

## **Deborah Griffiths**

### **Development of the house from medieval to modern.**

So when Higher Uppacott's first built in about the middle of the 1300s it would have been a single storey long building built into the ground and would have consisted of the shippon at one end and obviously the domestic accommodation at the other. The domestic accommodation would have been, as I said, single storey so when you stood in the hall you would have been able to look up and see the underside of the thatch; and at that time the building would have been heated by, basically a bonfire on a hearth stone somewhere in the middle of the hall, and the smoke from that fire would have gone up into the roof space and just filtered about in there; and the net result of that, of course, is that all the timbers and even some of the straw is smoked-blackened, which is really a very rare thing indeed. And then sometime around about the late 15<sup>th</sup> century, the late 1400s, the upper end, for some reason, was rebuilt, because we've got slightly different roof timbers than we have in the shippon, but it was still rebuilt as a single story house, and probably there would have been low partitions between the hall and the cross passage and the hall and the room that's buried at the far end of the house, which we call the inner room, and whose function we're a bit unclear about, but possibly a withdrawing room or possibly even a storage space. And it isn't until the mid 16<sup>th</sup> century, the mid 1500s, that we actually get the creation of a first bedroom here, a room that was just for sleeping in, and that occurs at the upper end, the far end of the building, over the inner room, and a partition is made that goes the full height of the building and you would have had access into that bedroom from a ladder coming from the hall; the hall meantime remains as what we call an open hall, that is, open to the underside of the roof. Then in the late 16<sup>th</sup> century more modernisation comes to Higher Uppacott and we have a fireplace inserted into the hall with its back against the cross passage: and that fireplace to a certain extent is a bit of a status symbol, you're actually telling people that you've got sufficient resources to be able to build a fireplace. And at the same time that the fireplace went in we think another little room was put over the cross passage; and yet, at the same time that all these little sophistications are going in the hall remains open, still, to the roof, and it's not until we get to the mid 1600s that a floor is actually inserted over the hall, so probably, again, there was some status attached to having a really lofty hall. In the mid 17<sup>th</sup> century the floor was inserted by putting beams across the width of the building and one of those beams actually is set into the blocking of the medieval window, so the medieval window that was on the east side of the building that had lit the open hall was

blocked and one of the bridging beams was inserted into the blocking, and essentially the building turned round, because new windows then went into the west side of the house.