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ROMAN CROP PROCESSING ABOVE GALMINGTON STREAM: EXCAVATIONS AT COMEYTROWE, TAUNTON, IN 2019

JESSICA COOK AND JONATHAN HART

SUMMARY

Excavations above Galmington Stream, Comeytrowe, on the southern edge of Taunton were undertaken in advance of development. Two crop-processing ovens were revealed, and radiocarbon dates indicate that these were in use during the Mid to Late Roman period. No associated settlement was found, but the nature of the crop-processing activities, which included hardening grains prior to milling, suggest that settlement may be suspected nearby.

INTRODUCTION

In July and August 2019, Cotswold Archaeology (CA) undertook an excavation on land at Comeytrowe, Taunton (centred NGR: ST 205 230; Fig. 1). The excavation was undertaken for The Environmental Dimension Partnership (EDP) acting on behalf of the Comeytrowe Consortium in advance of a residential and mixed-use development.

The scope of the excavation was defined by EDP in consultation with Steve Membrely of the South West Heritage Trust (SWHT), the archaeological adviser to Somerset West and Taunton Council, and the excavation was undertaken in accordance with a *Written Scheme of Investigation* prepared by CA (2019) and approved by SWHT.

The site lies within a gently rolling landscape on the south-western fringe of Taunton and was agricultural land at the time of fieldwork. It is bisected by tributaries of Galmington Stream, which flows northwards through the central part of the site to join the River Tone. The undulating land varies from 62m to 40m aOD. The underlying bedrock comprises mudstone of the Triassic Branscombe Mudstone Formation; there are no superficial deposits (BGS 2019). The substrate was overlain by a clay subsoil, which was itself covered by a grey-brown clay silt topsoil. The land comprised fields prior to the development works reported on here.

A geophysical survey (GSB 2013) across the 116-ha site recorded several linear anomalies, which were tested by trial-trench evaluation (AC Archaeology 2014). A linear anomaly within the south-western

part of the site, just above Galmington Stream, was investigated by a single trench (Fig. 1, Area 1) and was interpreted as an infilled natural coombe, 14m wide and at least 1m deep (*ibid.*). It contained Bronze Age and Roman pottery and iron slag. A semi-complete Early Bronze Age Collared Urn recovered from the south-eastern corner of the site (Fig. 1, Area 2) during the evaluation came from the subsoil and is considered to have been residual, although its degree of preservation suggests that its point of discovery was near that of its original deposition.

Based on these preliminary works, excavation was undertaken in these two areas: Area 1 (0.42ha) was targeted on the natural coombe, whilst Area 2 (0.14ha) was located to investigate the area around the residual Bronze Age pottery (Fig. 1).

This report presents a summary of the main findings of the excavation. Full details are contained within an archive report, published on the *Reports Online* page of the CA website (<https://reports.cotswoldarchaeology.co.uk/> report no. CR0501_1). The physical site archive will be deposited with the South West Heritage Trust (accession number TTNCM 49/2019) and the digital data with the Archaeology Data Service.

RESULTS

The mudstone geological substrate was exposed across both areas. No archaeological remains were found within Area 2, and no additional Bronze Age finds came from this area. Within Area 1, a small number of archaeological features were present, described here.

Period 1: later prehistoric (Fig. 2)

The linear feature identified during the preliminary works and provisionally interpreted as a natural coombe was exposed for a length of 120m. Excavation demonstrated that it was indeed a natural coombe, 16.5m wide and 1.1m deep, with moderately sloping sides leading to a flat base. A series of silty clay fills suggest natural infilling over a long duration, something reflected in the small, diverse,

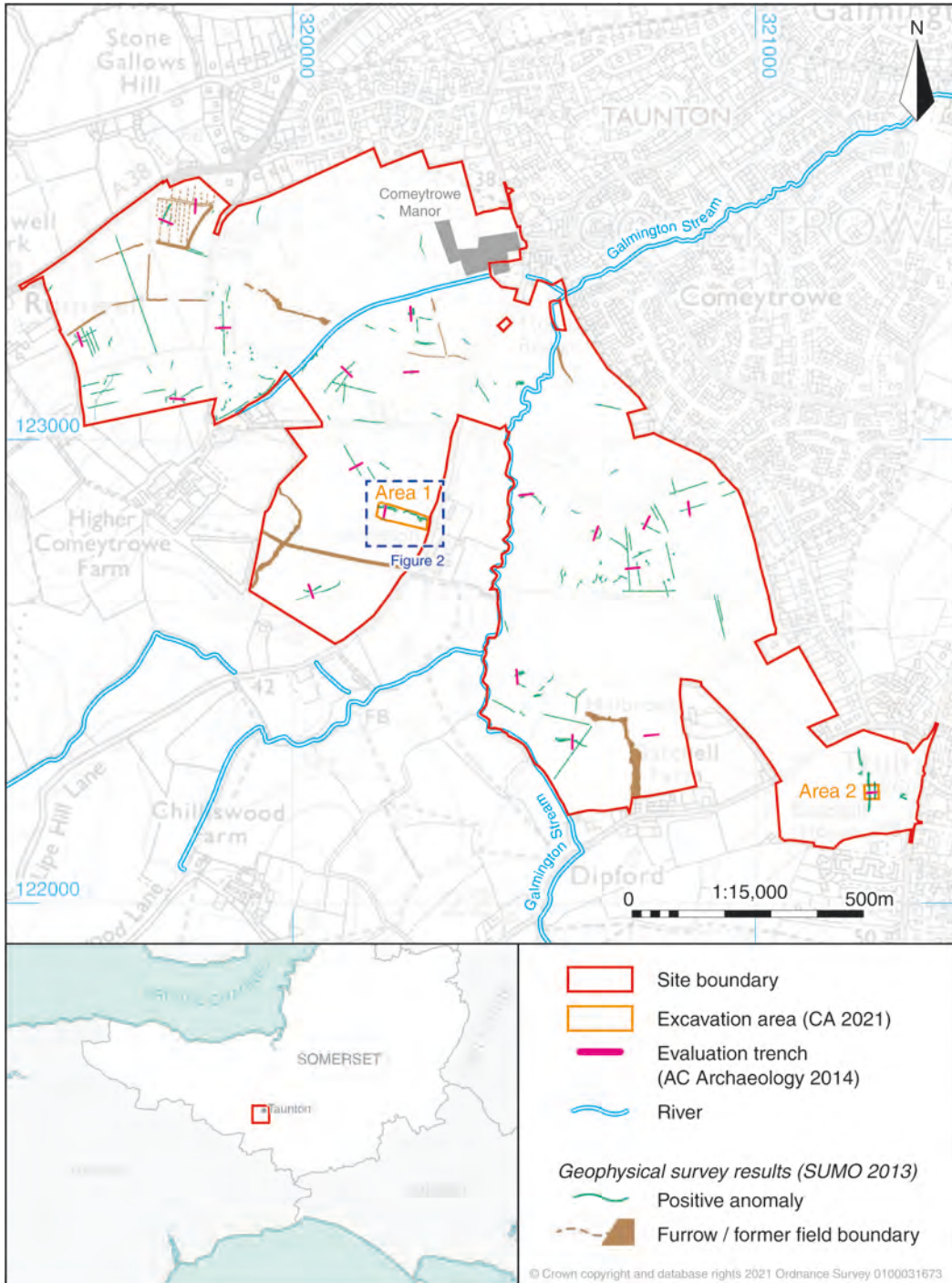


Fig. 1 Site location (1:15,000)

finds assemblage. The second fill produced a sherd of handmade pottery broadly datable as late prehistoric to add to the Bronze Age material recovered in the evaluation. The upper fill produced Roman finds as described below.

Period 1: Roman (Fig. 2)

The upper fill of the coombe included a dump of burnt material, probably derived from two Roman crop-processing ovens in the immediate vicinity (described below) and rich in charred cereal remains, some identifiable as spelt wheat. This fill also produced a small quantity of Roman pottery, including a sherd of Central Gaulish samian datable to the mid to late 2nd century.

Oven 1023 was located 9m north of the coombe and had been built into a north-west/south-east aligned construction cut. The lower courses of the oven walling survived, built from clay-bonded limestones and sandstones, creating an oven 3.5m long and 2m wide, surviving to a depth of 0.3m. The fire pit was at the south-eastern end, connected via a flue to the T-shaped oven. A charcoal-rich grey silty clay within the fire pit contained pottery broadly datable as Roman. Soil samples from the oven were dominated by charred cereal remains, predominantly of hulled wheat, from which spelt (*Triticum spelta*) was specifically identifiable. Grains outnumbered chaff elements, and the assemblage is characteristic of a stage of crop processing during which cleaned grains are taken from storage and heated, which hardens them to facilitate milling for flour (van der Veen 1989). Some of the remains may reflect an earlier stage of processing, where the winnowed grains collected during harvest are parched to reduce germination during storage (Hillman 1981; 1984). A few grains had germinated, which may have been accidental or might indicate use for malting as part of brewing. The assemblage also included charred seeds from wild species associated with arable environments.

A charred cereal grain from the oven was directly radiocarbon dated to within cal. AD 121-236 (95.4% probability, Oxcal v4.4.2, SUERC-98306: 1869 ± 25 BP) suggesting use during the 2nd or early 3rd century. The upper parts of the oven were infilled with debris from its demolition, which included fired clay likely derived from a superstructure.

Some 35m to the south-east, the second oven, 1039, was cut into the upper fill of the coombe. The flue had been cut to a shallow depth by a later drainage gully. This oven was built within a north/south aligned cut, 3.4m long and 1.8m wide, and was of similar construction to oven 1023, with the fire

pit to the south and the T-shaped stone-lined oven to the north, the two connected by a narrow flue. The construction cut backfill produced pottery of the mid 2nd to 4th centuries, along with an iron strip. Charcoal-rich fills from within the oven were again dominated by the remains of spelt wheat and weed seeds associated with arable environments, and these indicate similar uses for the oven to those suggested for oven 1023. One of the spelt grains produced a radiocarbon date range of cal. AD 221-349 (95.4% probability, Oxcal v4.4.2, SUERC-98307: 1776 ± 25 BP), which indicates that this is the later of the two ovens. The two radiocarbon dates are not statistically consistent (failing a chi-squared test) indicating that the individual cereal grains, and by implication the ovens, are likely of different date.

Four small pits were likely contemporary with the ovens. Three of these were behind the fire pit of oven 1023, whilst the remaining pit was cut into the upper coombe fill mid-way between the two ovens. All had charcoal-rich fills which included fired clay, and two of the pits produced Roman pottery. An unidentified function associated with crop processing seems likely for these.

Later remains included a post-medieval ditch (1017) draining into the largely infilled coombe, and there were a number of recent field drains.

DISCUSSION

The coombe seems to have filled in gradually, receiving cultural material during the Bronze Age and into the Roman period, thereafter remaining as a slight hollow into the post-medieval period, at which time it provided an outflow for drainage. On the western side of the Galmington Stream valley was a focus for crop-processing in the Mid to Late Roman period, represented by two ovens and four pits, apparently standing in isolation from other features and beyond any settlement.

Crop-processing ovens are attested in the British Isles from prehistory through to the post-medieval period, and indeed the process remains a necessary practice in temperate climates in order to reduce the germination of stored grains (Hillman 1981; 1984; Lodwick with Brindle 2017, 48; Comeau and Burrow 2021, 112, 114). The forms of such ovens varied, but all produced a gentle heat which was applied to the grains. The most recent meta study of crop-processing ovens is focused on Wales (Comeau and Burrow 2021), but many of its findings are applicable to the wider British Isles, as indicated by meta studies undertaken as part of the Roman Rural Settlement Project (Smith *et al.* 2016; Allen *et al.* 2017). The Welsh study found that Roman ovens were well attested and of those,

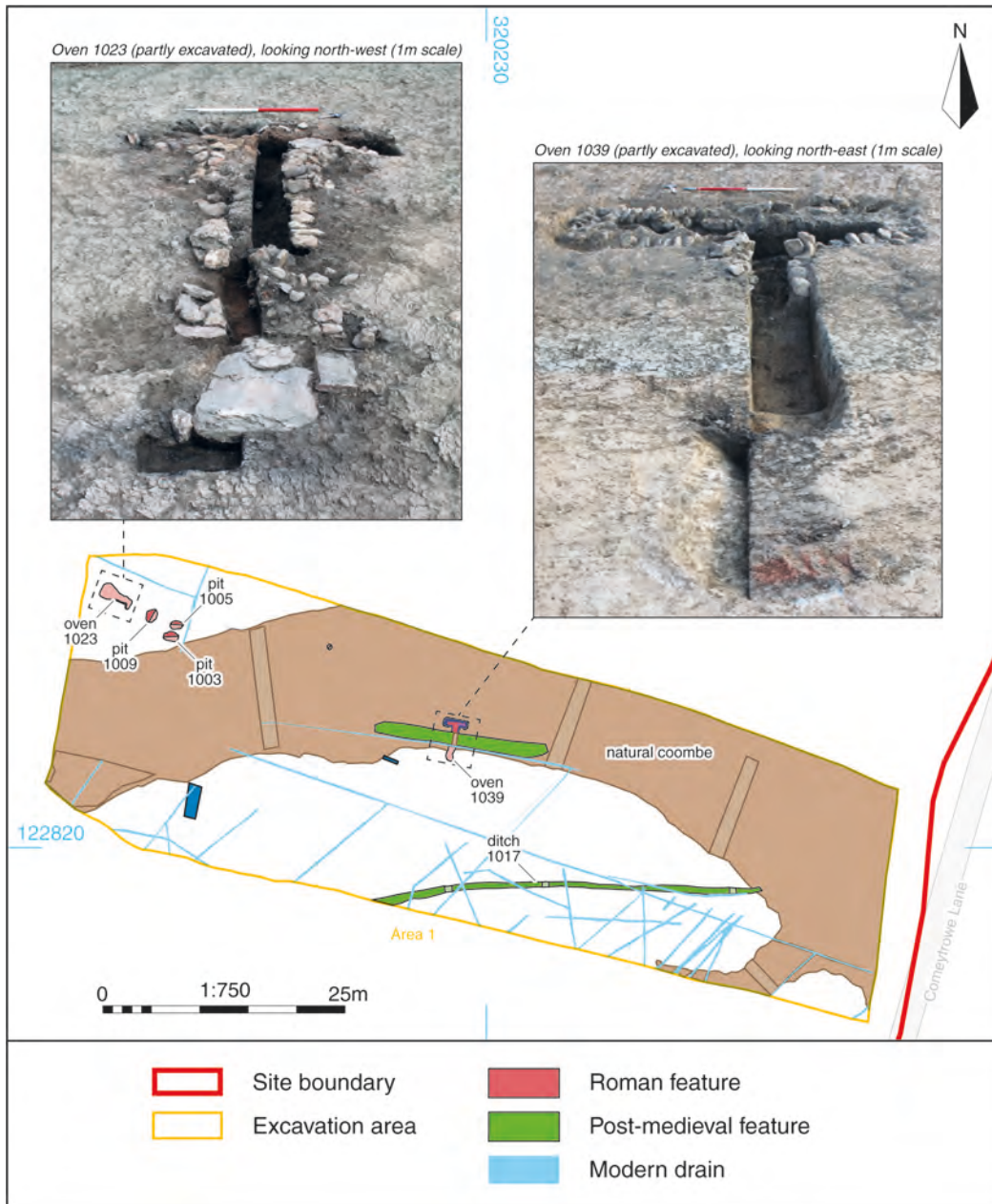


Fig. 2 Excavation Area 1 (1:750) and photographs of crop-drying ovens partly excavated

one third were of the T-shaped form evidenced at Comeytrowe (Comeau and Burrow 2021, 120, table 1). Indeed, the Welsh meta study indicated that the T-shaped form was exclusively Roman (*ibid.*, 122). Although the ways in which these Roman examples

were used is presently not well understood, the provision of well-built permanent structures might imply production levels beyond simple subsistence, allowing, for example, for surpluses for trade and tax (Lodwick with Brindle 2017, 55; Comeau and Burrow

2021, 112, 114). However, this supposition requires further research. In post-Roman times, for which there is documentary evidence, crop-processing ovens located away from settlement centres served to parch freshly harvested and winnowed crops close to source, among the arable fields themselves, prior to the parched crops being transported to settlement centres for secure storage (Rackham 2020, 172; Comeau and Burrow 2021, 114).

In some ways, the Comeytrove ovens fit the post-Roman model of field ovens suggested above: they were seemingly located away from any settlement, and crop parching may have been among their uses. However, they also appear to have been used for grain hardening prior to milling, and it seems unlikely that this would have been undertaken far from where the grains had been stored or where they were to be milled. On this basis, location close to a settlement or a mill seems likely, and in this rural area a farmstead or minor villa (or perhaps a mill associated with a villa) may be suspected. No such settlement was found within the site, however, and none is recorded in the Historic Environment Record around Comeytrove. It is conceivable that one was located just south-west of the site on the high ground east of Higher Comeytrove Farm, or on the slight plateau on the valley side immediately east of the ovens, a site currently occupied by an abattoir, or at Comeytrove Manor, 600m north of the site. However, in the absence of any evidence, these suggestions must remain speculative. In the Comeytrove ovens, some barley was processed, but the main crop, certainly in the later firings, was spelt wheat, the dominant wheat grown during the Roman period within this part of the British Isles (Greig 1991; Lodwick with Brindle 2017, table 2.6).

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THE WEDMORE COIN HOARD OF 1853

STEPHEN MINNITT

Coin hoards, of all periods, discovered in the past often have frustratingly limited details about circumstances and content. This note is focussed on one such hoard. It is the largest hoard of later Anglo-Saxon silver pennies found in the county that includes a significant proportion of coins struck at local mints. They range in date from Aethelred II's Helmet type (c.1003-09) to Edward the Confessor's PACX type (c. 1042-44) and derive from a wide range of mints across England including Southampton, Winchester, Canterbury, London, Leicester, Lincoln, Stamford and Oxford (Symonds 1923, 30-37). Of these, a number were from West Country mints, including Axbridge, Barnstaple, Bruton, Crewkerne, Exeter, Ilchester, Taunton, and Watchet. The hoard was buried in 1042, or shortly afterwards, early in the reign of Edward the Confessor. Although far larger, the Chew Valley hoard is later in date and only contained a few Somerset mint coins all struck in Bath in the reign of Harold II (Gareth Williams pers. comm.). Circumstances and records mean that the number and details of the coins in the Wedmore

hoard will never be established with certainty but this paper pulls together all that is known, in particular the post-discovery events. References below cited as PSANHS refer to the *Proceedings of the Somerset Archaeological and Natural History Society*.

The hoard, contained in an earthenware bowl, was discovered in March 1853 by John Tucker Coles while he was widening the churchyard path at St Mary's Church, Wedmore. Coles, a 43-year-old labourer, was married to stay maker Elizabeth and lived in Quab Street, Wedmore, with their five children (1851 Census).

A sherd from the bowl that contained the coin hoard survives and is in the care of the South West Heritage Trust Museums Service (TTNCM 69/1997). A watercolour illustration of the piece, a spout, with the caption: 'Part of an ancient vessel found in the churchyard of Wedmore, Somerset March 1853 containing coins of Aethelred, Cnut, Harold I, Harthacnut, Edward the Confessor, &c' (Fig. 1) is in the Somerset Archaeological and Natural History Society's collection and is cared for by the Trust (SHC,



Fig. 1 Watercolour illustration of the surviving fragment of the bowl that contained the Wedmore hoard

DD/SAS/c795/SX/110). The artist is unknown but the illustration has AB.1 written on the back in pencil which may indicate that it was once in the possession of Arthur Bulleid. Bulleid was an accomplished artist/illustrator and is therefore most unlikely to have been responsible for the watercolour!

Shortly after the hoard's discovery, The Vicar of Wedmore, The Reverend John Kempthorne, reported the coins, an inquest was held, the find was declared to be Treasure Trove and the coins in Coles' possession were claimed by the Treasury. Prior to the inquest an unknown number of coins had been sold or given away by Coles. Twelve coins from the hoard had entered the collection of the Somerset Archaeological and Natural History Society, through Mr. R. P. Edwards, a member of the Society (PSANHS iv, 1853, 12). In his report to the Annual Meeting of the Society held at Yeovil on 13 September 1853 the Reverend F. W. Warre, one of the Secretaries to the Society, referred to the acquisition of these coins and the subsequent events states: 'Among the most valuable [objects deposited and presented] since the last meeting are twelve curious Anglo-Saxon coins discovered in Wedmore churchyard. These coins were claimed by the Lords of the Treasury, and of course were given up; but upon a memorial being presented to them, seven were restored, and those which were retained for the British Museum, have been replaced by others of equal rarity and value, of which there were duplicates in that collection.' (PSANHS iv, 1853, 3). It is not known whether the duplicate coins were from the British Museum's Wedmore hoard holdings or were general duplicates from the collection. Robert Phippen Edwards (1802-76) was an attorney at law and lived at Sand Hall, Wedmore (1851 census).

A series of letters in the Axbridge Borough Records, cared for by the South West Heritage Trust, shed light on events (SHC, D/B/AX/38/24/13) They begin with a letter sent by the Treasury to Coles on 20 April 1853:

John Tucker Coles.

The Lords of Her Majestys Treasury are desirous that the coins found by you at Wedmore, or as many as can be collected, should at once be transmitted to the Treasury for examination in order to enable their Lordships to determine as to the disposition of such coins and I have therefore to request that without further delay you will transmit to me of such coins as are in your possession and will inform me what you have done with the remainder of them.

There can be no doubt that all the coins are

*legally the property of the Crown and can be recovered by the process of law and I have authority to state that if you transmit me the coins as directed, you will be liberally dealt with and indemnified against all expenses in regard to this matter. I am Sir your obedt. Servt
H. R. Reynolds, Solr. to H.M. Treasury.*

Further correspondence from the Treasury quickly followed:

Sir

Having been informed that you are in possession of 26 ancient silver coins lately found in the churchyard of Wedmore, Wells, I beg to acquaint you that John Tucker Coles from whom I understand you attained them, was not authorised to deliver to you such coins, the same being the property of Her Majesty by virtue of Her Royal Prerogative.

I have therefore to desire that you will forthwith transmit to me the coins in question. Any application you may wish to address to the Lords of the Treasury regarding them may be enclosed to me and will be taken into consideration on receipt of the coins.

I am Sir your obedt servant

H. R. Reynolds Solr to H.M. Treasury.

This letter was sent on 22 April 1853 to Richard Trew (1793-1874), Clerk to the Union at Axbridge, who also served as mayor of the town. Trew replied on 27 April 1853. He denied that he had received 26 coins from Coles. However, he did say that some weeks previously he had bought 'a few coins of a person but not of Coles'. Trew doesn't record how many coins he bought but by the time of his response he only had six. Considering the others that had been in his possession to be of little value, he had given some to two friends, a few others were 'misaid' and some were given to his son who had recently left England. He said that he would send the six but hoped that after inspection they would be returned even if it proved that they came from the Wedmore hoard.

The Treasury responded to Trew on 29 April 1853: 'Sir [] you will have the goodness to send me the 6 coins you have, which I understand to have formed part of the collection found by Coles, I can undertake that such of them as may not be required to be deposited in the British Museum will be returned, and that you will be repaid what you gave for such, if any of them, as may be retained. Your Ob Servt H. R. Reynolds.'



Fig. 2 The nine coins from the Wedmore hoard, all from the reign of Cnut, in the collection of the Somerset Archaeological and Natural History Society and cared for by the South West Heritage Trust. The upper six were donated by Mrs G. W. Saunders, the lower three by R. P. Edwards

There is a draft response by Trew to the letter from the Treasury dated 9 May 1853 written to accompany the coins. Four and a half of the seven lines in the draft are crossed out. The latter refer to the fact that he hadn't bought the coins, they were only in his care, and that if any were retained, he would have to pay for them. The, presumably curtailed, final version of the letter, together with the coins, was clearly sent on the 9th of May as a note confirming receipt of the coins was sent by the Treasury to Trew on the 10th of May.

A decision on the future of the six coins was quickly made. A letter from the Treasury, dated 16 May 1853, records that four of them were returned to Trew. The British Museum acquired the other two. Rather than payment for the retained coins, the Solicitor sent two coins in exchange. They are described as being "... pieces of the same collection", suggesting that they were from the Wedmore hoard, and of equal value to the coins acquired by the British Museum. The replacement coins were from the reign of Cnut as,

probably, were the four returned coins. It is not known what subsequently became of Trew's coins.

Henry Symonds was inspired to write a paper on the hoard following the donation of six coins from the hoard to the Somerset Archaeological and Natural History Society by Mrs G. W. Saunders, R. P. Edwards' granddaughter, in 1923 (Symonds 1923, 30-37). The coins were all from the reign of Cnut and derived from the mints of Exeter (1), Lincoln (3) and London (2). Symonds contacted the British Museum as part of his research and was informed that 148 coins from the hoard had been acquired by the museum in June 1853 'by purchase from the Lords of the Treasury'. They had 'been selected from about 200 specimens claimed as treasure-trove being part of a larger number found at Wedmore'. This implies that the British Museum had the option to acquire more than 148 coins but chose not to. Symonds emphasised the importance of a hoard of this period: 'It may be added that the discovery in this county of a hoard of



*Fig. 3 a) The inscription in Wedmore churchyard recording the discovery of the coin hoard;
b) Its condition had markedly deteriorated by December 2020*

Anglo-Saxon money, as distinguished from sporadic finds of single coins, is in itself a very exceptional incident when compared with the almost innumerable finds of Roman currency in the same territory.'

Symonds recorded the reverse legends of the Somerset mint coins but simply listed the names of the mints outside the county. He also notes that of the original twelve coins in the Society's collection, of which seven were certainly from the hoard, only three were labelled as such. The others had presumably been merged into the general collection of Anglo-Saxon pennies. However, those three coins are of particular importance as they were struck at Somerset mints (Fig. 2, lower three coins). They are all of Cnut's quatrefoil type (c. 1017-23). One is from the Bruton mint (moneyer Aelfelm) and two are from Ilchester (moneyers Oswie and Wulfelm).

The coins held by the British Museum are noted in Grueber and Keary (1887), but not as a separate listing, and this work was revised by Dolley and Strudwick (1955, 26-59) who established that the number of coins acquired by the British Museum was 180. The coins derive from the reigns of Aethelred II (1), Cnut (141), Harold I (24) and Edward the Confessor (5).

Anthony Gunstone, whilst undertaking research on the history of the Society's Anglo-Saxon coin collection for his volume on Iron Age, Anglo-Saxon

and Anglo-Norman coins in collections in West Country museums in 1970 added to knowledge of events relating to the Wedmore hoard (Gunstone 1977, xxiv-xxv). He felt it 'safe to assume' six coins of Cnut and one of Harthacnut formed part of Edwards' 1853 donation to the Society. If correct, four would certainly have been part of the hoard and the remainder replacements from the British Museum, possibly from the hoard, or possibly not. In 1970 the decision was taken by the Society to sell 30 non-Somerset mint coins in order to raise money for the acquisition of local material. Coins sold included the seven referred to above and possibly others derived from the hoard.

The question remains, how many coins were in the hoard? It is understandable that the usual figure cited is simply over 200. The exact figure will never be known, not least because an unknown number were disposed of by Coles before the legal process began. However, accepting the various figures cited above: 180 coins in the British Museum, twelve coins donated to SANHS by Edwards, 26 held by Trew and six given to SANHS by Mrs Saunders, there were at least 224 coins in the hoard. It is probably fair to assume that the six coins held by Saunders derived from Edwards and were not declared by the latter following the Treasury's action over his donation of coins to the Society. A detailed catalogue of all

surviving coins, known, or assumed, to have formed part of this hoard has yet to be prepared and published.

The discovery of the hoard was clearly considered to be an important local event as 40 years later the find was recorded as part of an inscription in Wedmore churchyard (Fig. 3). The primary purpose of the inscription was to mark the marriage of the Duke of York and Princess Mary of Teck in 1893 but in the lower part was the following: 'ABOUT 3 YARDS N.E. OF THIS SPOT, IN MARCH 1853, WAS FOUND A CROCK CONTAINING MORE THAN 200 SILVER COINS OF THE TIME OF KINGS ETHELRED, CANUTE AND HAROLD. THERE THEY HAD LAID COVERED AND HID FOR 800 YEARS. [...].' Sadly, due to the degradation of the stone only the first three lines of this this element of the inscription now survive.

In the 19th century a reward for declaring and handing over a find determined to be Treasure Trove was by no means guaranteed. In the case of the Wedmore hoard the Treasury chose to reimburse those holding coins acquired by the British Museum either with replacements of equal value or by money equating to the coins' value. Things may not have ended happily for Coles. He is reputed to have received a reward for handing over the coins in his possession which enabled him and his family to emigrate to America where, again reputedly, he had the misfortune to be killed in the Civil War (Hervey 1898, 305-6). Confirmation of these events has not been found. If correct, Coles is unlikely to have died as a combatant as by then he was in his 50s.

As an aside, another and unrelated Anglo-Saxon

coin was found in Wedmore churchyard. A silver penny of Aethelberht, king of Wessex from 860-65, discovered by Tom Wall while digging a grave and subsequently reported to S. H. A. Hervey (1898, 306). The whereabouts of this coin is unknown.

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A NOTE ON THE TOPONYM 'NINE BARROWS' AT PRIDDY

NICK CORCOS

INTRODUCTION

The toponym 'Nine Barrows' appears to do exactly what it says on the tin. It is applied to the celebrated group of Bronze Age tumuli which lies at the western end of the Mendip plateau near Priddy, and which, by long convention, is counted as nine. However, this attribution has always been problematic – the name, as it has been used both historically, and up to the present day, actually applies to a linear cemetery of seven barrows, at the summit of North Hill, plus a further two, which seem at first glance not to be part of the main group. The southernmost of the two singletons lies nearly 180m north of the northernmost of the main group of seven, so that the separation is in fact considerable (Fig. 1). The main group, and the two 'subsidiary' barrows, are separated by a boundary. Historically, this marked the division between Chewton Mendip to the north, and land of the Dean and Chapter of Wells to the south. The line of this boundary had certainly been established by the late 13th century; it is, though, likely to be earlier, and

Frances Neale (1976, 78, fig. 11, 78) maps at least a part of it as being potentially of early medieval origin.

While all nine barrows are subject to formal Historic England scheduling, a distinction is drawn between the main group of seven, and the two outliers; the gap in between the two groups is not scheduled. The entire group of nine is given a single number on the Somerset HER, and is referred to there as 'Priddy Nine Barrows cemetery'. The individual barrows are also referenced by their own HER numbers, as is standard practice. It has recently been suggested that the gap is explicable due to the presence of a low bank, dated to the Neolithic period. This runs roughly east-west to the south of the two outlying barrows, and to the north of the main group (Lewis *et al.* 2018). It remains unclear, however, what we should infer from this observation in terms of our understanding of the relationship between the two barrow groups. Dr Jodie Lewis (pers. comm.) remarks that:

I still consider that these two barrows are separate [from the main group of seven] - not

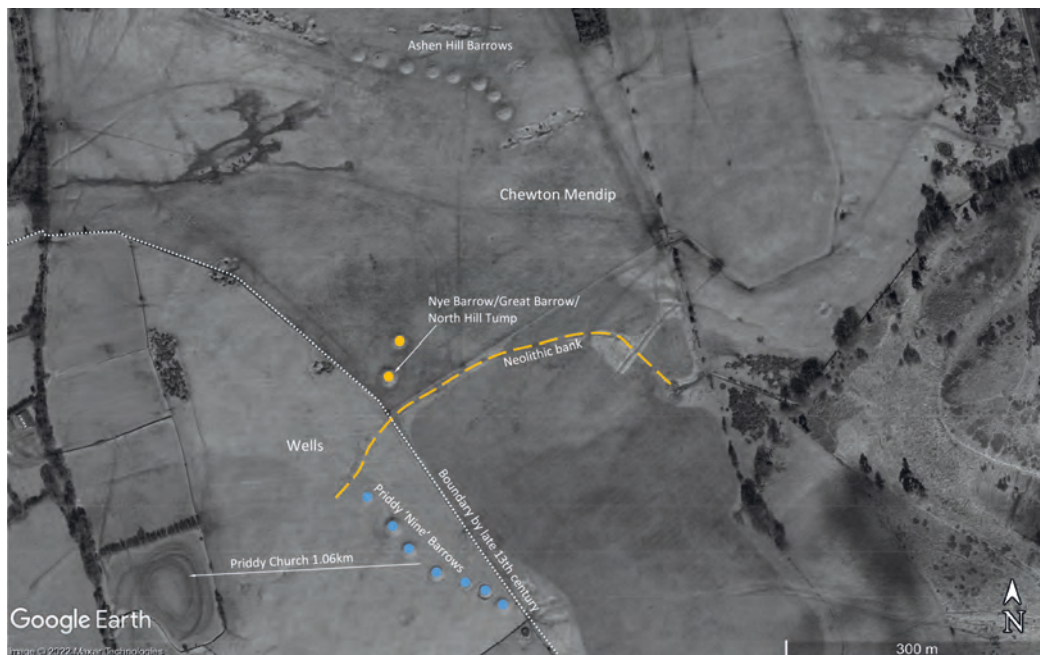


Fig. 1 Satellite image of the area highlighting salient features

just because of the gap but also the orientation and skylining issues. It is a difficult issue because in many ways the whole of North Hill is a barrow cemetery and Bronze Age populations may have viewed it thus. The thrust here I think is how the barrows were viewed (literally and otherwise) when they were named in the medieval period, rather than the Bronze Age.

HISTORICAL CONFUSION

The literature on the Bronze Age barrows of the Mendip plateau is voluminous. However, very useful ‘short cuts’ both to that literature, and to the latest thinking on the nature, modes of construction and dates of these iconic features, are provided by a number of recent authors (Mullin 2011; Lewis and Mullin 2012; Jamieson 2015, 58-72). North Hill is actually home to two separate barrow groups, the Nine Barrows themselves, and the Ashen Hill group, the latter consisting of eight individual monuments (Fig. 1). These are similar to the Nine Barrows in terms of both the morphology of the individual mounds, and their disposition as a linear cemetery. The Ashen Hill barrows lie just under 600m north of the Nine Barrows group, but the Chewton Mendip tithe map (1839) refers to the field in which they lie as ‘The Nine Barrow Lot’.

Such confusion appears to be of long standing. Christopher Greenwood’s map of Somerset (1822) also identifies what is clearly the Ashen Hill group, as Priddy Nine Barrows (Harley and Dunning 1981). However, the First Edition OS 1” map of this area, dated 1817, correctly identifies the Nine Barrows, and is more accurate than Greenwood in terms of their physical location (Cassini 2007). This is despite the fact that Greenwood actually used, in his own work, a mass of data for Somerset, including full triangulations, which the OS had already published (Harley and Dunning 1981, 12-16).

In the early 1970s, Leslie Grinsell produced his still indispensable survey of the Mendip barrows, including his review of those monuments in north and east Somerset, where the Priddy Nine Barrows lie. Grinsell (1971) established an identification system based on location by parish, and then numbering of barrows (from 1) within each individual parish. Of the group that is currently counted as constituting

the Priddy Nine Barrows, the two ‘outlying’ barrows are Grinsell’s Chewton Mendip 13-14, and the main group of seven are his Priddy 28-34. It was only later that Grinsell himself, very aptly, provided the definitive identification of the Nine Barrows, as a rebuttal of an earlier suggestion made by A. T. Wicks nearly 30 years earlier (Wicks 1953; Grinsell 1982). Wicks had suggested that what is now the Ashen Hill group should be regarded as the Nine Barrows.

HISTORICAL SOURCES FOR THE NAME

Grinsell deals with the Nine Barrows together, under Chewton Mendip, and, very usefully, he further presents the various ways in which the name has been recorded in documents from the late 13th century onwards, with references. His source is given as an unpublished thesis by Turner (1950; Grinsell 1971, 71). He notes what is apparently the earliest known occurrence of Nine Barrows, from 1295/96, with a spelling of *Nigheberewes*, but interestingly, he makes no comment whatsoever on this form. He seems merely to assume that it is simply an early form of Nine Barrows, perhaps implying the possibility of an error on the part of the scribe who copied the document. He also presents a spelling of *Nye Barrow*, from a ‘diagrammatic’ map of the bounds of Chewton, now in the Somerset Record Office (DD/WG/Map/3), which he suggests is an 18th-century copy of a 17th-century original (*ibid.*, 67). Again, he suggests, among other things, that this is simply a corruption of Nine Barrows. Although undated, the SRO catalogue regards this map as an original 17th-century document, dating it to c. 1640, calling it ‘Mindery Lot – Chewton Plain’. It is notable that this survey refers to Nye Barrow (ie singular), not ‘Nye Barrows’, plural. The position on the boundary shows clearly that the general location of the Nine Barrows group was intended, but it is also the case that ‘Nye Barrow’ does for a time at least, seem to have been applied to just a single barrow within the group (Fig. 1).¹

Grinsell’s (1971, 71) source for the 1296 spelling is given as Turner (1950). Turner does indeed present the spelling of *Nigheberewes*, and, like Grinsell after him, raises no questions or concerns about the spelling. He also seems simply to presume that the *intended* first element of this name should be taken as ‘nine’; his lack of further comment on this form

¹ The Chewton Estate retains a number of important historic maps in its own possession but these are unfortunately not generally accessible for research purposes. Most notable is a detailed map of Chewton manor dated 1794, for which, however, the accompanying book of reference is in the SHC, DD/WG/4/1/14.

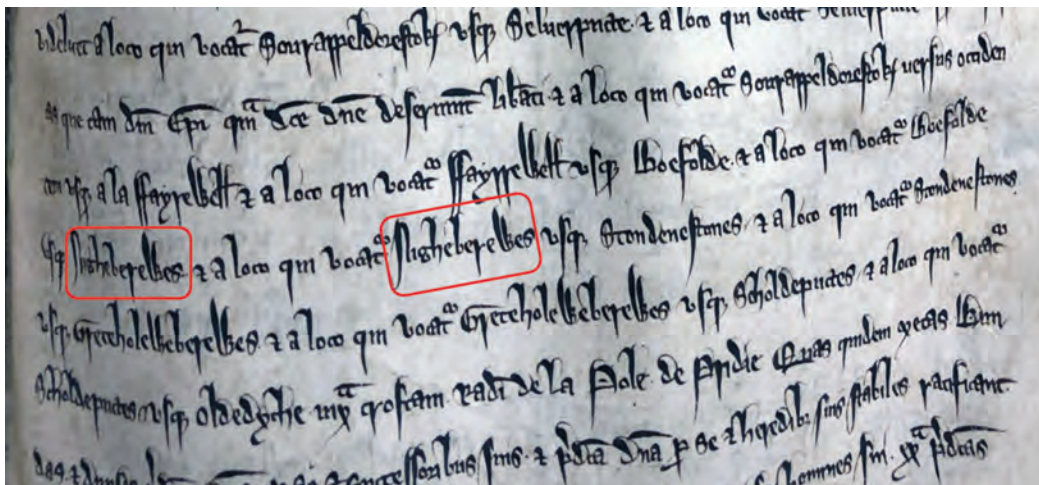


Fig. 2 Extract from f. 121 of the *Liber Albus I*, Wells Dean and Chapter Library, with the two occurrences of *Nigheberewes* highlighted. (By kind permission of the Archivist for the Dean and Chapter)

of the name, might suggest an inference that it was a straightforward scribal slip (Turner 1950, 102).

Turner quotes as his source the medieval manuscript known as the *Liber Albus I*, now in the Cathedral Library at Wells: a miscellaneous collection of documents seemingly begun c. 1240 and containing records running to the very end of the 14th century. It is, however, not completely clear from Turner's account whether he was working from the manuscript itself, or from the transcriptions of Wells mss published in two volumes by the Royal Commission on Historical Manuscripts (RCHM 1907 and 1914). The key document is an *inspeximus* dated 1296,² but referring to an agreement made a year earlier (Fig. 2). This relates to the boundary between the Dean and Chapter's lands to the south, in the parish of St Cuthbert Out, and those of the manor of Chewton Mendip to the north. More strictly, it is a restatement and confirmation of an *existing* boundary (RCHM 1907, Vol. 1, 158). One of the boundary points is recorded by RCHM as *Nigheberewes*, and as we have already seen, other authorities seem to have assumed that the first element in this toponym ought to have been 'nine'.

J. W. Gough (1967, 93-94, and fns 2, 3 and 4) also discussed this document and its bounds. He remarks that 'perhaps *Nigheberewes* is Nine Barrows, for this

point is marked as 'Nyebarrow' on the old Chewton boundaries map....' (*ibid.*). So, again, the presumption seems to be that *Nighe*=nine. It seems clear from his bibliography that Gough, quite reasonably, relied on the published RCHM transcript, and did not have recourse to the ms of the *Liber Albus I* itself (see also Thomson 2011, 206-10, for an examination of medieval and early medieval historical references both to Priddy and to its surrounding landscape). Both Gough and Grinsell make reference to spellings of 'Nye', and the latter identifies 'Nye Barrow' as the Great Barrow (his Chewton Mendip 14) from several different 18th-century perambulations. This is the southernmost of the two northern outliers to the main Priddy Nine Barrows group (better identified by its HER number 23243). It was also occasionally known as North Hill Tump, although Grinsell further speculates that this name might also have been used of the entire group (Grinsell 1971, 67 and 71; and Fig. 1). The fundamental point here is that a name form 'Nye', or variations thereof, was current in the mid-17th century, but that by the mid-18th century at the latest, this had become 'Nine'. The earliest surviving map of the area which records the name as 'Nine', appears to be the survey of Chewton manor made by John Rocque in 1740, now in the SHC.³

However, because of the late 13th-century spelling,

² The formal examination and confirmation, or otherwise, of the validity of an earlier charter, letters patent, or other document usually involving some kind of agreement between two or more parties.

³ DD/WG/Map/1.

Nighe, it is far more likely that this and its 17th-century development ‘Nye’ represent the original, and crucially the intended form of the name. Had the late 13th-century scribe wished to use a word explicitly for the number ‘nine’, he would have had perfectly good forms available to him, descended from Old English *nigon*. This might, for example, have given rise to a mid-16th-century form, *Neghen* (for this and other examples of ‘nine’ in field names, see Cavill 2018, 298-99; see also Smith 1956, 50). Recourse to the original ms of the Liber Albus I (f. 121) shows that the RCHM was indeed correct in its transcription of the full word as *Nigheberewes*.

The RCHM transcript does not, however, present a literally verbatim account, for it includes only a single occurrence of the word, whereas in the ms, *Nigheberewes* occurs twice (Fig. 2). In the ms, the description of the bound takes it up *to* the *Nigheberewes* (first occurrence); and then *from* *Nigheberewes* to the next point (second occurrence); the RCHM account only includes the *first* occurrence of the word, *to* the boundary point. It is also crucial to add that there does not seem any good reason to reject as incorrect, or a mistake, the belief that the word, here in its Middle English form, is a plural – it seems very clear that the scribe, and/or his exemplar, intended posterity to understand that he was talking about more than one barrow.

Had the first element of this word come ultimately from OE *nigon*, we would almost certainly expect the second ‘n’ to survive transmission, and to be expressed in a late 13th-century spelling such as the one that we have. There is of course no such ‘n’ in *Nigheberewes* where we would expect to see it, in the medial position. Dr Michael Costen (pers. comm.) refers to a Middle English form of the word *nigh*, which is *nezen*. It is his view that this form ‘could easily retain the terminal ‘n’ and be confused with ‘nine’’. This might, for example, have given rise to a (completely theoretical) form such as *nezenberewes* or something similar, but for even the temporary existence and currency of which there is no evidence.

All this being so, we can have no good reason to doubt that the first element of this toponym, in the late 13th century, is Middle English *nigh*, ‘near’, ultimately from Old English *nēah* (Cavill 2018, 293, who gives other examples of field names containing this word). It is therefore the contention here that we should now take this late 13th-century spelling at face value, and move away from the idea that it is simply a garbled or misunderstood form of ‘nine’. This original form seems to have persisted as ‘Nye’, or variations thereof, into the 17th and possibly the early 18th century, although by then, its influence had waned and it was applied to only a single barrow.

The late 13th-century boundary point is probably a reference, therefore, to ‘the near/est barrows’, referring to a part or the whole of the group which by the 18th century had become ‘Nine Barrows’; this perhaps occurred in part through the garbled transmission of the name, but also to some extent as a back formation. ‘Nine’ could have become current to satisfy a perfectly reasonable logic and belief locally that, since it was possible actually to ‘construct’ a group of barrows of this number, then the name *must* contain ‘Nine’. The considerable gap between the two groups thereby became ‘airbrushed out’ of this narrative. Very importantly, we cannot doubt that there was more than a little assistance from local antiquarians in this process, consciously or otherwise. It is also the case that, so far as we know, the boundary on which the Nine Barrows sit, is of long standing, and is likely to be the one which was recorded in 1295/96. Therefore, by definition, it seems reasonable directly to equate *Nigheberewes* with the modern ‘Nine Barrows’.

It is a different matter to come to a view concerning exactly to what the word *nighen* is referring, and any proposal in this regard must be speculative. The most logical explanation relates to the Nine Barrows’ position in relation to both Priddy, and to the Ashen Hill group. It seems at least possible that this nomenclature originated as an attempt to distinguish between two major barrow cemeteries, very similar in their general form and disposition in the landscape. Priddy was the most likely ‘datum’ point, being the only settlement of any note, with its own church, on the whole of the upland part of the western plateau. The intended sense of the name, then, as originally coined, would be ‘the barrows near or nearest [to Priddy]’. The corollary of this is that in the collective mind map of the local community, it would simply be understood that the Ashen Hill group were the ‘further barrows [from Priddy]’.

Turner (1950, 101-2) long ago suggested that Priddy contained a second pre-English element which gave a sense to the whole placename of ‘the earth house(s)’; but he stopped short of then making a specific link to the barrow cemeteries. Andrew Breeze, however, has taken this idea a step further, and suggested that before the arrival of English speakers in this area, it was explicitly the barrow groups around Priddy which had become characterised rather charmingly as ‘the earth house[s]’. This suggestion is directly relevant in the present context since it links the barrow group(s) directly to the toponym ‘Priddy’ (Breeze 2008). At present this idea remains controversial. There does not seem to be any disagreement among specialist toponymists that the first element of the name is a British word with

a sense of ‘earth, soil, mud, clay’ (see for example Smith 1956, 73; and for its occurrence in Cornish, Padel 1985, 193-94). It should be noted though that, at the present state of knowledge, the second element is entirely unexplained, and there are other interpretations of what it may be. Notwithstanding all this, however, it seems beyond dispute that the people who coined the place-name also knew perfectly well that the barrows were, in a very real sense, the houses of the dead.⁴ But although, since the 18th century, they have been the Nine Barrows, and have become celebrated under that label, that is not how they emerge into the historical record. A recognition of this fact gives us a heightened appreciation of their true significance as an important spatial and cultural referent for generations of the farming folk who dwelt and worked in that remarkable and beguiling landscape – people who named them, and for whom the ‘near/est barrows’ were both the dwelling places of revered ancestral spirits, and their constant, and reassuring companions.

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I am extremely grateful to Drs Michael Costen FSA, formerly of the Department of Archaeology, University of Bristol, and Jodie Lewis FSA, Lecturer in Archaeology in the School of Archaeological and Forensic Sciences, University of Bradford, for reading and commenting on an early draft of this paper. My sister Sally Corcos kindly performed the same service from the point of view of an interested non-specialist. Dr Lewis was also able to provide numerous invaluable insights into the prehistoric legacy of the Priddy environs. Dr Oliver Padel, of the Department of Anglo-Saxon, Norse and Celtic, at the University of Cambridge, was kind enough to offer his view on a suggestion by Andrew Breeze about the possible affinities of the difficult toponym ‘Priddy’. I am greatly indebted to Albert Thompson for his kindness and patience, in giving me the benefit of his encyclopaedic knowledge of Priddy and its environs, and in discussing with me at length the implications of his own detailed archaeological and historical research in that area of the Mendip plateau (Thompson 2010; 2011). Philippa Nabb-Osborne kindly lent me the benefit of her expert knowledge

of the map sources contained within the generally inaccessible Chewton estate archive (note 3). I am especially grateful to Veronica Howe, Archivist and Records Manager for the Wells Dean and Chapter, for her kindness in supplying me with high resolution images of the relevant folio of the Liber Albus I, containing the late 13th-century boundary clause with the ‘nigheberewes’ spelling.

Finally, I am very grateful to the anonymous reviewer of this paper for SANHS, who suggested several amendments intended to make the paper more readable. Once done, and thanks to that person’s careful insights, it was clear that readability had indeed been greatly improved. Any errors which may remain are entirely my own.

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⁴ Explicitly of Andrew Breeze’s suggestion, Dr Padel advises me (pers. comm.) that ‘both the date and the spelling cited as ‘Pridiau 10th’ are to be treated with caution, and the name (assuming it is Brittonic, and with the suggested derivation) seems likely to be singular rather than plural’. Although Turner published successive papers on Somerset place-names containing British elements, based on his PhD, Priddy is not among his selection (Turner 1950-52; 1952-54; 1953). The general air of reverence in which many prehistoric monuments, including barrows, were held by early-medieval people, on a variety of different levels, cannot be doubted; see Semple 2013, 74-107.

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STONE-FRAMED WINDOWS IN THE DARSHILL, HAM AND BOWLISH HAMLETS OF SHEPTON MALLET

JOHN RICKARD

BACKGROUND

The Darshill and Bowlish Conservation Society, established to manage and improve the post-industrial landscape of the Sheppey valley at Shepton Mallet, was awarded a National Lottery Heritage Grant to extend its work to promote public awareness and knowledge of this locality (Fig. 1). A Heritage Project ensued which, in addition to recording and monitoring the biodiversity, set out to research the historical archives, archaeology and architecture and the former families involved in the cloth industry that had operated in the valley since the 15th century. The Somerset Vernacular Building Research Group (SVBRG) conducted architectural surveys of selected houses in support of the project.

INTRODUCTION

Until the Lottery-funded Darshill & Bowlish Heritage Project was initiated in 2018 the only available indication of the ages of the buildings were those set out in the individual entries of Statutory Listings (Table 1, below).

In their support of the Heritage Project SVBRG surveyed fifteen listed buildings in the Darshill, Ham and Bowlish hamlets which have stone-framed windows (Fig. 2).

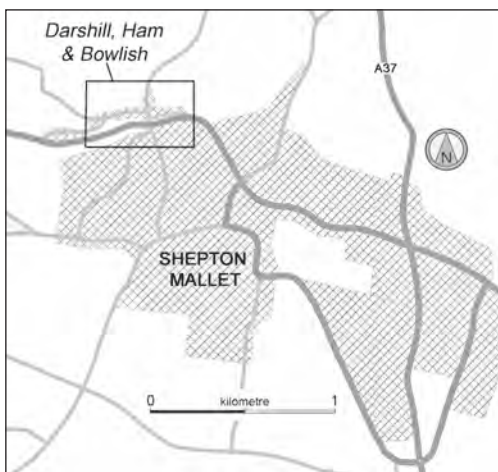


Fig. 1 Map showing location of the hamlets

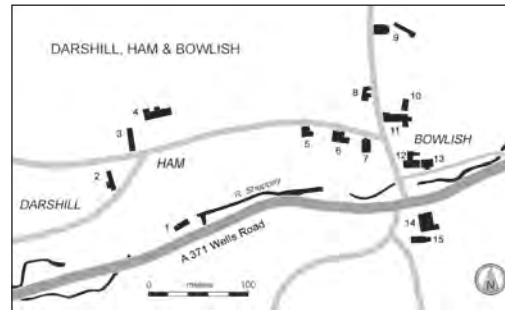


Fig. 2 Location of houses mentioned, see Table 1

It should be noted that almost none of the Listings make any reference to internal features and hence the suggested dates can only have been based on external observations.

The ‘stone frames’ in the context of this study include moulded frames, i.e. those with ovolo form, as shown, or with flat or concave chamfers, usually with mullions of the same profile, into which iron window frames are fitted and which are typically referred to as 17th-century style (Fig. 3). Other, rectangular, flat faced frames, with a small edge bead and, in some instances, a raised outer lip and fitted with wooden glazing frames, are referred to as 18th-century style.

There is also the architrave form, similar in

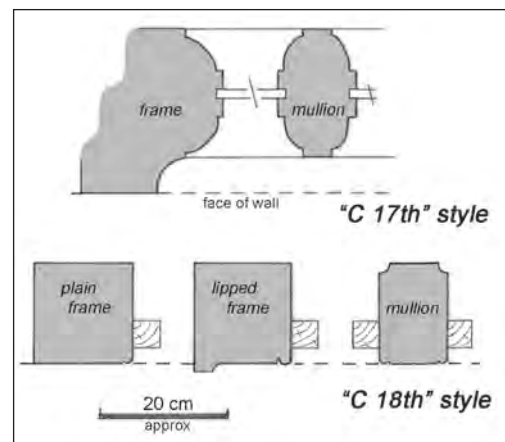


Fig. 3 Window frame profiles



Fig. 4 Exterior window architrave to Coombe House (No. 15)

appearance to door cases, that provide a decorative, classical facing to the sash boxes concealed behind them (Fig. 4).

A REVIEW OF THE WINDOWS

Windows with 17th-century features

A good example of 17th-century features is seen on the north elevation of Bowlsh Grange (No. 11; Fig. 5).

The three-light window has ovolo mouldings to frame and mullions and a further step in the moulding to the outer face of the frame. A quadrant casement stay to the central opening light and the relieving arch in the wall above the window adds to the authenticity of this 17th-century window. The window has no hood. The wall here is approximately 600mm thick.

On the west side of the rear wing to Old Bowlsh House (No. 12) there are several three-light mullioned windows, each with an individual hood; the moulding of the mullions and frames incorporate a cyma element.

The same moulding is also found in a two-light transomed window on the north wall of the house (Fig. 6). These windows all have individual hoods.

To the rear of Park Farm House (No. 9) is a detached barn building with stone mullioned windows at first floor level. The window frame has ovolo moulding but the mullions are plain chamfered replacements.

The windows have individual hood moulds and are set in walls 600mm thick. The



Fig. 5 Window at house No. 11

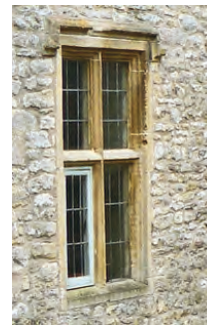


Fig. 6 A transomed window at No. 12

building is not shown on maps before 1885.

The windows of Old Manor (No. 2) have ovolo mouldings and the windows have individual hoods. However, the mullions are not well matched to the frame and neither they, nor the hood, show the expected level of weathering. The walls of the building are approximately 650mm thick.

Studfold Cottage (No. 6) has ovolo-moulded windows with individual hood moulds. Wall thicknesses of almost 1m have been recorded in the building.

The south gable of Cleavers (No. 3) has a symmetrical arrangement of a pair of ovolo-moulded windows at ground floor linked with a continuous hood and a similar feature on the floor above (Fig. 7). The matching attic window has an individual hood. This wall is 750mm thick.

On the south side of Ham Manor (No. 4) there are three-light windows with ovolo mouldings and individual hoods. On the north side there are a pair



Fig. 7 South gable of Cleavers (No. 3)

of mullioned windows about 7m apart linked with a continuous hood. This feature is all but obscured by a 2m high garden retaining wall only 1.5m away. The house walls here are 750-780mm.

Windows with 18th-century features

The simplest example of this style of window frame is seen at Little Bowlish (No. 13). The first floor (mullioned) and attic windows, both now blocked, in the south gable fronting the street have the plain bead edge form and there is no hood mould over either window. The wall is 700mm thick at ground floor level.

A similar window, partially blocked, overlooks the road at The Cottage (No. 5). That, and the south attic window, have plain bead edge frames in walls of 600mm. However, the door frame below a relieving arch on the west elevation has a lipped and beaded profile and is clearly a later insertion.

Forum Terrace (No. 8) comprises three dwellings where the window frames facing the street are completely plain, except for the ground and first floor windows of No. 3 Forum Terrace; these two windows have hood moulds and the frames beneath have a small cyma moulding. The mullions, which are plain externally have a small hollow chamfer inside, and sit

on a sill designed to take moulded mullions. The wall is 600mm thick.

The Stable (No. 10) at Park House has three ground floor window frames and mullions with a small hollow external chamfer and each has a hood mould. On the upper floor the frames are completely plain. A door set between two of the ground floor windows has a bead edged frame and has been inserted below a timber lintel; brick packing is visible between the timber and the stone frame. The wall thickness is not known.

At Weirside (No. 1) the front upper windows frames are plain and the mullions have bead edges (Fig. 8). The attic windows in the gables are also bead edged and all have hood moulds. The door frame is also bead edged. The wall thickness of this house is about 650mm on the ground floor and 500mm above.

The mullioned windows at Bowlish Villa (No. 7) have a beaded inner edge and a raised lip to the outside of the frame. The first floor windows are linked with



Fig. 8 Hood mould over a beaded frame (No. 1)

a continuous hood (Fig. 9) but the second floor windows have no hood. There was also a continuous hood over the ground floor windows (now replaced with bays) and the door; the door also has the lipped and beaded frame. The ground floor walls are 650mm but the upper walls are 570mm.

At the rear of Bowlish House (No. 14) there are transom windows with the lipped and bead-moulded frames. The mullions have a bead on the exterior and a small hollow chamfer inside (Fig. 3, above). The contrast in style between these windows and those of the Palladian frontage could scarcely be greater. Bowlish House together with Old Bowlish House and Coombe House (No. 15) are similar in having a classical façade (Fig. 10). The architrave framing to their windows has already been mentioned.



Fig. 9 Lipped and beaded frame under long hood (No. 7)



Fig. 10 The west front of Bowlish House (No. 14)

EVALUATION

The *Dating of the smaller Somerset houses from external appearance* is discussed comprehensively in a paper of that title published in this journal by Williams and Gilson (1976). This paper brought

together the results of years of study in Somerset and provides guidance and advice to those concerned with dating and understanding older buildings.

Notwithstanding the descriptions and illustrations to be found in Williams and Gilson's paper it is suggested that even they would have had difficulties

TABLE 1 A SUMMARY OF THE DATING RESULTS

Ref	House	Summary from Statutory List	Walls	Suggested Date (SVBRG)
1	Weirside	c.1650	650 mm	Early 18th cent.
2	Old Manor	c.1550, modified C17 & mid C20 cent.	650 mm	Early 17th cent.
3	Clevers	17th century, restored mid C20	750 mm	Late 16th/early 17th cent.
4	Ham Manor	Circa 1600, restored c.1920	780 mm	Mid 17th cent.
5	The Cottage	17th century	600 mm	Mid 18th cent.
6	Studfold Cottage	c.1650	<1000 mm	Early 17th cent.
7	Bowlish Villa	c.1700	650/570 mm	Mid 18th cent.
8	Forum Terrace	c.1800	600 mm	Late 18th cent.
9	Park Farm House	c.1700	600 mm	Late 18th cent.
10	Park House Stable	c.1650, later alteration	n.d.	Probably 18th cent.
11	Bowlish Grange	c.1700	600 mm	Mid 17th cent.
12	Old Bowlish House	17th century, remodelled c. 1720	800 mm	Mid 17th cent. - on older base?
13	Little Bowlish	c.1700 refronted c.1800	700 mm	Early 17th cent.
14	Bowlish House	House dated 1732 (on rainhead)	650/700 mm	1732
15	Coombe House	House, circa 1820	700 mm	Mid 18th, upgraded early 19th cent.

in this locality, principally because of the use and re-use and adaptation of buildings.

The history of the area revolves around the repeated growth and decline of the textile industry from the 15th century onwards. A hoped-for pattern of dateable window features did not materialise in this study. However, there are small groupings that can be identified and these are set out below.

Shaped Mullions (ovolo, cyma etc). At Bowlish Grange the mullioned window has no hood but mullioned windows under single hoods can be seen at Old Bowlish House, Studfold Cottage, Old Manor and the barn behind Park Farmhouse. Similarly, moulded windows below long hoods are to be found at Cleavers and at Ham Manor.

Lipped window framing with the attendant bead to the frame and to the rectangular mullion is found at Bowlish Villa (where it is situated under a long hood) and at Bowlish House where it appears in transomed windows that have no hood.

Another group comprising Weirside, The Cottage, 3 Forum Terrace and The Stable at Park House all have plain framing, i.e. with no raised outer lip, but they all have single hood moulds. The simplest arrangement is at Little Bowlish that has the plain frame but has no hood.

The apparently anachronistic assembly of 17th-century hood moulds over windows of the 18th-century styles was thought at one stage to indicate the replacement of the 17th-century moulded mullion windows by the later style rectangular windows but there is no evidence of such activity, either within the window elements or in the surrounding masonry.

It must be concluded therefore that this assemblage, born perhaps of a mixture of cost saving and contemporary fashion, is a local peculiarity. Its

presence on a number of houses has created a local style.

The wall thicknesses of the houses examined do not consistently demonstrate the general shift to thinner walls over time. This phenomenon is not uncommon and arises perhaps from either of two circumstances. Firstly, that the walls are constructed directly on older footings and the original thickness is maintained. This is often the case when buildings are adapted. Secondly, the local builders continue to build walls thicker than the general trend because they see no reason to make them thinner.

The dates suggested by SVBRG for the buildings are deduced from the interior as well as the exterior details. Many of the properties were extensively modified and/or refurbished at the end of the 18th or beginning of the 19th century although there are exceptions: Old Bowlish House was refronted c. 1720, the main range of Bowlish House was constructed in 1732 and in the 1940s contiguous farm buildings were incorporated with the 17th-century house to create Cleavers. The greatest dating discrepancy between the Listing and this study is at Old Manor where a 16th-century door frame had been reused, but generally there is broad agreement. Most of these houses seem to have their origins in the 17th or 18th centuries, some, even the earliest ones, being converted at least in part from former industrial buildings to domestic use.

REFERENCE

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JAMES AND MARY ADEY: COINERS IN TAUNTON

STEPHEN MINNITT

Counterfeit coins were a significant problem across the country in the first half of the 19th century. During research into the subject in Somerset (Minnitt 2019) a few cases were of especial interest and deserved further investigation. One of these was the arrest and prosecution of James (31) and Mary (32) Adey for counterfeiting in Taunton in 1845 (Fig.). The town had a population of approaching 13,000 people and the case probably attracted considerable attention.

Wilton Gaol Description Register for 1845 (SHC, Q/AGW/15) states that James Adey was a 'tramper' born in 'Mainsbury', the location of which has not been established. His occupation is described as gardener. James is recorded as 5 feet 9 inches tall with a fresh complexion, grey eyes, brown hair and with a scar on his forehead. Mary Adey was a 'tramper' and springmaker born in Sidbury, presumably in Devon. She was 5 feet 4 inches tall, had a 'sallow' complexion, grey eyes, brown hair, a scar on the forefinger of her left hand and had lost several front teeth. A tramper was someone who travelled and undertook short-term work, possibly including begging. The case was heard at the Bridgwater Lammas Assizes in August 1845. The prisoners were undefended.

Some details of the Adeys' activities and those who were unwittingly involved have been identified. Mary Brawley and her husband kept a lodging house in East Reach, Taunton. James Adey asked Mary Brawley for lodgings on 22 or 23 May 1845. He took a room on the first floor with a fire-place in it and was joined by his wife.

Census returns and local newspapers shed some light on Mary Brawley and her lodgers. In the 1841 census she is recorded as aged 45 and living in East Reach with her husband, Joseph, and their one-year-old son, Joseph Scales (sometimes spelt Scarles). Although only these three occupants were listed for the household in 1841 the Brawleys were clearly keepers of a lodging house by then. The source for this is fairly ignominious and shows that the Adeys were not the first, or the last, to be arrested at the Brawley lodging house. The *Taunton Courier and Western Advertiser* for 8 April 1840 records that William and Ann Snow had been arrested there and charged with housebreaking and stealing a watch and other articles. The case was heard at the April 1840 Taunton Assizes but the outcome is unknown.

Later, William Johnson and Henry Thorne were arrested in Taunton in December 1848 and charged



Fig. The arrest of Mary Adey in 1845
(by Victor Ambrus)

with attempting to break in to the house of John Totterdell, a brazier and tinman. The pair were arrested by constable Spiller at 'Brawley's house'. Both were sentenced to eleven months in gaol at the Lent Assizes held in Taunton in 1849. A more general overview of crime in the area had been published in the *Taunton Courier and Western Advertiser* on 19 August 1840: 'Some inhabitants of East-reach – more parsimonious, we suspect, than they are prudent – have indiscreetly resolved on relinquishing the cheap protection afforded by the nightly Police. This is more regretful, as the district alluded to, more particularly than any other, requires vigilant supervision.'

In the 1851 census Mary Brawley is recorded as married, although her husband is not listed and was

therefore presumably absent. Mary, now described as a grocer, was still living in East Reach and presumably in the same house. The property was specifically described as a lodging house. The census records those present who were:

- Joseph, her son, now aged eleven, is recorded as a 'lodger' with the occupation of 'errand boy'.
- William Bawler (50), a lodger and widower whose occupation was baker. He was probably related to the Brawleys.
- Henry Berkeley (51), an unmarried visitor who was a pipe maker born on the Isle of Wight.
- Simon Mitchell (47), a widower and 'lath render', born in Taunton.
- William Tonkins (68), married and a bellows maker, born in 'St Giles, Middlesex'.
- Charlotte Tonkins (21), married and also born in 'St Giles, Middlesex'. No occupation is given but it presumably related to William's.
- Henry Williams (17), unmarried visitor who was a 'fiddle bridge maker' born at 'Strand, Middlesex'.

By the time of the 1861 census Mary, described as a widow, head of the household and formerly a 'hemstres [hemstress] shop keeper', was living in Queen Street, Taunton. A Joseph Brawley, presumably Mary's husband, died in 1855 and was buried on 30 September. Mary died in 1871.

Events relating to the arrest and prosecution of the Adeys were as follows (*Bath Chronicle and Weekly Gazette*, 7 August 1845). Thomas Fisher kept an ironmonger's shop in Fore St, Taunton. Mary often bought Britannia metal tablespoons from him, half a dozen at a time. She bought some on 26 May 1845. As a result of her frequent visits and the suspicion this had aroused in him, Fisher told his porter, William Matthews, to follow her to see where she went. The use of Britannia metal in the counterfeiting of coins was common knowledge. At the same time Fisher procured a warrant and gave it to constables Burford and Spiller. John Martin Fisher, partner of Thomas, had known Mary for several months before her apprehension. He had asked her what she did with the spoons she bought; she told him she sold them at farmers' houses. The fact that J. M. Fisher had known Mary Adey for some months shows that the couple had been living in or near Taunton for some time prior to moving into their East Reach lodgings.

William Matthews followed Mary Adey to her East Reach lodging house. She went into the court, a common form of accommodation in the area, and then entered the building. Matthews led Burford and Spiller to the house. Matthew Spiller, on entering the property, saw Mary and informed her that he had a warrant. She ran towards the room occupied by her

husband, but Spiller stopped her and he went in. Spiller found James sitting in front of a 'brisk' fire with a plaster of Paris mould and two counterfeit halfcrowns. On the bed were six unfinished halfcrowns, part of a metal spoon and some 'grained tin'. Six unfinished crowns wrapped in paper were also found. Spiller overturned a ladle containing 'boiling metal' spilling the contents which were clearly destined to be used for casting more coins.

John Burford found ten halfcrowns in an 'unfinished state' in James' waistcoat pocket. He also found 27 shillings, 26 sixpences and five halfcrowns wrapped in silver paper and all counterfeit. This shows that the coins were ready for use. Wrapping coins was a common practice to avoid damage to the surface prior to uttering (passing) which could otherwise result in a recipient challenging the validity of a coin. The value of the coins recorded as found is £7.02.6d, equivalent to about £900 today.

Spiller took James Adey to the 'station-house'. The latter is reported as saying: 'Oh Spiller I shall get lagged', that is, transported. This statement shows that the Adeys were well aware of the likely punishment for their illegal activities.

As with many coiners using plaster of Paris moulds their operation was on a fairly modest scale. The coins produced were almost certainly for their personal use rather than for supplying others involved in uttering. The fact that the Adeys were caught as the result of acquiring metal rather than using coins suggests that their counterfeits were of convincing quality.

At the trial Caleb Edward Powell, an inspector in the Solicitor's Department at the Royal Mint, stated 'These plaster of Paris moulds are calculated for casting coin. They appear to have been made from halfcrowns, one of the year 1817 and the other 1819.' A halfcrown found in the 'bosom' of M. Adey had 'evidently' been used to make the impression in one of the moulds (*Taunton Courier and Western Advertiser*, 6 August 1845). The constables also found moulds for making shillings and sixpences. The use of plaster of Paris moulds for casting counterfeits became common practice from the mid 1820s. Coins selected to make the impressions in moulds had frequently been in circulation for some time and would therefore bear signs of wear. The hope was that they would be less likely to draw attention than would a counterfeit of a pristine contemporary coin.

Before a prosecution relating to counterfeit coins could proceed approval had to be given by the Board of the Royal Mint. Evidence was sent to and considered by the Mint Solicitor who requested clarification about the evidence if it was required. Once he was satisfied the case was presented to the Board for their approval to proceed, this was

usually a case of rubber stamping. Members of the Mint Solicitor's department attended cases of felony to give evidence whenever possible but did not undertake the prosecution, this fell to externally appointed solicitors. The latter were sometimes local and sometimes not. In the 1840s the senior solicitor received £5 for attending court and the junior £3. The senior and junior solicitors in the Adeys' case were W. Moody and E. H. Fitzherbert. Moody, of 6 King's Bench Walk, Temple, London, was a Special Pleader on the Western Circuit, Somerset Assize Sessions. Fitzherbert, of 1 Paper Buildings, Temple, London, was Counsel on the Western Circuit, Somerset Assize Sessions. Moody appeared in at least 46 counterfeit coin related prosecutions in Somerset between 1822 and 1845, initially as the junior solicitor and from 1835 as the senior prosecutor.

The costs incurred in prosecuting the Adeys were particularly high (TNA, MINT 15/15):

Mr Attorney General and clerk with case	£2-4-6
Mr Moody and clerk with brief	£5-7-6
The likes on 2nd Indictment	£2-4-6
Mr Fitzherbert and clerk with brief	£3-5-6
The like on 2nd Indictment	£1-3-6
Passing Indictment etc	£6-15-6
Witnesses	£30-1-0
Magistrates clerks' fees	£3-6-2
Chaise hire and expenses attending this Prosn.	<u>£18-4-0</u>
	£72-12-2

Witnesses received payment for making statements prior to the trial and for attending court and are approaching 50% of the total costs for the trial. The chaise hire and expenses relate to the attendance of Caleb Edward Powell at the trial.

The 1841 census sheds a little light on some of the people involved in the identification and arrest of

the Adeys. Thomas Fisher is listed in the 1841 census as aged 30 and living in Fore Street, Taunton. The same census records John Martin Fisher as aged 28 and living in Middle Street. The occupation for both is ironmonger. John Burford is recorded as aged 28 and living in North Street, Taunton. His occupation is policeman. Matthew Spiller's address has yet to be identified with certainty.

Cases dealt with by Spiller and Burford prior to that of the Adeys had been fairly mundane. Spiller's arrests included people accused of stealing a piece of boiled beef at Taunton (1840), theft of a silk handkerchief in the Rising Sun Inn, Taunton (1841), obtaining nine loaves by false pretences at Taunton (1842), theft of a duck at Ruishton (1843) and stealing a dead duck at Taunton market (1843). The case of the Adeys must have been one of the more memorable in Spiller's career. There are few references to Burford's arrests, apart from the case of the Adeys. Most notable is the prosecution of Faith Sealey, found not guilty, for the murder of her father by using arsenic which was heard at the Taunton Assizes in April 1844.

The Adeys were both sentenced to 15 years transportation. Doubtless after time on a prison hulk, James sailed from Woolwich on the *China* on 4 January 1846 for Van Diemen's Land (TNA, HO 11/14, page 57). There were 200 male convicts on board. He arrived on 16 May that year. What became of him has yet to be discovered. Mary's departure is not listed which suggests that she may have been reprieved.

REFERENCE

Minnitt, S., 2019. 'Counterfeit coin in Somerset 1810 to 1855', *SANH* 163, 172-91.

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