

# HISTORICAL AND ARCHITECTURAL OVERVIEW



HOUSE OF GEORGE W. DAVIES

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BROADWAY

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## LOCATION AND EXTERNAL CHARACTER

The House of George W. Davies is situated on the north side of the High Street, in the heart of the village of Broadway. Externally, the building displays a 17th century character, complemented by a modern extension to the rear. However, this outward appearance conceals a considerable degree of architectural complexity, reflecting a long and varied development history that includes three distinct medieval phases.



## MEDIEVAL ORIGINS AND STRUCTURAL EVOLUTION

The building's development likely spanned from the 14th to the 16th centuries, with its initial construction as a cruck-framed hall house. The majority of these early, predominantly timber-framed elements were significantly reduced during two separate phases of 17th century development. It was during this period that the broad layout of the main structure was established.

Although some limited modifications were made in the 18th century, the next major changes involved the addition of an agricultural structure to the rear in the early 19th century and further extensions when the property was converted into a doctor's surgery in the 1980s. Much of the building's internal character, especially at ground floor level, dates from the 1980s and later.



## HISTORIC AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

The area around Broadway has been settled since prehistoric and Saxon times, but the current settlement is medieval in origin. The village street is a classic example of a 'planted' settlement, as described by Beresford (1954), featuring a wide, regular high street and a triangular market place to the west.

The House of George W. Davies stands on one of a series of burgage plots that stretch from the High Street to Back Lane, which runs parallel to the north. Around the village, extensive ridge and furrow marks highlight the medieval agricultural landscape. A weekly market has been held in Broadway since 1196, and it is thought that much of the settlement's layout, including the House of George W. Davies, dates from shortly after this time in the 13th century.

By the 14th century, the presence of Abbots Grange and its monastic precinct, evidenced by documentary records, points to significant medieval development. Abbots Grange, which features a cruck frame, is one of seven such buildings in Broadway, with cruck-framed examples dating from the 14th to 17th centuries. Broad Close, immediately east of the House of George W. Davies, is believed to date from the 16th century, though an earlier date is possible.



Timber-framed buildings remain across Broadway, such as The Broadway Hotel, which features large, irregular panels with curved tension braces and a clasped purlin roof, likely dating from the 14th or 15th century. Clasped purlin roofs are considered to have fallen out of use regionally by the mid-16th century.

By the 17th century, Cotswold limestone had become the predominant building material, giving Broadway its distinctive character, with up to 65 buildings from this period surviving. Many of these were newly built, while others involved the refacing or rebuilding of earlier structures. The House of George W. Davies typifies this trend, being primarily 17th century in appearance but retaining numerous earlier features.

The village continued to prosper through the 18th century, but the arrival of the railway in the 19th century led to a degree of stagnation, reducing traffic to the centre. This decline was exacerbated by the construction of a bypass in the 20th century.



## HISTORIC INFORMATION AND MAPPING

The earliest mapping of the site appears on the 1st edition Ordnance Survey map of 1885, illustrating the building up to the end of Phase 7. At this time, the plot to the north of the barn was divided by a wall, with a small building at the eastern end. These features were altered by 1902 and demolished entirely by 1923. Mapping throughout the 20th century retained these features, despite known extensions to the rear constructed from 1981, when the building was converted into a doctor's surgery.

## PHASES OF BUILDING DEVELOPMENT

**PHASE 1:** 14th to 15th century – The earliest phase is indicated by a single surviving oak cruck blade, likely a remnant of a medieval hall house. With little remaining, it is difficult to determine much about the original structure or its precise date, other than its broadly medieval character. Comparisons can be drawn with at least one other 14th century cruck frame within Broadway and six further undated examples.

**PHASE 2:** 15th century

**PHASE 3:** 15th to 16th century – The building was extended to the east, probably in the 15th century. Features such as close-studded exteriors, clasped purlins, and trestle-sawn timbers support this dating. The precise form of the building during this period is unclear, as only the roof trusses remain, with floors dating from the 17th century or later. Subsequently, another structure featuring medieval details, including trestle-sawn timbers and clasped purlins, was built to the west of the earlier extension, leaving a gap of just over a metre. The gable of this section faced the High Street, suggesting it may have been a separate house or possibly a detached service building, though such structures were typically located at the rear of the plot. Timber was the predominant material up to this point, with some limited evidence of stone in Phase 1.

**PHASE 4:** Early 17th century – The building was substantially remodelled with Cotswold limestone, creating much of the present appearance. This is consistent with the wider village, where earlier buildings were often remodelled in the 17th and 18th centuries, resulting in the predominantly stone-built village seen today.

Many earlier features were removed, leaving mainly the roof trusses. First floors, fireplaces, and mullion and small casement windows were added. Most existing rooms and many details such as doors and latches likely date from this period, with 1637 a probable date, as carved on a reused timber.

**PHASE 5:** Mid-17th century – Further extension in the 17th century added ground and first floor rooms and internal partitions. The character of the earlier 17th century structure was largely retained, with a chimney date suggesting this phase occurred in 1657.

**PHASE 6:** 18th century

**PHASE 7:** Early 19th century – The early 19th century saw the addition of an agricultural structure to the rear. Its function is unclear but is likely related to animal husbandry, with crop storage on the first floor and possible stabling.

**PHASE 8:** Later 19th century

**PHASE 9:** 20th century – Few major alterations occurred in the early 20th century. The most significant remodelling took place after 1980 with the conversion into a doctor's surgery. This included major rear additions and numerous internal changes, such as the removal of walls, installation of concrete flooring throughout the ground floor, and new wall finishes. As a result, most of the internal character at ground floor level dates from this period, with historic features mainly surviving on the upper floors.



## RECENT RENOVATION AND SURVIVING HISTORIC FEATURES

In partnership with the Worcestershire Heritage Team, Wychavon District Council, and Broadway Parish Council, the renovation of Barn Close, adjacent to the House of George W. Davies, has been carried out with care to ensure that the remaining historical elements are preserved for the future.

Notable features include:

**ROOM 2:** Vaulted ceiling with an exposed 15th/16th century cross frame, comprising a tie beam, principal rafters, and a collar.

**ROOM 3:** Early to mid-17th century timbers form a focal wall, accompanied by a stone fireplace from the same period.

**ROOM 4:** Exposed timbers from the 15th century, including a tie beam, principal rafters, and a collar, with the carpentered face on the eastern side.



**ROOM 5:** The original cruck frame is visible, together with exposed timbers from the 18th century, offering a tangible connection to the building's origins.

**ROOM 6:** Showcases exposed timber frames dating from the 15th century.

**PRIVATE DINING ROOM:** Contains a cross frame from the mid-17th century within the timber frame, separating the dining room from the snug.

