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Court House, East
Quantoxhead,
Somerset: A
Jacobean manor
house and its
surrounding
landscape

Elaine Jamieson and Barry V. Jones

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**COURT HOUSE,
EAST QUANTOXHEAD, SOMERSET**
A Jacobean manor house and its surrounding landscape

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INTRODUCTION

Summary

Court House, East Quantoxhead was the focus of a detailed archaeological investigation and a brief architectural assessment carried out by staff from English Heritage in June of 2003. The house comprises a series of stone-built ranges enclosing a small central courtyard with the east-facing front, dating from c 1628-29, constituting the final major phase of alterations. The earliest element of the house is a three-storey porch tower, standing at the south end of the main front, probably dating from the late 14th or 15th centuries. A low two-storey wing in the north-west corner of the house probably dates from the 16th century, with the remaining ranges of probable early-17th-century date. Archaeological evidence suggests the house formed the focus of an elite medieval landscape, occupying a prominent position within a manorial enclosure or 'curia'. Surrounding the house were a series of paddocks, orchards and courts, with the parish church of St. Mary's also located within the manorial enclosure. The wider landscape comprised a deer park, warren and ponds with access to the short stretch of foreshore controlled by the manor. The earthwork remains of early post medieval gardens were recorded to the south of the house, with what is thought to be the vestiges of a dovecote or banqueting house to the east.

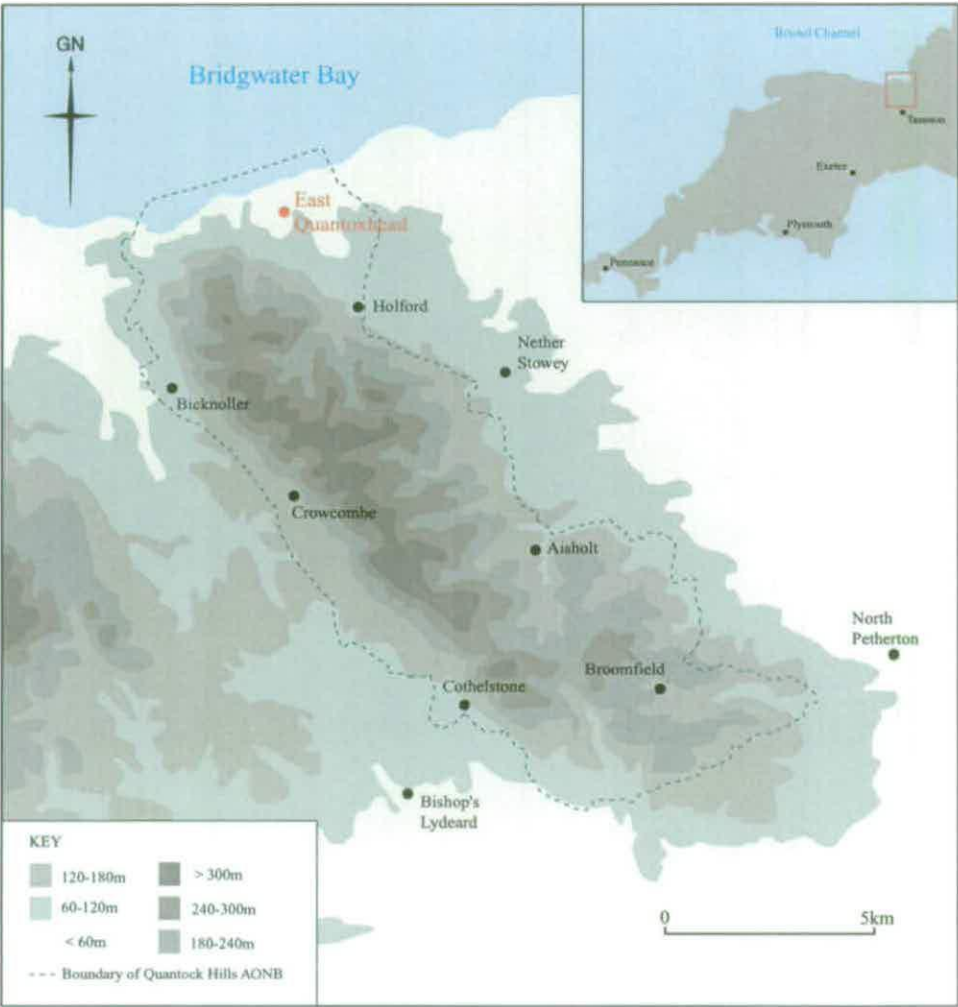


Figure 1.
Location map.

Location and topography

The manor of East Quantoxhead lies towards the northern extent of the Quantock Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), on a narrow strip of low-lying farmland bounded by the Bristol Channel to the north and the main Quantock Hills massif to the south (Fig. 1). The manor house, centred on ST 1364 4368, is prominently sited on an elevated knoll formed from blue lias rock of the Jurassic period surrounded by recent brown loamy and silty sands, at about 36m above OD (Geological Survey of Great Britain, sheet 279 & parts of 263 & 295). Court House lies 0.2km to the north of the small village of East Quantoxhead, in the parish of the same name, with the church of St. Mary's sited 10m to the south of the manor house (Fig. 2). The site can be accessed from the Bridgwater to Williton road (A39) by way of Frog Street or by the lane which leads from Higher Street, along West Street, to join Frog Street at the northern end of the village. The village mainly comprises 17th-century houses which stretch southwards from the manor house along Frog Street towards Town's End.



Figure 2. Aerial photograph showing the village of East Quantoxhead with the church and manor house at its northern end (NMR ST 1343-20).

The survey

A large scale survey of the archaeological remains at Court House was undertaken by staff from the Exeter office of English Heritage in June 2003. The site was recorded as part of the English Heritage archaeological survey of the Quantock Hills AONB. Concurrently, a brief architectural investigation of Court House was carried out by Barry V. Jones and a photographic record of the house and its environs was produced by Peter Williams, both from the English Heritage Research and Analysis Division based in Swindon. A report on the findings of this work was produced by Barry V. Jones and has been included in the description and interpretation section of this report.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The earliest reference to the manor of East Quantoxhead appears in the Domesday Book, at which time it was owned by Ralph Pagnell and held by Ralph de Reully as his tenant. The manor consisted of 7 villagers and 4 smallholders with 3 ploughs. The landholding was made up of 20 acres of meadow, 50 acres of woodland and pasture 2 leagues long and 1 league wide. East Quantoxhead was also recorded as having a mill at this time which paid 7s 6d, with the overall estate valued at £8 in 1086 (Thom & Thom 1980, 96 d).

After Ralph Pagnell's death, East Quantoxhead passed to his son William who subsequently passed the estate to his daughter Alice in c 1146. The estate remained in the female line until it was inherited by Maurice de Gaunt who, dying without issue in 1230, passed the estate to his third cousin Andrew Luttrell. Andrew inherited East Quantoxhead in 1232 and the estate has remained in the possession of the Luttrell family ever since (VCH 1985, 122).

The property was granted to Andrew's second son Alexander who probably died while on crusade c 1273. After Alexander's death the manor passed to his son Andrew and then directly down the male line of the family by way of Alexander (d. 1354), Thomas (d. c 1366) and Sir John Luttrell. After the latter's death, at the beginning of the 15th century, East Quantoxhead passed to his cousin Sir Hugh Luttrell, owner of Dunster Castle. The revision of Dunster had been purchased by Sir Hugh's mother, Lady Elizabeth Luttrell, from the Mohuns in 1376 and also included the manors of Kilton, Minehead and Carhampton, and the hundred of Carhampton. Dunster was not claimed until after the death of Lady de Mohun in 1404, but Sir Hugh is recorded as having taken up residence in the castle by Christmas of 1405 (The National Trust 1997, 40-41).

After Sir Hugh's death in 1428 East Quantoxhead passed to his son John who only held the manor for a short time before his death in 1430. John's son and heir Sir James Luttrell died from wounds sustained during the second battle of St. Albans in 1461 where he fought on the Lancastrian side. When the Yorkists temporarily gained the upper hand, East Quantoxhead, along with the other Luttrell estates, including Dunster, were given to Sir William Herbert, c 1463. After Herbert's execution in 1469 the manor reverted to the crown and was not regained by the Luttrell family until the final Lancastrian victory of Henry VII in 1485 (The National Trust 1997, 39).

Sir Hugh Luttrell lived at East Quantoxhead until his death in 1521 after which time it was held by his widow Walthean as her jointure. Her son Andrew resided at East Quantoxhead until his death in 1537 when it passed to his widow Margaret who occupied the manor until 1580. Andrew's son Sir John Luttrell died in 1551 having spent much of his life at war, leading the attack against the Scots at the Battle of Pinkie in 1547 (The National Trust 1997, 39). Sir John left three daughters whose shares were acquired by Thomas Luttrell, their uncle, between 1560 and 1569. His son George inherited the estate in 1571 aged only eleven and it was he who was responsible for transforming both Dunster Castle and East Quantoxhead into Jacobean mansions. George Luttrell married twice, firstly Joan Stewkley

in 1580, with whom he had two sons, and secondly Sylvestra Capps in 1622. The second marriage was relatively short lived as George was dead by 1629, leaving East Quantoxhead in the hands of his widow. Sylvestra out-lived both her stepson Thomas Luttrell and his heir George, with the manor passing after her death in 1655 to George's younger brother Francis (VCH 1985, 123). Subsequently, the Luttrell family appeared to have favoured Dunster Castle and the mansion house at East Quantoxhead was let to tenant farmers. The family did not take up residence at Court House again until 1888 when Alexander Fownes Luttrell went to live there. His heir Geoffrey lived at Dunster but his son Col. Sir Walter Luttrell made Court House his home and resides there to the present day.

Map evidence

One of the earliest maps which shows East Quantoxhead is Christopher Saxton's map of the *County of Somerset* dating from 1607. Morden's map of *Somersetshire*, dating from 1695 and based on Saxton's map of 1607, is the first to depict a deer park associated with the manor at East Quantoxhead (SRO 1695).

An estate map drawn up by George Withiell in 1687 is the most detailed early map of the manor (SRO 1687). The map, drawn on sheepskin and painted in watercolours, shows the various strips held by tenants in the parish with full particulars of tenure, size and cultivation. Withiell also embellished the map with several illustrations depicting various scenes including the family coach going along the Great Route, a hunting party in the park and a party rounding up 'wild bullox' out on the Quantock Hills.



Figure 3. Extract from George Withiell's map of 1687 (reproduced with permission from Col. Sir Walter Luttrell).

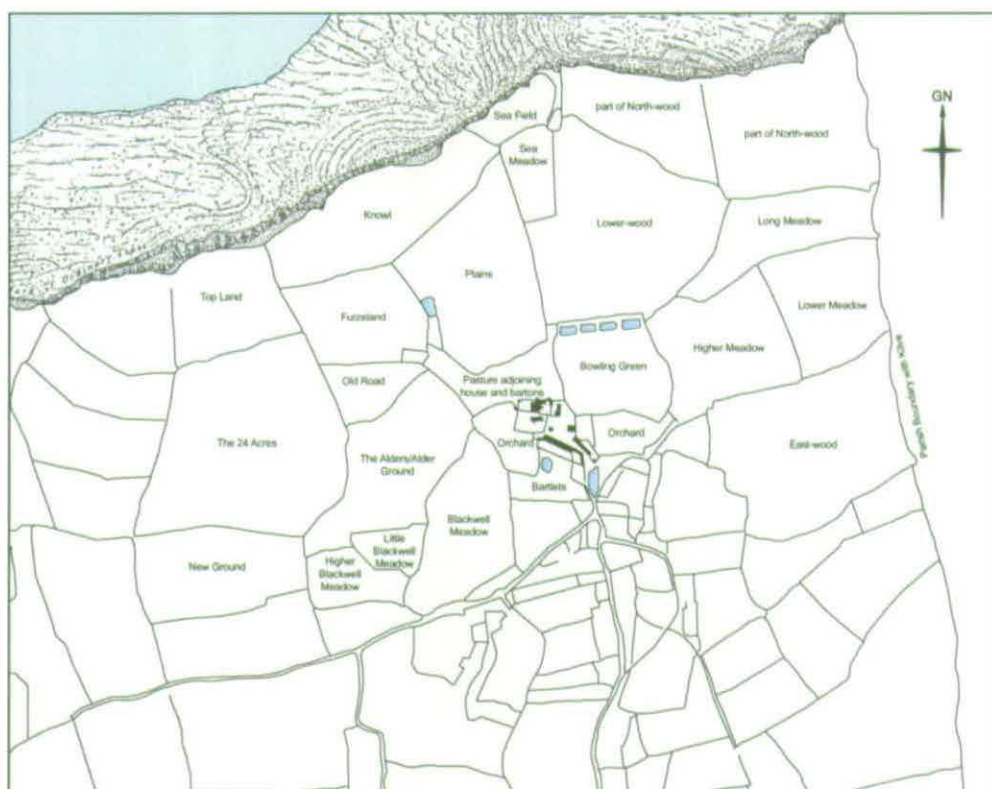
The map shows the house with an enclosed courtyard to the front with a range of buildings along its eastern side (Fig. 3). All the buildings on the map were depicted by Withiell as 'taken by perspective', therefore giving us an insight as to their appearance in the late 17th century. The mansion is shown in great detail and the similarity of the drawing to the surviving building suggests the buildings were depicted reasonably accurately. The range of buildings forming the eastern side of the front court would appear to be made up of three blocks, the southern block possibly the largest of the three. These buildings are shown as an L-shaped range on the tithe map but had been demolished or altered by the time of the Ordnance Survey 1st edition of 1888.

The map shows a range of buildings in much the same location as the present barns and cow houses, on the south side of the farmyard. These are shown comprising two or more ranges facing into an area named as Town Place. To enter Town Place, the map indicates passage through a large gateway or gatehouse, which appears crenellated with a pitched roof.

Small areas of woodland or orchards are shown to the south west and south east of the mansion. Withiell's account of the estate records that the Barton contained two orchards and two gardens covering approximately one acre. Adjacent to the western orchard, south of the parish church, the map shows what looks like a series of small enclosures. These may represent some form of garden feature, the apparent regularity and symmetry of their layout implying a formal scheme. Immediately north of these enclosures the map depicts a series of indistinct features which may also be part of a garden layout. Combined, these elements may represent the two gardens documented by Withiell in 1687. The area to the north-west of the main building is shown as containing a small grove of trees with the enclosed paddock, or close, to the east recorded as 'Culverhays with Bowling Green and Ponds'.

Looking at the wider landscape around the manor house, Withiell's map again gives us an insight into the land use in the late 17th century. It names the western third of a field named Knowl on the tithe map as Little Lawns, the field immediately to the west in the area named Top Land on the tithe, Middle Lawns and Great Lawns to the south (Fig. 4). These names would suggest that these areas were once part of a deer park associated with Court House. The map also indicates that to the south of the Great Route or Great Road was the 'Lords Commons' with the land to the north of the road the 'Tenants Commons', each covering 472 acres and 692 acres respectively. Both these areas are now simply known as The Commons. The field named Lower Meadow on the tithe map, to the north of East Wood, is named Marshwood Mead on the 1687 map, possibly indicating the location of former woodland. To the south of the manor house two fields are named Lower Coneyland and Higher Coneyland on the 1687 map. These fields lie between Higher Street and Town's End, south of the A39 road, at the foot of the Greenway. The fields, which lie towards the edge of the cultivated land, had become a single enclosure named Coneyland by the time of the tithe map in 1838. The name Coneyland would suggest that the area was once used as a warren for the breeding of rabbits.

Figure 4. Plan showing field names recorded on the 1839 tithe apportionment.



There are also notes along the eastern edge of this map. One of these notes refers to the boundary between the manors of East Quantoxhead and Kilve and reads:

..the full black line is the boundary between the manor of East Quantoxhead and Kilve within which bounds the lord of the manor of Kilve claims 15 feet all along except against Norwood against which the lord of East Quantoxhead claims 15 feet on Kilve.

These notes are repeated on a map dated c 1750 which is mainly concerned with the boundaries of the manor (SRO 1750). The notes on this map also refer to a route which once linked Court House to Kilton Park, a manor to the east and also owned by the Luttrell family. The route originally went northwards from the manor house towards the coast where it then turned eastwards across Northwood and 'through several grounds part of Kilve Farm' before entering Kilton Park. This route appears to have gone out of use by the beginning of the 19th century when a more direct route past the northern boundary of East Wood seems to have been favoured.

An estate map of 1827 is very similar to the tithe map but has been drawn in much more detail, indicating the position of individual trees and gates (Fig. 5)(SRO 1827). This map clearly shows the complex series of buildings and enclosures which surrounded the manor house in the early 19th century. The manor house is depicted as having small enclosed courts to the front and rear, both of which had a series of buildings within them. Just to the east of the front court the L-shaped range of buildings mentioned above is depicted together with several smaller buildings adjoining the walls of the court. A painting dated 1848, which hangs in Court House, indicates that the buildings adjoining the court walls had been demolished by the mid 19th century. The rear court and the western orchard are both



depicted with a small building on their perimeter. These buildings had gone by 1888 (OS 1888 1st edition 25" map, Somerset 36.12). There is a range of buildings depicted on the 1888 1st edition map which formed the eastern extent of the front court. It is unclear whether these incorporate the L-shaped range shown on earlier maps or are a completely new-build dating from the second half of the 19th century. They have since been demolished.

All of the main farm buildings were constructed by the first half of the 19th century, though several have since been demolished. The cow houses to the rear of the two barns seem to have been added some time between the 1830s and the 1880s as they are not evident on the 1827 map. The 1827 map and the 1888 OS 1st edition map both show two buildings to the south-east of the mansion house on south-facing slopes now occupied by a garden (Fig. 6). These buildings have since been demolished, but were most probably agricultural buildings associated with the farm, as they do not appear on the 17th-century map. A photograph in *Country life* shows that the buildings had been demolished by 1912.

A tree-lined track or drive is shown on the 1827 map leading from the rear of the mansion house north-westwards towards the field named Great Lawn. A second track is clearly shown running northwards from a position just east of Court House towards the lime kilns on the coast. This track once formed part of the route to Kilton Park (above). The garden area shown on the 1687 estate map to the south of the parish church is depicted as orchard by the early 18th century.

The OS 1st edition map of 1888 shows that only the first pond in the sequence of four which ran along the northern boundary of the field known as Culverhays or Bowling Green held water at this time. It also shows that the track depicted on the 1827 map which ran north-west from the rear of the house had been replaced by a new track following a slightly different course, leading to the field named 24 acres. The court to the rear of the mansion house is depicted as having a series of buildings around its perimeter by this time. A new footpath to the church had been created by 1888 following much the same course as it does today.

The OS 2nd edition map shows that the new coach house and stables were constructed between 1888 and 1904. This resulted in the creation of the new approach to the house, which still serves as the main access. The buildings on the east-side of the front court had been demolished by the time of this map in 1904 (OS 1904 2nd edition 6" map, Somerset 36 SE).

DESCRIPTION AND INTERPRETATION



Figure 7. Court House viewed from the east.

Court House East Quantoxhead, Somerset: A Summary of the Principal Phases

By Barry V. Jones

The following is intended as a summary of the principal phases of Court House based on the surviving visible evidence and is not intended to give a detailed description or comprehensive account of each phase. There are almost certainly numerous phases that have left no visible evidence, and therefore the development of the house, in particularly its medieval form, can only be partially outlined. Court House is listed Grade I.

An introduction to the house (Figs. 7, 8 & 9)

Court House, owned by the Luttrell's since the early 13th century, comprises a complex series of stone-built ranges enclosing a small central courtyard and with an east-facing front of circa 1628-29 constituting the final major phase of alteration. This two-storey frontage [corresponding to the parlour, lobby, porch, hall, dais and withdrawing room on the accompanying ground-floor plan] has the hallmarks of an E-plan house, characteristic of the period, with a principal range containing a single-storey hall, a central porch and forward-projecting, flanking, wing to the north. The plan is incomplete, however, as the opposing south wing is not present and, almost certainly, was never built.

Where this wing is expected, a medieval, three-storey, porch tower [storeroom on ground-floor plan] is set back at the south end of the frontage. It is assumed that the central porch, added in the 17th century, superseded the porch tower.

A low two-storey wing in the north-west corner of the house [dairy and pantry on plan] probably dates from the 16th century and incorporates a small garderobe block projecting from the west end of the north wall. A large corbelled-out first-floor chimney stack is another

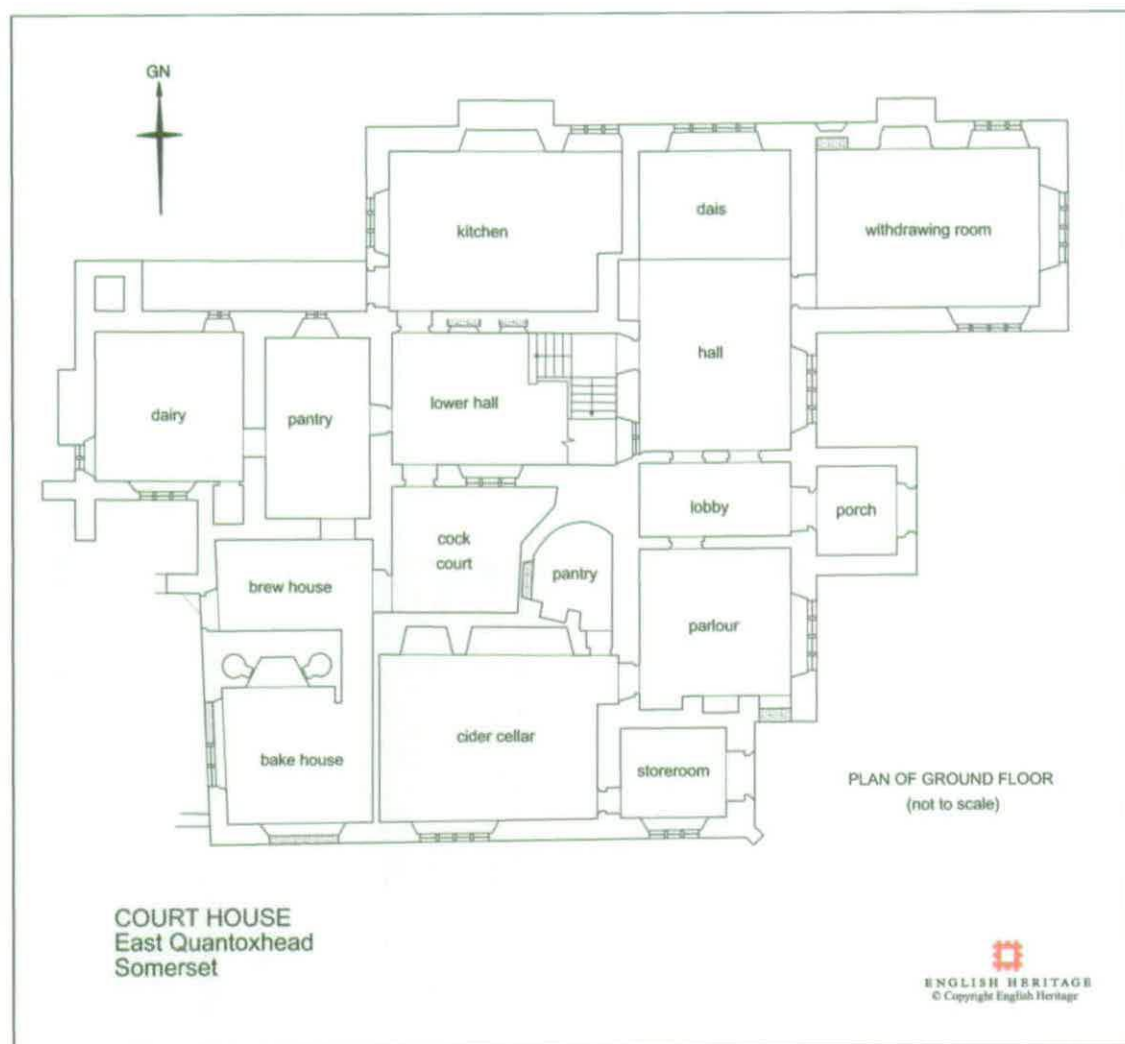


Figure 8. Court House: plan showing ground floor (not to scale).

of the wing's distinguishing features. The chimney now projects internally within the main stair range [lower hall on plan].

To the rear (west) of the 'E'-plan frontage, on the north side of the courtyard, stands a pair of parallel, adjoining, ranges, which are gabled to the east and west. The range adjacent to the courtyard contains the main stair [lower hall] and has mezzanine floors arranged on three storeys. The northern range [kitchen on plan] is of two storeys and probably dates from the late 16th- or early 17th-centuries. The range containing the main stair was probably built slightly later than the north range, although it is probably of early 17th-century date.

To the south and west of the courtyard, enclosing it on two sides and set-back behind the medieval porch tower, is a large L-plan service and chamber block which probably dates from circa 1614 [cider cellar, bake house and brew house on plan]. This two-storeyed range formerly included a small westward projection at its north-west corner. Only the truncated return wall of this projection survives, on the western side of the brew house shown on the ground-floor plan.

On the east side of the courtyard, adjoining the range of circa 1614, there is a multi-storey stair tower [pantry on plan] of probable late 16th or early 17th-century date. It retains a short section of the original timber newel stair leading to the roof, but appears to have been truncated above this level.

In overall terms, the house is arguably most renowned for its sophisticated and extensive series of early 17th-century plaster overmantels and ceilings. These have been discussed in a number of publications, including those listed in the bibliography; a discussion that is not repeated for the purposes of this text. However, it should be noted that the house is also exceptional for the quantity of other surviving internal features, namely moulded and plastered beams, doors and their fittings, timber and stone door surrounds and windows, wall friezes, floors, fireplaces and stairs, most dating from the 16th and 17th centuries.

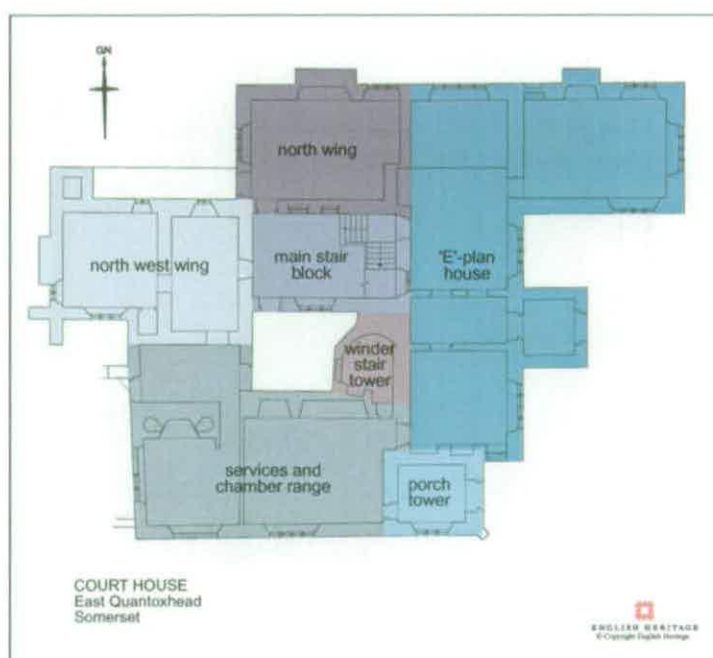


Figure 9. Court House:
interpretation plan.

The medieval house

The *Victoria History of the Counties of England* states that, in 1273, Court House was 'adjoined by two stone-roofed houses, one opposite the hall, and by farm buildings, a gatehouse, gardens and fishponds' (VCH 1985, 122). A similar reference, from which the former is probably derived, is quoted in *Country Life* in 1912 (*Country Life* 1912, 169), although there are contrasts between the two accounts. 'When he (Alexander Luttrell) died, in 1272, his widow received by way of dower a stone-roofed house opposite to the hall of her late husband's manor of East Quantockshead, another small house similarly roofed, two cowhouses, a chamber over the gate, an old garden adjoining the houses and other pleasant things'. In the 15th century, 'a great chamber' is referred to in 1403-4; a tile-covered 'loigge' in 1421-22; and a 'buttery garden' in 1478-9 (VCH 1985, 123). Very little survives of the structures that constituted this well-appointed medieval manor house.

As can be seen from the introduction, the earliest surviving identified phase of the house comprises a three-storey porch tower standing at the south end of the main front. A number of features identify the porch as medieval, the principal example being the large moulded, stone, door surround on the front wall (Fig. 10), which, stylistically, is probably of late 14th- or 15th-century date. It has a complex moulding, carried round the two-centred arch and jambs, and terminating in bold, bulbous stops. A similar date span is likely for the crenellated parapet on the south elevation, which incorporates blind quatrefoil panels and a moulded coping. Also, the north wall [now concealed within a roof void] has two probable putlog holes visible near the



Figure 10. Detail of porch tower showing late 14th or 15th century door surround.

top of the wall. The buttress at the south-east corner, although incorporating a probable medieval coping stone, has ragged joints formed at the junctions with the main walls suggesting that it may be a later feature, not inconceivably a rebuilding of a medieval buttress? There are two pieces of medieval sculpture, including a head over the door and a gargoyle on the south-east corner. It is unclear if either or both have been reset in their current positions.

The porch tower - which has a small, near-square plan and a shallow-pitched, concealed, lead, roof - is of a height that distinguishes it as a tower, rather than a porch of one or two storeys (Fig. 11). This view is supported by evidence on the west corner of the crenellated



Figure 11. South elevation showing medieval porch tower with crenellated parapet.

parapet, which indicates that this parapet originally returned above the west wall of the block. A parapet return on the west elevation may be interpreted as evidence that the porch stood above the walls of any adjoining range to the west - the most probable position for an adjoining range [see evidence presented below], including, possibly, the hall. On the basis of its height and parapet detail, the porch would, therefore, have formed a prominent and important element in the appearance of the medieval house, especially when viewed on approach.

On the first floor, a blocked opening [now used as a wall cupboard] in the west wall may be a medieval or 16th-century doorway. If so, this indicates that prior to the construction of the L-plan service and chamber range in the early 17th century, an earlier storeyed range adjoined the west wall of the porch. The opening became redundant when obstructed by a change in floor heights resulting from the construction of the service and chamber range in circa 1614.

A shallow-pitch roof between the porch and the frontage of circa 1628-29 incorporates reused smoke-blackened medieval roof timbers, one of which has an open seating for a halved or half-lap joint. This type of joint suggests an antiquated roof form, probably of 14th-century date at the latest. Of course, there is no certain provenance to these timbers, although the distinct possibility remains that - like a medieval domestic screen reused in the chancel of the adjacent parish church - these roof timbers may have formed part of the medieval Court House. The location of the smoke-blackened timbers may also be interpreted as possible evidence that the medieval hall was demolished shortly before the construction of the circa 1628-29 frontage, hence the timbers' availability for use when this range was built abutting the porch tower.

Unfortunately, it is no longer possible to determine the plan of the medieval house, although some ideas can be discussed. It may be that the house was arranged on a courtyard plan, possibly with the present courtyard forming a vestige of this arrangement. Or, perhaps, more likely, the porch tower may have led to a cross-passage to the north, at the low end of

a medieval hall. A putative first-floor doorway in the west wall of the porch tower may imply a phase when the hall was floored in. A further difficulty with this interpretation is the proximity of the church to the south, which involves a small service range to the south of the conjectured cross-passage and porch tower. Such a plan form would position the hall across the site of the present central courtyard.

Although this may have been the location of the medieval hall, there has been some misleading evidence cited in support of this view, namely the existence of three doorways, interpreted at medieval service doorways (Country Life 1987, 93), located in the north wall of the stair wing. There are a number of problems with this interpretation, one being that service doorways in that location would dislocate the cross-passage from the porch tower. Furthermore, of the three doorways, the most easterly example does not match the other two, while a more substantial difficulty is that the two matching doorways date from the late 16th or early 17th-century and are not medieval. There is another difficulty demonstrated by a corbelled chimney on the west wall of the wing. This has an external coping visible on the first floor, which indicates that when the north-west wing was built [in the 16th century], there would have been no range adjoining the wall where the three doorways are located. Therefore, if the medieval hall was positioned there, it may not have extended as far as the corbelled-out chimney.

To summarise the above, it seems highly unlikely that the medieval cross-passage was associated with the three grouped doorways. Also, the evidence of the corbelled chimney casts reasonable doubt on the idea that, in the 16th century, there was a hall range standing to the south of these doorways. The reused smoke-blackened timbers point to the possibility that the medieval hall was of 14th-century date or most probably earlier, and that it may have survived to be replaced by the east frontage built in circa 1628-29. Despite the possibility that the medieval hall stood to the north of the porch tower, its exact location remains unclear.

The north-west wing (Fig. 12)

This wing can be ascribed, on stylistic grounds, to the 16th century. It is built of local lias, on a chamfered lias plinth, stands on an east to west axis and has a large gabled roof (the roof void was not accessible at the time of investigation). The wing has a two-roomed plan with a stone cross-wall on both floors. There is a garderobe block projecting from the north wall. Originally, the wing housed two chambers on the first floor, lit by large windows in the north and south walls. The western chamber is provided with a garderobe that retains its original wooden door. This chamber also retains a fragment of probable 16th- or early 17th-century plaster ceiling with moulded ribs.

However, the modest scale of the wing stands out in contrast to the later ranges: a factor that may be indicative of the proportions of the pre-1600 house and certainly serves to highlight the later aspirations embodied in the early 17th-century reconstructions and enlargements.

Figure 12. North-west wing viewed from the north.



Significant features of the wing are the series of original wooden-framed windows, with four-centred arched heads to the lights and plain recessed spandrels, including a large wooden window, with king mullion, on the first floor of the north wall (Fig. 13). This has ogee mouldings and hollow-chamfers. A four-light stone window surround (now partly blocked) on the south wall has foliated spandrels and a dropped and returned hood mould. This



Figure 13. Detail showing wooden-framed window, with four-centred arched heads and king mullion, on the first floor of the north wall.

differential use of stone might reflect the relative prominence of the south elevation in the 16th century. Another distinguishing feature of the wing is the large corbelled chimney on the east wall, built to heat the adjacent first-floor chamber. In addition, on the west wall, there is a smaller projecting stack, rising from ground level rather than corbelled, and which incorporates hollow-chamfered stone fire surrounds on both floors. These fireplaces heated the ground and first-floor rooms in the west end of the wing.

The relationship between this wing and the medieval hall is no longer clear, although the characteristics described above would be consistent with a solar wing. This, however, is far from certain. What is apparent, from the distribution of windows and the corbelled stack - which was originally external - is that any adjoining range would have abutted the wing in the

eastern part of the south wall [in the vicinity of the brew house marked on the plan]. An alternative interpretation might be that the wing was free standing and provided an annex to the main house, in a way similar to the houses mentioned in the 13th century. An early-17th-century example of this type of free-standing annex can be seen at Leigh Barton Farm, Old Cleeve, Somerset, in the nearby Brendon Hills.

The L-plan services and chamber range (circa 1614), re-fenestration of the porch tower and addition of the winder stair tower (Fig. 14)

The date of construction for **the services and chamber range** is attributed on the basis of a dated plaster overmantel of 1614, located in one of the first-floor chambers. Also, the features of this range are compatible with an early 17th-century date, which lends support to this attribution. Characteristics of this phase include the chamfered sandstone plinth course and sandstone door surrounds with plain chamfers and depressed four-centred, arched, heads. The range was built abutting the earlier porch tower's west elevation. On the south elevation of the house, a ragged joint and change in the character of the stone walling marks the position where the south wall of the range was stitched into that of the pre-existing porch tower. It is uncertain whether the service and chamber range adjoined the medieval hall or if the circa 1614 phase actually impinged on the site of the medieval hall. However, the position of the service/chamber range in relationship to the porch tower may be interpreted as possible evidence that the latter was the case.

The scale of the range, in particular its great height which matches that of the porch tower, demonstrates that this phase marks a significant endeavour to enlarge and aggrandise the earlier house. The main L-plan block, as opposed to the small north-west projection [which



Figure 14. L-plan services and chamber range viewed from the south.

is no longer extant], has a plain stone parapet, but, distinctively, a gabled roof with a roof structure whose form accomplishes the provision of both parapet and gable.

On the ground floor, to the west of the courtyard, there is a passage with opposed doorways and a now redundant stone stair [in the brew house shown on the accompanying plan] which originally led up into the west projection and the north-west wing. A small corbelled



Figure 15. Detail showing corbelled stair light, with Ham Stone surround.

stair light, with a Ham stone surround, survives in the west elevation, close to where the projecting block has been removed. In the same area, the north wall of the main L-plan range is built of timber and rendered, above the position where it adjoins the 16th-century wing. The use of a timber wall in this location probably reflects the fact that the circa 1614 range stands considerably taller than the earlier north-west wing which it adjoins.

The provision of three substantial cooking hearths, one in a separate back kitchen or bakehouse, indicates that the range superseded the earlier services. The new service rooms were lit by large wooden-framed mullion and transom windows on the south elevation, facing the church. These windows are positioned at a height that admits a high degree of natural light, but does not allow views either into or out of the ground-floor rooms. The window lighting the back kitchen or bakehouse has been blocked. The surviving window frame associated with the kitchen [marked as cider cellar on plan], has a king mullion and is treated with an ogee-moulding and a hollow-chamfer. Ham-stone hood moulds surmount the wooden-framed windows. On the south elevation, both first-floor chambers have Ham-stone hood moulds above timber window lintels, suggesting that the original window frames were similar to that surviving on the ground floor, lighting the kitchen.

The north wing of this phase has smaller two-light windows with rebated hollow-chamfered surrounds executed in Ham stone. These also have hood moulds. The reason for the differential use of wood and Ham stone for the construction of the windows is uncertain, although it may reflect the contrast in scale between the windows on the different elevations, coupled with the relative expense of Ham stone compared to wood. It should be remembered that the wooden-framed windows have Ham-stone hood moulds, from which it might be inferred that the contrast in materials is not necessarily a reflection of the relative status or prominence of the elevations.

The back-kitchen, or bakehouse, has a 17th-century plaster frieze of reasonable quality, demonstrating that prior to, or during, that period, the room function changed. However, the survival of the service fireplace and ovens points to the likelihood that the room was subdivided

to form a chamber at mezzanine level, thereby leaving the ground floor as a service room. The floor was removed subsequently.

The first floor contains two good-quality chambers, each with a large fireplace and highly decorative plaster overmantel. The eastern room, which is the larger of the two chambers, also has a ceiling frieze.

The south elevation of **the porch tower** has inserted fenestration arranged on three floors. The windows have rebated hollow-chamfered Ham-stone surrounds, the characteristics of which suggest a probable late 16th or early 17th-century date. However, these windows are compatible with the stone windows in the circa 1614 range, which may point to a re-fenestration of the porch tower having taken place at a similar date. The storey heights in the porch tower are at odds with those of the adjoining service and chamber range. Therefore, in order to maintain access between the first-floor room over the porch and the high first-floor chambers in the new wing, a small winder stair was provided in the angle to the north of the porch tower. This has a wooden-framed window, now blocked, facing north-east, where the present east frontage now adjoins. The presence of this window probably indicates that there was no adjoining range in that position immediately prior to the construction of the east front, in circa 1628-29.



Figure 16. The winder stair tower.

The winder stair tower (Fig. 16) probably dates from the early 17th century, despite the date 1689 placed internally on one of its ground-floor walls. A documentary reference to a room behind the kitchen, built in 1689 (VCH 1985, 124), probably relates to some other work – possibly even the removal of the winder stair on the ground floor – but does not relate to the original construction of the winder stair tower. The characteristics of the windows, with their Ham-stone, hollow-chamfered surrounds, suggest a date of construction considerably earlier than 1689 - the use of hollow chamfers at Court House being superseded by more fashionable ovolo mouldings long before the 1680s. The 1689 date plaque may have been reset in its present position, or, as mentioned above, may commemorate some event other than the construction of the stair tower.

The tower is probably contemporary with the L-plan service and chamber range, or post-dates it. This is evident from the form and construction of the tower in the position where the two blocks abut. Here the stair tower has a rectangular plan, as opposed to a polygonal plan used above the height of the L-plan range and for the tower's north-west facets, where, originally, no other structure abutted. The style of the windows matches those of the re-fenestrated porch and west wing of the L-plan range – another factor pointing to the possibility that these ranges may be contemporary. Further evidence to this effect is found on the first floor, where a good-quality, early 17th-century, wooden, doorframe, with mouldings and stops, leads between the tower and the main chamber of the L-plan range.

The stonework in the area where the tower abuts the main stair block demonstrates that the winder stair tower pre-dates the present main stair block [the latter, significantly, making extensive use of ovolo-moulded window surrounds]. It is most probable that, until the construction of the later stair, the stair tower contained the principal staircase.

The tower's mono-pitch roof (Fig. 17) gives the distinct impression that it has been altered, perhaps to make it less prominent once the east front, with its parapets and flat roofs, had been built. The form of the tower, with its polygonal design and abundance of windows, indicates that, at the time it was built, it was perceived as a status symbol. It is likely that it was originally



Figure 17. Mono-pitched roof of the winder stair tower.

surmounted by a prominent - and possibly elaborate - turret, along the lines of those employed in fashionable manor and gentry houses of the day.

One short length of the original timber winder stair survives at the top of the tower, where it rises to provide access to the roof. However, there is evidence that the head of the stair may,

originally, have led into the attic above the south wing of the L-plan range, rather than leading onto the roof. The south wing's roof has been truncated at its eastern end, probably when the new eastern frontage was added in circa 1628-29, and a low, shallow-pitched roof has been built in its place. When standing to its original extent, the earlier pitched roof may have connected – perhaps via a dormer-type structure – with the winder stair, which thereby would have provided a means of reaching the attic. This interpretation is supported by the fact that the attic has early floorboards, while no other stair reaches to that level.

An area of disturbance to the stonework at the base of the tower's west wall suggests that there may once have been an external doorway leading from the base of the tower into the courtyard.

The north wing (Fig. 18)



Figure 18. Northern elevation of Court House showing the north wing and section of the E-plan house.

The characteristics of the north wing set it apart from the other early-17th-century ranges, which may indicate that it is the work of a separate building campaign. It has a chamfered sandstone plinth, which provides a similarity with the L-plan service and chamber range, but the west doorway differs in that it has a limestone and Ham-stone surround, rather than sandstone. The alignment of the west wall and that of the adjoining main stair block is stepped slightly, again indicative of a possible change in phase between the two. However, both have prominent gabled roofs [neither roof void was accessible at the time of investigation], which stand out in marked contrast to the shallow, near-flat roofs of the east frontage of circa 1628-29. Also, on the first floor, the chimney serving the frontage projects into the north wing in a strikingly awkward manner, suggesting that the two are not contemporary. The north wing is probably the earlier of the two ranges.

The north wing contains a large room on each floor, both heated by fireplaces served by a projecting chimney on the north wall. Irregularities in the construction of the plinth point to the possibility that this chimney has been added, possibly around the time of construction of the east front. The rooms are lit by large windows with ovolo-moulded, stone, mullioned and transomed surrounds. The fireplace in the first-floor chamber has a fine early-17th-century, plaster, overmantel denoting that it was one of the better chambers in the house.

The north wing's south wall incorporates the three doorways that have been mistaken as evidence of service doors at the low end of a hall [as mentioned above]. One of these doorways, that to the east, has a plain chamfered four-centred arched head, and may be earlier than the two other doorways, which are more elaborately moulded. The precise reason for the existence of the three doorways side-by-side is no longer clear. However, it is possible that the plain doorway was superseded by the two moulded openings in a later phase, possibly when the main stair range was added. In this later arrangement, one of the moulded doorways may have provided access to a lobby against the north-west entrance, the other a separate doorway leading into the wing's main ground-floor room.

Figure 19. Detail showing the three doorways in south wall of north wing.



Main stair block, east front and porch

The work of this phase represents an endeavour to create a more unified and fashionable frontage by building what is effectively an E-plan house [never fully completed] across the front of the earlier ranges. In addition, a new, grander staircase was provided by the construction of the main stair block on the north side of the courtyard, although the possibility remains that the main stair block pre-dates the eastern frontage (discussed below). It is likely that this phase saw the demolition of the medieval hall, assuming it had not taken place earlier, and the construction of a quasi-medieval arrangement of single-storey hall with dais and cross-passage. The work of this phase is notable for the use of large ovolo-moulded, mullion and transom stone window surrounds and is distinguished from the earlier 17th-century phases by the absence of Ham-stone and the use of a chamfered lias plinth course, as opposed to sandstone. The doorways are also of limestone, in preference to sandstone, and are treated with more elaborate mouldings, many with recessed spandrels. Overall, the work of this phase, especially the plaster ceilings and overmantels, are of a superior quality compared to the earlier 17th-century work and indicate that, comparatively, this was a phase of considerable ostentation.

The 'E'-plan house (Fig. 7) is entered through the central porch, which leads into an entrance passage with stone screen dividing it from the single-storey hall to the north. There are two stone door surrounds leading to the hall which reflect the medieval arrangement of service doors and cross-passage. On the south side of the passage, there is a single doorway, which leads into a modest heated room, with a doorway connecting directly into the kitchen. This small front room may well have been a service room, despite its prominent position – an arrangement that was not unusual in the period.

The hall has a wooden dais at the north end, lit, unusually, from the rear by a large north-facing window. It has a large fireplace with a dated plaster overmantel of 1629 [a rainwater spout on the north-east wing bears the date 1628](Fig. 20). Leading off the hall, is a large chamber [now the drawing room] located on the ground floor of the north-east wing. This too has a large fireplace with an elaborate plaster overmantel and an ornate plaster ceiling. The north wall of this room has a blocked doorway, which is contemporary with this phase and probably led to a viewing terrace on the north side of the house, affording extensive prospects across the Bristol Channel. The first-floor contained large and well-appointed chambers, in particularly above the hall and drawing room, with a smaller heated chamber at the south end of the hall range.



Figure 20. Detail of the hall showing the fireplace and dated plaster overmantel.

There is convincing evidence that a south-east wing, which would have completed the E-plan frontage, was intended as part of this phase. Externally, the absence of a plinth and the lack of quoining at the south-east corner of the hall range, are significant aberrations in the external detailing, suggesting that this area of wall was not intended to be seen externally. Internally, in the south-east corner of the hall range, on each floor [in the parlour on the ground-floor plan], there are contemporary doorways [blocked] which, if used, would lead outside the house. Although in a later phase the first-floor doorway in this position may have been used in conjunction with an external stair (pers. comm. Col. Sir Walter Luttrell), in the 1620s such a positioning would have been incongruous and would have flown in the face of the fashionable design of the remainder of the frontage.

The **main stair range** contains a substantial newel staircase adjoining the hall range and a series of mezzanine chambers to the west (Fig. 21). Although the stair range and the east frontage are probably contemporary, the possibility remains that the main stair block may be slightly earlier in date. This question is raised by the existence of a ground-floor window facing out from the main stair into the hall of circa 1628-29. However, it is not inconceivable that the window was intended as a vantage point for viewing events in the hall, rather than functioning as an external window opening. A possible piece of evidence in support of this comes from the form of the window reveal which extends down to the ground to permit people to stand in the opening, therefore giving a view without having to lean over the window cill. The significant factor in this interpretation is that this is the only window in the main stair block that includes such a walk-in reveal. The question remains unresolved.



Figure 21. Newel staircase in main stair range.

The main landing provides entry to the principal chambers in the eastern frontage and north wing, via stone doorways with stone moulded surrounds. Entry to the mezzanine chambers is via half landings on which there are moulded wooden doorframes. A stone doorway leading from the main landing into the earlier winder stair tower is unique in the house in terms of the stone used and the slender form of the mouldings, and this indicates that it was probably cut through during a distinct and separate phase. If it pre-dates the doorways leading between the main stair, east frontage and north wing, then the inference is that the main stair block is earlier than the work of circa 1628-29. If this doorway post-dates these ranges (and their associated doorways) then it may denote that the landing cutting through the winder stair tower was formed in a separate, later, phase.

The work of this period, including the east frontage and main stair, marks the final building campaign at Court House - the point after which alterations were few and largely insignificant, thereby leaving a notable example of an unspoilt, predominantly early-17th-century house of great character and interest.

The earthworks (Fig. 34)

The manorial enclosure

The medieval manor house at East Quantoxhead occupies a prominent position on top of a small, elevated knoll that is almost completely surrounded by watercourses. These watercourses may represent the boundary of a medieval enclosure, possibly defining the *curia* of the manor (Fig. 22). The sub-rectangular enclosure measures c 380m east-west and c 251m north-south, encompassing an area of approximately 8.3ha (20.5 acres).



Figure 22. Aerial photograph showing Court House with surrounding watercourses and ponds (NMR ST 1343-19).

The northern extent of the enclosure was partly defined by a sequence of four ponds, three of which have now been amalgamated to form one large pond. Although the ponds do not appear on the 1687 estate map the enclosure named Culverhays is recorded as containing ponds, suggesting these ponds are early post-medieval or possibly medieval in date. A reference to the existence of fishponds in the 13th century suggests the possibility that these ponds have an early origin. The four ponds appear on the Ordnance Survey 2nd edition map of 1904; they did not hold water by this time. The ponds were altered by the present owner in the latter part of the 20th century. At this time a substantial earthen dam which formed the eastern extent of the large pond was created. This feature was recorded as standing up to 1.6m high and 8.5m wide and may have incorporated an element of the earlier ponds. The most easterly pond in the sequence was recorded partly surviving as an earthwork in an area of scrub and woodland east of the modern pond. The southern and eastern sides of the feature survive as a spread earthen bank c 0.3m high and c 3.7m wide, with part of its northern extent defined by a low scarp, c 0.4m high and c 2.3m wide. The western end of this pond has been lost, most probably due to the creation or enlargement of the dam. The area to the west of these water features was also recorded as containing ponds on the 1838 tithe map, although no earthwork evidence for these survives today. A small stream now runs through this area and feeds the existing pond. It is not inconceivable that this area contained a sequence of shallow ponds as a sluice is marked towards its

eastern end on the OS 1st edition map of 1888 and may have been used to control the volume of water in this area.

The western extent of the manorial enclosure is defined by an unnamed stream which rises in Herridge Combe and Gay's House Combe on the Quantock Hills, before flowing northwards down to the coast. The stream has been diverted round the western side of the manorial enclosure and used to supply the series of ponds along its northern boundary. A stone-lined culvert was recorded within the area known as the Alders which form the western boundary of the site. The culvert is 11.4m long and 0.9m wide, with a depth of 0.8m. It is crossed by a small stone-arched bridge but it is unclear exactly why such a long section of the stream was culverted in this way. The culvert most probably dates from the 19th century when a series of water management features appear to have been created in the immediate vicinity of Court House.

The same watercourse also flows eastwards to join a second stream which rises in Dens Combe. This body of water supplies the millpond which lies on the southern side of the manorial enclosure. After powering the mill the stream then flows round the eastern side of the enclosure before running eastwards towards Kilve Pill and the sea. There would appear to be a very deliberate manipulation of water round Court House to supply the various ponds but also to surround and help define the area of the manorial enclosure.

The approach

The principal approach to the manor house was from the south, much as it is today, leading from the northern end of Frog Street. The 1687 estate map shows that the visitor passed through a small outer gate, then along the western edge of the millpond, before entering Town Place through a large crenellated gatehouse. The route to the manor house then passed a series of agricultural buildings before climbing gently towards the east end of the church (Fig. 23). Just before reaching the entrance to the churchyard the visitor was required to turn sharply right to enter the front courtyard and then left to face the main façade of the manor house.



Figure 23. Court House and St. Mary's Church viewed from the south east along route of original approach

It is possible that the agricultural building that lies on the northern side of the farmyard incorporates the remains of the gatehouse depicted on Withiell's map of 1687. The building is of coursed rubble construction with walls c 0.9m thick and is built of local stone from the beach. The hipped roof is partly thatched and partly slated and the building has a single

Figure 24.
Farmyard viewed from the north west showing agricultural building representing possible remains of gate house.



entrance on its north-western side (Fig. 24). This entrance has a wooden chamfered doorframe which appears to have been altered and reused. The form of the doorframe suggests a medieval date though it can not be known where it was originally set. The building is very different in character to the cow houses which adjoin it to the south east, and pre-dates their construction. A 'chamber over the gate' (above) is mentioned in the late 13th century and it is possible that this building incorporates the fragmentary remains of the structure referred to in this account.

The manor house could also have been approached from the seaward side. The remains of this approach survive as two grass-covered scarps that form a hollow way located north-east of the manor house. These earthworks run north-south with the hollow way surviving to a maximum width of c 10.4m and a maximum depth of c 1.1m. The eastern scarp of this feature also defines the course of a field boundary that ran parallel with the hollow way for part of its length before veering slightly south-east at its southern end. Approaching from the north the visitor would have entered the manorial enclosure with the manor house directly above them and by passing fishponds to their east and possibly to their west. This may be viewed as a deliberately created setting for any visitor approaching from the north. This route was used to gain access to the beach and the Luttrell family's deer park at Kilton, to the east.

A sub-circular earthen mound was recorded adjacent to the western edge of the hollow way, north-east of the manor house. This grass-covered mound measures c 10.5m east-west and c 15.4m north-south and stands up to c 0.7m high on its down-slope side. It is unclear what this feature represents but it post-dates the hollow way and the rather sharp nature of the earthwork may suggest it is a relatively recent feature, possibly related to the modern services for the house. Adjacent to the mound are two slight scarps, standing a maximum of c 0.3m high, which represent the remains of a trackway or path with an overall width of c 5.1m.

The church (Fig. 25)

The parish church of St Mary's was also located within the manorial enclosure or *curia*, c 10m to the south of the manor house. The church is a simple two celled building built of blue lias random rubble with sandstone dressings and a slate roof. The church comprises a nave and chancel with a west tower, the main fabric of which is thought to date from the early 14th century (VCH 1985, 127). An aisle originally stood on the north side of the chancel in the location of the present vestry, the latter probably constructed as part of the restoration work undertaken in the 19th century. The aisle was mentioned by Collinson in his *History of Somersetshire* where he noted:

The church is a small structure, having a tower at the west containing a clock and four bells. In a little chapel on the north-side is a tombe of Sir Andrew Luttrell, and Margaret his wife, the daughter of Sir Thomas Wyndham.
(Collinson 1791, 501)

The elaborate canopied chest tomb commemorating Sir Hugh Luttrell (d. 1521) and Andrew Luttrell (d. 1537) is now located on the north wall of the chancel.



Figure 25. Parish Church of St. Mary's.

The farm buildings (Fig. 26)

Documentary sources indicate that from the late 17th century the manor house at East Quantoxhead was let as a tenanted farm. Most of the surviving farm buildings however, do not appear to date from earlier than the late 18th or early 19th centuries. The estate map of 1827 shows the farm buildings much as they appear today with the exception of two structures situated on the north side of the main farm complex which have since been demolished. The 17th-century estate map also shows that buildings were located in

approximately the same position as the two existing threshing barns. The surviving buildings are of blue lias random rubble construction with partly slated and partly thatched roofs. The structures both have a wall thickness of c 0.6m and the southern-most barn has a horse-engine house attached to its northern side. The thickness of the walls and the construction of the roof would not indicate an early date for these buildings, although the remains of a single timber cruck was identified embedded into the north wall of the western barn. This timber may represent the fragmentary remains of the medieval or early post-medieval buildings depicted on Withiell's map of 1687, suggesting the existing barns follow a similar footprint to that of the earlier structures.



Figure 26. Farm buildings viewed from the roof of the manor house.

The north-east wing of the mansion house is thought to have been used as a grain store and a quantity of grain was recovered from under the floor during restoration work (pers. comm. Col. Sir Walter Luttrell). It is therefore probable that many of the existing manorial buildings were converted to agricultural use in the late 17th and early 18th centuries. It was only during the fervour of agricultural improvements in the later 18th century that more specifically dedicated farm buildings were constructed. These included a series of open-fronted cow houses and enclosed yards, all of which face away from the original approach to the house and church. The cow houses are again of random rubble construction with circular pillars supporting a tiled roof. A range of probable cow houses was demolished at the eastern end of the north-eastern range of buildings some time between 1888 and 1904, almost certainly to accommodate the new entrance driveway.

Trackways and boundary features

A series of earthworks were recorded in a pasture field to the north of Court House and are thought to represent a series of trackways or paths. The earliest of these remains takes the form of a slight grass-covered scarp, c 0.4m high and c 4m wide at its widest point, running

NW/SE from just west of the manor house. This trackway is depicted on the 1827 estate map where it is shown lined by trees. Several tree holes were recorded along the length of the feature during survey work. The 1827 estate map indicates that the track led to the field named as Great Lawn on the 1687 map, suggesting it may have served as a route out into the deer park from the house. These earthworks are cut by a second trackway defined by two scarps. These scarps survive to a maximum height of c 0.9m and a maximum width of c 3.2m. This path or trackway is depicted on the OS 1st edition map of 1888 leading from north-east of the mansion house, westwards towards the field named Old Road on the tithe map. The remains of both these tracks are cut by a curved pathway which leads from the existing farm track north-eastwards and along the northern edge of the pasture field in front of the mansion house. This path or track survives at two grass-covered scarps, c 2.3m wide and c 0.4m high, and can be clearly seen on an aerial photograph dating from 1945 (106G/UK 738.3016).

The earthwork remains of a grass-covered bank and ditch were recorded c 35m west of the mansion house, running NE/SW. The spread earthen bank survives to a maximum of c 0.5m high and c 8m wide at its widest point and the ditch survives to a maximum of c 0.9m deep and c 7m wide at its widest point. This feature has been cut by the modern farm track but clearly represents the vestiges of a post-medieval or possibly a medieval boundary. The 1687 estate map shows a boundary in this position as does the 1827 map, the latter indicating it joined the north-west corner of the rear court.

The very slight earthwork remains of a bank and ditch were recorded in the area between the modern farm track and the Alders. This smooth, grass-covered feature has an overall width of c 9.5m and stands to a maximum height of c 0.3m. The remains of this earthen bank and ditch are cut by the above mentioned boundary bank, and may therefore pre-date that feature. It is possible that this earthwork represents an earlier boundary of the area now known as the alders and may be medieval in date.

A series of slight scarps were recorded to the north-east of the mansion house in the area named the Bowling Green on the 1838 tithe map. Two almost parallel paths or trackways were identified surviving as grass-covered scarps c 0.3m high, running round the contour of the hillside. The paths led from an area recorded as New Orchard on the tithe map, the lower path joining the hollow way south west of the ponds.

A well-defined earthen bank and ditch was recorded surviving to the north of a group of modern estate cottages, east of the manor house. The feature has an overall width of c 5.7m, with the bank standing c 0.7m high and c 3m wide. The remains of the ditch survive as a smooth grass-covered scarp along part of the northern side of the bank, the ditch having a maximum depth of 0.2m. The appearance of this feature suggests a post-medieval date for its construction. The boundary is depicted on the 1827 estate map where it can be seen to form the northern extent of an area of orchard lying on the south facing slopes of the hill.

Garden features

The earthwork remains of a large sub-circular earthen mound were recorded c 60m to the east of the manor house (Fig. 27). This grass covered, flat-topped mound measures c 19.4m east-west and c 22.8m north-south, and stands up to 0.9m high. The mound has a slight sub-circular hollow towards its centre, c 0.3m deep, which suggests a building c 9m in diameter once occupied the mound. The stump of a large tree was also recorded on the southern edge of the feature.



Figure 27. Large earthen mound viewed from the east, with Court House behind.

The mound lies within an area named Culverhays on 17th century estate map, the prefix *cul* or *culver* meaning dove, possibly suggesting a dovecote sat within this area at one time (Gover, Mawer & Stenton 1932). There are no direct documentary references to a dovecote at East Quantoxhead but the manor would almost certainly have possessed one. Pigeon meat formed an important part of the aristocratic diet in the medieval and post-medieval periods, providing a ready supply of meat all year round. Dovecotes were commonly located close to the manor house for both convenience and security but their prominent position may also have been due to their symbolic function. Dovecotes were a prerogative of the manorial gentry by law and they therefore demonstrated that the residence was a manorial hall and its owner a man of status (Williamson 1997, 95). It is possible that the mound at East Quantoxhead represents the remains of just such a feature, and may date from the medieval or early post-medieval period.

Alternatively, the mound may represent the remains of a garden building or banqueting house. Banqueting houses were popular in the 16th and 17th centuries, with most Elizabethan gardens of any consequence contained one (Girouard 1978, 105-6). They could be located close to the house or at some distance, and allowed *al fresco* meals to be taken during a walk or ride round the garden or estate. An early 17th-century banqueting house survives at

Cothlestone Manor, on the south-western side of the Quantock Hills. The building forms one side of an enclosed court and is situated no more than 65m from the main house. The mound at Court House commands a central position within the manorial enclosure, occupying the highest ground, and would therefore have afforded good views out over the surrounding landscape. The banqueting house may therefore have been raised up slightly on this mound to enhance the view. Looking eastwards the manor house and church at Kilve would have been clearly visible, as would the whole of the deer park at Kilton. To the south the observer would have looked out over the village of East Quantoxhead with the Quantock Hills beyond. Looking north and west the attached deer park would have been visible with the Bristol Channel as a backdrop.

The conversion of Court House to a farm by the end of the 17th century would suggest that the mound pre-dates this drop in status of the house. It would be unlikely that any decorative features such as a banqueting house or garden building would have been created after this period. There does not appear to be a building depicted in this location on Withiell's map of 1687 again, a possible further indication that the feature is earlier in date.

The mound lies at the western end of a level area of ground known as the Bowling Green. This large terrace is defined on its northern and eastern sides by a substantial scarp which stands up to c 1.1m high at its highest point. The western end of the terrace slopes sharply from the base of the prospect bound towards the existing entrance drive, the edge of which is defined by a slight grass-covered scarp c 0.2m high. The southern extent of the terrace is less clear. The construction of a new coach house in the late 19th century and a series of three cottages in the 20th century have disturbed any earthwork remains of the terrace in this area. The platforms for these buildings probably used the existing terrace scarp. The boundary bank and ditch (above) which runs behind the cottages could also have been constructed along the southern edge of the terrace, possibly indicating the southern extent of the levelled area. A bowling green was a popular element of late 16th and 17th century formal gardens but like many features they continued to be constructed in to the 18th century. An octagonal summer-house and bowling green were constructed on top of the Tor at Dunster in the early 18th century and are visible in Buck's view of the castle dated 1733 (The National Trust 1997, 26).

At the north-western corner of this terrace the earthwork remains of a possible platform were recorded adjacent to the mound mentioned above. This feature takes the form of a sub-rectangular hollow c 22.8m long and c 9.3m wide with a maximum depth of c 1.2m at its eastern end. It is possible that this is the remains of a building platform, though it is thought unlikely that it relates to the later use of the mansion house as a farm. None of the early estate maps record a structure in this location therefore the feature may be medieval or early post-medieval in date. The earthworks do not appear to cut the mound and may therefore be contemporary with it or pre-date it. It is possible that this is also some form of garden feature, a small building or perhaps a route up onto the terrace, and as such may date from the 16th or 17th century.

Beyond the eastern extent of the terrace, on gently sloping ground, the earthwork remains of a possible platform were identified during survey work. This platform measures c 11.2m east-west and c 8.6m north-south and is formed by a grass-covered scarp which has a maximum height of c 0.6m at its western end. An earthen mound c 0.4m high was recorded forming the eastern extent of the feature. This could again represent the remains of a small building platform or garden feature of medieval or early post-medieval date. The grass-covered mound may be related to a former planting scheme; a tree is shown at this location on the 1827 estate map.

In the area to the south of the church the earthwork remains of a formal garden were recorded. These remains take the form of a sloping terrace cut into the southern side of the natural knoll defined by two parallel scarps standing up to c 0.4m high. Below this terrace a level, grass-covered area is defined by a smooth scarp on its western side and by the existing field boundaries on its south and east sides. Within this area the very slight earthwork remains of two rectilinear platforms, surviving to a maximum of c 0.3m high, were identified and are thought to represent the remains of cultivation plots or flower-beds. A slight amorphous mound was also recorded to the east of these features surviving to a maximum of c 0.2m high. George Withiell's map of 1687 shows this area as containing a series of small enclosures laid out in a fairly regular pattern, representing a formal garden. To the north of these enclosures a series of indistinct features also appear to form part of this garden. The natural topography means there are few areas in the immediate surroundings of the house which would be suitable for growing delicate plants. This site is possibly the only location both sheltered and light enough to grow such flowers and shrubs. These remains date from either the late 16th or early 17th centuries and represent a rare survival of garden remains from this period.

The wider landscape

There are several documentary references to a deer park associated with the manor house at East Quantoxhead. One of the earliest accounts of the park dates from the 1540's when John Leland noted during his travels through Somerset: 'in this parochie I saw a fair park and manor place of the Lutterelles, caullid Quantok-Hedde, bycause it standith at the Hedde of Quantok-Hills toward the se.' (Harbin Bates, 35).



Figure 28. Extract from Withiell's map showing a hunting scene in the park

The deer park is also referred to in the muster rolls for the County Militia made in 1569 which records the park as having a circuit of about one mile (Bond 1998, 54). Parts of the park are recorded as having gone down to arable in 1408 and 1452-3 but by the middle of the 16th century it comprised about 100 acres enclosed within a park pale and contained about 100 deer (Bond 1998, 55). The park is

again referred to in the 17th century when, shortly after his father's death in 1629, Thomas Luttrell brought a lawsuit against his stepmother Sylvestra Capps for damage to his deer and timber at East Quantoxhead which she held as her jointure at that time (Vivian-Neal 1946, 37). In 1630 the tithes for East Quantoxhead included the right shoulder of every deer taken in the park (VCH 1985, 127). A hunting scene depicted on Withiell's map of 1687 suggests the park was still in use and contained deer at this time but it is probable that it reverted to farmland soon after when the manor house was let as a tenanted farm (Fig. 33). A survey of the estate in 1746 makes reference to 'the capital mansion-house with the barns stables courts gardens and orchards and the farm thereto belonging' as let to a tenant but does not mention the park or when it had been turned into farmland (Vivian-Neal 1946, 37).

The original area of the park in the medieval period is uncertain but it probably extended as far as the parish boundary with Kilve to the east and was bounded by Underway Lane and West Street to the south (Fig. 29). The coastline almost certainly formed the northern extent of the park with the western boundary possibly following a ridge of higher ground which runs north-south towards the coast, c 0.8km to the west of East Quantoxhead. The park would have incorporated areas of enclosed woodland the location and extent of which can now only be known through nomenclature. Northwood or Norwood, which formed the north-eastern corner of the park, was partly cultivated in 1407-8 and is recorded as being surrounded by a pale in the 1490's (VCH 1985, 122). Marshwood was referred to in the 13th century and its location is now only known from the estate map of 1687 which names the field north of East Wood as Marshwood Mead. By the time of Withiell's map of 1687 Marshwood, Northwood and Lowerwood had reverted to agricultural land. Emparked areas also contained areas of wood pasture, open ground and meadows as well as enclosed blocks of woodland. Three fields to the north-east of the manor house were named as Little Lawns, Middle Lawns and Greater Lawns on the 1687 estate map, the names indicating these were *laundes*, grass dominated compartments. The map also depicts a small area of wood in the north-west corner of the field called The Old Blackwell, as well as indicating a scattering of individual trees. By the 17th century the park had reduced in size, with parts recorded as going down to arable in the 15th century (above), and probably covered an area of just over 100 acres to the north and west of the mansion house (Fig. 29). The park pale almost certainly followed much the same line as the modern field boundaries do today.

The remains of a pond can be identified from aerial photographs c 260m to the north-west of the manor house, within the suggested area of the park (NMR 21188/11). This pond is recorded on the 1838 tithe map but does not appear on the 1st edition 25" map of 1888. Fishponds are common within medieval parks as deer needed water and freshwater fish were a valuable commodity; in the Hanger Park at Dunster a fishpond one acre in extent is mentioned several times in the 15th century (Bond 1998, 30). Water was supplied to the pond by a leat diverted from the main watercourse which fed the ponds on the north side of the manorial enclosure. A further leat then carried water from the pond across the field named Plains and down to the sea; this leat survives as an earthwork. Ponds are difficult to

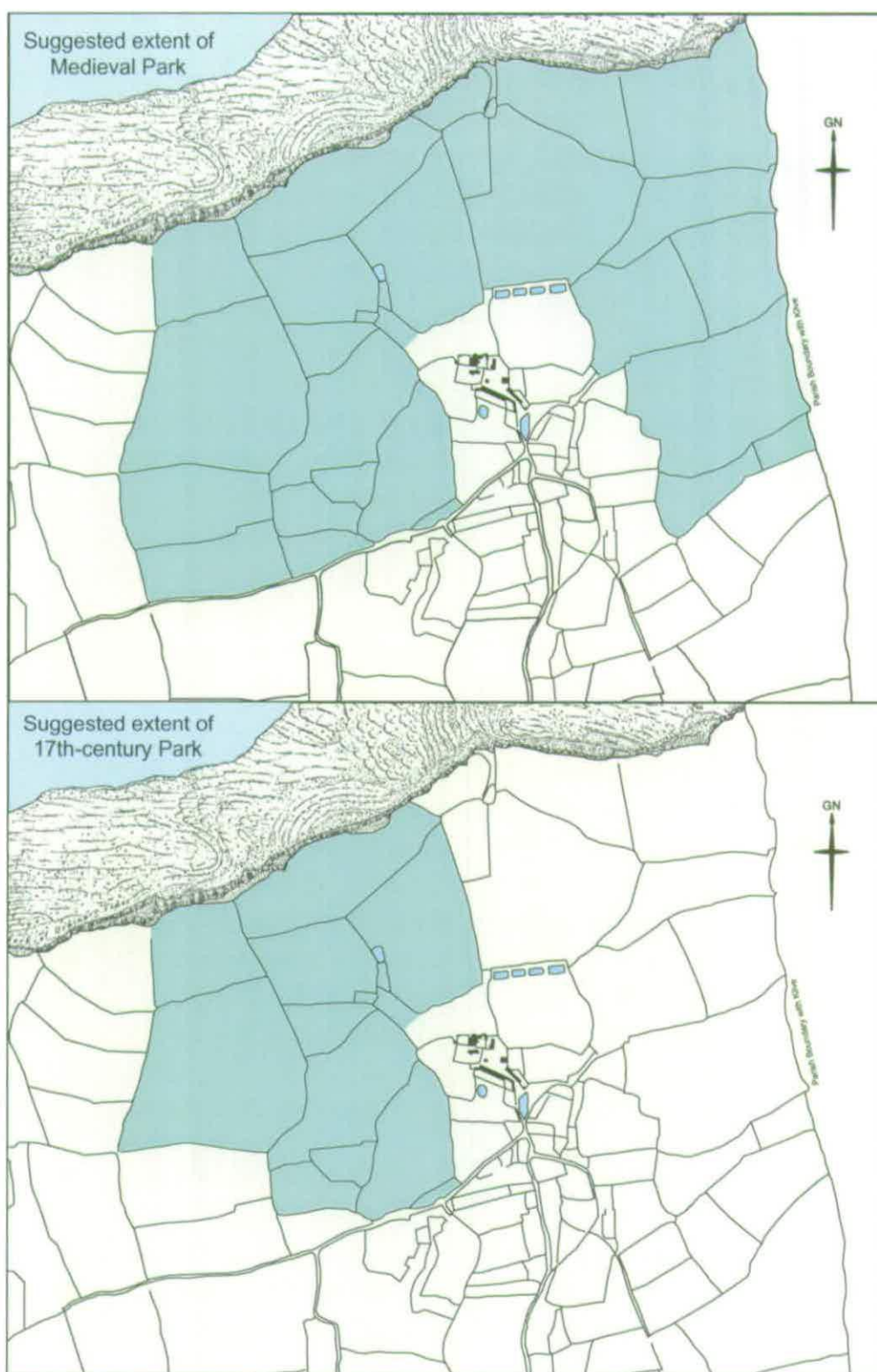


Figure 29. Suggested extent of deer park in Medieval period (top) and 17th century (bottom).

date but it is possible that this feature dates from the medieval or early post-medieval period and formed part of the complex designed landscape surrounding the manor house.

The beach provided a ready supply of stone for building with the domestic and farm buildings of East Quantoxhead almost entirely constructed of stone collected directly from the beach. Access to the beach in the medieval and early post-medieval period was through the manorial enclosure, indicating that access to, and use of, the beach was under manorial control. The foreshore was let by the manor from the early 16th century for the collection and burning of seaweed. Surviving leases divided the coast into two or three areas and restricted burning to prevent smoke reaching the manor house (VCH 1985, 125). Fishing from the ridge, an offshore bank, was also let in the early 15th century and villagers hunted conger eels with dogs on the foreshore up until the 20th century (VCH 1985, 125). The remains of a fishtrap were recorded from aerial photographs in the inter-tidal zone to the west of Kilve Pill, evidence of organised fishing grounds along the East Quantoxhead coast. The ruinous remains of a large limekiln, probably dating from the late 18th century, survives at the head of a small inlet on the cliffs to the north of the manor house. Limestone and coal would have been brought from Wales and landed on the shore before being burnt in the kiln then spread on the fields as fertiliser. The kiln is marked on the OS 1st edition map of 1888 when it appears to be still in use. The remains of a further limekiln can be seen within East Wood along with extensive quarrying where limestone was presumably extracted from a natural outcrop. This kiln is possibly earlier in date than those along the coast and may have been used to supply lime for building purposes.



Figure 30. Mill building viewed from the south east.

A mill building and millpond lie c 160m to the south-east of the manor house (Fig. 30). A mill associated with the manor at East Quantoxhead is first mentioned in the Domesday Book (above) and by 1341 was recorded as having two pairs of stones (VCH 1985, 125). A mill and mill pond are depicted in this location on Withiell's map of 1687 and the mill was described as lately burnt in 1725 (VCH 1985, 125). The present mill building is thought to date from 1729 and is of blue lias random rubble construction with a slate roof. The mill continued to operate as a flourmill until the early 1920's and the remains of the water wheel and mill equipment survive *in-situ*.

DISCUSSION

Although East Quantoxhead is possibly most renowned for its Jacobean mansion house, the architectural and archaeological investigation carried out by English Heritage has shown that the remains of the older medieval house and its wider landscape setting can still be found preserved within the existing buildings and landscape.

The architectural assessment of Court House has indicated that the oldest surviving fabric of the manor house is the porch tower, dating from the late 14th or early 15th century. The height and parapet detail of the tower indicates that it formed a prominent and important element of the medieval house. This suggestion is strengthened by the map evidence which shows that the main access to the manor house was from the south-east. The tower would therefore have been directly in front of the visitor as he approached, with its grotesque gargoyle looking down from above (Fig. 31), and would have provided the visitor with his first impression of the manor house. The parish church also dominated the approach to the house, the tower possessing a crenellated parapet similar in style to that of the manor house. These two towers may have been used to strengthen the connection between the manorial lord and the church, serving as a visual reminder of the standing and importance of the Luttrell family within the wider community.



Figure 31. Gargoyle on south-east corner of porch tower.

Before this view of the church and porch tower could be fully appreciated the medieval visitor would have to have entered the outer court or Town Place through the gatehouse. The survey has highlighted the possibility that the small agricultural building on the north side of the existing farmyard may incorporate the remains of the medieval gatehouse. A gatehouse at East Quantoxhead is referred to in the 13th century and is depicted on Withiell's map of 1687 but it is unclear whether these two documents refer to the same structure. The latter shows the gate as a large crenellated building and indicates it was located to the north east of the barns. It is thought that the surviving building may have formed the northern side of the gate. The remains at East Quantoxhead help to locate the original approach and give us an idea of the original layout of courts around the medieval manor house.

The date of the porch tower may suggest that a building campaign was undertaken during the late 14th or early 15th centuries. This date would indicate that the work was probably carried out by Sir Hugh Luttrell (c 1364-1428), the first member of the family to live at Dunster Castle. It is known that he renovated Dunster after he took up residence in 1405 and began building a new gatehouse in 1420 (The National Trust 2003,39). Documentary

sources refer to 'a great chamber' at East Quantoxhead in 1403-4 and to a tile-covered 'loigge' in 1421-22 (above), indicating that the manor house was a well appointed and high status building by the early 15th century. It is possible that the rise in status of the Luttrell family, which can be seen with the purchase of Dunster Castle and lands from the Mohuns at the end of the 14th century, could have been the catalyst for the building activity at East Quantoxhead. The work may therefore be viewed as a symbol of the increased power and prosperity of the Luttrell family at this time.

Map evidence indicates that an L-shaped range of buildings stood to the east of the Jacobean hall, and may suggest that the house followed a courtyard plan. It is possible that a reference in 1273 to 'a stone-roofed house opposite the hall' (above) may relate to this range of buildings. After the Wars of the Roses in the late 15th century the Luttrell estates were regained from the crown and the family would appear to have lived mainly at East Quantoxhead. By the mid-16th century Dunster had apparently fallen into disrepair as John Leyland noted in 1542 that: 'the dungeon (keep) of the castelle of Dunstorere hath been fulle of goodly building. But now there is but only a chapelle in good case (repair)' (The National Trust 2003, 30). In contrast, building work would seem to have taken place at East Quantoxhead during the 16th century with the construction of the north-west wing.

Evidence suggests that a south-east wing was intended at part of the 17th century alterations, giving the house a fashionable E-plan frontage. The alterations made to East Quantoxhead at this time were undertaken by George Luttrell who also commissioned William Arnold in 1617 to transform the medieval castle at Dunster into a Jacobean H-plan country house (The National Trust 2003, 31). If East Quantoxhead was intended to have had a symmetrical frontage, as the Jacobean mansion at Dunster had, it is unlikely that the main facade of the building would have been screened from view by an older range. It is therefore probable that the intention was to demolish this range of buildings as part of the new building work but, like the south-east wing, this proposal was never realised. Evidence from the plaster overmantels in the house indicates that alteration work at East Quantoxhead began around 1614 with the creation of the services and chamber range. A rainwater spout on the north-east wing dates the new E-plan frontage to c 1628 (Fig. 32). The spout also bears the initials of George Luttrell and his second wife Sylvestra Capps whom he married in 1622, suggesting that this work was done very much with her in mind. The overmantel in the Jacobean hall bears a date of 1629, the year George Luttrell died, indicating that work on the house carried on up until his death. It was most likely due to the death of George Luttrell and Court House's use as a dower house until 1655 that the building work was never



Figure 32. Rainwater spout on the north-east wing, dated 1628.

completed. The buildings subsequent drop in status and use as a farmhouse and grain store in the late 17th century has been instrumental in ensuring no major alterations were made to the building after the early 17th century.

The archaeological survey has highlighted that the manor house at East Quantoxhead formed the core of a complex medieval landscape. The house occupies a prominent position on an elevated knoll within a clearly defined area that almost certainly formed a manorial *curia* or enclosure. This enclosure is defined by a series of watercourses and ponds, the complexity of which would suggest a very deliberate water management scheme. Water was diverted round the western side of the site and used to feed the pond in the park and the series of fishponds that partly define the northern extent of the enclosure. This string of four ponds would have served as a store for fresh-water fish but may also have had a more ornamental purpose. They are strikingly regular in both size and shape and would have been clearly visible from the elevated position of the house as well as from the northern approach. Ponds are difficult to date but a documentary reference to fishponds at East Quantoxhead in the 13th century may suggest an early date for these features. The main southern approach to the manorial enclosure also appear to have been deliberately manipulated. Its elevated position means Court House dominates the surrounding landscape and any visitor would have had a clear view of the house as he approached from the south along Frog Street. On reaching the northern end of the street he would have had to pass along the western edge of the millpond towards the gatehouse. The ponds practical function as a millpond does not invalidate its ornamental impact (Fig. 33). It is possible that these ponds at East Quantoxhead may be considered as features of a medieval designed landscape or garden.



Figure 33. Looking east across the millpond.

The manorial enclosure contained several closes or paddocks, some of which may represent the remains of gardens and orchards dating back to the medieval period. The earliest reference to a garden at East Quantoxhead dates from 1272 when an 'old garden adjoining the houses' was recorded as part of the dower received by Alexander Luttrell's widow (Country Life 1912, 169). This reference would suggest that this garden was located very close to the house, possibly in an adjoining courtyard to the front or rear. A 'buttery garden' was recorded in 1478-9 the name suggesting it was located adjacent to the buttery (VCH 1985, 123). Withiell's map of 1687 records the Barton as containing two orchards and two gardens, the map indicating that all these features were located on the south side of the knoll. The natural topography greatly restricts where these features could be located as the seaward side of the hill affords little shelter from the harsh winds and sea spray off the Bristol Channel. The south-facing slopes would also have received more sun, essential for ripening the delicate fruit crop. The possible formal gardens recorded as earthworks to the south of the churchyard were again presumably located in that position to gain as much light and shelter as possible. Earthwork evidence also suggests that a formal garden may have been laid out to the east of the house with the remains of a possible banqueting house or garden building recorded at the west end of a large terrace known as the bowling green.

The parish church of St Mary's is also located within the *curia*, c 10m to the south of the manor house. The position of the church, within the manorial enclosure and so close to Court House, may indicate that it developed from a proprietary church attached to house and land of the manorial lord. This may indicate a pre-conquest date for the founding of the church as the 10th and 11th centuries saw an insurgence of small churches built by local landowners (Blair 1996, 13). There were both social and economic benefits to the lord of the manor by founding a small church next to his residence. The local church standing adjacent to his great hall, proclaimed the lord's independence and his social status within the surrounding community. It drew his peasantry into a closer relationship of dependence and increased his income, by diverting a proportion of the tithes into the lord's church and so into his pocket (Costen 1988, 53). Access to the church at East Quantoxhead could only be gained by entering the manorial enclosure through the crenellated gatehouse. The manorial lord therefore had ultimate control over access to the parish church, serving to increase the relationship of dominance and dependence with the local community. The earliest known reference to a church at East Quantoxhead dates from 1259 when the advowson formed part of an estate bought by Henry de Gaunt for St Mark's Hospital, Bristol (VCH 1985, 126-7).

From the medieval period right up to the end of the 17th century the manor of East Quantoxhead possessed an attached deer park. Documentary sources indicate that the size of the park changed over time and areas of emparked land were recorded as having gone down to arable in the early and mid-15th century (Bond 1998, 55). This may be related to the acquisition by the Luttrell family of the hunting parks at Dunster, Marshwood, Kilton, and Minehead in the late 14th century. It may have been more profitable to turn areas of the East Quantoxhead park over to arable at this time. Records show that the Luttrell family were enlarging their parks at Dunster and Minehead in the early 15th century, the latter increasing from 51 acres

in 1383 to 150 acres in 1428 (Bond 1992, 27). It is also possible that the close proximity to the park at Kilton may have had an effect on the size of the park at East Quantoxhead. It is feasible that the former was used as a detached hunting park from Court House, reducing the need for a large park at East Quantoxhead. It is recorded however that the park at Kilton was little more than a wood by 1553 (Bond 1998, 59). Hunting in the park at East Quantoxhead would appear to have continued up until the end of the 17th century though it is probable that areas of the park were also used to graze livestock. The park by the 17th century almost certainly covered the area of rising ground to the north and west of the house. The entire area would have been visible from the house and the veranda created along the north side of the Jacobean house would have afforded stunning views out over the park.

It has been suggested that the area to the north of the manor house was the location of a small settlement in the medieval period (VCH 1985, 121). The settlement is recorded as lying in an area named Plantessaysh in 1407, Plontesyaysshe in 1495 and which has been interpreted as including the field named Plains on the 1839 tithe map. The bounds of the settlement are recorded as extending into the sea 'so far as the lord of the manor could ride on a horse pulling a "slegge" weighing 12lb', with a new house mentioned there in 1408 (VCH 1985, 121). It is thought unlikely however, that this settlement was located to the north of the manor house as suggested by the VCH, as this area almost certainly formed part of the deer park during that period. It is very doubtful that a settlement would have sat within the park and evidence for the location of the deer park is compelling, making it highly probable that this settlement was located elsewhere. There is also no field evidence from either aerial photography or earthwork survey to suggest the location of a settlement in this area.

The remains at East Quantoxhead are an important survival as they add greatly to our knowledge of the historic landscape of the northern coastal strip of the Quantock Hills. To the east of Court House lie the manors of Kilve and Kilton and to the west the manor of West Quantoxhead or St. Audrie's. Like East Quantoxhead, the manor houses of Kilve and St. Audrie's both lie at the northern end of a linear settlement and both possessed an attached deer park by the 14th century. The exact location of the manor house at Kilton is not known but it is recorded as standing near a tiled barn, stable, and oxhouse, and included a hall and a great chamber in the late 14th century (VCH 1985, 92). The manor house was not mentioned after 1381 but the deer park, created by 1279, survived into the post-medieval period. Like East Quantoxhead, the manor house at Kilve can be seen to lie within a manorial enclosure or *curia* which contained the parish church of St. Mary's, several closes or paddocks and a sequence of fish ponds (Jamieson 2003). The relationship between the church and manor house at Kilve and East Quantoxhead would suggest that both these sites may be pre-conquest in date. The earthwork remains of a double bank and ditch were recorded within East Wood and are thought to represent a section of the medieval park pale or freeboard associated with the park at Kilve. This earthwork may also have formed the eastern boundary of the medieval park at East Quantoxhead, the feature only surviving due to its location within an area of woodland. Nomenclature indicates that the manors of East Quantoxhead,

West Quantoxhead and Kilve all had warrens associated with them. At West Quantoxhead an area of rising ground to the south east of the manor house, now named Stowborrow Hill, was recorded as Conyger Hill in 1418 (VCH 1985, 130). Earthwork evidence and nomenclature has also suggested the location of a possible dovecote at East Quantoxhead, with a documentary reference to a manorial dovecote existing at Kilton until c 1438 (VCH 1985, 92). Evidence indicates therefore that in the early medieval period this fertile coastal strip was dominated by high status manorial complexes, complete with fish ponds, dovecotes, deer parks and warrens. The close proximity of the manors of East Quantoxhead, Kilve and Kilton may have been a factor in the development of this elite landscape which would have been embedded with complex symbolic meanings of power, wealth and status.

METHODOLOGY

The earthwork survey of Court House, East Quantoxhead was carried out by Elaine Jamieson and Hazel Riley from the Exeter Office of English Heritage. The work was undertaken using a Trimble 5600 total station EDM and completed using graphical survey methods. The survey data was processed using Trimble GeoSite Office software. A digital plan of the survey was produced using KeyTERRA-FIRMA software running in an AutoCAD environment. Adobe Illustrator software was used to produce the finished illustrations for this report. The earthworks were recorded at 1:1000 scale.

The brief architectural assessment of the building was carried out by Barry V. Jones and a photographic record of the building was produced by Peter Williams, both based in the Swindon office of English Heritage.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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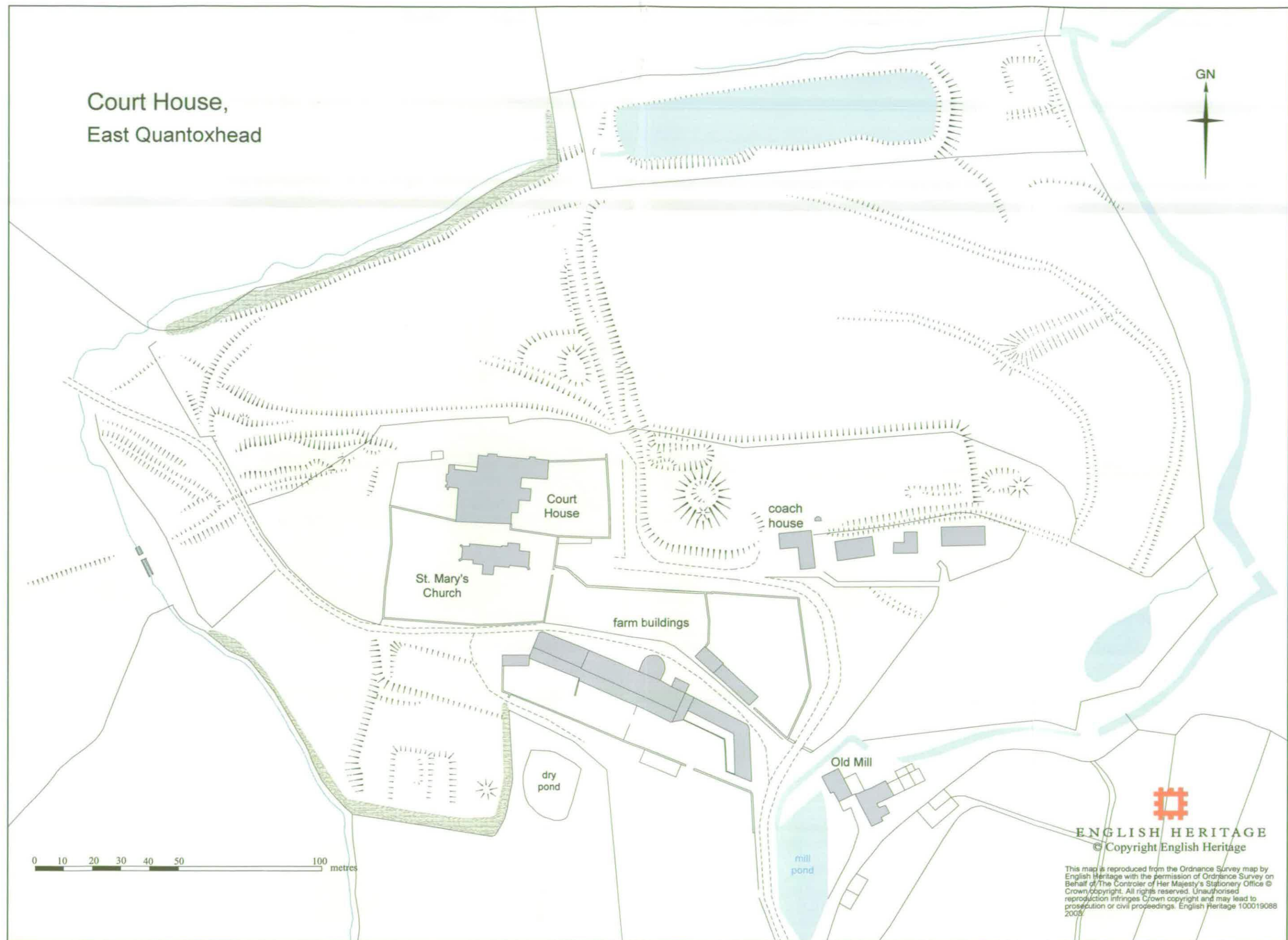


Figure 34. Court House, East Quantoxhead: English Heritage 1:1000 scale survey (reduced).



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