

GLOUCESTERSHIRE FARM BUILDINGS
IN THE EARLY NINETEENTH CENTURY

by R.K. Howes

At the beginning of the nineteenth century the 'Agrarian Revolution' was in full swing. Its best known feature was the enclosure movement. Another aspect was the development of farm buildings. These can be studied for Gloucestershire at this period in estate surveys carried out by Thomas Fulljames. He was a surveyor, whose home was at Hasfield Court, and who often served as an enclosure commissioner. In 1802 he carried out a survey at Toddington of the estate of Charles Hanbury Tracy, whose lands lay partly on the Cotswold Hills, and partly in the Vale. In the same year he made a survey at Forthampton and Swinley of the estate of James Yorke, Bishop of Ely. He made another survey in 1808, of the estate at Elmore of Sir William Berkeley Guise. Both the latter estates were in the Vale.

Each survey examines the estate farm by farm, giving details first of the farmhouse and other farm buildings, and then of the fields, stating whether they were arable, pasture or meadow and so on. The present account deals only with the farmhouses and buildings.

All the farmhouses seem to have been situated within compact farms; and they all appear to have been old. This was stated of most of those at Toddington. They were not therefore newly built following the allotment of land in compact farms at the time of enclosure. Indeed the Toddington estate was not fully enclosed, some farms having their land in the open fields. Some of the out-buildings, such as barns, stables, stalls and sheds, however, were described as new, and had often been put up at the tenant's expense. The only new farmhouse listed was that of Joseph Guilding at Elmore, stated to have been put up about 1779.

There were a number of labourers' cottages on all three estates. Some were let by the landowner, and others sub-let by a farmer. Some farmers rented more than one farm, and the unneeded farmhouse was sub-let to labourers.

The farmhouse contained both living rooms and rooms used for the farmer's work. In every house the main room was the kitchen, and sometimes there was a back kitchen as well. Many farmhouses boasted a parlour or a sitting room or even two such rooms, a sign of increasing comfort. Nowhere was a room described as a hall (in earlier times the main room of a farmhouse), though the parlour in one house had been converted from the hall. There were usually several bedchambers. Over them in Toddington and Forthampton were garretts. These were not mentioned in Elmore, where the farmhouses were presumably two storey.

The work rooms always included a dairy. There was nearly always a cheese chamber in one of the upper storeys. A pantry was usual, though few were mentioned in Toddington. There was normally a brewhouse, either in the farmhouse or in an out-building.

The most common outbuildings were stables and barns. Sometimes, besides a carthorse stable, there was a hackney stable for riding horses. There was often more than one barn. Threshing floors were of stone, oak or earth. Stalls for the oxen which still pulled ploughs and carts, some of them furnished with pump and trough or cistern, existed in all three areas at about one third of the farms. The survey recommended in some places that they should be provided. Similarly there were open sheds for tying up and foddering beef cattle in winter at about half the farms, and the survey often recommended their provision. (the number in the tables refers to ranges of sheds). Buildings that occur almost everywhere were a cart house (or wain house or waggon lodge) and pig sties or cots.

Other outbuildings varied from area to area. A cowhouse for dairy cattle was usual at Forthampton but not elsewhere. A few farms had a special calves' stage or house or pen. Many farms had a granary or corn chamber, usually an upper chamber in an outbuilding. A woolroom was mentioned at one farm in Toddington and one in Forthampton.

There was a drinkhouse at nearly every farm in Forthampton, usually in addition to a brewhouse and a cyder millhouse, but only one at Elmore and none at Toddington. A cyder millhouse was usual at both Forthampton and Elmore (in the former area it was called simply a millhouse), but there was none at Toddington. These buildings belong to the Vale, where the surveys of the fields show a number of orchards. Three or four farms had also a cyder cellar or cyder house. More unusual outbuildings included a malthouse with kiln, cisterns and drying rooms at a Toddington farm, and a dovehouse in Forthampton.

Two farmhouses were also public houses. These were the Red Lion Farm and Inn at Toddington and the Lower Load Public House at Forthampton. Each farmhouse had the usual rooms, including a brewhouse. The Red Lion was attached to a fair sized farm of 82 acres, and had the customary outbuildings, including two barns. The only way in which the house differed from normal was in having an extra sitting room. The Lower Load Public House had only 12 acres of land, and the tenant depended on the money he received from tolls for the passage or ferry over the Severn (which were lessening because every passenger had also to pay at the turnpike at Tewkesbury, which had not been the case till about two years previously). The house had been adapted to serve as a public house, having bar, back parlour and bedrooms with closets, besides additional lodging rooms over the brewhouse.

The building materials show the differences between the three areas which one would expect. The Toddington farms on the Cotswold Hills had stone and tiled farmhouses and buildings, while farms in the Vale had brick, timber, lath and plaster buildings, usually with thatched roofs. At Forthampton the buildings were mostly brick and tiled. One farmhouse had a wooden chimney piece in the parlour; the survey said it was very dangerous and should be replaced by stone. At Elmore brick and timber were the usual materials, and the brick was often said to be in panels or nogged. Roofs were both thatched and tiled. Wattle, or wattle and daub, was still used in some farmhouses and outbuildings in all three areas.

Sources

Survey of Toddington,
Gloucestershire Record Office D2153/Av 16

Survey of Forthampton,
Gloucestershire Record Office D134/F 11

Survey of Elmore,
Gloucestershire Record Office D326/E 96