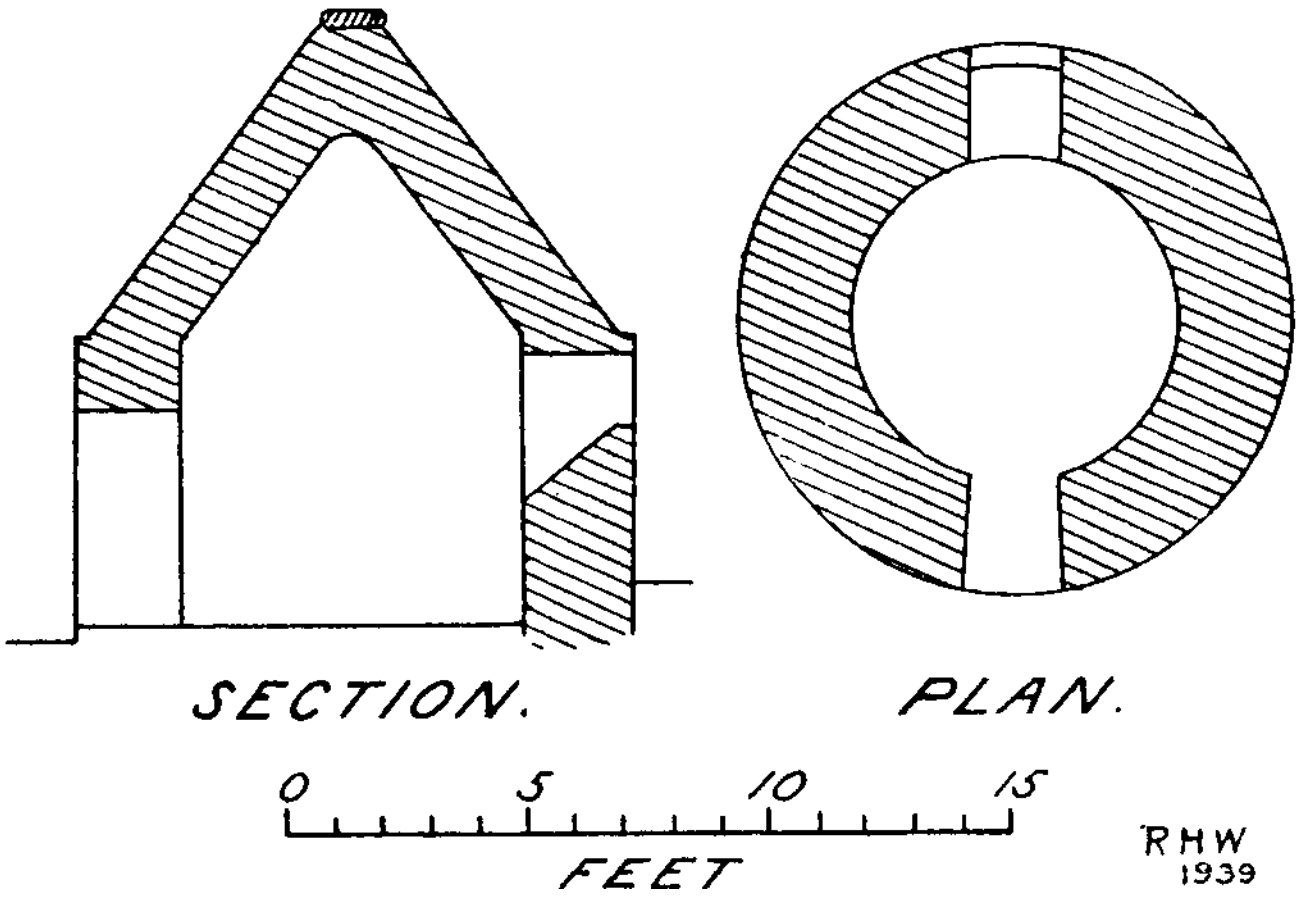


FIG. 120. Ash-house, Lower Hisley, Lustleigh.

with an earth or lime-ash floor, the walls of masonry; the roof in the round type a hollow cone of masonry, in the square type covered with cleft granite posts. Those circular in plan had on one side a door, and opposite the door a small opening at a few feet above ground level and also provided with a door or hatch. The ashes and embers were taken every night from the hearth and placed in the ash-house, into which they were emptied through the hatch, which was placed on the side nearest the homestead. In some of the few square ash-houses the ashes were placed in the house at the same door by which they were subsequently removed.

These little buildings were always at a distance from the main house, often, where the farm was by the roadside, on the far side of the road. (There is one notable and extreme departure from this rule; at Wranga-

ton Manor, in Ugborough parish, the ash-house is placed at the back of the hearth, and from the hearth the embers were thrown directly into the ash-house. Although under the general roof, it has its own arched masonry ceiling, and is thus completely fireproof.)

Mr. Wills of Rudge, Lustleigh, has told me that he, as a boy, lived at the adjacent farm of Lower Hisley, and it was part of his work to carry out the ashes every night. The system thus extends to within living memory; and yet there are many countrymen and women to whom the uses of these buildings are unknown. Naturally the insatiable curiosity of the children has to be met; for them has been devised the explanation that these are pixy houses, and the doors are placed away from the farm because the little folk do not like being overlooked.

I give a plan and section of the ash-house at Lower Hisley (Fig. 120), and views of the ash-house at Shapley, North Bovey (Pl. 85 A and B); and at West Combe in the same parish (Pl. 86).

I wonder whether these little round buildings were the basis of the guide-book assertion that, on Dartmoor, there were many round towers, like those of Ireland? It is possible.

There is one other appurtenance of many Dartmoor houses, now fallen into disuse, which has proved puzzling to strangers: and that is the potato cave.

It was not every house which could have its cave. The possibility depended on the geology of the neighbourhood. They are found only in granite areas, and then only where the granite has been weathered to some little depth and converted into 'growan'. In growan the granite has been changed, by the break-up of its felspar, into a soft, sandy rock (see p. 7). It is easily excavated but still sufficiently coherent to be self-supporting, so that a heading driven into it will need no timber to sustain its roof. In this material short tunnels were driven in from the hillsides, in length from twenty to forty feet, in height from six to seven feet, and in width from three to six feet. At places more extensive chambers were excavated. Granite jambs and lintel at the entrance, and a wooden door completed the cave. Their general condition was damp, but not wet; if water was struck the cave was a failure. These caves were usually near the house, opening sometimes into the courtyard.

The knowledge of the use of these structures is by no means lost, but it is on the way to oblivion. The forgetfulness which shrouds so many simple things is too marked to leave any ground for faith in the reliability of alleged tradition. When we started the first serious archaeological work on Dartmoor, the best of us, of whom Mr. Robert Burnard was assuredly one, were without sufficient evidence or experience, we were pioneers opening new ground. It followed that we made mistakes, not in record but in interpretation. I have no regret that we published, we at least preserved the facts.

In the *Transactions of the Plymouth Institution* (Vol. 10, p. 232) Burnard

figured two of these caves, at Deancombe, as tinner's caches. He learnt the error later, and himself constructed a small cave at Huccaby, the last of its race.

To mention a few only, such caves can be found near Colley Town, at Yellowmead, Leather Tor, Deancombe and Riddypit in the valley of the Meavy; at Routrundle in the Walkham Valley; and at Huntingdon Warren in the valley of the Western Wallabrook. At Yellowmead the chamber was branched and rather wider than usual. Since it is necessary to keep above the saturation level, the cover here as elsewhere was rather shallow. Someone planted beeches over the cave, these grew to be large trees, their weight broke the roof, and the trees falling into the cavity ended the career of that cave. At Huntingdon Warren the captain of the Huntingdon tin mine saw in the cave the beginning of a possible exploratory driveage, and obtained consent from the tenant of the Warren to the continuation of the excavation into the hill. This carried the work deeper, to below saturation level, the cave was flooded, and so remains, thus its useful life was ended. Pl. 87A shows the flooded cave at Huntingdon, and Pl. 87B gives a view of the entrance. I do not know any potato cave of the type described which is still in use.

On the whole the houses of the moor bear evidence of considerable prosperity on the part of their builders. They are sound, and for their date roomy. The granite dressings are at times simple, but are substantial and sightly. Quite unexpectedly one finds, here and there, moulded oak beams and joists, even in small buildings. That the cots of the labourers may have been small and inconvenient may well be admitted, but neither as small nor as inconvenient as in the in-country; the very plenty of building material, and the practice of the labourers themselves in the construction of stone fences ensured the contrary. One need only look at the little colony of Peat Cot, formed by men who worked by day and fenced their land and built their house in the few hours of daylight left by that work, to realize that (with the exception of Nuns Cross Farm) there is no evidence that any capable man need be other than reasonably housed. It is to be doubted whether there were any labourers without independent holdings on Dartmoor, except the tinners; and the latter lived in the villages on the border and walked to their work.

From the Dartmoor house has come many a family which has played a great part in its time: one has only to instance the Heles of Cornwood. The recruitment of the active life of the nation from the countryside, and from yeoman families, has been a great feature in past history;[1] while the traditional dullness of the rustic-bred would seem

[1] Hoskins & Finberg (1952) show how a large class of landed gentry arose from twelfth and thirteenth-century pioneer freeholders. The history of the Cholwich family, who originally farmed a small outlying part of Cornwood, on the edge of Dartmoor, is a revealing example. (ED.)

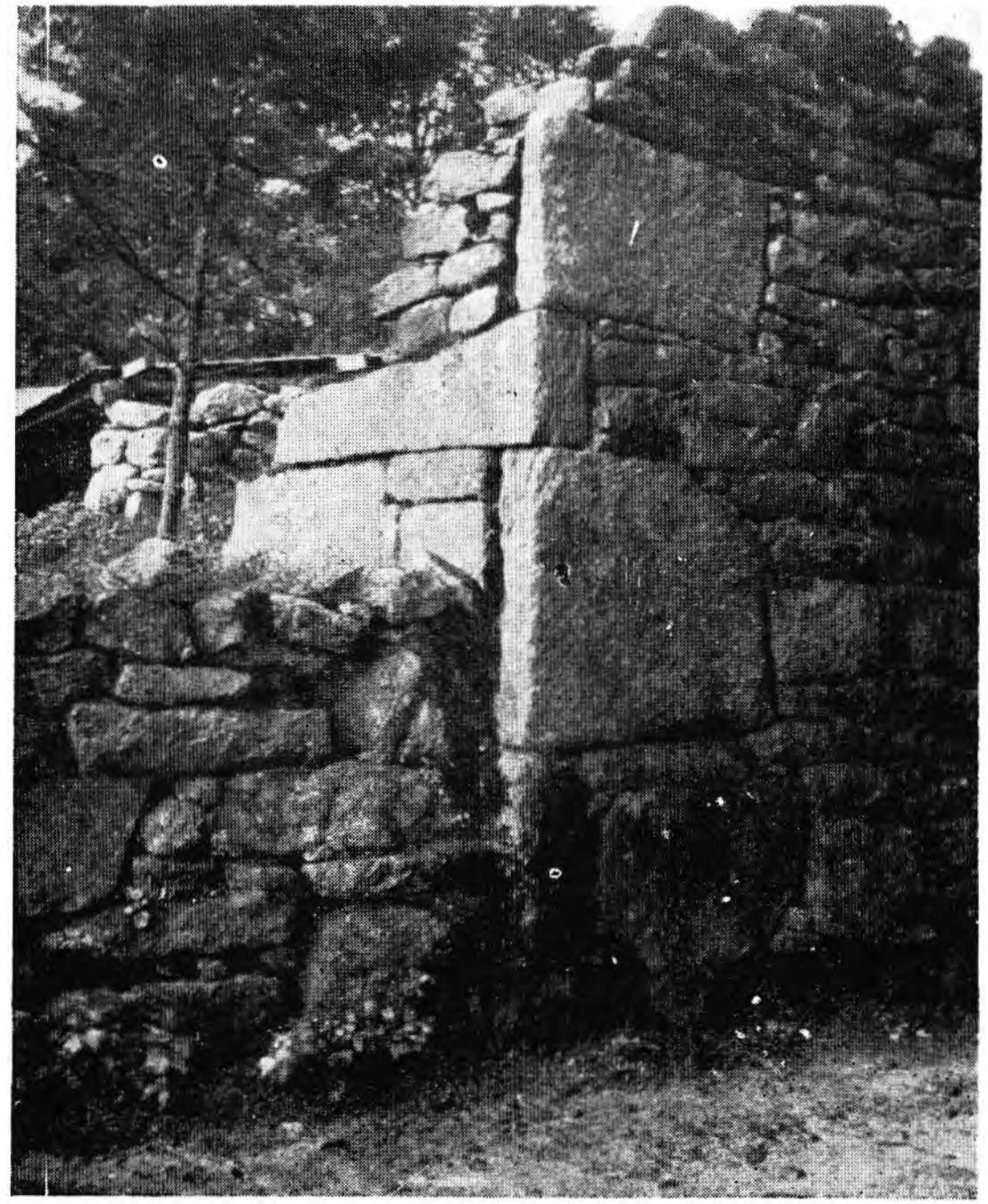
to be, as are most traditions, a very modern error, in view of the many men learned in the law with whom the hills of Dartmoor have endowed, or afflicted, the community.

References

Carpenter, R. J., 1894. Furse of Moreshead. *T.D.A.*, Vol. 26, pp. 168–83.

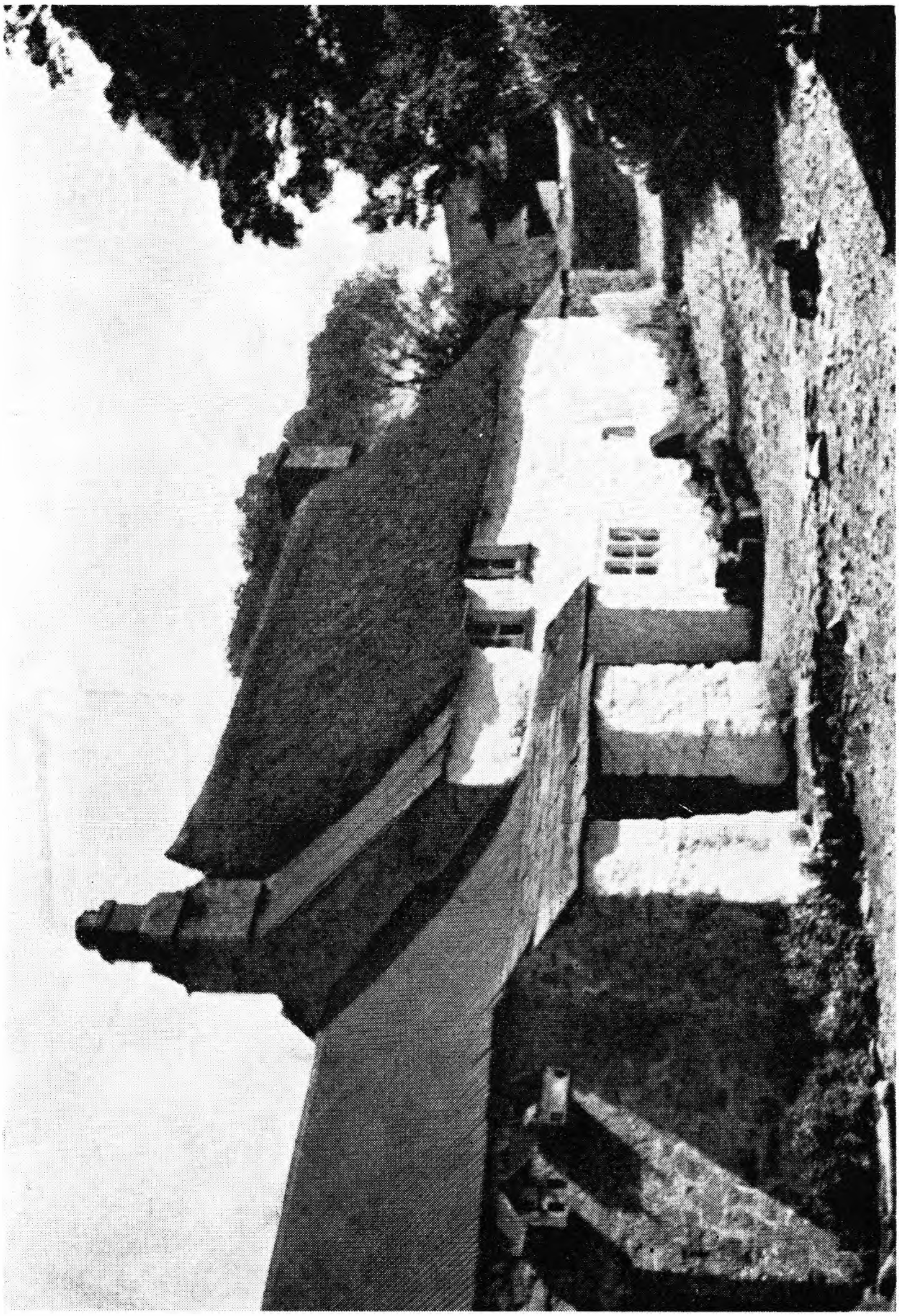
Hoskins, W. G., & Finberg, H. P. R., 1952. *Devonshire Studies*. London. Jonathan Cape.

A. South gable, Old Yardworthy, showing broad-and-narrow work.

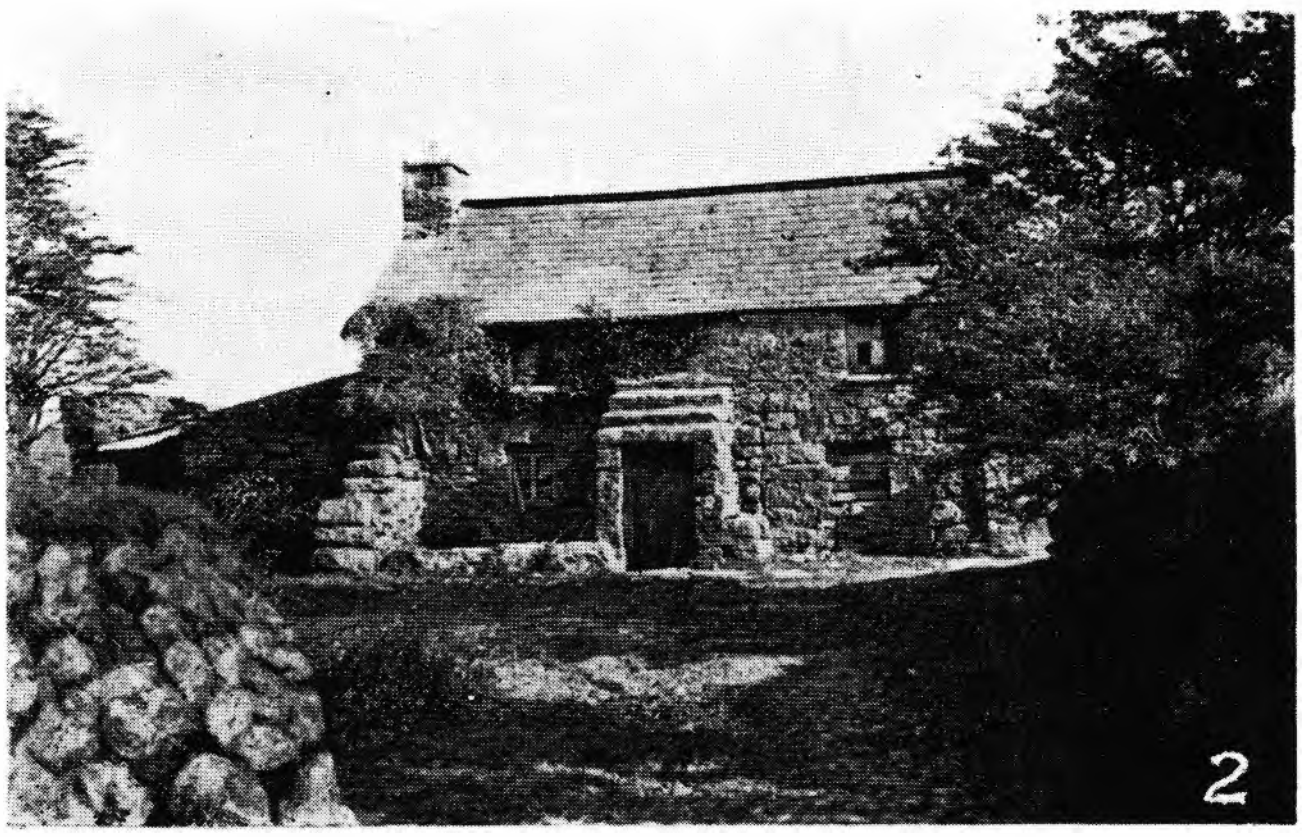


B. Broad-and-narrow work in old building at Challacombe.

Old Yardworthy building, porch



Higher Godsworthy, Peter Tavy.

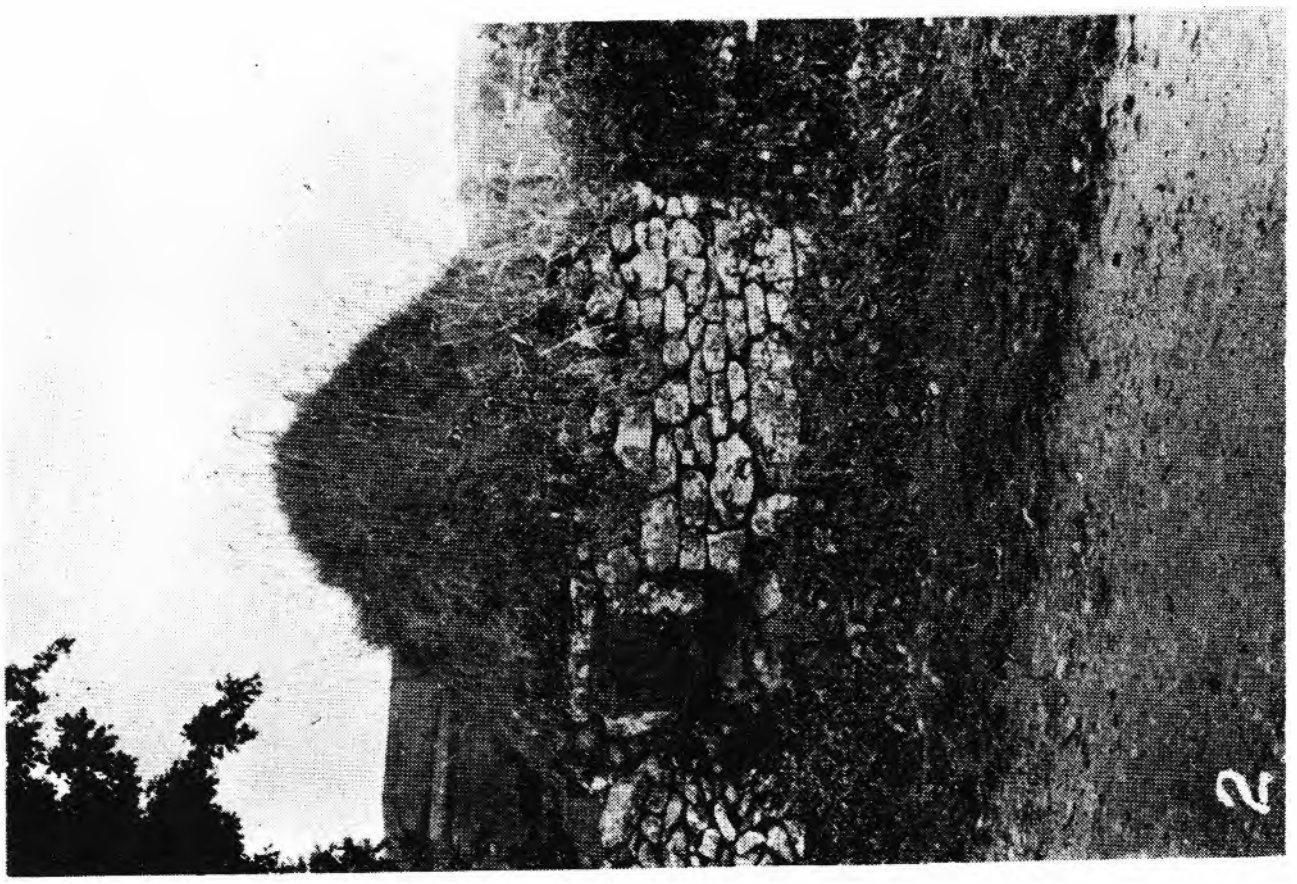


1. Nuns Cross Farm.

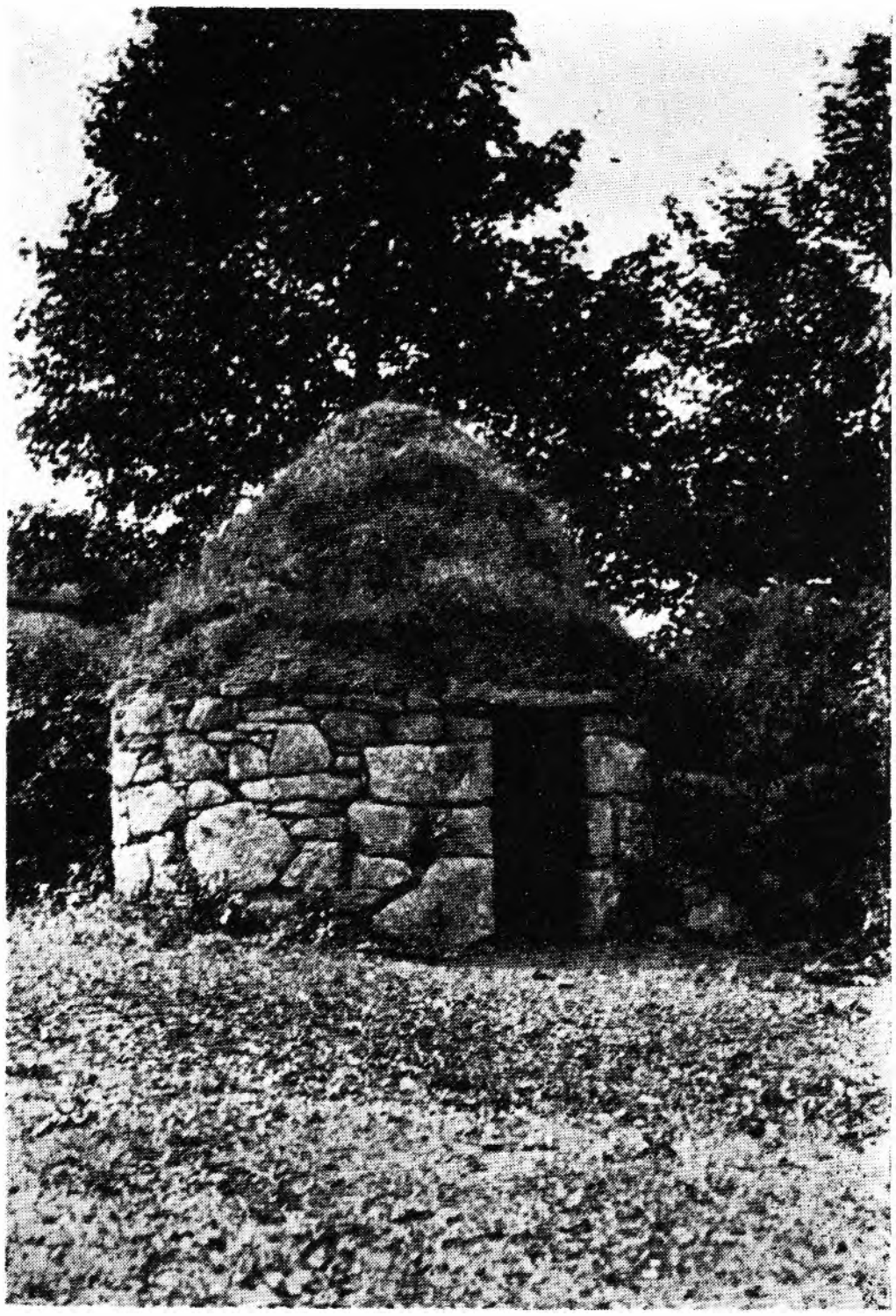
2. John Bishop's house, Swincombe.

A. Shilston, Throwleigh.

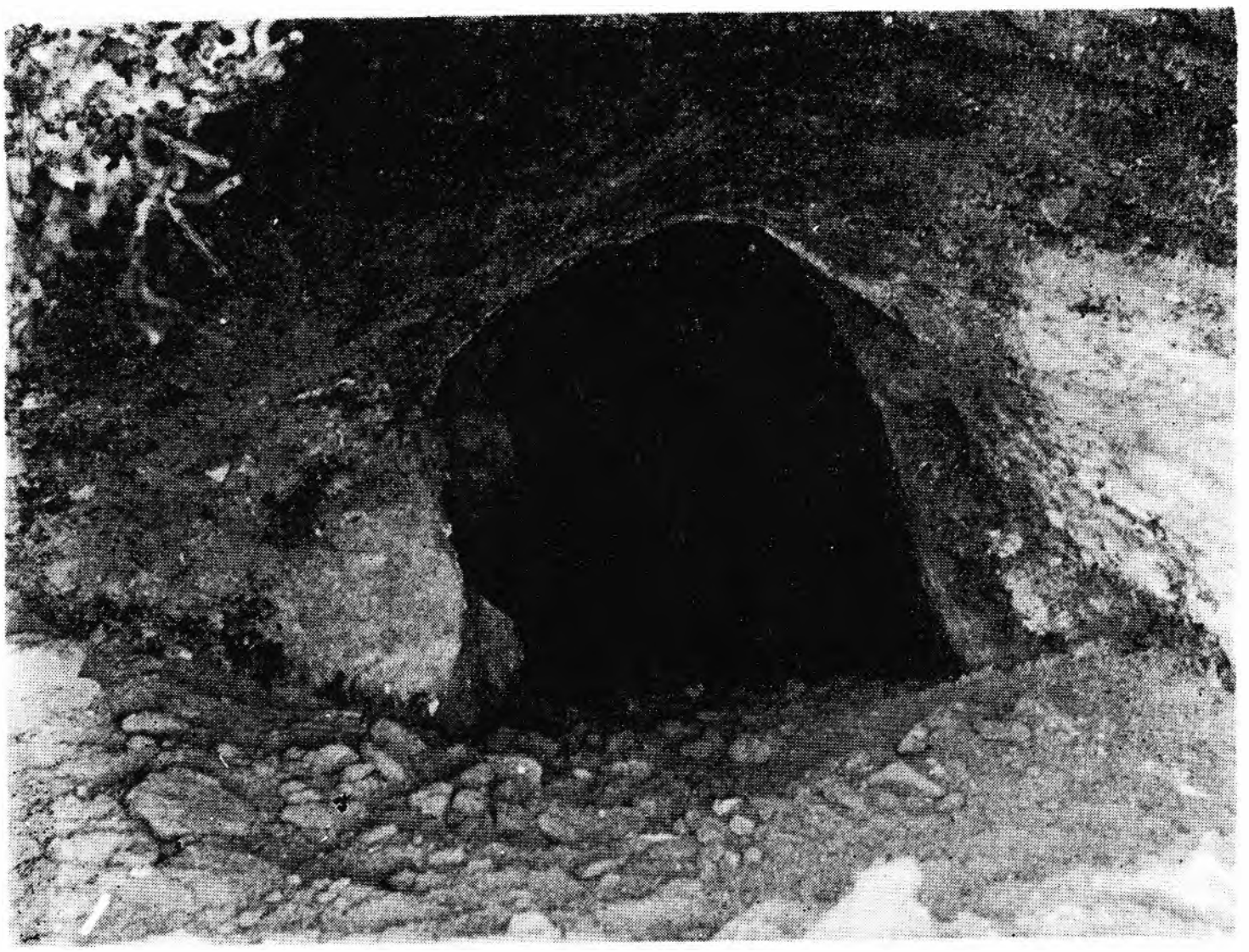
B. Lower Tar, Widecombe-in-the-Moor.



Ash-house, Shapley, (1) view with door, (2) view with hatch.



Ash-house, West Combe, North Bovey.



Potato cave, Huntingdon Warren, (1) interior, (2) entrance.