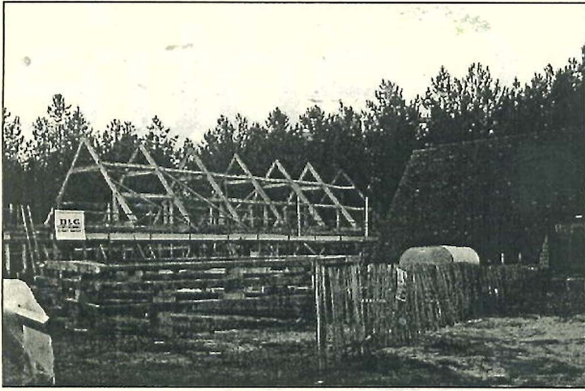


Moors Valley Visitor Centre

HISTORY OF THE VISITOR CENTRE,
MOORS VALLEY COUNTRY PARK



The Barn at Moors Valley Country Park

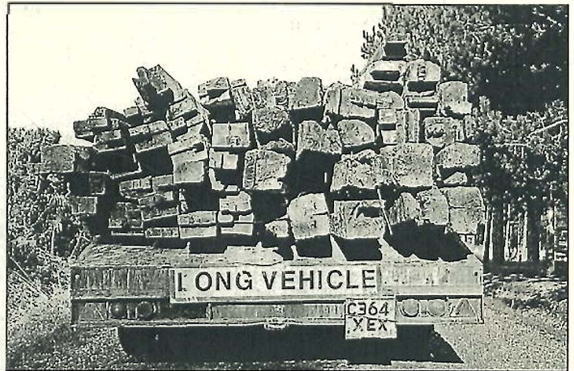


The Visitor Centre and Tea Rooms at Moors Valley Country Park are housed in a lovely old Barn which came from Manor Farm, Easton Royal near Marlborough in Wiltshire.

It was transported here on a series of low loaders in the Autumn of 1985. Rebuilding commenced in 1986 – about a dozen carpenters

worked on the project and the building was completed during the long hot

summer of 1987. The work was overseen by Council architect David Richards. Each piece of timber had been labelled and colour coded and was meticulously placed back in its original position. Some infill old timber of the same age was purchased from Oxfordshire and only about 10% is new timber. The main construction which is set on a

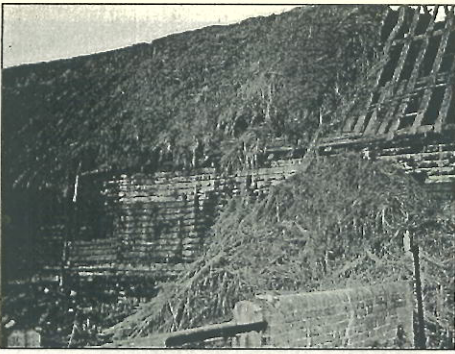


brick plinth, consists of 4 'A' frames and two Gable porches. All timbers are connected by mortice and tennon joints, pegs and dowels. The roof

which was originally thatched was replaced by red and grey tiles.

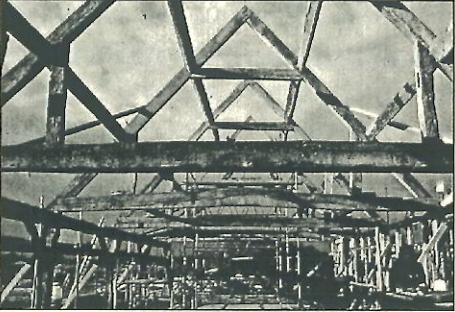


The Wind Braces which are the short sections of wood placed at right angles to the rafters are all original. These added extra strength to the structure of the roof.



The outer cladding all had to be replaced and is oak.

The original source of the Flagstones is unknown. They were supplied by The Wells Cathedral Stone Masons Company – they are not thought to have come from the Cathedral.



By 1989 the Country Park had become so popular that the existing area of the Visitor Centre was not big enough and East Dorset District Council were able to purchase the second half of the same Barn from Manor Farm. The foundation stone was laid on 12th May 1989 and the extension to the Barn consisting of 10 more 'A' frames was built at right angles to the original part to house the Tea-Rooms and the first Country Shop.



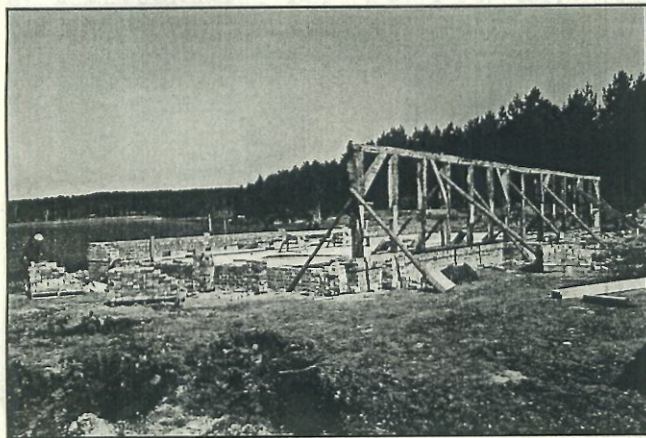
The existing Country Shop and the Toilets were built in 1997 entirely from new materials but in keeping with the old Barn.

The Barn now acts as a focal point for Visitors housing the Information Point, First Aid Room, Tea-Rooms and Cycle Hire and a small Lecture Room. It is used throughout the year for Barn Dances Jazz and Folk evenings, Art and Photographic Exhibitions and work-shops as well as for many Private Functions such as birthday and wedding celebrations.



The Barn is not shown on a Map of Easton Royal of 1773 but in a lease to John Butcher dated 1798 it states 'maintain and keep the messuage barns, stables, buildings and premises barns Rick yards etc' so there is evidence that a lot of building took place in the late 1700s probably using local oak timber that was growing there in the time of King Charles II (1660 – 1685) or earlier.

Manor Farm was known originally as Easton Farm or Mr Seymour's Farm when it was the main Farm in Easton Royal. In the mid 1780's the local Carpenter in the village was John Canning so it is possible he was involved in the original construction of the Barn. There is a significant entry for 1785 when the thatcher Stephen Goddard, as well as being paid for repairs in the village, was paid £3 15/- 10d for 'thatching at Easton Farm' – possibly for work on the Barn.



It was over 200 feet in length and was a 'long Barn' (not set at right angles as it is now) most likely to have been the Tithe Barn for the area – mainly because it belonged to the Manor Farm – the most important farm in the area and it was situated adjacent to the Church and the site of the old Monastery. A tithe was a tenth part of agricultural or

other produce or personal income which was contributed either voluntarily or as a Tax for the support of the Church or local clergy. The role of the Tithe Barn was to store the agricultural tithe of the village (sacks of corn etc)

Most Barns were used for processing as well as storage – the sheaves (bundles of reaped but unthreshed corn bound together) were stored before the threshing process. This was a process used to beat or rub the stalks of the ripe corn with a hand implement such as a flail to separate the grain from the husks and straw. A flail was an implement consisting of a long wooden handle with a free swinging metal or wooden bar attached to it. A tall unobstructed area was needed for swinging the flail during this process hence the height of the Barn. Once the grain had been threshed any remaining chaff or husk had to be separated by the winnowing process. The tall Barn doors were utilised in this process by creating a draught as the grain was tossed from a basket to separate the chaff which then blew away.

Gradually the threshing machine and steam engines took over in the 19th Century and the role of the Barn changed forever. It was used for the storage of hay and later as storage space for sacks of fertiliser.





On Tuesday 17th September 1929 the Farm including the Barn was sold by Fox and Sons at auction at the Town Hall Marlborough for £6750.00. The barn is referred to as 'An old Tithe Barn now used as a Chaffhouse'

Later in the 20th Century the Barn housed a Grain Dryer and in the late 1960's housed three litter sheds for chickens.

The Roman Numerals that can be seen on some of the timbers are thought to be original – they were clearly seen on the timbers whilst the Barn was at Manor Farm.

By 1985 the original thatch roof was in a bad state of repair. The owners decided that the cost of replacement was too high and reluctantly decided to dismantle most of the Barn and put it up for sale. It was sold to a dealer who stored it in a field under a tarpaulin in Calne in Wiltshire. He placed an advertisement in the Daily Telegraph and it was from there that it was purchased by East Dorset District Council in the autumn of 1985. So possibly exactly 200 years after it was built at Manor Farm – it began a new life here at Moors Valley Country Park.

Moors Valley Country Park acknowledges with grateful thanks the vast amount



of help and information received from the following

Mark de Pass and his family – original owner of the Barn at Easton Royal

David Crompton – First Head Warden of Moors Valley Country Park.

Jo Johnston and her fellow Archivists at the County Record Office at Trowbridge

Frances Neal – Archivist – Wells Cathedral

Steve Prince – Carpenter involved in the re-building of the Barn at Moors Valley





For all enquiries please contact
The Wardens, Moors Valley Country Park
Horton Road, Ashley Heath, Ringwood BH24 2ET
Tel: (01425) 470721

Moors Valley is a joint venture between
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