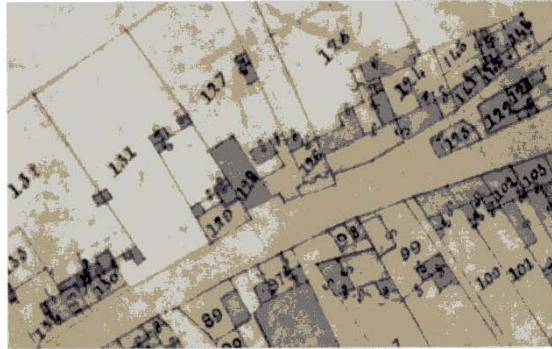


The Buildings of Batheaston 1600-1840

Introduction

The survey is of the buildings of Batheaston, not just houses. Many dwellings have been surveyed from the modest cottage built for the labourer to the big house designed for the gentleman but all types of the village's built structures have been surveyed, commercial, industrial and agricultural. The main criterion being the portrayal of the building on the 1840 Tithe Map of Batheaston. (Fig 1) It also follows, that with houses, no distinction has been made between the so-called vernacular and the designed polite houses of the gentry. The distinction is hard to make. Most of the polite houses of Batheaston have developed from pre-existing vernacular structures. The survey has so far revealed a fine Queen Anne house built over a 16th Century undercroft, a classical house dated 1750 with an entire 17th Century wing complete with a stair turret and a number of symmetrically fronted 18th Century houses disguising 17th Century structures behind their façades.



1. Section of the Tithe Map 1840 showing Lamb and Flag (126) and Red Lion Inn (122)

Batheaston houses have over the centuries been rebuilt, re-fronted, extended or re-arranged to meet the changing economic and social needs of their inhabitants. Batheaston was never a closed village subject to the dictates of a dominant local landowning family deciding who should come and go, how they should earn their living or how they should be accommodated. Batheaston is a large parish, even larger before local government boundary changes in the second half of the 20th Century transferred large areas of the parish to the City of Bath. In 1840 the largest landowner by far, William Eleazer Pickwick, owned only 224 acres in Batheaston, out of a total acreage of 1603, and he was an absentee landowner (1840 Tithe Apportionment Schedule). 14 landowners held between 42 and 152 acres each and these included the Batheaston Freeholders, Oriel College, Oxford, and Bath General Hospital. The great majority of landowners, 117 of them, owned less than 40 acres each. This appears to have always been the case. Batheaston had no manor house, in the middle ages the village was not coterminous with a manor – in fact, there appear to have been three manors. The various lords were content to exploit Batheaston at a distance. As long as the smallholders paid their dues and fines they were largely left to their own devices (Dobbie, 1969, p. 13-14).

The population of Batheaston is mobile. There is no long lasting family (Dobbie, 1969, p.61). Good communications and the proximity to Bath have aided mobility. Until 1995 a major road ran through Batheaston based upon the Roman Fosse Way, which, in turn, became one of the first turnpike roads in England and, later, the A4. The people of Batheaston, perhaps, have never been isolated, never remote from new influences - and within three miles of the economically important and fashionable Bath. Perhaps significantly, of the three villages to the east of Bath with the prefix Bath in its name, only Batheaston seems to have consistently borne the prefix since early medieval times.

Over the centuries the changing mix of the inhabitants of Batheaston have left their individual marks on the properties in which they live or work. The "unspoilt" property in Batheaston is a rarity. It is instructive to compare Batheaston with another village very close to Bath, Newton St Loe. In the buildings survey conducted by John Dallimore (2001), the picture emerges of a closed village dominated for generations by its local squire or lord exercising personal power over the community from the manor house. This village displays all the expected features of a closed village – small, rural and remote with tenanted properties and "unspoilt".

Agricultural, Commercial and Industrial Buildings of Batheaston

In relation to agricultural activities in Batheaston, past and present, three barns have been surveyed; one of which is still in active farm use, one is semi derelict and is scheduled to be converted into a dwelling and the last has been converted into a studio although its former agricultural usage is still discernible. Four other barns are believed to be extant in Batheaston but three of these have already been converted into residences. As befits a pasture economy, one of the surveyed barns is of the combination type, that is a ground floor area for keeping animals and an elevated platform area for storage, one is a traditional threshing barn with large opposed doors and other is a threshing barn converted to keep cattle.



2. A late 18th Century combination barn