

# VERNACULAR BUILDINGS ON EARLY MAPS OF THE WEALD

By *E.M. Yates*

*"For as much as it is more (thanked bee god) in a manner wholly replenished with people, a man may more reasonably mainteine that there is no Weald at all, than certainly pronounce either where it beginneth or maketh an end" (W. Lambard).*

## Introduction

Evidence for early vernacular buildings is derived mainly from studies of surviving buildings. Medieval or early-modern buildings surviving to the present are unlikely, however, to be fully representative of the buildings of a given period in that the more lowly buildings, the homes of poorer members of society, have survived to a much lesser extent. The black and white timber-framed houses of the English countryside, the subject of both Victorian water-colours and modern calendars, appearing on myriads of greeting cards, were for the most part the homes of the minor gentry, the yeomen and the more well-to-do husbandmen; yet by Tudor times landless labourers made up half the population of some parishes, quite apart from the paupers and the vagrants. Futhermore, the surviving buildings have generally been subject to extensive alterations. Built for families of some substance, perhaps as part of Hoskin's "Great Rebuilding", many of these houses have been extensively altered to keep pace with changes in fashion and in living standards. Changes include insertion of chimneys, ceiling of rooms, and the addition of outshots. Some of these buildings were subdivided in the 19th century to provide accommodation for labourers, as farmers moved out from the village to new farmsteads, with consolidated farm holdings established by enclosure from former common land. In the present century, as the village has become gentrified, the reverse process has taken place; the subdivided homestead has been re-established as an individual home with the additional provision of bathroom, inside lavatory, modern kitchen, central heating and the other material benefits of modern life. As a result of these many changes, each house portrays, to a varying degree, a complex socio-economic history. To unravel these changes, to establish the original form of the house is exceedingly difficult, usually undertaken with a considerable element of speculation, informed speculation, but nevertheless speculation. When such homesteads are removed and rebuilt in open-air museums, to make way for reservoirs or motor-ways, the rebuilding is often controversial because of these difficulties of re-establishing the original form.

Similar points can be made in relation to rural settlement at two further levels of analysis, that is the individual farmstead,

and the village or hamlet. Most of the medieval and early modern houses that survive in the countryside began life as farmhouses, and were therefore associated with a complex of other buildings such as cartsheds, byres, sties and barns. These too have been subject to change, or more often to destruction. There were also in the village the buildings associated with rural industries. These have disappeared or have been converted to residences, as mass-production methods in industry led to the decline of rural crafts. The sum of changes in the individual farmstead, plus the destruction of cottages (W. Cobbet) or the movement of buildings (R. Gough) to other sites means that the whole pattern of rural settlement, the location, shape, and indeed existence of hamlets and villages has been a continuous flux.

### **The Evidence and the Region**

Evidence for vanished buildings or the original condition of much-altered buildings can be derived in part from archaeology, and in part from the careful survey of surviving buildings. Another source is archives. Representative of archival evidence are the probate inventories, beginning in 1529, from which in some cases the internal lay-out of the house can be established. A further source is pictures of houses. The house shown on the Bayeux Tapestry has been used in discussion of the evolution of the hall-house (M. Wood); a painting by A. Dürer of the village of Kalchreuth has been used in discussion of the spread of the mid-German house-style (J.F. Pries). The house drawings on early maps are of this type of evidence, but there is an additional advantage; the number of surviving early maps makes possible a distributional study.

The region here examined is the Weald. Although widely recognised as a region of south-east England, associated with a distinctive house type—the so-called Wealden house—the boundaries, as Lambard noted, are difficult to define. Most of the vagueness about the limits of the Weald turns upon whether the North and the South Downs should be included, and the location of the western boundary. In the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, Privet—west of Petersfield—is described as in the Weald, and there is a village “Wield” between Alton and Alresford. This evidence points to part of East Hampshire being within the Weald; the western boundary therefore probably coincided with the limit of the Clay-with-Flints overlying the Chalk, where the wooded landscapes of East Hampshire are replaced by the more open landscapes of the Wessex Chalk. Since woodland was and is the most characteristic feature of the Weald, as indeed the name indicates, inclusion of part of the North and South Downs within the region can be explained in terms of the presence of woodland

where, as in East Hampshire, here and there, superficial deposits mask the Chalk. The northern and southern limits are therefore the escarpments of the Downs except where the presence of heavy soils developed on Clay-with-Flints was associated with the survival of woodland, at least until medieval times, as for example in the west of West Sussex. For this Wealden region, still rather vaguely designated, some hundred or more maps survive for the 16th and 17th centuries showing detail of buildings; maps now preserved in the various county record offices, the British Library, the Public Record Office, and even in France.

### **Reliability of the Evidence**

The representations of buildings on maps is now by plan or by dot according to the scale employed. On earlier maps, buildings and other features—such as gates, stiles, and hedges—were shown either simply in profile, or in a perspective, the use of which improved with time to give an oblique bird's eye view. This practice was discontinued after the 17th century as increased demands were made for accuracy, especially by the military. Maps with profile or perspective drawings may be divided approximately into two groups in terms of scale. On the small scale maps, such as the county maps of Saxton and Norden, only the more important buildings are shown in profile, highly stylized and indicators of the site. A fuller representation of buildings was attempted only for the larger towns. The maps being considered in the present context, forming the second group, were drawn on larger scales, often—indeed generally—showing field divisions. They were drawn in relation to legal disputes, that is as evidence, or as an estate map for a land-owner. They begin with the 1480 map of Chertsey Abbey (of course outside the Weald), in the Public Record Office, with many 16th century, and even more 17th century examples.

The accuracy of the drawings, the degree to which all buildings are shown, and the degree of stylization are questions to which no general answer can be given. Some of the maps of this period, prepared in relation to legal disputes heard in the Star Chamber, or the Court of Requests, are accurate for the areas to which the disputes related, more stylized elsewhere. Some of the estate maps of the time, associated with identifiable cartographers and surveyors, such as the Walkers of Essex, have an astonishing accuracy of detail, and can be used to find ancient buildings not previously listed (K.C. Newton). On other maps the more substantial buildings appear to have been carefully drawn, the lesser buildings stylized.

An example of these difficulties is the 1682 map of Binsted<sup>1</sup> Hampshire (SU 7701410) (Fig.1). The church is perfectly

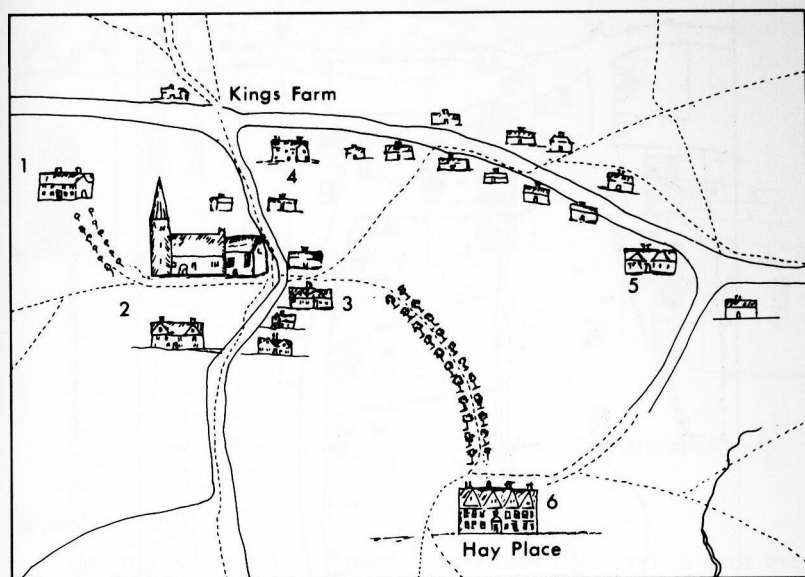


Fig. 1: Binsted, Hants. Reduced copy of selected detail on 1682 map, with annotation.

recognisable from the drawing although there are various discrepancies. Some of the discrepancies appear due to the cartographer; for example he has not shown the massive buttresses to the tower but they undoubtedly existed. Some of the discrepancies appear due to Victorian "restoration". The large chimney at the end of the nave roof has been replaced by the small pot, and the end wing—shown gable-end on—has disappeared. Windows in the chapel beside the chancel are shown by the cartographer as square, but are now Victorian Gothic. Of the six substantial houses (numbered for this article) four survive, only numbers 1 and 5 having disappeared, the latter replaced by a council estate. All the survivors are recognisable from the drawing, although Hay Place, No. 6, is now considerably extended with gables removed and some partial change in fenestration; but in each case the cartographer has altered the orientation of the house in order that the simple profiles can be seen together from one angle, particularly No. 4, King's Farm. The survival rate for the small buildings is, in contrast, about twenty five per cent. Of the twenty small buildings shown on the excerpt five are still present; all five, now ceiled with an upper floor, are baffle-entry central-stack, as shown. The outline of the village is very little changed since more recent housing occupies much the same site.



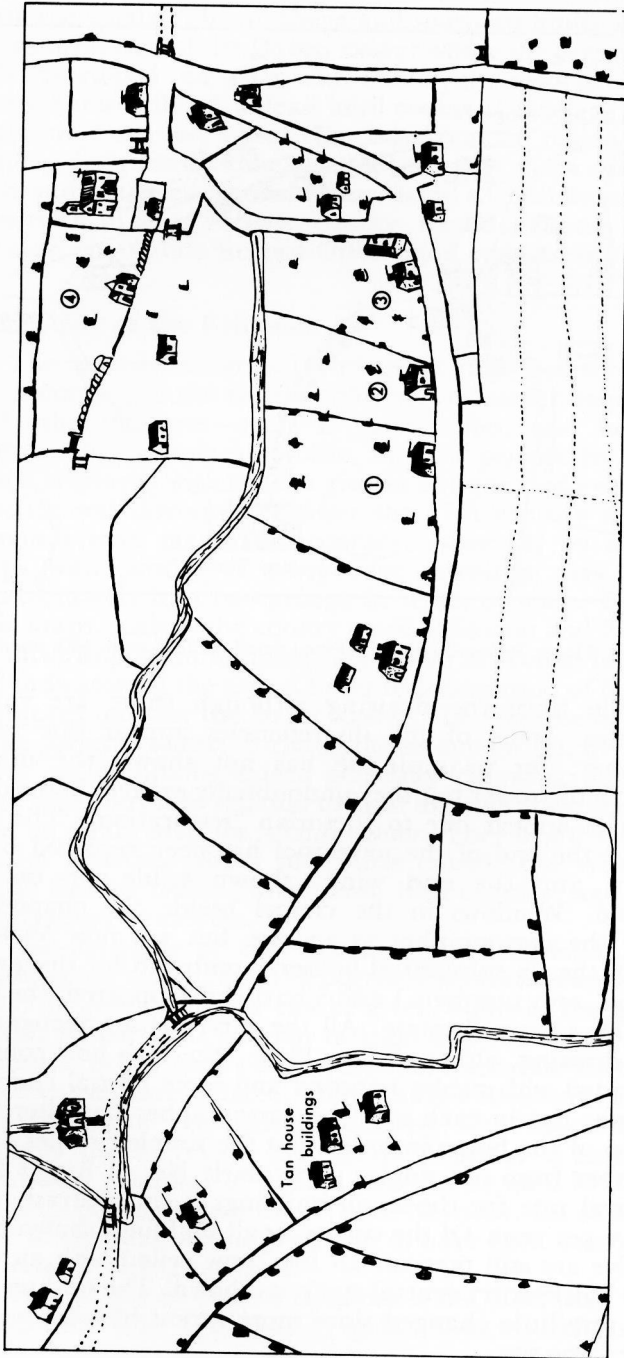


Fig. 2: Dunton, W. Sussex. Reduced copy of selected detail on map with annotation.

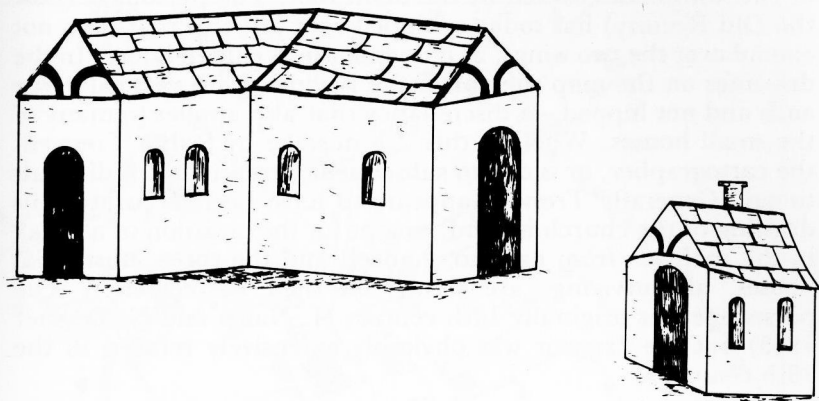


Fig. 3: Pevensey, E. Sussex. Enlargement of selected detail on 16th century map.

### Building Styles

The maps extend in age over two centuries and in area over parts of four counties so that temporal changes and some intra-regional variations are to be expected. In fact the majority of the buildings shown resemble the poorer buildings on the Binsted map (Fig. 1), simple buildings with a baffle-entry; that is to say with a door in the gutter side directly before the chimney stack. Gable entries are rare but do appear as at Duncton<sup>2</sup> Sussex (SU 960170) (Fig. 2), Betchworth<sup>3</sup> Surrey (TQ 210500) and at Pevensey<sup>4</sup> (TQ 050650) (Fig. 3). In terms of being the commonest building style represented on the maps it is this single storey baffle-entry central-stack house that most merits the term "Wealden" but it was in no sense exclusive to the Weald. Quoting two of many examples this simple cottage appears on a 1550 map of Middleton<sup>5</sup> in Norfolk and on a 1631 map of Caldon in Staffordshire (E.M. Yates). Gable-end chimney stacks are also represented, particularly in the north-west Weald.

The term "Wealden house" or "Wealden hall-house" is applied to a substantial timber-framed building with central hall and two wings, all beneath one large hipped roof. It is illustrated as for example at Lamberhurst<sup>6</sup> (TQ 675360), but is neither the sole style adopted by the substantial large houses shown nor limited to the Weald, occurring for example at Durndale in Sheppey.<sup>7</sup> Other substantial houses have an H ground plan with gabled roof, as at Wrotham<sup>8</sup> (TQ 600590) in 1620 and a L ground plan with gabled roof as at Horsmonden<sup>9</sup> (TQ 700405) in 1605. At Sutton<sup>10</sup> (SU 980150) (Fig. 4) in Sussex none of the three substantial houses is portrayed as of Wealden style, but have one

or two wings not covered by the main roof. The parsonage (now the Old Rectory) has today a hipped roof but this roof does not extend over the two wings, as it does in the Wealden house. In the drawings on the map the parsonage is shown with vertical gable ends and not hipped—a discrepancy that also applies to many of the small houses. Whether this is a mistake by Ralph Treswell, the cartographer, or is due to subsequent alterations it is difficult to say. Generally Treswell appears to have been accurate. His drawing of the church is good, except for the omission of a break in the roof line from nave to chancel; and the three substantial houses, all surviving, are shown on their correct sites. The parsonage was originally 14th century (I. Nairn and N. Pevsner 1965) but the exterior was obviously extensively refaced in the 19th century.

### Settlement Changes

The maps reveal the striking alterations that have occurred in settlement patterns. Villages, hamlets and isolated farmsteads have disappeared, or changed site. An example is Duncton (Fig. 2) also mapped by Ralph Treswell, in 1608. The settlement then consisted of sixteen buildings, grouped west of the church, only one of which was in any sense substantial. This substantial building survives (marked No. 4 on map). The church has gone, its former presence marked by a few gravestones in thick scrub. So too have the majority of the other farmsteads; only Nos. 2 and 3 survive, much extended but still recognisable as Tudor buildings. No. 4 has been completely replaced with the house now called Duncton House, and modern Duncton is half a mile north. The main Petworth road, the A285, crosses a spring-fed stream between the old and the new sites, and from that point have vanished the tan house buildings shown. Sutton, which is nearby, (Fig. 4), (Lord Leconfield) has not shifted site but previously contracted with loss of buildings in the south, near the West Gate. It has now grown again, in the manner of many villages, with the addition at this extremity of the old village of a council estate. Some of the cottages shown have survived, but the overall outline of the village, as at Binsted, has been maintained by successor buildings on the same sites. One of the surviving cottages, on the plot marked Richard Forde, has now exposed timber-framing, and it would appear that at one period the entry door was offset on the gutter side. Similarly the two surviving cottages at Duncton, Nos. 1 and 2, appear at one period or another to have had baffle entries, whether or not Treswell's drawings—showing gable entries—were correct. For villages nearer London, the maps show the extent to which recent growth has quite overwhelmed a tiny settlement, as for example Shalford<sup>11</sup> (TQ 005470) (Fig. 5) and Bletchingley<sup>12</sup> (TQ 320505).

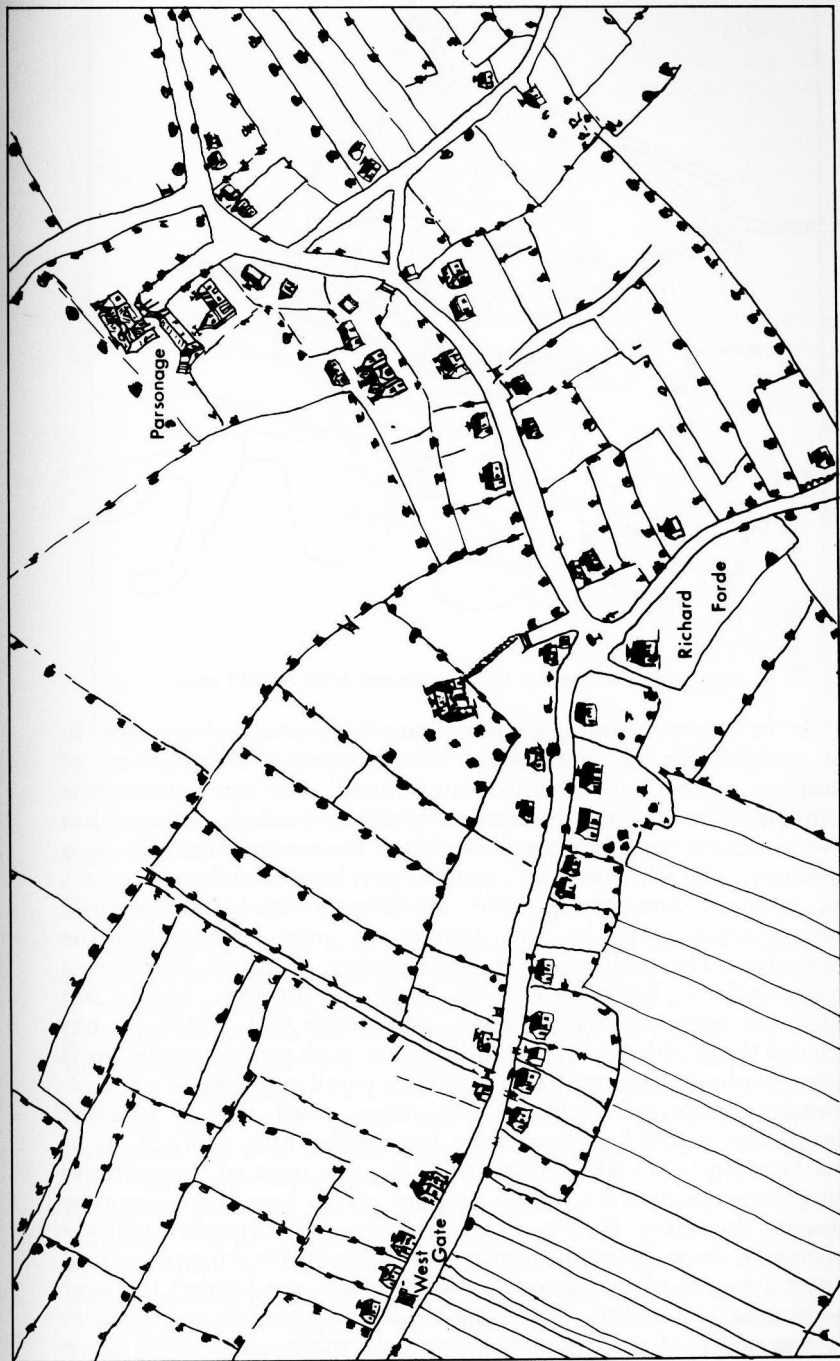


Fig. 4: Sutton, W. Sussex. Reduced copy of selected detail of 1608 map, with annotation.

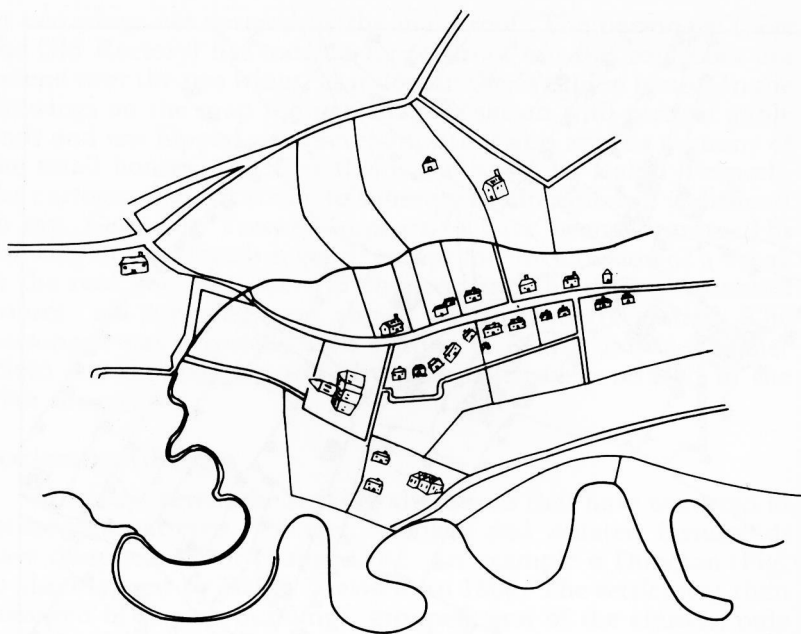


Fig. 5: Shalford, Surrey. Copy of selected detail of 1617 map.

As well as site changes, there have been marked changes in the composition of settlements in terms of the functions of buildings present, as previously mentioned. The tan houses gone from Duncton are representative of many such buildings that have similarly vanished or have been converted, usually to a residence. The wheelwrights, smiths, parchment makers, tanners and coopers formerly present in villages have disappeared, leaving trace only in the names of now highly-desirable residences. The reduction in the number of farms has had a similar effect. Engrossment of farms, a process which has continued since the Middle Ages, and which still continues, has reduced the numbers of farm holdings in each parish, replacing a large number of peasant farms with a small number of capital-intensive holdings. Many of the maps show that a peasant community was still present even late in the 17th century, as at East Harting<sup>13</sup> (SU 800195) in 1694 (Fig. 6), most of the cottages being accompanied by a byre or barn. Only two farms are now present, the other former farmsteads having become ordinary residences. As at Binsted, Sutton and Duncton the surviving small houses are now of two storeys, and the roofs are hipped to cover outshots at either end. The map evidence probably understates the size of the then-surviving peasant farming community since



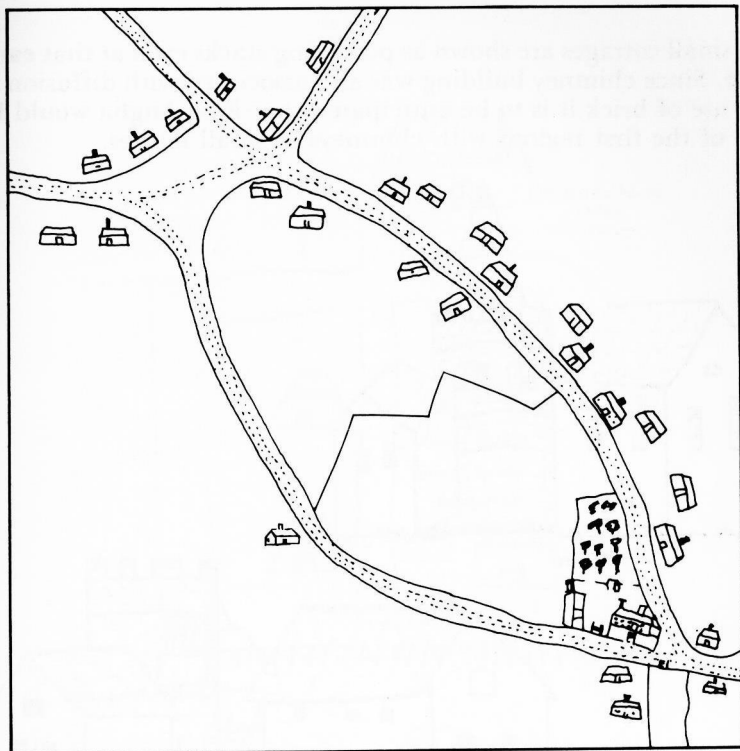


Fig. 6: East Harting, W. Sussex. Copy of selected detail of 1694 map.

the poorer members of the community, owning only geese or a pig, were unfortunate in having no need of a byre.

### Chimneys and other features

During the 16th and 17th centuries important changes took place in the lesser vernacular buildings, notably the introduction of window glass and of chimneys; later followed by the ceiling of ground floor rooms and the insertion of first storey floors. Maps of the period should throw some light on the diffusion of such changes. Although William Harrison's comments in 1577—relating directly to Essex—on the increase in the number of chimneys are well known, it is obvious from surviving evidence that chimneys were part of many of the more substantial medieval buildings (L.F. Salzman). The diffusion of chimney building was likely therefore to be both spatial, in that provision of chimneys would begin in the more prosperous areas, and social, in that it would begin in the houses of the more affluent.

Thus on a 1550 map of Middleton in Norfolk (near King's Lynn), a map to which reference has already been made, many of

the small cottages are shown as possessing stacks even at that early date. Since chimney building was also associated with diffusion in the use of brick it is to be anticipated that East Anglia would be one of the first regions with chimneys in small houses.

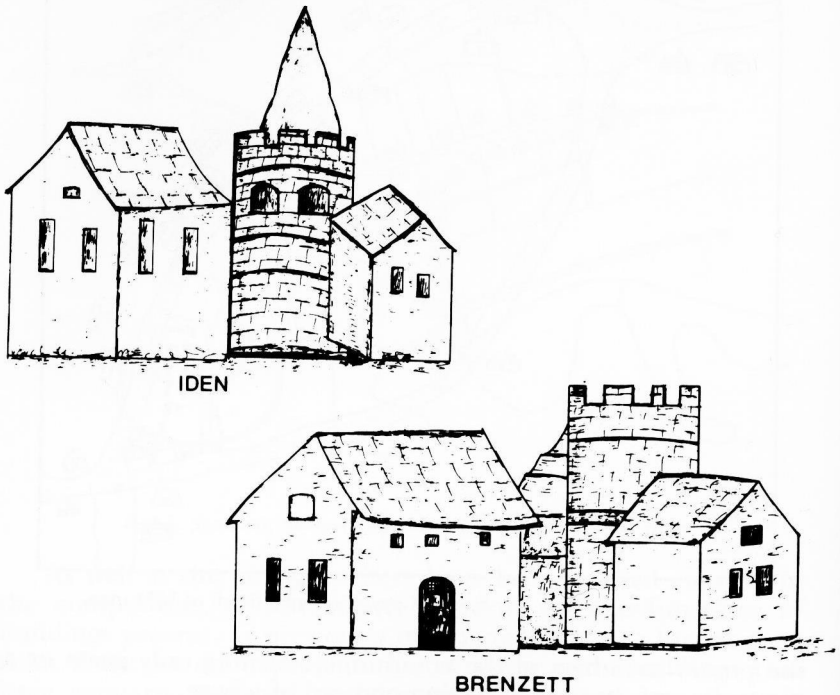


Fig. 7: Iden, E. Sussex and Brenzett, Kent. Enlarged copy of detail on 1537 map.

Some of the earliest maps of Wealden areas—generally crudely drawn—show buildings without chimneys. The earliest is of Iden<sup>14</sup> Sussex (TQ 920240) and Brenzett Kent (TR 005280), drawn in 1537. The buildings, stylized representations of the settlements, without chimneys, have small openings in the gable ends above the windows which may be smoke vents (Fig. 7). Although not relevant to the present theme it is interesting to note in passing that Iden church is shown with a beacon on the tower, ready to fire. Another map, undated but probably early Elizabethan, relates to an area of Ashdown forest south of Tonbridge near Southfrith<sup>15</sup> (TQ 582450) (Fig. 8). The cartographer sketched the then existing house—Wybarn's house—and the former hamlet of Bromelerigs. The houses are of the simplest type with entry on the gutter-side but no chimney, and indeed no

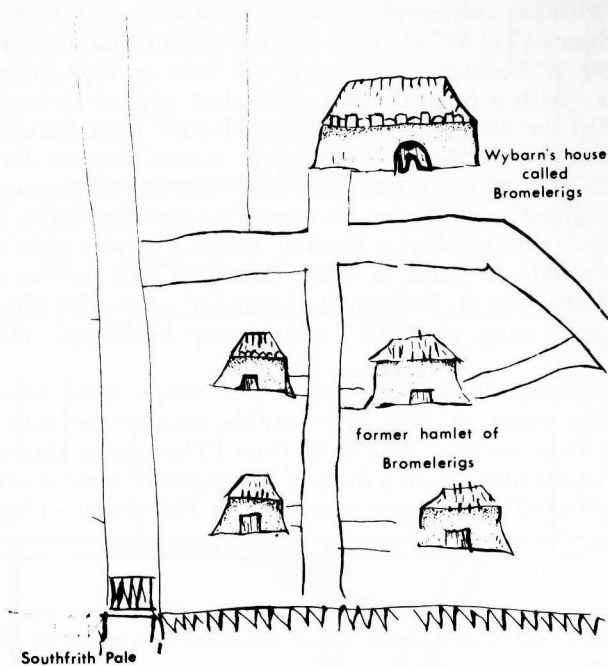


Fig. 8: "Bromelerigs" and "Wybarn's house", Kent. Slightly enlarged copy of detail on 16th century map.

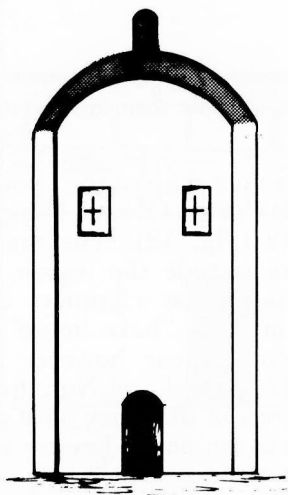


Fig. 9: Greenings, near Newdigate, Surrey. Copy of detail on c.1560 map.

windows. Pevensey, highly stylised (Fig. 3) had buildings with and buildings without chimneys. A simple drawing of Greenings<sup>16</sup> near Newdigate (TQ 225415), on a 1560 map of that area, Fig. 9, shows it as a building—probably of two storeys from the dimensions—with a central stack and what appear to be glazed windows. On the other hand Shurland House<sup>17</sup> near Eastchurch, Sheppey, outside the Weald, is shown in most elaborate detail on a map of 1570, a great courtyard house with service passage and transverse wings but with no chimneys except for those in the outbuildings—presumably a kitchen range—to one side of the entry quadrangle. Stumps of these chimneys still survive in the ruins of the building (J. Newman). A star fort at nearby Minster is depicted on a map of 1574<sup>18</sup> with many buildings, all with chimneys.

The chimneys shown on the earlier maps have usually a massive cross piece or cap, presumably to prevent rain from falling down the vertical and wide flues. The cap is shown well into the 17th century, as on a map of Pissingwell<sup>19</sup> near Waterringbury Kent (TQ 674534)—now usually spelt Pizienwell—(Fig. 10),

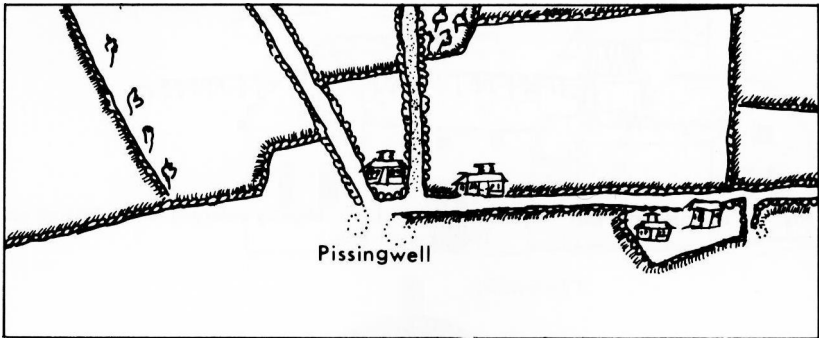


Fig. 10: Pizienwell near Waterringbury, Kent. Enlarged copy of detail on 1650 map.

the massive cross piece on a map of the Unsted area (SU 982449) of Farmcombe<sup>20</sup> in 1617 (Fig. 11) and Nore Farm<sup>21</sup> (SU 996442) near Shalford in 1612 (Fig. 12). The massive crosspiece also appears in maps from outside the region to the south—as at Portsmouth<sup>22</sup>, with four great chimneys complete with cross pieces in a building labelled “bake house” in 1628. The cross piece or cap does not appear however on the drawing of Greenings (Fig. 9). The Unsted and Nore buildings (Fig. 11 and 12) are of further interest in that they have gable-end stacks and these stacks are shown as stepped. They are also coloured red and with an oblique series of lines. These may indicate tiles but the style of drawing—by John More of Farnham—is so distinctive that it can be recognised on other maps as for example that of

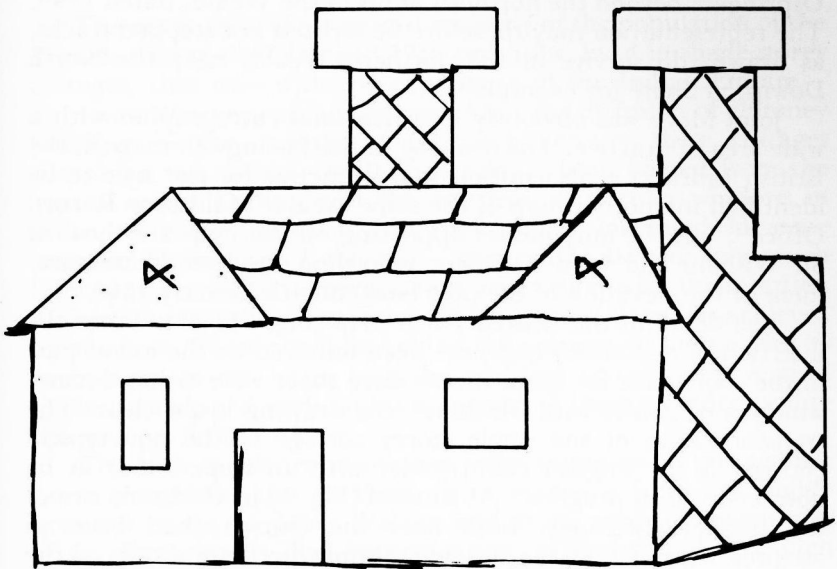


Fig. 11: Unsted nr. Farmcombe, Surrey. Enlarged detail from map of 1617.

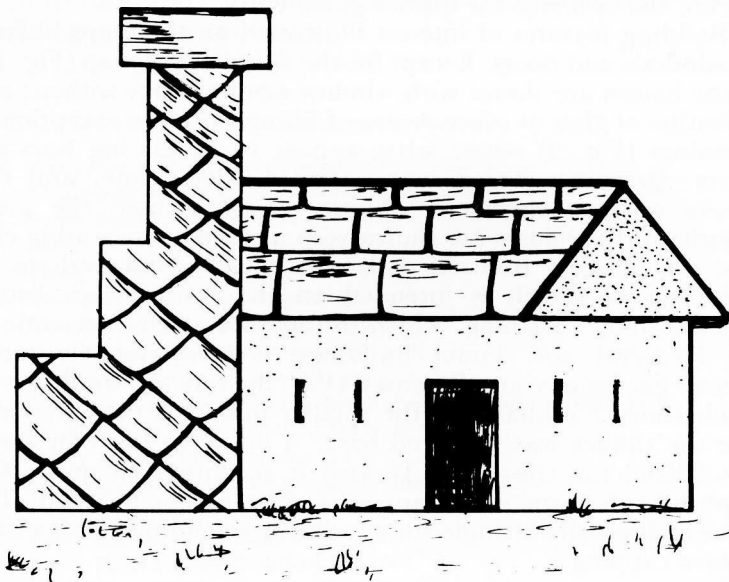


Fig. 12: Nore Farm, Shalford, Surrey. Enlarged detail from map of 1612.



Ospringe<sup>23</sup>, beyond the northern limits of the Weald, dated 1599. The representation may therefore be stylized but stepped stacks, as drawn, do survive in the northern Weald, near the North Downs, at Shere for example.

John More was obviously a professional cartographer with a wide area of practice. The drawing of the Pissingwell map (in the British Library) is also sufficiently distinctive for the style to be identified in another map of the same area at Maidstone Record Office<sup>24</sup>, but the only names appearing on the map are those of Sir William and John Twisden, recording the latter's measurement of the elevation of the pole (star) on 4th January 1640.

The detail of the Unsted Farm map (Fig. 11) shows that the insertion of a chimney had here been followed by the use of part of the roof space for extra rooms since there were either dormer windows or gables with windows—the drawing is not clear. The transformation of the single storey cottage to the now-typical cottage of the English countryside, with an upper floor lit by dormers, was in progress. At Binsted (Fig. 1) in 1682 only two of the smaller dwellings, both near the church, had been so adapted. As noted all the surviving simple dwellings shown on the Binsted map are now so adapted, usually also with a change in roof from the vertical gables shown to hipped. The addition of outshots in line with the main axis of the building would provide explanation for this change in roof style, and would of course obscure the evidence for former gable entry.

Building features of interest illustrated on the maps include the windows and doors. Except for the Bromelerigs map (Fig. 17) all the houses are shown with window openings but without any indication of glass or other means of filling, with the exception of Greenings (Fig. 9) where what appear to be glazing bars are drawn. Greenings has a round topped door frame, and this feature appears elsewhere. Where colour is used the great majority of the houses are shown with a red roof indicating clay tiles, including at Brenzett and Iden in 1537, but perhaps an indication of thatch is intended on the Bromelerigs sketch. Exposed timber framing, which we now see as characteristic of late Medieval and Tudor buildings, is comparatively rarely shown. Exceptions are Pevensey (Fig. 3) and at Sandhurst in Lamberhurst.<sup>6</sup> Probably in the smaller buildings that predominate the timber was plastered over. A house at Barham Down (TR 20550) (on the North Downs) is accompanied on a 1646 map<sup>25</sup> by two barns which appear to be weather boarded. The house incidentally is single storey with three chimneys, all with a massive capping.

## Conclusion

The maps show that the vast majority of the population of the Weald, during the 16th and 17th centuries, lived in single storey cottages, that we—with the experience of the Indian Empire—have now come to call bungalows. After the diffusion of chimney building in the middle of the 16th century these cottages contained two rooms—hall and parlour, both heated from the central stack. Ceiling and the insertion of dormer windows in order to utilise some of the roof space—increased in some instance by raising of the roof—generally followed very much later; and not in contemporaneous association with the insertion of the chimney stack. Extension of the ground floor was achieved by outshots. These could be behind the cottage, or in line with its main axis. In the latter case the addition transformed vertical gables to a hipped roof; and this appears to have preceded ceiling the ground floor.

The high incidence of the two room single-storey cottage has been recognised also in Essex, with evidence from the highly accurate maps of John Walker and from probate inventories (F.G. Emmison). The identification of individual Wealden cartographers—such as Ralph Treswell, senior and junior, John More and perhaps John Twisden (the Pizienwell map)—will facilitate the appraisal of their accuracy and the degree of reliance we can place on their maps in the study of vernacular architecture, and in the practical matter of identifying and listing buildings for conservation.

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