

NOTES

TIMBER STRUCTURES IN THE PEAT TO THE SOUTH OF CHEDZOY: MOOR DROVE

CHRISTOPHER NORMAN



Fig. 1

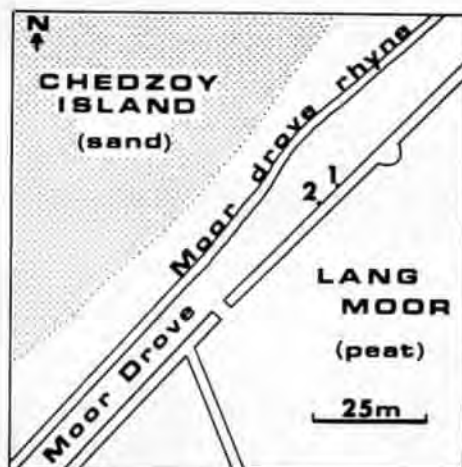


Fig. 2

Moar Drova is an unmetalled farm track which skirts the southern edge of the sand 'island' of Chedzoy, approximately 4km east of Bridgwater. In April 1979 sections through two timber structures were seen in the peat bank of a ditch bordering this drove at ST 34773626. Prior to these discoveries, the water level in the rhynea and ditches of this area had been lowered to drain surplus water from the adjacent peat moor. However, within a few days the water level was raised and penned for the summer period, submerging many of the timbers exposed in the ditch bank. Thus it was not until the following Spring, when the water level was again at its lowest, that a useful record could be made of the timber structures.

The sections recorded at Moar Drova occur on the northern fringe of Lang Moor, an area of low-lying peat which extends from the Chedzoy island to the edge of the Burtle sand at Westonzoyland, some 900m to the south (Fig. 1). They lie approximately 1km to the south-west of Sutton Hams, where a group of similar track-like structures was recorded in 1979 and published in Vol. 123 of these *Pro-*

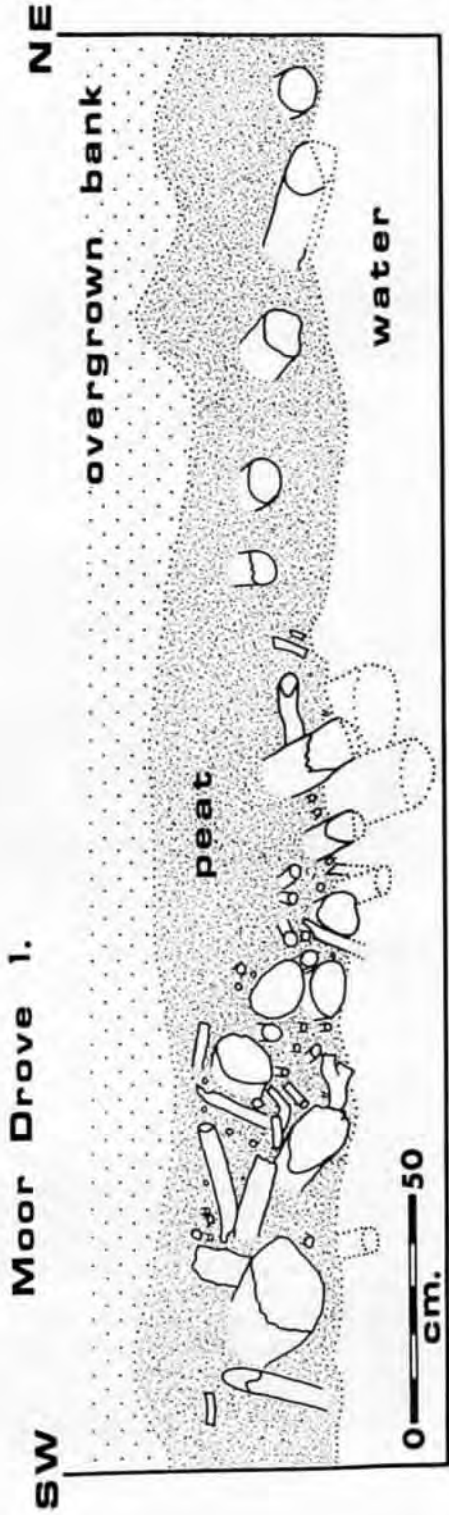


Fig. 3

ceedings¹. This latter report contained a full introduction to the physiography and archaeology of the Chedzoy area.

The cleaning and recording techniques employed on the Sutton Hams exposures² were slightly modified for use at Moor Drove, the main difference being the need to clear debris and vegetation from the sections at the latter site. However, unlike the Sutton structures, those seen at Moor Drove were exposed in one bank only and obliquely cut sections alone were available for recording. These were both photographed and drawn to scale from the opposite bank of the ditch.

Moor Drove 1 (Fig. 3) This obliquely cut section, 1.65m in width, was found in the north bank of the field ditch bordering the drove (Fig. 2). A detailed examination confirmed the presence of a robust, longitudinally laid structure with a true width of c1.20m, an average thickness of c0.40m and a general orientation of 100° from north. The timbers ranged in diameter from 10mm to 150mm, the largest pieces having reached an age of about 30 years when felled. All of the timber samples taken for identification proved to be hazel, none of which bore any evidence of coppicing.

The base of the structure lay permanently below the water level in the ditch and could not be fully recorded. However, several large timbers were present and were in excellent condition. The main body of the structure above the water line was composed of brushwood (10-50mm diameter) interspersed with larger roundwood longitudinals. Some of this brushwood lay at oblique angles to the main timbers, creating spaces which had subsequently become filled with peat. Three pegs (20-50mm diameter) were present, the most substantial of these retaining the large timber on the south west margin of the structure.

The upper surface, which lay c90cm beneath the level of Moor Drove, was poorly preserved and had a markedly uneven appearance. This may be partly explained by the presence of five timbers to the north-east of the structure, which suggests that the upper surface may have been partly dismantled or subjected to damage by flood water.

In this exposure, the upper surface of the structure lay at 2.90m O.D. and the base of the lowest longitudinal at 2.40m O.D.

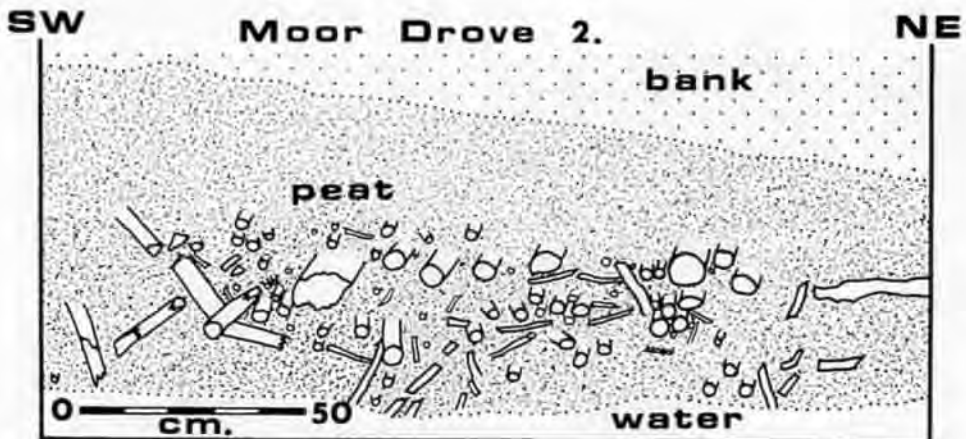


Fig. 4

Moor Drove 2 (Fig. 4) An obliquely cut section through this feature was visible in the ditch bank some 4.5m to the south-west of Moor Drove 1 (Fig. 2). The spread of timbers, which was 1.5m wide, consisted largely of roundwood ends ranging in diameter from 15mm to 90mm. These clearly formed the body of a longitudinally laid structure with a true width of c1.10m, an average thickness of c0.30m and a general orientation of 170° from north.

In section, the structure was seen as an irregular mattress of roundwood ends interspersed with peaty areas containing few timbers. The upper surface was composed mainly of larger timbers (50-90mm diameter), although brushwood and twigs were also present at this level. Amongst the lower timbers, the remains of at least two slender laterals (15-20mm diameter) were noted. However, it is uncertain whether these represented a significant constructional feature or were merely random pieces of brushwood. Beneath the main body of timbers, several obliquely inserted pegs (14-33mm diameter) were found. In at least two instances, the original peg tops were found. In at least two instances, the original peg tops were overlain by longitudinals in the upper part of the structure, suggesting that reinforcement with extra timbers may have taken place.

Many of the higher timbers had been subjected to weathering and attack by plant roots, especially during the summer months, and thus were in a poor state of preservation. This may partly account for the uneven appearance of the upper surface, which lay c85cm below the present day level of Moor Drove. The lower timbers, however, lay beneath the water level in the ditch for most of the year and were in generally good condition. All of the timber samples taken for examination appeared to be non-coppiced hazel. In some cases, the outermost rings of the stems suggested that they were probably felled during early summer.

In this exposure, the upper surface of the structure lay at 2.95m O.D. and the base of the lowest longitudinal at 2.55m O.D.

It seems probable that the Moor Drove sections represent trackways which were laid southwards from the Chedzoy island towards the Burtle sands at Westonzoyland. Both structures consisted of timbers laid lengthwise to form a walking surface and as such resemble the most prolific type of prehistoric track recorded from the Somerset Levels³. Moor Drove 1 contained a substantial proportion of heavy timbers and appeared more robust than Moor Drove 2, a basic difference which may reflect variations in the stability of the contemporary peat surface. Moor Drove 2 contained a high proportion of slender roundwood and resembled some of the brushwood tracks found on Chilton Moor⁴ and at Tinney's Ground, Sharpham⁵. However, the thickness of its construction suggests that it was built across peat which, although firmer than at Moor Drove 1, was sufficiently unstable to necessitate a mattress of brushwood beneath the upper timbers of the track. As both exposed sections lay between 15m and 20m from the edge of the sand, the thickness of the structures may indicate the former existence of an unstable, wet zone near the margin of the island.

Although no absolute dating evidence is as yet available, the details of construction and levels above O.D. of both structures suggest that they may belong within a third to first millennium B.C. age-bracket. That they may be contemporary is suggested by the similar levels above O.D. of the uppermost timbers in each section. This is of particular significance as the orientations of both timber groups suggested that the structures were likely to meet at a junction somewhere beneath the drove. Thus it is possible that they represent contemporary tracks which converged to form a single passage across the last few metres of peat adjacent to the island.

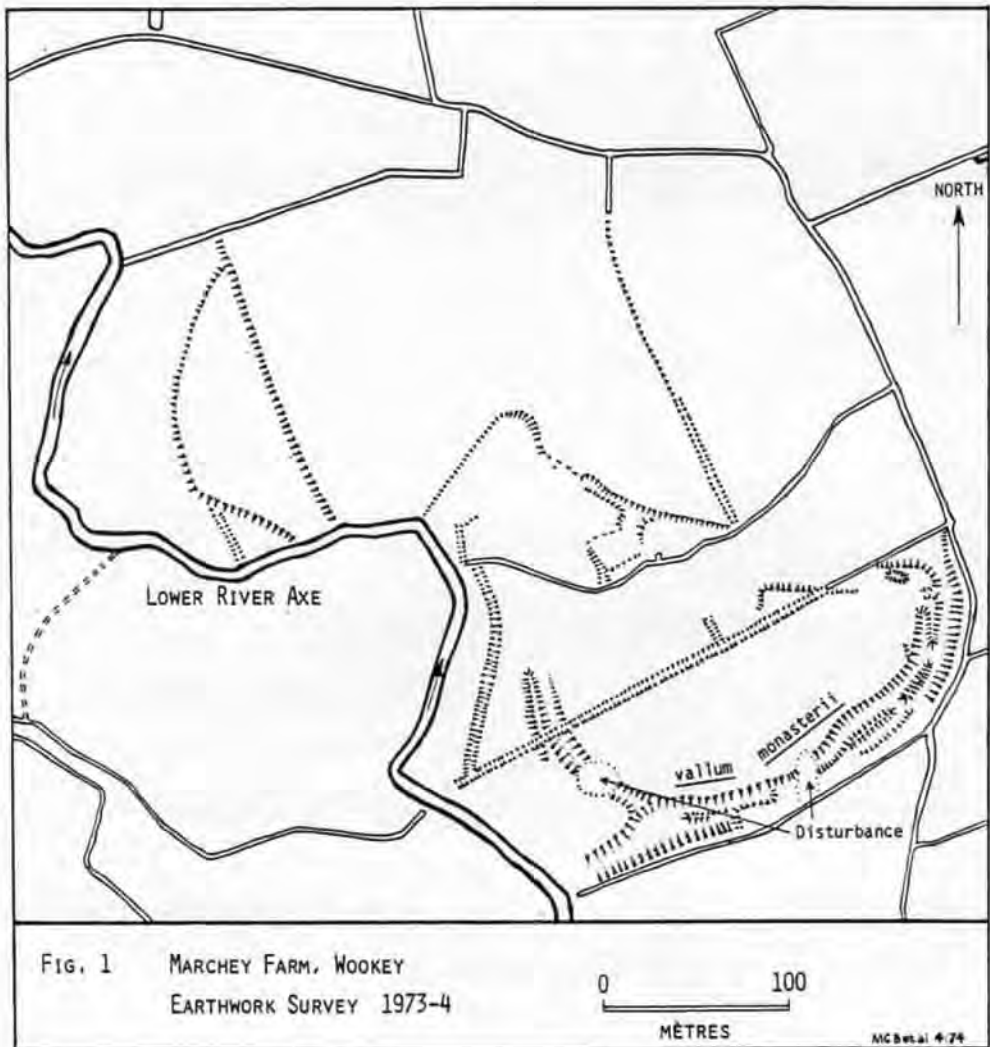
As only single sections through the Moor Drove structures have been located, there is as yet no evidence to indicate how far they extend southwards towards the Sowy island. It is possible that they cross the entire width of Langmoor, thus having provided a communication route between the two Burtle sand islands. Alternatively, they may simply have been short tracks built to gain access to the natural resources of the peatlands. Although the scope of the research currently being undertaken in this area is very limited, it is hoped that further information about the functions of these structures may be obtained in the near future.

My thanks are due to Mr. N. Fry and Mr. D. Dare for allowing fieldwork to take place on their land. I am also grateful to Peter Field (timber identifications), Colin Clements and Joanna Norman (fieldwork) and Rita Howe (report preparation).

- 1 Norman, C. and Clements, C. F., 1980, 'Prehistoric Timber Structures on King's Sedgemoor: Some Recent Discoveries', *Proc. Som. Arch. Soc.* 123, 5-18.
- 2 *Ibid.* 8.
- 3 Coles, J. M. and Orme, B. J., 1977, 'Garvin's Tracks', *Somerset Levels Papers* 3, 73.
- 4 Coles, J. M., Hibbert, F. A., and Clements, C. F., 1970, 'Prehistoric Roads and Tracks in Somerset, England: 2. Neolithic', *Proc. Prehistoric Soc.* 36, 125-51.

MARCHEY FARM, WOOKEY: AN EARLY CHRISTIAN EARTHWORK ?

MICHAEL BATT



Occupation on the site of Marchey Farm, Wookey (ST 478463), during the Roman period is well attested by the presence of quantities of Romano-British pottery found during the past ten years (Batt, 1969 and Ellis, 1979).

Research was begun by the writer at Marchey Farm in 1969 following a ground investigation of an earthwork located by oblique aerial photography. The earthwork comprises a ditch with external bank running in an arc from northeast to southwest (Fig. 1). It encloses the smaller of two 'islands' of Keuper Marl projecting not more than 10m above the surrounding levels, situated 2km. east of Theale. The external bank suggests a non-defensive use while the double ditch appearance in the south-eastern part of the arc would appear to be created from spoil thrown from an existing drainage ditch during cleaning operations.

This is hardly a defensible earthwork. In view of the early connections of the Marchey site with the abbey at Glastonbury it is best interpreted as a *vallum monasterii*, an enclosure around a religious settlement. There are early references to a religious settlement at Marchey (then called Martinsey) with a chapel dedicated to St. Martin (Sawyer, 1968, 364). Marchey has a similiar historical background to its sister sites at Beckery (Rahtz and Hirst, 1974) and Nyland (then call Andredsey).

The date of construction of this *vallum* is at present unknown. The similarity of its shape to those surrounding early Irish and British monastic sites is striking (Thomas, 1971). Sited on an 'island' within the marshes of the Somerset Levels, the Marchey earthwork occupies the ideal situation in which an early christian settlement could be established.

Archaeological evidence for the early christian origins of this site has not yet been forthcoming. The presence of late Romano-British pottery at the site of the farm does not on its own suggest the presence of an early christian settlement. Apart from a pre-conquest jar (Ellis, 1979, fig. 6, 31) which confirms the late Saxon documentary evidence, no sherds of imported dark-age mediterranean pottery nor sub-Roman or pre-Saxon indigenous hand-made wares are known nor recognised from the Marchey ceramic assemblage.

While it should not be forgotten that late Romano-British pottery was found in association with imported dark-age wares at Cadbury-Congresbury, any suggestions of an early christian date for the Marchey earthwork must for the present remain tentative. In the meantime, until highly expert archaeological investigation at the Marchey site has been carried out, we must be content with only documentary and field archaeology evidence.

The author would like to thank the owner of Marchey Farm, Mr S. Norman of Bawdrip, for permission to carry out research at the site and Mrs F. Neale for reading and correcting the text.

Batt, M. C., 1969, Wookey, Marchey Farm, *Archaeological Review*, 4, 58.

Ellis, P., 1979, 'Archaeological watching Briefs in Avon and Somerset', *Proc. Som. Arch. Soc.* 122, 107-11.

Fowler P. Gardner K, Rahtz, P. 1969, *Cadbury-Congresbury* 1968, University of Bristol.

John of Glastonbury (ed. T. Hearne) *Johannis, Confratis et Monachi Glastoniensis Sive Historia De Rebus Glastoniensibus* (Oxford, 1726).

Rahtz, P. and Hirst, S., 1974, *Beckery Chapel, Glastonbury* 1967-8 (Glastonbury Antiquarian Society).

Sawyer P. H. 1968, *Anglo-Saxon Charters* (London).

Thomas C., 1971, *The Early Christian Archaeology of North Britain* (Oxford Univeristy Press).

William of Malmesbury *de Antiquitate Glastoniensis ecclesiae Adami de Domerham Historia De Rebus Gestis Glastoniensibus* (ed. T. Hearne, Oxford, 1725).

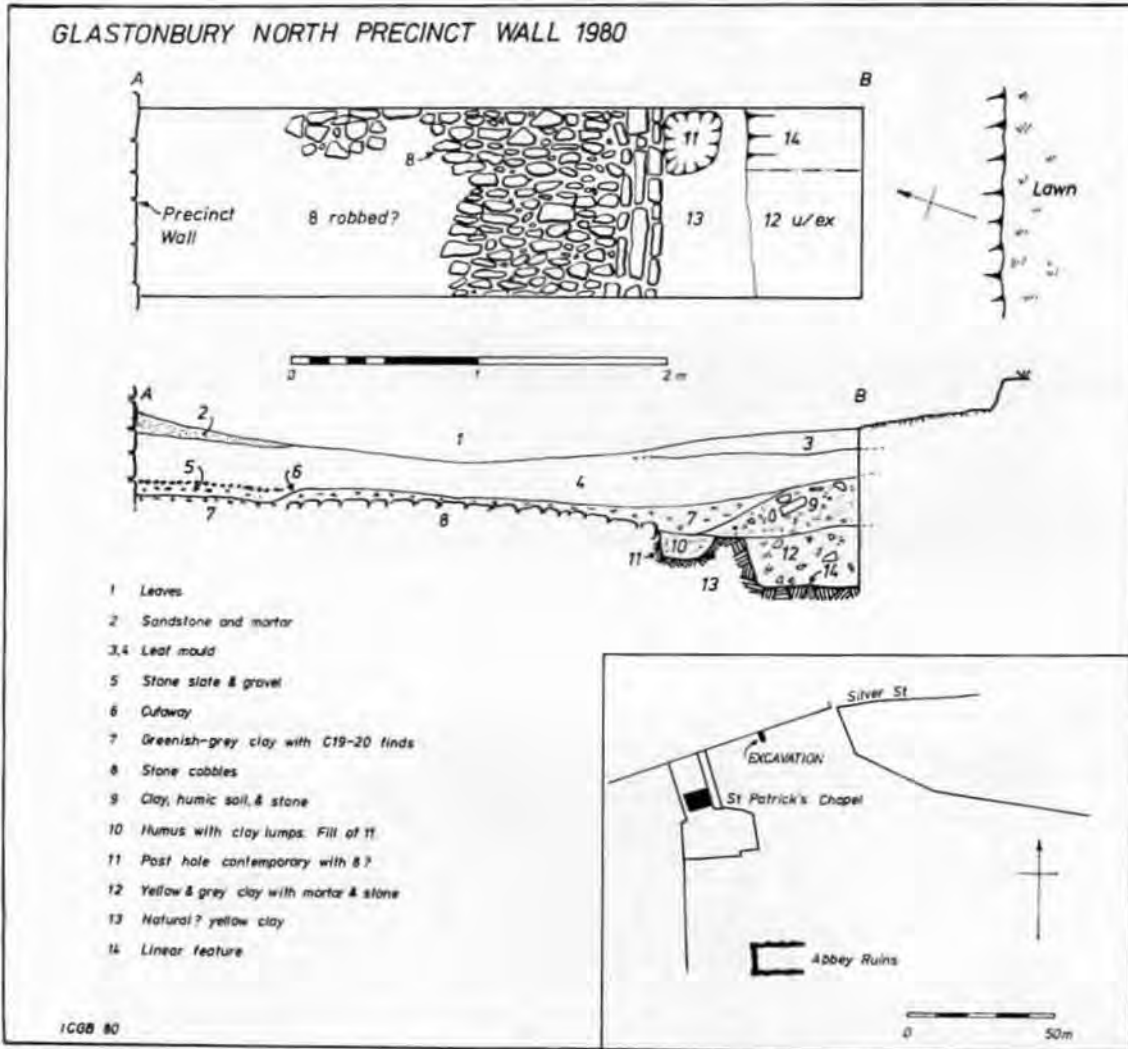
TRIAL EXCAVATIONS AGAINST THE NORTH PRECINCT WALL, GLASTONBURY ABBEY, DECEMBER 1980

IAN BURROW

Proposals to erect a *lapidarium* against the southern face of the north precinct wall of the abbey necessitated small-scale archaeological investigation in order to assess the stratification in the area and the implications of the proposed development. A trench 1m E—W × 3.85m N—S was therefore opened, extending southwards from

the face of the precinct wall, its western side being 20.1m E of the east jamb of the doorway in the wall adjacent to St. Patrick's chapel (NGR ST 4998 3892).

The earliest feature was undoubtedly the precinct wall itself, a massive structure about 6m high at this point, built wholly of stone and with a number of features of interest within the masonry. It would clearly repay a detailed survey.



The area to the south of the wall consists of a linear depression 4.60m wide bounded on the south by the edge of the lawn which extends over the whole abbey precinct. The excavated area lies some 30cm below this level and is used for the dumping of leaves. Firm ground below the leaf mould is some 60cm below the adjacent ground level on the lawn. There has clearly been some removal of soil from this area at some stage and stratigraphy may have been lost.

Natural clay (13) was reached at the southern end of the cutting, consisting of a dense, marly blue and yellow clay. A linear E—W feature (14) had been containing gravel, mortar and stone (12). One green-glazed late medieval sherd was found in this context.

After an entirely uncertain interval a well-constructed cobbled surface (8) was laid down with its southern edge 2.80m S of the precinct wall and parallel with it. Its northern side had been robbed and its original extent in this area is unknown, though it is probable that it ran up to the precinct wall. No mortar was used in the construction of the surface and no finds were made. Because of the limited aims of the excavation the cobbling was left in situ.

Adjacent to the south edge cobbling a rectangular pit c15cm deep (11) was dug into the natural clay. Its position and form suggest that it was contemporary with the use of the cobbling, though its purpose is unknown. The fill (10) contained one fragment of clay tile which is not closely dateable.

A wedge of stony clay (9) was next deposited over the filled up features 14 and 10, apparently a dump of material from the south. The cobbling passed out of use and was covered by a grey clay layer (7) containing 19th- and 20th-century material. This layer ran up to the precinct wall. North of the surviving cobbling it has been cut away (5 & 6). The whole area was then covered with leaf mould (4 & 3). Recent weathering of the precinct wall had deposited a wedge of material at its foot (2).

Medieval features may exist in this area, but have probably been somewhat truncated by later soil removal. A crucial matter is the date at which the adjacent lawn level was established, as it is very unlikely that the cobbling in particular would have been made after that time. The lateral extent of the cobbling is of course uncertain but probing suggested that it extends at least 5m E and W of the excavated area. It seems unlikely that the cobbling is medieval in view of the recent finds immediately above it, but it clearly is a feature of the precinct and thus merits record and further elucidation.

Thanks are extended to Stephen Minnitt and Cathe Burrow for their help.

Records are with the Somerset Sites and Structures Records.

TWO FARMS IN NORTH BREWHAM

MICHAEL MCGARVIE

BATT'S FARM, NORTH BREWHAM

The following information seeks to provide a historical background to the discovery of possible earthworks in a field adjacent to Batt's Farm, North Brewham, by Mr. Edward Besley¹. Batt's Farm was the site of the manor house of North Brewham and it was known from the 17th to the 19th centuries as North Court, which gives a clue to its legal status. It seems to have taken its present, and no doubt vernacular, name from Hugh Batt, the tenant in 1569². North Brewham was given to Bruton Priory by William de Mohun between 1142 and 1166³ and Batt's Farm appears to have become an occasional residence of the priors of Bruton. In 1411, Prior John Corsham gave a charter 'dated in the prior's principal chamber at Northbruham by Bruton'⁴. The prior of Bruton had the right to hold the hundred court and his residence at Batt's Farm may account for Sir Richard Colt Hoare's curious statement that the tithingmen of the hundred were obliged to meet at a gate near Pinkwood (which adjoins Batt's Farm) on the 3 May at the rising of the sun⁵.

Collinson mentions the chapel⁶ and is followed by Phelps⁷ and by the Ordnance Survey, presumably on their authority. There is no primary documentary or architectural evidence for a chapel at Batt's Farm. Not only are the ecclesiastical records silent but there is no mention of such a structure in the deeds of the property which go back to 1612⁸ or in the grant from the Crown of the farm to Sir Maurice Berkeley in 1546. It is, however, conceivable that the prior of Bruton had an oratory within his manor house, perhaps a super- or portable altar.

The existence of a splendid stone barn, dating back to the early 16th century, adjoining the farm may be partially responsible for the chapel tradition. It has handsome buttresses, one of them ornamented with a plain carved escutcheon, and some antiquaries have refused to accept that it can have been a mere barn, although it is

small fry compared with those on the Glastonbury estates. H. W. Underdown suggested that it was a church house⁹. There may well have been a few houses for those who served the prior's household here. John Pinkwood's residence in North Brewham with 'the garden before the gate of the court with the small house'¹⁰ must also have been nearby. A more likely site for the DMV is south of Hentshill Farm, west of the lane from North Brewham to Upton Noble (N.G.R. ST 7373 3376) where six houses are shown on the tithe map.

Another element may be the licence granted to Alexander Huscarl 'to have Chantrey served by his own priest in his oratory in Esthrop Manor-house'¹¹. 'He' was in fact 'her', Alexandra, Lady of Eastrip in Bruton parish. Field-name and other evidence suggest that the house was on the site of Colinslays Farm (N.R.G. ST 7370 5363) not more than a mile from Batt's Farm at the other end of Pinkwood Lane. Folk memory and precision rarely go together and the two sites may have become confused.

The fish pond of Brewham is mentioned in a charter of William de Mohun before 1166¹² and the 'fish pools and ponds lying on the east side of the said farmhouse' are reserved to Sir Maurice Berkeley and his heirs in the conveyance of Batt's Farm to Edward Barnard of Downside in 1612¹³. They are clearly shown on the North Brewham tithe map; the passage of the Wilts., Somerset and Weymouth Railway in 1853 destroyed them but vestiges of the banks can still be made out.

Horseley Farm

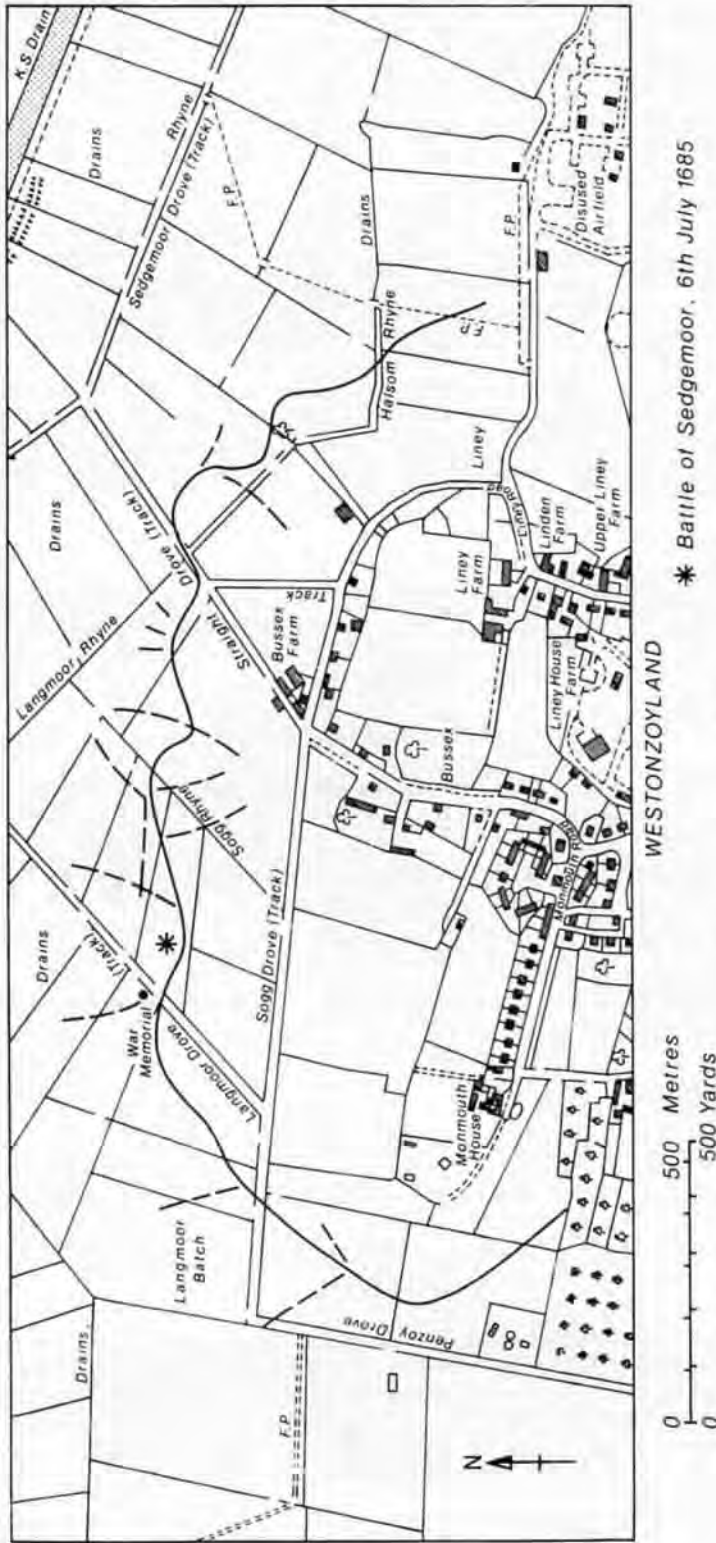
This should properly be referred to as Horsley, a detached part of North Brewham in South Brewham. Collinson¹⁴ calls it a depopulated hamlet. He was followed by Beresford¹⁵ who adds a mention of church ruins. There is obviously a serious confusion between Horsley Farm and Horseley in Gloucestershire, both of which belonged to Bruton Priory. Horsley is referred to as a grange in a charter dated between 1206 and 1242¹⁶ and is called the 'Farm of Horsleigh' in Sir Maurice Berkeley's will¹⁷.

- 1 F. Condict, *et al.* 'A Somerset Field Monument and Land Use Survey' *Proc. Som. Arch. Soc.*, 120, 90.
- 2 *Somerset Record Society*, 20, 18.
- 3 *Ibid.* 8, p.12.
- 4 Historical Manuscripts Commission, *Calendar of the Manuscripts of the Dean and Chapter of Wells*, 1, 460.
- 5 Wiltshire Record Office, ST/383/142.
- 6 J. Collinson, *The History and Antiquities of Somerset*, 1, 221.
- 7 W. Phelps, *The History and Antiquities of Somersershire*, 1, 272.
- 8 Wiltshire Record Office, ST/383/625.
- 9 H. W. Underdown, 'Witham Friary Boundaries and Place Names' *Somerset and Dorset Notes and Queries*, 10, pp. 24-5.
- 10 *Somerset Record Society*, 8, p.3.
- 11 *Ibid.* 1, 148.
- 12 *Ibid.* 8, p.2.
- 13 Wiltshire Record Office, ST/383/625.
- 14 Collinson, 1, 221.
- 15 M. W. Beresford, *The Lost Villages of England*, 385.
- 16 *Somerset Record Society*, 8, p.16.
- 17 F. Brown, *Abstracts of Somerset Wills*, Sixth Series, 101.

THE BUSSEX RHYNE

PAUL CURRAN

The Bussex rhine was a drainage channel that once ran around the northern outskirts of the village of Westonzoyland. It holds an important place in English history for the crucial part it played during the course of the battle of Sedgemoor in 1685. Until recently some historians have been uncertain of its exact course,¹ though conventional air photographs revealed part of its course.² Bernard Storer refers to contemporary maps which showed its course and suggested that its curving line indicated an old river bed as its origin³.



* Battle of Sedgemoor, 6th July 1685

—— Bussex Rhyne - - - - Tributaries of Bussex Rhyne

WESTONZOYLAND

0 500 Metres
0 500 Yards

A much more precise view of its course can be obtained by using colour infra-red aerial photography. This film records both visible and near infra-red wavelength of electromagnetic radiation by means of colour shift. Instead of being sensitised to the three primary colours of blue, green and red, as in the case of standard colour film, the three emulsion layers are sensitised to green (500 to 600 nm.), red (600 to 700 nm.) and near infra-red (700 to 900 nm.). Vegetation with a high infra-red and low red reflectance appears red, bare soil with low infra-red and high visible reflectance appears blue/green. By contrast, water which absorbs all infra-red radiation, appears black. This film can be used to map soil moisture patterns, as darkening in a field, whether it be crop covered (red) or fallow (blue/green), is usually indicative of an increase in soil moisture. Therefore, if colour infra-red photography is taken of the Westonzoyland area at a time of soil moisture deficit, the moister areas of the old drainage channel should be visible as darker bands on the photographs.

Vertical infra-red aerial photographs were taken at a scale of approximately 1 : 10,000 using a standard mapping camera on 6 July 1972 by Hunting Surveys Ltd., as part of a contract for the University of Bristol, on a grant awarded by the Natural Environment Research Council. The photographs clearly revealed most of the Bussex rhyne and its tributaries. Unfortunately there were some points where the channel was not visible, owing to the effect of man's land management over the past three hundred years. Therefore the site was again photographed from the air using colour infra-red film, this time using a light aircraft (Cessna F172) and a standard 35 mm camera. These photographs were taken on 24th June 1978 after a period of low rainfall by West Air Photography of Weston-super-Mare. At approximately the same time the author took similar colour infra-red photographs of the site from the roof of a Landrover, again using a 35 mm camera.

The extra details visible on these oblique photographs enabled the missing sections of the rhyne to be located and a map of the rhyne drawn (Fig. 1), though the plungeons or crossing places could not be located.

The direction of flow in the channel cannot be determined from the aerial photographs. The raised land to the west of the rhyne would make it an unlikely tributary of the river Parrett. The possibility of it being a tributary to the river Cary is much stronger, for Westonzoyland is built upon deposits of Burtle Beds and lias clays, the boundary of which roughly follows the outline of the village, running under the orchard to the west and the former airfield to the east. An irregular spring line along this boundary would support the theory of a rhyne fed by springs at both ends, with an outflow at one of the marked tributaries (Fig. 1), feeding into the Cary, now King's Sedgemoor Drain. This would imply an easterly flow for the western half and a westerly flow for the eastern half of the Bussex rhyne.

The writer wishes to acknowledge the Natural Environment Research Council and West Air Photography for providing the colour infra-red photographs; and to thank Mr A. Graves and Mr J. Lawrence for their advice, and Mr S. Godden for preparing the map, and Mrs J. Curran and Mr J. Lawrence for reading the manuscript.

- 1 C. Chenevix Trench, *The Western Rising* (1969); P. Earle, *Monmouth's Rebels* (1977); B. Little, *The Monmouth Episode* (1956).
- 2 P. Young and J. Adair, *Hastings to Culloden* (1964).
- 3 B. Storer, *Sedgemoor: its History and Natural History* (1972).