

# Four Exmoor Farms

**Report K727**

## The Brief

Keystone Historic Buildings Consultants are contracted by The Victoria County History to record the traditional farm buildings on four named farms on Exmoor as a part of the *Settlement on Exmoor* project.

The four farmsteads which are the subject of this report are:

Ashway, Dulverton	OS ref. SS 868 313
Lyshwell, Molland	OS ref. SS 836 306
Stetfold Rocks, Cutcombe	OS ref. SS 873 386
Stone, Exford	OS ref. SS 865 388

All four were recorded from an historic and archaeological point of view. The site surveys were hand-measured with the help of a dumpy level. This report comprises a description of the buildings, their fabric, layout, features, dating and development. Function is implied on stylistic grounds although the farmers generally helped by relating usage within their lifetimes, or as reported to them by their fathers or grandfathers. It also includes plans and elevations of the buildings. These were prepared by hand at a scale of 1:50 but have been reduced to a scale of 1:200 for reproduction.

The Keystone survey was entirely non-invasive and therefore it is possible that future building works will uncover historic information which may refine, or even alter, the conclusions contained in this report.

Keystone photographed the tithe maps in the Devon and Somerset Record Offices. Historic OS map information was supplied by Exmoor National Park whilst the information from the valuers' field books for the Inland Revenue Increment Value Survey, undertaken between c.1911 and 1915 (PRO, IR58), was supplied by Spencer Dimmock of the British Library. These are referred to as '*IR valuers' notes*' in the following text and the relevant material is transcribed as Appendix 1.

## **Building Materials**

All the buildings on all four farmsteads are built of local stone rubble bonded in lime mortar. The one exception is the timber-framed granary, clad with weatherboards, which stands on cast-iron columns over the dung pit in the yard of Stetfold Rocks. The stone is the old Devonian sandstones that vary in colour from purple, through reddish brown to grey.

Since the stone was quarried locally (probably on the farm) the style of the rubblestone varies from farm to farm. However the northern two, Stone and Stetfold Rocks are adjoining farms and therefore their masonry is very similar. In general the stone blocks are small and irregular. The corners and sides of openings have no quoins as such and the larger, more regular stones appear to have been reserved for voussoirs forming the heads of the openings. The style is similar at Ashway except that here most of the corners include roughly dressed quoins. At Lyshwell the stone is darker and more purpley-brown in colour than the others. The blocks are, in general, larger and a little more regular so that they are laid to discontinuous courses with quoins (particularly noticeable in the threshing barn). The voussoirs over the openings in the main two ranges are of a hard purpley brown-coloured stone that is neatly tooled with a finish of stippled rustication.

Ashway is distinguished by its use of limestone ashlar to the kneelers and coping of the roof verges each end of the east and west ranges. Brick is rare although it is used to make the heads of two shippon openings below the northern barn at Stetfold and as dressings on the house and minor farm buildings at Lyshwell.

The roofs are mostly covered with Welsh slate but this has been replaced with corrugated iron sheeting or asbestos sheeting on some sheds. John Tucker claimed that his hay barn at Stetfold Rocks was still covered in 19th century corrugated iron. This is a secondary late 19th century shed and it is possible that this shed was covered with corrugated iron from the beginning. Other roofs which were probably slate originally were already corrugated iron by 1911 according to the IR valuers' notebook record of that year. The only recorded use of thatch comes from the same survey, noting its use on a poultry house at Lyshwell (which has now gone).

## **Isolating Building Phases**

Rebuilding work is often difficult to distinguish. It is in the nature of the local stone rubble construction that it was easy for a competent mason to tie in new work to old without leaving obvious evidence. For instance, at Ashway there is a vertical straight join in the north

range associated with a couple of blocked windows to indicate the presence of an earlier building. This was extensively rebuilt in its present form as a shippon in the mid 19th century but it is not possible to determine exactly how much of the former building was reused. At Stone the physical evidence presents something of a conundrum. The bank barn is clearly built up against the stable, but the front elevation looks as if it was designed to be open from end to end. The ranges built up to it meet it rather awkwardly, and yet there are no structural breaks. There are also close stylistic similarities between the barn and north shippon. One possible explanation is a change in plan once construction was underway.

## **Dating**

All the four farmsteads were essentially created between c1840 and c1890 on the evidence of historic maps, and date from the mid or late 19<sup>th</sup> century on stylistic grounds (see Summary below)

### **1. Ashway, Dulverton**

The steading is built in a small south-facing combe above the water meadows in the valley of the River Barle. The valley side rises steeply to open moorland at about 300m (1000 ft) but Ashway manages to find the least steep part of the hillside right on the springline.

#### **Layout**

The drive approaches the farmstead from the east. At the farm there is a gateway (widened for farm machinery in the 20th century) to a north-south driveway descending the hillslope between the house and the main quadrangular yard.

The double-depth house is built across the hillslope facing south across a walled front garden, the front end of which is built up with revetment walls. There is a narrow service yard off the drive at the back of the house. The shed on the north side was formerly a brewhouse according to the farmer Mr Vellacott. The rear garden includes a small open-fronted shelter shed and there are a couple of buildings close by the east end of the house. These have been converted to domestic use and their date and original function are unclear. Mr Vellacott remembers the one nearest the house in use as a potato store, although its form suggests rather that it was built as pigsties. (It is a shame that the IR valuers' notebooks do no

survive for his parish). Further south there is a tiny yard flanked on the north and west side by an L-plan linhay with three open bays facing south and one facing east, but this was extensively rebuilt in the 20th century. The yard opens onto a lane returning along the south end of the garden.

The main farm buildings are on the west side of the north-south driveway. Uphill at the north end there is the upper yard just inside the main gate. The main yard is downhill to the south. It is roughly square and is enclosed on all four sides by two-storey farm buildings. The entrance gateway is through the northeast corner, that is to say the north end of the east range, and directly opposite the service yard behind the farmhouse.

The north range is terraced so deeply into the hillslope that the loft level can be accessed directly from the upper yard behind. It contains two shippens facing south onto the yard and with a continuous feeding passage along the rear wall from a doorway off the driveway to east to the root store under the barn in the west range. The west range is a bank barn, its north end is terraced into the hillslope so that there is direct access to the first floor barn from the upper yard. The lower level comprises a root store to the north end, a shippen adjoining with a feeding passage along the rear (west) wall, and then a relatively small compartment of uncertain function. This now contains 20th century corn bins but it may have been built as a chaff house. It also provided access to the wheelhouse and the power from the waterwheel passed along the east wall by means of belt drives on its way to the barn on the upper level. The south end is a cowshed open to the lower level of the south range linhay. The upper level is mostly taken up by the threshing barn but the south end is walled off and is thought to have been a straw barn open to the hayloft of the south range.

The south range was an open-fronted linhay with a hayloft above (called a tallet in the westcountry). A feeding passage runs along the rear wall alongside a possibly original feeding trough and the remains of a boarded compartment or pen, and at the east end connects through to the stable. The east range is the stable range and contains two lofted stables.

As mentioned above the lofts in the north range and barn have access from the upper yard. There is also a wagon lodge on the west side of the upper yard, which shelters the farmer's doorway to the barn. A stone boundary wall forms the north side and it is open to the driveway to east.

## **The North Range**

The two shippons are of different size, the east one larger than the west. The full-height straight join between the two indicates that the eastern shippon includes some masonry from an earlier building. Other evidence comes from two blocked window openings, one towards the west end of the front wall and near the south end of the west wall. However it seems that the rest of the building was massively rebuilt in the mid 19th century as a component of the whole integrated yard.

It has two cow doors to the yard and a man door to the feeding passage in the east end wall, all with segmental arch heads made of rubblestone and include plain joinery. Directly above the cow doors there are small shuttered windows to the loft, whilst the rear wall includes a single hatch large enough for human access. All have plain frames and simple plank doors.

The front of the western shippon looks more like a stable from the size of its windows. It is possible that it was built as a stable but converted for cows when new stables were provided in the east range (see summary). There is a central doorway flanked by windows with a small shuttered window above the doorway. There is a large hatch to the loft in the rear wall similar to the one to the eastern shippon.

Inside the fixtures and fittings all date from the 20th century. Nevertheless the cobble floors may be from the 19th century. The roof structure, four bays overall carried on king post trusses, also remains from the 19th century.

The western of the two haylofts could have been a granary. There is no actual evidence for such a hypothesis. It is simply based on its position next to the threshing barn with a connecting doorway between the two.

## **The West Range**

The west range is the tallest of the four. It is gable-ended with shaped kneelers supporting limestone coping to the verges. At the lower level the north end root store has a single window in the rear wall. It was apparently stocked through a hatch from the barn above.

The western shippon has a row of three round-headed arches and was probably open originally. The doors there now certainly date from the 20th century. To the left (south) is a small window to the putative chaff house (now containing a 20th century top-tilting casement).

The upper level barn has the traditional arrangement of opposing doorways, as if to a threshing floor. The rear (western) doorway is full-height and wide enough to contain double doors, both of two flaps. Were this at ground level it would be described as a wagon entry but this is clearly not the case here. The large size of the doorway would seem down to its situation. It is on the outside of the farmstead and therefore convenient for loading the freshly harvested crops from wagons. The opposite doorway on the yard (east) side is the size of a man door, also two flaps. It is flanked by relatively large shuttered windows. There is no threshing floor inside. Nevertheless the traditional arrangement meant that the doorflaps could still be arranged to create a draught across the building. No doubt this was just as necessary, if not more so, when the processing was by machine rather than by hand.

At the back and towards the south end there is a leanto shed housing the wheel pit and the remains of a leat descending the hill along the east side of the buildings. The wheel has gone but the height of the leat in relation to the surviving axle of the wheel indicates that it was a breast-fed wheel. The shed is lit by a series of narrow slits in the east wall and there was access to the pit from the outside at the south end and from the putative chaff house in the west range. There is also an external man door from the west range just south of the wheel shed. There are now steps up to this doorway from the concrete yard. However it is clear that the ground level in this area was lowered a little over 1m in the late 20th century when a new cowshed was built close by.

The interior of the west range has been superficially modernised. For instance the trough and standing in the shippon is built of concrete and dates from the mid 20th century. Nevertheless it is thought that the original layout is maintained with a feeding passage along the rear wall between the root store and the putative chaff house. Early, if not original, fittings do survive in the south end cowshed but these are described below with the linhay (south range).

There are some remains of the drives from the waterwheel. There is a layshaft through the wall from the wheelhouse into the putative chaff house with cast-iron pulley drives each end. The power of the waterwheel was used to drive machines in the barn by pulleys and belts. There is a gearing pulley just under the ceiling of the shippon (over the feeding passage towards the south end) and there is a shaft with three more belt-drive pulleys in the northern half of the barn. There is a 19th century threshing machine in the southwest corner of the barn but this is not thought to be its working position.

The structural carpentry is largely original. This includes the roof which is eight bays in all. There are large tiebeam trusses. The tiebeams rest on spreader plates set along the

walltops or (in the case of the eastern end of the south end truss) a large axial beam across the open front of the straw barn. The principals rise to meet as an X-apex held together by a notched mortise-and-tenon joint. There are no collars but each truss has two vertical queen struts. On the east pitch, where the original arrangement survives, the trusses carry a single set of back purlins (the lengths mortised and tenoned together) and the ridgeboard is supported on plate yokes.

## **The South Range**

This was an open-fronted linhay which extended, at ground floor level into the south end of the west range and at first floor level was open to the straw barn above. The ground floor front was filled with concrete blockwork in the mid 20th century. It is six bays wide with the first floor and roof supported on full-height timber posts on padstones. At first floor level crossbeams are set into the posts with notched mortise-and-tenon joints fixed by pegs. Upright joists rest on top of the crossbeams to carry the boards of the first floor tallet. These are staggered from bay to bay. At the front timbers of similar size are set between the posts (and fixed into them with pegged mortise-and-tenon joints). The posts rise through the upper level to carry the front wallplate and are augmented here by curving upbraces each side. The rear (south) wall is completely blind.

The lower level includes early, maybe original, fittings and cobbled floors. There is a feeding corridor along the rear wall extending from a doorway connecting to the stable at the east end into the southwest corner of the west range, from where it returns along the west wall to the putative chaff house. The linhay corridor runs along the back of a feeding trough. This is built of stone rubble with a plastered finish and the trough itself is lined with mathematical tiles. The rims each side are timber and the corridor side is built up higher with a sturdy horizontal boarding.

There are iron hoops, some with tethering rings, on the cow side of the trough but these may be secondary. Nevertheless they show two cows were once tethered in each of the seven bays as the trough extends into the west range. The eighth bay includes the remains of a compartment bounded on the south and west sides by the feeding corridors. Its walls are of rough boards with wide gaps between. It appears to have had an entry from a small area to north connected to the main linhay cattle house by a gateway. Its function is not clear but it is associated with the linhay and therefore is assumed to be for cattle, maybe a bull pen or even a birthing pen.

The tallet was an open-fronted hayloft. The structure of the roof divided the space into bays with a central corridor from a hatch to the stable hayloft to east and the straw barn to west. These are interrupted tiebeam trusses. The tiebeams rest on spreader plates on the top of the stone south wall and the wallplate over the northern open front. They engage with lap dovetail joints. The ties are interrupted by upright posts which rise from the tops of the first floor crossbeams through the ties up to the collars, making convenient man-sized openings. All the joints are mortise and tenon fixed by pegs including the notched joint making the X-apex. The original roof cover has gone including the common rafters and purlins. Redundant nail holes at the apex suggest that there were plate yokes which would have carried the ridgeboard, as this remain in the similar roofs of the east range here and the northern stable roof at Stetfold Rocks.

## **The East Range**

Like the west range the stable block is built down the hillslope and is relatively tall with limestone ashlar kneelers and coping to the verges of each gable end. It contains two stables, the northern one much smaller than the southern one, both under a continuous hayloft.

The west front presents two doorways to the courtyard one each end and with a window alongside. In fact the front continues into the linhay with another ground floor window and doorway at the south end. This is the only window on the whole farm to have escaped 20th century refurbishment. It is two lights with a plain frame on a timber sill. It has boarded shutters hung on wrought-iron strap hinges with teardrop finials. The only first floor opening on this side is the hatch from the linhay tallet to the hayloft. There are other hayloft loading hatches in the north end and east sides and another stable window in the south end.

Both stables retain their cobbled floors which include an axial drain from the northern one into the southern one and out the south end wall. However the southern end of the drain has been rebuilt in concrete. The small northern stable was apparently for two horses and the original stall boarded division remains with a timber trough (collapsed on the floor). There is an upright post against the front (west) wall directly opposite the kicking post at the back of the stall partition. Both include slots which indicate that spars could be slotted between the two partitioning off the southern stall and effectively converting it to a loose box. The southern stable has been converted for cattle and, although there are timber divisions and a feeding rack, the fittings are thought to date from the 20th century.

The hayloft is supported on a first floor of superior carpentry construction. The crossbeams are neatly squared and the neat upended joists are fitted into the beams with a



tenon and soffit spur. There are mortises for tenons at the east end of the beam but it seems likely that these were never used. It would have been awkward to feed the horses without the feeding gap along the west side of both stables.

The loft level is in the same style as the linhay tallet. The interrupted tiebeam trusses divide the hayloft into bays with a central walkway. The construction is identical except that here the collars are thick and clasp the principals. This roof also has its original single set of back purlins, just notched slightly over the back of the trusses, plate yokes, ridgeboard and common rafters on the eastern pitch.

**The yard** is now largely covered in concrete but some cobbles remain in the northwest corner. There is a drain hole in front of the linhay close to the southeast corner. This passes under the linhay and stable emerging through the south wall under the stable window. Mr Vellacott remembers that this once fed a slurry pond just south of the stable (which is shown on all three historic maps. Every spring the slurry was released to flood the meadows below.

## **2. Stone Farm, Exford**

Stone is at the eastern end of the parish and little over 1k from the village. The farm is on high land rising to the open moor. The steading is built on the 330m contour and the unenclosed downs less than 1k to the north rise over 400m OD.

The steading is down a drive from Stone Cross which turns a corner as it passes by the main farm buildings to the northeast and proceeds south to the rear of the house. It is a gentleman's house rather than a farmhouse. It dates from the early 18th century and is listed Grade II\*. It has an elegant and symmetrical façade featuring Venetian windows in stone ashlar frames flanking a central bay which breaks forward to include the front doorway and rises turret-like through the eaves with its own pyramidal roof. This faces roughly south over parkland pasture. The main farm buildings are a couple of hundred metres north of the house, nearly out of sight.

Just behind the house there is a cottage on a rough north-south axis facing east onto the drive. This was identified as a trap house and pigsties on the sketch plan in the IR valuers' notebooks from 1911. The pigsties a little further north still remain.

The main farm buildings are roughly aligned northwest-southeast and northeast-southwest but here are described according to the main cardinal points for the sake of simplicity. Thus the long northwestern side, the one furthest away from the house, is

described as the north side. The buildings are built down a relatively steep west-facing slope. The drive approaches from the east to the higher level of the bank barn, the east side of a large north-south range. A lofted stable projects east at right angles from the north end of the barn. It faces south and a small implement shed is built in front of its east end. There is now a large 20th century shelter opposite the stable on the other side of the drive. Some rubble masonry at the east end is all that remains from the '4-bay cart linhay' or wagon lodge recorded in 1911, and depicted on the first and second edition OS maps.

The main farmyard is at the lower level on the other (west) side of the barn. It is a quadrangular yard with its entrance gateway in the southwest corner (the west end of the south side).

The east range is the bank barn with a shippon on the lower level onto the yard. There is a root store at the south end under the granary. The north range is a shippon with hayloft over. The south and west ranges are single storey. The south range was for calves and a two-stall stable with adjacent tack room. The west range was cattle sheds but was converted to stables in the late 20th century.

There is enough evidence to infer a waterwheel at the north end of the barn which is confirmed by the mention of 'waterwheel adjoining' in the 1911 IR valuers' notes. The wheel house and leat is also shown on the first and second OS maps. There is still a head pond to east of the farmyard which now overflows as a stream and feeds into a larger pond just west of the yard. In the 19th century this was presumably a slurry pond.

The farm drive branches west off the main drive and descends the hillslope past the south end of the granary and along the south range. It continues round the pond to a separate small yard with a small cattle shed along its north side. In the field behind there is a roofless stone shed open-fronted on its south side. This is presumably the silage shed mentioned in the 1911 notes.

## **The East Range**

This is the bank barn and is the largest of the farm buildings. It is built across the hillslope and terraced deeply into it so that the threshing barn and granary on the first floor level are readily accessible up a couple of steps from the higher ground on the east side. The lower level comprising chaff house to north, central shippon and root store under the granary at the south end, all facing west onto the lower level of the main farmyard.

The basic masonry of the bank barn is built of particularly small and thin slabs of the local mudstone with larger blocks reserved for quoins and the segmental arch heads of all the main openings with the exception of the south end window to the root store (which has a timber lintel). On the north side the masonry butts up to the southwest corner of the stable proving that the stable was already in existence when the bank barn was built.

The west front faces the yard two-storeys high. At the left (north) end there is a massive opening with round arch head, 4.6m wide and 4.8m high. It is now mostly hidden within the north range shippon but not entirely and its awkward relationship with the shippon would seem to suggest that the archway was originally intended to be open and that the shippon range was technically added later.

The centre section is still open to the yard. The front of the shippon has five doors whilst the barn above has two doorways containing plain timber frames (following the segmental arch heads) and two-flap doors. There are three ventilator slits between them and another one each side. At the south end the calves house range appears to have been built after the bank barn since its roof appears to have caused the blocking of the window to the granary. Down below there are two more doorways in the same style and spacing as those to the shippon. The south gable end has a single window to each level. The upper one contains a 20th century glazed window but the lower one, west of centre, contains a 19th century timber window comprising a narrow upper section divided into three by glazing bars and with a grille below. Bricks in the sides of the window might indicate that this is a secondary opening.

The east side has three doorways, one to the granary and the other two to the barn. Next to the stable at the north end there is a loading hatch, the lower part of which contains a reused domestic window, a horizontal sliding sash.

The north gable-end wall has a single doorway to each level. The ground floor opening was to the putative chaff house. Originally this was a wide wagon-sized opening under a segmental arch head, but it is now blocked up and contains a 20th century window. The first floor doorway is a loading hatch to the barn. Next to it (to west) is part of the switching gear from the original water power system. According to the first and second edition OS maps the wheelhouse was close by the end of the barn. The wheel pit is buried and the ground level has built up here since the 19th century.

Although the interior has been modernised and adapted for 20th century practices the basic form remains. The first floor is strong. It is carried on a series of hefty crossbeams with

upended joists between. Above there is a continuous high roof over the barn and granary. This is carried on a series of large scissor-braced roof trusses with lap-jointed principals making each X-apex. They are all pegged together and carry a diagonal ridge and two sets of back purlins. As far as could be seen (for the barn was largely filled with hay bales at the time of survey) there was no threshing floor to the barn. It seems that the threshing process was mechanised from the start. However there is very little evidence of machinery left in the barn. There is only a switching wheel in the north wall next to the loading hatch. In the adjacent east wall (the end wall of the stable block) there is a row of three slots just over 1m above the floor level. These presumably mark the position of a platform or machine. In the northwest corner there is the large archway through to the hayloft over the shippon in the north range.

### **The North Range**

This is interpreted as the 'shed for 15 bullocks, loft over' (next to the chaff house) mentioned in the 1911 IR valuers' notes. It is a long lofted range on the north side of the main yard. The front comprises four full-height openings with boarded window to the shippon between. Three of the openings include a horizontal lintel forming the head of the shippon doorway and the sill of the hayloft loading hatch. The fourth opening at the east end is different. It is an uninterrupted opening across the corner to the southern side of the large arch in the front of the bank barn. The chaff house below the barn extends across this opening into the north range and there is no floor behind the opening back to the crossbeam. This arrangement creates a small, but sheltered loading bay, or viewed another way, a large hatch in the first floor between the barn and the shippon hayloft.

The rear (north) wall includes a first floor hayloft loading hatch positioned east of centre and, at the west end, a wide wagon-sized entry to that part of the range which is thought to have been the hay store mentioned in the 1911 IR valuers' notes associated with the cow pens in the adjacent west range. It is a square compartment with doorways off to the south (now blocked) and the east (rebuilt in the 20th century) to presumed sites of original feeding passages.

The interior of the north range has been superficially modernised. The trough and standing in the main shippon is built of mid 20th century concrete. It is thought to retain the original feeding passage between the chaff house under the barn to east and the putative hay store at the west end. The hayloft floor is carried on a series of relatively close-set crossbeams without joists between. The hayloft is an uninterrupted space from end to end

under a nine-bay roof of scissor-braced trusses in the same style as the larger ones over the barn.

### **The South Range**

This single-storey range projects west at right angles from the southern end of the bank barn. It forms the south side of the main yard. It backs onto a lane to south and the yard entrance is past its west end. This is interpreted as the '3 calves house adjoining [*the root house and granary*], harness room and 2-stall stable' described in the 1911 IR valuers' survey notes (Appendix 1).

The range has been altered somewhat and there is obvious evidence for a re-arrangement of most of the windows and doorways. Nevertheless the main internal partitions remain as full-height stone crosswalls.

From east to west it is 2-1-2-bays. At the east end, next to the bank barn, there would have been the calves house. Apart from the interior access to the bank barn, the only doorway is through to the yard (north). This is an original doorway opening. There is now a connecting internal doorway to the one-bay central section. This is a 20th century insertion. The calves house was originally separated off from the rest of the range, which has been extensively remodelled. What is clear is that there was a single-bay room next to the calves house and a two-bay compartment beyond, with a central connecting internal doorway (now blocked). The central one-bay room was, almost certainly, the harness or tack room with the two-stall stable to west. Both sections have obviously been remodelled more than once since they were built and both now have doorways to north and south. These rooms have doorway openings in both north and south walls, and it is not exactly clear which were the original openings. Because of the nature of the stone rubble construction it is assumed, rather than proven, that the middle single-bay putative tack room had a southern doorway whilst the western two-bay stable had a doorway onto the yard. This makes the best logistical sense. None of the interior fittings remain. The roof structure is also of timbers of relatively slender scantling and the A-frames are clearly not the same quality as those of the main bank barn and northern shippon.

### **The West Range**

This low single-storey range was much altered during conversion to stables in the late 20th century, too much so to read the details of its original form. The 1911 IR valuers' notes

are interpreted as this being the house for cow pens for six, and cow pen for four with hay store (presumably the adjacent space at the west end of the north range).

There are no signs of partitions but the blocked doorways each end on the rear (west side) indicate an original feeding passage along the rear. The front wall has obvious evidence of inserted late 20th century windows and doorways, and earlier less obvious alterations are suspected. The roof structure dates from the late 20th century conversion.

## **The Upper Yard**

The surviving buildings of the upper yard comprise a former stable and adjoining implement shed. These are interpreted as being the 'implement linhay [and] 7-stall stable, loft over' recorded in the 1911 IR valuers' notes. There is an east-west block projecting at right angles from the north end of the barn, which faces south onto the upper yard. The implement shed was built in front of the east end in the late 19th century or very early 20th century on the evidence of historic maps. The building is not shown on the first edition OS map but is there on the second edition. It is also demonstrably secondary since its construction caused the blocking of a stable window.

The stable itself was much altered in the late 20th century. The centre section of the front wall was demolished in order to create an opening wide enough to accommodate vehicles. The upper part of the wall was rebuilt in stone on a pair of RSJs over the wide opening. It includes a loading hatch. To left of the opening there remains the jamb of an original stable window. Another window is blocked behind the implement shed, but a third window survives in the east end wall. It includes a 19th century frame, which appears to have been re-set upside down. It has a lower tier of narrow lights separated by glazing bars with a large shuttered light above. There was originally a loading hatch to the hayloft above the window but it is no longer used. The opening is boarded up.

The stable was thoroughly refurbished in the late 20th century. All the interior carpentry of the first floor and roof structure was replaced at that time. Nevertheless the roof is carried on scissor-braced trusses which suggests they are replicas of the originals.

The implement shed is a small gable-ended block projecting forward (south) from the east end of the stable. It has no windows but the front includes a wide opening for double doors. The roof is two bays and carried on an A-frame truss.

### **3. Stetfold Rocks, Cutcombe**

Stetfold Rocks occupies the west end of Cutcombe parish. However, in 1843, the date of the tithe map, it was an outlier of Timberscombe parish and then known as Stetford Rocks or Rocks & Cabsland. Stone is the adjacent farm to the northwest, just the other side of Stone Cross. Stetfold Rocks too is high. The steading is on the 320m contour, and the unenclosed downs less than 1k to the north rise over 400m OD.

The steading occupies a sheltered site just down from the ridge at the head of a small east-facing combe opening to the valley of the Larcombe Brook just a couple of hundred metres away. The site is aligned west southwest-east northeast but is described west-east here for the sake of simplicity.

#### **Layout**

The drive descends from the ridge to the west then forks. The northern fork follows the contour to the farmhouse, whilst the southern fork descends to the large farmyard which essentially comprises three ranges of traditional farm buildings around a yard which is much longer on the east-west axis than it is north-south. The open side is the west one which is the gateway to the yard. The buildings spill outside the yard with a couple built between the two forks of the drive extending the northern range of the yard. There is also an interesting lambing shed in the field northwest of the house. The house itself is set parallel to the north range, only 15.86m away to north, on higher land overlooking the upper levels of the buildings.

The farm court occupies a dip so that the long north and south ranges are terraced into the ground each side. Together they make up an integrated and planned system of buildings which were largely built in two phases in the mid 19th century. The evidence from old maps conforms with the stylistic details of the construction of the buildings.

The tithe map of 1843 shows a very small steading compared with that of c1890 from the first edition OS map. The largest building on the tithe map is assumed to be the old farmhouse, set a little to the southeast of the present one. There appears a loose arrangement of farmbuildings in front of the house, and relatively modest in scale. These include an east-west range on the north side, just inside the courtyard. This could be the existing west end of the northern range which now includes the stables and bank barn.

The rest of the yard was new-built, c1860 according to John Tucker from documents in his possession. This included a large lofted shippon round the three sides of the east end of the yard. Where the northern wing is built up against the northern bank barn it includes a cross passage through that end to a flight of steps rising to a path that continues a short distance to the front doorway of the house. Next to this is a small compartment which was pigsties. According to the IR valuers' notes from 1911 the shippon then accommodated 28 cows, yearlings and calves as well as a root house, chaff house and implement shed. The implement shed is easily recognisable at the west end of the south range but the rest of the shippon has been so much modernised that there is no real evidence for the positions of the other rooms. However these may be expected in corner rooms at the east end. There is a continuous loft over the whole shippon space.

At the west end of the southern range of the shippon there is a second bank barn (more or less opposite the northern one). There is a vertical straight join between it and the shippon showing that the bank barn was added onto the shippon. Its tall ground floor level was evidently a stable and it is described as a '3-stall hack stable' in the IR valuers' notes from 1911. At the same time the upper floor is described as a 'potato house' but it is set up as a threshing barn with a strengthened threshing floor. All the lofts are interconnecting so that it was originally possible to walk in the west end of the southern barn right round and out the other end of the northern barn.

The south range is completed by an open-fronted wagon lodge. This is set forward from the adjacent bank barn so that its rear southeast corner engages only with the front northwest corner of the barn.

The yard was evidently improved within the period between the production of the tithe map of 1843 and the first edition OS map of c1890. A dedicated dung pit was created in the middle of the east end of the yard surrounded on three sides by the shippons. A granary was raised high on cast-iron posts to stand over the dung pit with a first floor gangway (originally removable) connecting it to the hayloft over the east end shippon. On the outside (east side) of the east end shippon is the remains of a wheel pit with a piped water supply. This shifted cereal processing from the purpose-built threshing barns to the hayloft over the eastern shippon. This then became the barn or machine floor.

Outside the yard at the west end there are two free-standing buildings on the rising land between the two forks of the drive. Nearest the north range there is an open-fronted hay barn facing south. The south front is supported on the same cast-iron posts which support the granary and therefore show that it was a part of the later mid-late 19th century redevelopment.



The space for hay storage had been reduced when the eastern hayloft was changed from hay storage to machine cereal conversion. Extra hay storage space was created as part of the redevelopment of the yard.

It is also interesting to note that John Tucker, the farmer, remembers bringing in bracken for bedding through the southern haylofts.

Just to west of the hay barn, leaving a narrow walkway between, is the trap house facing north onto the farmhouse drive. It does not appear on the first edition OS map but is there by the second edition of c1905.

The later map also shows a new small store or mash house built on the north side of the main yard in the angle between the bank barn and wagon lodge. The small shed on the north side of the house drive was an ash house.

### **North Range – West End**

This is the lofted stable (west) and bank barn (to east). A small extension on the west end of the stable was a pigsty with a hen house above. Hens were often housed over pigs because the smell of the pigs was believed to deter the fox. These buildings were described as ‘pigsty, 5-stall stable, [both] with loft over’ and ‘cowstall for 8 cows and calves house with barn over.’ The farmer, Mr John Tucker, described the barn’s use within living memory as the ‘shearing barn’.

Both buildings are deeply terraced into the hillslope so that the rear (north) side allows convenient access to the upper levels. There is a flight of stone steps that rises up westwards from the front of the pigsty and henhouse to a level that coincides with the yard entry. This is on a level above the drive, on a terrace on which the hay barn stands. Returning round the back of the pigsty and henhouse there is a doorway into the loft (the henhouse) and to the hayloft over the stable. Steps rise from here up the hillslope to the farmhouse fork of the drive. The rear eaves of the stable are less than a metre above the ground level. However this is the level of the adjacent barn floor, and there is a terrace wide enough to accommodate a wagon.

The stable and pigsty and henhouse present a unified front. Although the pigsty and henhouse is much narrower than the stable the roof appears to run continuously across the two from the front. In fact it is monopitch at the pigsty and henhouse end and carried up to stable ridge level to provide a porch or shelter over the loft doorways.

The front has a doorway to the pigsty at the left (west) end and the stable has a central doorway flanked by generous two-light windows. The joinery is largely original, plain but good quality. For instance the windows have solid frames with bead moulded stiles and mullions. They contain beaded plank shutters hung on wrought-iron strap hinges with teardrop finials. There are no openings at loft level except for a relatively small square opening at the west end (now blocked) which was a hen door to the upper level of the pigsty and henhouse. There is a narrow slit window round the corner in the west end wall and a man door at the back. Alongside there is the end of the stable at hayloft level and there is an access doorway up a couple of steps. Again both doorways are of plain sturdy joinery. This is the only external opening to the hayloft.

The interior was altered when the stable was converted to a cow house in the 20th century. Nevertheless the basic structure remains. It is three bays long. Neatly squared oak beams and upended plank joists (tenons with soffit spurs) carry the hayloft floor leaving a feeding gap along the rear side. The roof trusses are of interrupted tiebeam type. The tiebeam is interrupted by a pair of posts which rise from the crossbeams to the collar creating a central walkway. The collar clasps the principals and, at the apex, the principals engage with a notched mortise-and-tenon joint and extend to an X-form. The whole assembly is pegged together. The truss carries a single set of back purlins and a plate yoke is nailed to the apex to carry the ridgeboard. This is identical to the roof over the stable hayloft at Ashway Farm in Dulverton. At the east end there is a doorway through to the adjacent barn.

**The bank barn** is a typical example of its form comprising a shippon under a threshing barn with opposing central doorways to the threshing floor. This is the 'cowstall for 8 cows and calves house with barn over' described in the 1911 IR valuers' notes. The barn is certainly set up as a traditional threshing barn but the farmer, John Tucker, calls it the 'shearing barn'. There is no reason to suppose that it could not have served both purposes, although its threshing function was superseded by the arrival of the water power system at the east end of the yard which powered machinery in the former hayloft over the east shippon .

It is a gable-ended building rising above the stable to west and northern shippon to east. The south front has broad raking buttresses each end. The shippon level has two large doorways with segmental arch heads made of brick. The upper level has a large central doorway under an oak lintel. It has a plain solid timber frame and contains a two-flap plank door hung on cast-iron strap hinges with teardrop finials. At the back (the north side) the barn doorway is off the terrace. It is a large wagon entry under an oak lintel and has a large solid timber frame containing double doors complete with central closing post. The eastern door is

full height whilst the western one is two flap. They are of plank-and-ledge construction and are hung on cast-iron strap hinges with teardrop finials.

Inside the shippon still has a cobbled floor. It seems that the original arrangement was of a passageway back from each front doorway with kerbs each side to raised standings. The stalls each end have been rebuilt but the central compartment could be original. The stall or loose box is enclosed by boarded partitions containing a central gateway each side from each passageway. A timber feeding trough still survives against the front wall.

The barn floor is five bays and carried on hefty crossbeams finished with rough chamfers. The outer bays have upended joists fitted into the beams with a tenon and soffit spur. The centre bay is under the threshing floor which has no joists but is strengthened by an extra crossbeam.

The interior of the threshing barn is well preserved. There are doorways each end connecting to the adjacent stable and shippon haylofts. There is a threshing floor between the front and back doorways. It is made of thick planks (of oak or elm) which stand proud from the rest of the floor. They needed to be so heavy to withstand the repeated impact of hand flails.

There is a low, boarded partition along the west side of the threshing floor. This was built to prevent grain spilling onto the floor beyond. It is a rare survival. Most were removed to facilitate movement when the threshing floors went out of use. There are also crossbeams set 2.1m high each side of the threshing floor. These were provided for hanging sail-cloths which helped concentrate draughts through the opposing barn doorways. By manipulating the various door flaps the draught could be controlled and thus disperse the chaff outside the barn during the manual threshing process.

There are keeping places next to the doorways. These are understood as places where a flagon could be kept to quench the thirst of those involved in the long, sweaty and dusty task of hand flailing the cereals. Additionally it could store the grease needed to keep the joints of the hand flails swivelling smoothly.

The barn roof is five bays and carried on tall A-frame trusses. The collars (some rather wavey) are lap jointed and spiked onto the principals which join as an X-apex with a pegged mortise-and-tenon joint. They carry a diagonal ridge and two sets of back purlins. The common rafters have been renewed on the south pitch, but the originals survive to north.

## **The Shippons**

The lofted shippons enclose the east end of the yard extending round three sides from the northern bank barn to the southern one. It is consistent in style and construction. As described above it was extensively modernised in the 20th century making it a matter of opinion as the position of the chaff house and root store mentioned as ground floor rooms in the 1911 IR valuers' notes.

The north side includes the cross passage which allows direct access to the yard from the farmhouse. This is right at the west end alongside the shippon level of the bank barn. Next to it is a small compartment which John Tucker identified as the pigsty mentioned in the 1911 IR valuers' notes. Directly opposite, at the west end of the south range, is a wide opening to the implement shed.

The south front of the north range has five doorways. The west end one is to the cross passage and the one next to it (the only one without a segmental arch head) is to the pigsty. The remaining three serve the shippon. There is a loading hatch doorway to the hayloft near the east end and a window roughly in the centre (now containing a 20th century casement with glazing bars). There is another doorway directly opposite the loading hatch which provides convenient access from the farmhouse. The doorway rises through the eaves and has its own pitched roof.

The west front of the east range has a regular arrangement of three doorways to the shippon and a central first floor doorway provides access from the hayloft to the gangway and granary. This is a two-flap door with a replacement lower flap. At the back there are three small ground floor windows, one south of centre, the others north of centre with the middle including some disturbance caused by builders making good after the demolition of the waterwheel house and its associated drives.

The north front of the south range includes another row of three shippon doorways and, at the west end, a wide opening to the implement shed under an oak lintel and relieving arch containing a plain timber frame and double doors. There is a loading hatch doorway to the hayloft in the middle of the range and another directly opposite in the rear (south) wall (both with replacement joinery). There is also a ground floor doorway in the south wall towards the east end and a couple of small windows now containing 20th century glazed frames, one to the ground floor and two to the hayloft.

The interior was adapted for 20th century cattle rearing. This involved the replacement of the original troughs, stall partitions and other features. There are boarded partitions and

cobbled floors in the northern shippon but they are associated with troughs made out of concrete block work. There is a feeding passage along the rear wall and it returns along the rear of the east range. With a chaff house and root store in the corners this may reflect the earlier layout. The pigsty has a second doorway off the passage and has a pair of narrow vents into the shippon.

The hayloft level is uninterrupted. However it has been extensively repaired. Whole areas of floor beams and joists were replaced c2000 (the older work easily distinguished because it is whitewashed), large areas of the hayloft were reboarded, and the whole of the roof rebuilt at the same time. These and earlier repairs have removed all evidence for the drives, shafts and pulleys associated with mechanised processing powered from the waterwheel. John Tucker remembers a threshing machine and chaff cutter in the east shippon hayloft and a couple of other cast-iron machines that are now stored in the granary came from the hayloft.

### **The Southern Bank Barn**

Situated more or less opposite the northern one the southern bank barn includes a riding horse stable at yard level with the remains of a threshing barn above. It too is deeply terraced into the rising ground to south so that the rear (south) side presents the barn doorway directly off the green lane on that side.

The barn has the traditional layout of a threshing floor between opposing doorways. The barn appears to have gone out of use relatively early because it is described as a 'potato store' with a '3 stall hack stable' in the 1911 IR valuers' notes.

The barn was built demonstrably later than the shippon to east. There is a vertical straight join on the yard side which shows the end of the shippon. The taller barn is built against and over the top of it. Some time in the late 20th century the original roof was removed and replaced by the present monopitch arrangement. It seems likely that the front (north) wall represents the original height of a side wall and it was a gable-ended block. Therefore the rear (south) wall has been reduced in height to take the secondary roof which is covered in 20th century corrugated iron.

The north front (to the yard) has two stable doorways, each with a window to right (west), the western one now hidden within the late 19th century – early 20th century mash house/store. The doorways have plain, solid timber frames with segmental arch heads and, although the doors are replacements they reuse some old strap hinges with teardrop finials.

The upper level has a central doorway to the threshing floor under an oak lintel. It has a relatively large solid timber frame with a narrow chamfered surround which contains a replacement two-flap door. There is a similar-sized doorway off the lane to the rear (south) which has an identical original frame and another replacement two-flap door.

Inside there are no fittings to indicate that the ground floor was a riding horse stable, except perhaps the high ceiling. The barn floor is carried on six crossbeams. It is essentially five bays but there is an extra beam against the eastern crosswall and another between the two central beams supporting the threshing floor. Although the carpentry technique is inferior the construction is identical to that of the first floor of the northern bank barn. The beams are roughly finished and the outer bays are joisted – the joists lapped over the rounded tops of the beams and supported below by timbers nailed to the sides of the beams. The central space, beneath the threshing floor is unjoisted. The thick planks of oak or elm are sufficient to carry the first floor and are set axially across the beams rather than across the building over the joists.

In the barn above, the threshing floor stands proud of the rest of the floor. There are doorways each end, the east one connecting to the shippon and the west one to the outside. The late 20th century monopitch roof is carried simply on a series of what look like telephone posts.

## **The Wagon Lodge**

At the west end of the yard the wagon lodge is set forward from the riding horse stable and its west end wall is on the line of the entrance gateway. It is single-storey and originally open-fronted, four bays long. The front was rebuilt in concrete blockwork in the late 20th century. The other original masonry walls have no openings. The four-bay roof is carried on a variant of tiebeam trusses, that is to say, that they are of tiebeam construction at the front but, at the back, the tie acts as a crossbeam set into a taller rear wall with the principal not engaged but sitting on the top of the wall birdsmouthed onto a spreader plate. The trusses have lap-jointed collars pegged onto the principals. At each apex the principals are lap-jointed to form an X-apex fixed by two pegs. The trusses carry a diagonal ridge and a single set of staggered back purlins.

The centre two bays are lofted but it is unclear if this was the original intent since the joists rest on timbers spiked along the crossbeams.

## **The Dung Pit and Granary**

Stetfold Rocks is remarkable for the dung pit and granary raised above it at the east end of the yard. The two were clearly built together since the cast-iron posts supporting the granary are set into ashlar pads set within the walls of the dung pit.

The dung pit is enclosed with stone rubble walls but is open on the west end and has a man-sized opening on the east end. The granary is the same size standing over the dung pit with its floor level roughly equivalent with the hayloft level of the surrounding shippons.

The granary, which is large, three bays long measuring 10.23m x 4.23m is supported on cast-iron posts or columns which rise through the granary (the first floor) to support the roof. These posts were not designed for this granary since they include a purpose-less bracket less than 1m below roof plate level. There are timbers between these brackets, but these are under the ceiling level and simply put there to brace the building together.

The granary is timber-framed, weather-boarded on the outside and plastered on the inside with a ceiling that hides the roof structure. The doorway is in the east end onto a gangway over to the hayloft level of the eastern shippon. The timber gangway is now fixed but this dates from c2000. John Tucker reports that the original was capable of being removed into the hayloft. It has a small window in the west end and another in the middle of the south side, both rebuilt c2000. There are the remains of original corn bins at the east end.

## **Waterwheel and Water Supply**

There is a wheel pit against the east end of the yard, on the outside of the east-end shippon. This intrudes into a walled garden. The house has been demolished and connections through to the adjacent shippon and hayloft above have been removed, and the masonry of the east end wall made good. Inside there is no surviving evidence of powered machinery.

North of the pit there are a regular series of stone rubble supports, each about 1.25m x 0.52m and set between 2.1m – 1.52m apart. Next to the farm buildings they have been reduced in height and carry nothing. In the garden to north they support 2.74m-long sections of cast-iron pipe bearing the mark of ‘O. Jordan, Iron Founder, Newport’. The level of the pipe suggests an overshot wheel.

## **The Hay Barn**

The hay barn, situated a short distance west of the north range of the yard, backs onto the farmhouse fork of the entry drive whilst facing onto the farmyard fork of the drive. It has a corrugated iron roof, as mentioned in the 1911 IR valuers' notes, which John Tucker reckons is still surviving from its construction at some time between the tithe map of c1840 and the first edition OS map of c1890. In fact the tithe map appears to show a building here that early, but its style of construction suggests that the present building is later.

It is a curious and unusual building built across the hillslope, its rear wall along the farmhouse fork of the drive. It faces south onto a narrow terrace well above the farmyard fork of the drive. It is three bays long, open on the sheltered south front and east end. The back (north) wall includes two hayloft loading hatches. This is a tall and unfloored building with an asymmetrical roof pitch – much smaller on the north side. The open south side is divided by cast-iron posts identical to those used in the granary. As in the granary they are not designed for this position because the brackets do not relate to any function. The roof structure was not accessible at the time of survey since the building was full of hay bales.

### **Mash House**

The tiny mash house is described as a store in the 1911 IR valuers' notes. Built in the angle between the riding horse stable and the wagon lodge, it was not there on the first edition OS map of c1890, but is shown on the second edition from c1905. It is a plain small shed with a window in the north end and a doorway through the east end. John Tucker remembers a cooking place for mash and a chimney here which has now gone.

### **Trap House**

The trap house was also built between the production of the two early OS maps, c1890-c1905. It is built a short distance west of the hay barn facing onto the farmhouse drive. Although its rear wall drops down deep to the farmyard drive it is a simple building with a wide wagon/trap-sized entry on the north side. Apart from the front doorway it has a window towards the rear (south) of its east wall, a repaired 19th century casement with glazing bars creating two panes to left and three to right.

### **Discussion**

Stetfold Rocks is an interesting farmstead. It is the largest of the ones recorded. As described above, a small part may have been incorporated into a massive enlargement. Any earlier scheme was subsumed within the scale of the rebuilding as a planned yard. There



were large changes to the farm between the production of the parish tithe map from c1840 and the first edition OS map of c1890.

The first great rebuild within this mid-19th century period simplistically created barns at the west (stable) end of the farm designed for hand threshing. The east end was for cattle and haylofts, containing both feed and fodder. It was at this east end that the waterwheel was introduced, and then it is quite logical that the east-end shippon hayloft was converted to corn processing, chaff cutting, and all the processes normally associated with the traditional threshing barn.

Stetfold Rocks then preserves an enormously interesting example of a traditional farmstead whose farm buildings expanded massively in the mid 19th century, and was then adapted to accommodate waterwheel power. The adaptation of using the east shippon hayloft for mechanised corn processing appears to have rendered the two purpose-built threshing barns redundant. A large granary was built over a dung pit at the east end whilst a new hay barn (using the same cast-iron posts as the granary) was built outside the main yard. It seems that the introduction of water power altered the whole dynamics of the mixed farm.

## **4. Lyshwell, Molland**

Lyshwell is a small farm at the north end of Molland parish. It is just inside Devon with the Danes Brook forming the county boundary a couple of hundred metres to the north of the farmstead. The brook forms the north and west boundary of the historic farm whilst open moor forms the south and east sides. The farm is approached from the south off a ridgeway lane crossing West Ansty and Molland Commons. The drive has to accommodate a steep-sided valley to reach the farmstead which sits on the south side of a spur on the 300m OD contour. This is the springline.

The farmstead is on a south facing slope. It is essentially a mid-19th century single-phase farm. The 1843 tithe map shows a tiny settlement called South Lyshwell on the same site as the existing farm but there is no trace of it today. It is interesting to note that the tithe award records North Lyshwell as a field away to the northeast, Moor House a couple of fields away to the northwest and Lancombe in the large field to south of the farmstead. No buildings are shown in these fields but the sketch plan in the 1911 IR valuers' notes record three sheds at 'Land combe' and describes them as 'very old & dilapidated buildings being let down'.

### **Layout**

Lyshwell is a small upland farm built on a rough south-facing slope. The drive approaches from the south but is forced into a sharp dogleg just in front of the house to accommodate the steep valley there. Thus it rises past the south side of the steading turning north round the east side.

The two-storey house is double depth and built across the hillslope facing south. It overlooks a generous garden on a terrace, which is supported by a stone revetment wall, above the drive and field beyond. There is a part-lofted turf (or peat) house on the west end. This is mentioned in the 1911 IR valuers' notes but Raymond Davey's father remembers it in use. The third domestic building is a small privy in the western garden wall close by the north end.

The rectangular farmyard is immediately east of the house and garden and follows the same southwards slope. There is the threshing barn across the full extent of the upper (north) side of the yard, with a relatively large horse engine house off the rear of the east end. The west end of the barn is built up against the end of the farmhouse. The east side of the yard is mostly taken up by a tall range which originally housed the stable to north of a shippon on the lower level with haylofts over. At the north end there is no overlap with the barn. The two ranges just touch each other on the corners. There is a gap beyond the south end of the east range forming the gateway or main entry to the yard.

The west side of the yard is a single-storey calves shed, part of which was occupied as pigsties in 1911 according to the IR valuers' notes. It does not extend to the northern end of the yard. This is separated from the garden by a stone rubble wall containing a man-sized gateway.

The south side of the yard is a stone revetment wall dropping down to the drive and reducing in height from west to east as the drive rises to the yard entry. There is a cart lodge on the lower level built between the drive and revetment wall just south of the calves house.

The first and second edition OS maps show another building further east, a short distance south of the lower east corner of the garden. This is described in the 1911 IR valuers' notes as an 'old and very dilapidated' poultry house. This has been replaced by a small unlofted stock-shed built further north up against the garden wall.

The only other remaining farm building is the small shed on the north end of the engine house. This was an implement shed. There appears to be a little confusion in the IR valuers' notes. The sketch plan labels the engine house as J and the ash house as K. Block J is described as ash house with no mention of Block K.

Apart from the 'dilapidated' buildings at Lancombe no other buildings are shown at Lyshwell in 1911. However the first edition OS map shows a medium-sized shed on a rough east-west axis north of the farmhouse, and a small shed to south of the steading on the other side of the drive. Both had gone by the time of the second edition OS map.

## **The Threshing Barn**

The four-bay barn is built in the traditional form with large opposing doorways to the threshing floor. There is also a small hatchway just east of the main northern doorway to the engine house and a loading hatch in the middle of the east gable-end wall. The eastern bay is part floored with a cross passage underneath, running along the west wall (next to the farmhouse). This may be a secondary insertion, but probably from the 19th century. It is certainly a very practical way of getting the farmer from his back door to the main yard, and milk and other materials back from the yard.

The south front overlooks the yard and contains two doorways. The larger one, left (west) of centre, is the doorway to the threshing floor, whereas the west end one (next to the house) is to the cross passage. The main doorway is raised above the yard, and is sheltered by a monopitch slate hood. The doorway is up a flight of steps to a platform. The steps which rise along the wall from the west are built of stone but have replacement concrete treads. The platform is a large square slab of slate supported on stone side walls repaired with early 20th century red brick.

The doorway itself has a low segmental arch head made up of dressed voussoirs finished with a lightly stippled rustication. It contains a plain solid timber frame and a two flap door of plank-and-ledge construction hung on wrought-iron strap hinges with teardrop finials.

The rear (north) wall of the barn is largely hidden behind other buildings. The eastern half is covered by the engine house whilst the west end (including the doorway to the passage) is sheltered under a late 20th century porch built in the angle of the house and barn. There is the rear doorway to the threshing floor between. This is a large wagon-sized entry, nearly full height and containing double doors. The opening is spanned by a hefty oak lintel. It contains a plain solid frame (including a sill) and still retains the removable central closing stud. The double doors include a two-flap door to east and full height door to west are of braced plank-and-ledge construction and are hung on wrought-iron strap hinges with teardrop finials. The loading bay doorway in the west end has a projecting slate sill and a segmental arch head. It has a plain solid frame and doorway in the same joinery style as the main doors.

The barn was designed for hand threshing and there are the remains of heavy cross boards making up the threshing floor between the opposing doorways. (For more detail, see description of north barn at Stetfold Rocks above). However the barn appears to have been built with an engine house off the east end of the north side.

A cast-iron gear shaft with belt-drive pulleys passes through the wall from the engine house; high up above the connecting hatch. A leather belt still hangs forlornly from the shaft. The shaft is held firmly in place by a superficially crude but eminently practical arrangement of minimally trimmed spars. The iron shaft is held against a vertical spar hanging from a horizontal running between the two nearest roof trusses and fixed into the angle between the top of the collars and undersides of the principals. Diagonal braces extend from each side of the base of the upright to the ends of the horizontal. Further south there is a horizontal lay shaft across the full width of the building. It is sited along the west side of the threshing floor at about the same height as the gear shaft further north and is held firm by a crude frame of three full-height uprights braced by a crosspiece at about loft level, with two further intermediate studs below. The shaft contains six pulley wheels of various sizes and thicknesses.

The west end loft is only 2.45m wide and supported on a half-beam against the farmhouse to east and a sturdy crossbeam to the barn to west. This is more a platform than a loft, and may be associated with the working of agricultural machines. Below there is a boarded screen to the cross passage.

The five trusses (one against the east end wall) are relatively tall A-frames made up of sturdy but waney timbers. The principals are lap-jointed together to make an X-apex. The collars too are lap-jointed and the assembly is spiked together. There are sets of chiselled Roman numerals on the main timbers which are the carpenters' assembly marks. The trusses carry two sets of back purlins and a diagonal ridge.

### **The Horse Engine House**

This was mis-named the Ash House in the 1911 IR valuers' notes (see above). It is a wide rectangular building (6.4m x 7.12m) projecting northwards from the east end of the barn and projecting a very short distance beyond the end wall. It was built with the barn and the masonry is continuous between the two buildings. Some of the masonry, particularly on the barn side, was disturbed when the engine structure was dismantled.

There are three external doorways. The northern one (at the west end) is original. The western is late 20th century in its present form. It is a short hatch-like doorway in the blocking of an original 2.3m-wide opening, which also contains a 20th century metal-framed window. The eastern doorway is a 20th century insertion and the opening is lined with red brick.

There is another original opening which is now blocked. This is a small opening, 570mm wide and 1m high, set high in the west wall right next to the barn doorway. This was apparently provided to take a belt drive outside from the surviving pulley wheel on the gear shaft passing through the barn wall.

On the south side there is also the low and narrow hatch connecting with the barn. This is believed to be a 'shouting hole', whereby the operators of the machinery inside the barn could communicate with those supervising the horses in the engine house.

The inside has been converted to a cattle shed and has a 20th century concrete floor. It has a three-bay roof built in the same style as the barn roof.

### **The Implement Shed**

The implement shed is a small building on the north end of the engine house. It continues the roofline of the engine house to its north gable end. It appears to be contemporary with the engine house but uses brick voussoirs over the two windows. The wide doorway in the east side is nearly full width. It has an oak lintel and contains a solid plain timber frame with uneven double doors. These are similar in style to those of the barn. They are of braced plank-and-ledge construction hung on wrought-iron strap hinges with teardrop finials. There is a small single light window in each of the other two external walls.

The interior is featureless and the roof is carried on purlins and the ridge extended from the engine house to the north wall.

### **The Stable and Shippon**

The lofted block forming the east range of the yard is built down the hillslope. It was described in 1911 as 'Stable & Calves Ho. Bullocks Ho. for 8'. Raymond Davey's father remembers it used as such with the stable uphill at the north end. However it was extensively refurbished in the mid 20th century when the whole place was taken over by cattle.

The west front now has two doorways and three windows to the lower level. It has been somewhat altered. The left hand (northern) window and doorway are the original openings to the former stable section. The shippon section is now comprises a wide window each side of a doorway. In fact these windows are in the blockings of original doorways whereas the doorway appears to have been knocked through an original window. All the joinery of the doorways and windows dates from the 20th century. The relatively tall loft has a single loading hatch over the central shippon doorway. It has an oak lintel and contains a plain solid frame but has lost its doors. There was a second loading hatch of the same size over the former stable door towards the north end but this is now blocked up.

The stable loading hatch was apparently replaced in the mid 20th century by a secondary loading hatch in the north gable-end wall. This hatch opening has a concrete lintel and brick jambs. The north end also includes a mid 20th century doorway at the east end, also with a concrete lintel and brick jambs.

Each gable includes a small original window. In a lowland barn these might be interpreted as owl-holes but maybe not here at over 1000ft above sea level.

The rear (east) wall contains three original window openings, two to the original shippon section and one to the former stable.

The interior at ground floor level is essentially the product of the mid 20th century modernisation. Connecting doorways have been knocked through each end of the stone crosswall which originally separated stable and shippon. A feeding passage has been created along the east wall (with access through the 20th century doorway in the north end wall). The stalls, troughs and floor are all concrete and the loft floor is now carried on 20th century RSJs.

The loft floor steps up from the original shippon section to the former stable loft. This seems to preserve the original arrangement and the two are still divided by a probably 19th century partition made up of wide vertical boards.

There is a five-bay roof over all carried on A-frame trusses made up of timbers of relatively large scantling. The principals are birdsmouthed and notched into spreader plates laid along the walltops. They engage as X-apexes with lap joints fixed by two pegs each. The lap-jointed collars are also held by pairs of pegs each end. The timbers include chiselled Roman numerals as carpenters' assembly marks. The trusses carry two sets of back purlins and a large diagonal ridge.

## **The Calves House**

This is the low range forming the west side of the yard backing onto the garden. It is the building described as 'Yearlings Ho. 2 Pigs Hos' in the 1911 IR valuers' notes. It is now divided into three uneven compartments by solid walls up to eaves level. However the interior is plastered and therefore it is not possible to determine whether or not these are original partitions. The east front includes three full-height doorway openings, one to each compartment and the rear wall contains one ventilator slit to each compartment. The four-bay roof is a 20th century replacement of the original and designed for the existing corrugated asbestos cover.

## **The Wagon Lodge**

The wagon lodge is built against the revetment wall supporting the farmyard terrace. It is situated between the yard and the drive, open-ended at the east end. It was partly rebuilt in the mid 20th century when the north wall (the revetment wall) was largely rebuilt in concrete blockwork and the roof reduced to a monopitch with a cover of corrugated asbestos sheeting.

The east end is open full width. The only other feature is a man-sized doorway in the south wall which is now blocked up.

## **The Small Cattle Shed**

As described above this isolated cattle shed probably dates from the early 20th century and replaced the poultry house described in the 1911 IR valuers' notes. It is built against the revetment wall supporting the garden terrace. It is a small single-storey block built of local stone rubble with red brick dressings. The gable-ended roof is covered with corrugated iron sheeting which may be original.

It is built on a rough east-west axis with the doorway at the south end of the east wall. There is a single, relatively generous single-light window in the middle of the south wall. The interior contains no original features below the three-bay roof. This is carried on tiebeam trusses with vertical cast-iron tension bars from the centre of the tie to the lap-jointed apex (fixed by a peg). The single set of back purlins and the double ridge may be original if the roof has been covered with corrugated iron sheeting from the beginning.

## **Summary**

Detailed analysis of the buildings will be provided by the historians of the Victoria County History, who will have access to more documentary material than Keystone. The survey work, however, has established some initial conclusions.

## **Dating**

On historic map evidence all four farmyards arrived at their present form between c.1840 and c.1890. All four farmsteads were completely rebuilt and massively enlarged between these dates and preserve little that can be dated before the mid 19th century. There is no pre-1840 fabric at Stone and Lyshwell. At Ashway part of an earlier building shown on the tithe map was incorporated into the shippon, but extensively rebuilt. [fn. It may be significant that this range has a king post roof which might date from the early 19th century.] At Stetfold Rocks it is possible that an old barn and stable were incorporated into the enlarged mid 19th-century yard. The stable roof is identical in style to the mid 19th-century roof of the stable at Ashway and is likely to have been recently-erected when the building was recorded on the tithe map.

## **Layout**

As rebuilt and enlarged, the farmsteads provide an interesting insight into mid 19th-century, upland, integrated farming systems. 'Planned Farms' seems too grand an appellation, considering that three of the four examples demonstrate some element of having been adjusted in plan. Ashway and Stetfold Rocks incorporate earlier buildings. Stone appears to have been a single concept and is consistent in style but the various ranges abut awkwardly, as if there were changes in plan during construction. Lyshwell is the only farmstead which is completely consistent.

## **Size**

The increase in size of the farmyards on all four farms between c.1840 and 1890 is striking. It reflects both the general principles of 19th-century agricultural improvement and also particular attempts by larger estates to expand arable cultivation by improving the Exmoor soils.

Stetfold Rocks was enlarged from a modestly-scaled group of buildings to one of the largest farmyards on Exmoor. It is of particular interest in illustrating at least four phases of



development between c.1840 and 1890. The first ideas of improvement were presumably adjusted to the realities of Exmoor farming and may reflect general issues of the cost and availability of labour as well as the time taken to raise funds for investment. Shortly after the first major expansion of the yard a new bank barn was added in the south range, more or less opposite the old one in the north range. Both were designed for hand threshing with no evidence for mechanisation. Within about a decade or three, water was brought to the yard via a pipeline and a waterwheel power system introduced into the east range of the yard. [fn. Mr John Tucker, the farmer, informed Keystone that he has accounts of building work in the yard, along with other documents, from 1860. These were not examined by Keystone but would be well worth investigation]. The water wheel prompted a major re-arrangement of the farmyard. Grain was now processed in what had formerly been a hayloft over the eastern shippon. A new granary of generous size was built over the dung pit in the middle of the yard and connected to the eastern hayloft/new machine loft by means of a removeable gangway (this was subsequently remodelled as a fixed bridge). A new haybarn was built close by the west end of the yard to compensate for the hayloft space lost to the new machine loft. Mechanisation rendered the two old threshing barns redundant, although they could provide general storage space.

The enlargement of the other three farmyards included power systems from the outset. The barn at Lyshwell has a traditional threshing floor for hand threshing but there is a horse engine house off the north side. Both Ashway and Stone have natural streams channelled into leats to feed waterwheels and their barns were apparently not built with traditional hand-threshing floors.

## **Identification of Function**

The intended function of the major building is relatively easy to identify from their design. Later adaptations of the buildings can be less obvious. Barns, especially the older form of barn with a hand threshing floor between opposing large doorways survive at Stefold Rocks and Lyshwell. The barns associated with mechanisation at Stone and Ashway still have sets of opposing doors. At Stefold Rocks, the relocation of grain processing from the traditional barns to the hayloft over the shippon can only be identified from the relationship of the hayloft to the secondary waterwheel system and the granary. All evidence of machines and drives has been removed from the former hayloft and the upper floor much repaired.

Animal houses can be distinguished from one another by their design, stables having larger windows and being better-appointed than cattle sheds. Without documentary material

it is not easy to determine the refinements of what age or type of cattle were kept where. Keystone has not been able to discover why some cattle were allowed to wander in and out of their houses (as is commonly the case with shippens) or were tethered in stalls. Pigsties are relatively easy to recognise on account of their scale.

Root stores are commonly found in cool, dark corner rooms between shippen ranges. Other storage rooms are more difficult to identify, particularly if they have lost their original fittings. The valuers' field books for the IR valuers' Increment Value Survey, undertaken between c.1911 and 1915 (PRO, IR58) are extremely useful for identifying use at the date of survey, although these uses may be adaptations of original use. They often mention chaff houses and hay stores and the descriptions can be linked to the existing buildings either by plans (where they exist) or mentally following the valuers round the farmstead. The descriptions of function are not necessarily completely reliable (for instance at Lyshwell, the valuer identified the horse engine house as an 'ash house'). Nevertheless they provide useful information to be tested against the evidence of surviving layouts and the interaction of spaces.

Lastly, there is the evidence of 20th-century alterations in the existing layouts. In some cases 20th-century concrete and tubular steel stalls can be inferred as upgrading the Victorian originals. This is most obvious at Ashway. Here original doorways to the outside and between the ranges offer evidence of original feeding passages which were retained when troughs and stalls in the northern and western shippens were replaced. The southern range at Stone was substantially altered when it was converted to stables in the late 20th century. It can be identified as cow pens from the valuer's fieldbook of c.1911 and disused original doorways each end indicate the existence of a former feeding passage. By contrast, the feeding passage through the former stable and shippen at Lyshwell is wholly associated with mid 20th-century alterations. Stetfold Rocks is the only farmyard studied where the presence (or not) of feeding passages cannot be established. This is partly due to the layout of the 19th-century shippens, but also the extent of late 20th-century adaptations and repairs.

Permanent buildings designed specifically for sheep are virtually unknown in the south west before the mid 19th century and are rare afterwards. This is an instructive reminder that farm buildings do not tell the whole story of agricultural systems and the region's long history of sheep-based wealth has left little tangible evidence in farmyards. No more than a handful of Dartmoor farmsteads have purpose-built space which might be interpreted as lambing sheds (e.g. Halsanger Farm in Ashburton). This makes the lambing shed at Stetfold Rocks a rare and remarkable building for the survival of many interior partitions, creating small pens associated with feeding troughs and mangers. At the same farm, the current farmer, John

Tucker, described the northern barn to Keystone as a shearing barn. This was clearly built as a threshing barn but this function was transferred to the east range a couple of decades after it was built. The value of oral history for farm building function is plain here, identifying a secondary use for this building as a shearing barn and wool store.

It is worth noting that most traditional west country farms commonly include a cider house and cellar, associated with orchards close to the farm. Cider was an important form of payment for harvest work, as well as the drink of preference on Devon and Somerset farms. The altitude on the farms studied is too high for orchards and none has any buildings for cider production and/or storage.

### **Original Fixtures and Fittings**

19th-century external joinery detail is plain, sturdy and utilitarian, giving little help in the way of dating criteria. The few internal partitions which might be considered original are plain and simple affairs with wany posts and boards. One superior stall partition survives in the riding horse stable at Ashway.

Doorways and windows have plain frames jointed together by pegged mortise and tenon joints. 19th-century doors are usually of braced plank and ledge construction, hung on strap hinges with fleur-de-lis finials. Examples can easily be found on all four farms, sometimes thriftily re-used on late 20th-century replacement doors. Fewer original window frames survive complete with their shutters, or evidence of original glazing. The best examples of shuttered windows are in the northern stable block at Stetfold Rocks and the window at the south end of the stable range at Ashway. No such early windows survive at Lyshwell. Stone includes two examples of a different type of window. These are found at the east end of the original stable block and the south end of the root store in the bank barn. They have a timber grille under a narrow tier of glazing with bead-moulded glazing bars. The grille was designed as a horizontal sliding frame which could be opened or closed for ventilation.

The great majority of internal fittings have been removed or replaced. Threshing floors survive at Lyshwell and in both barns at Stetfold Rocks, where the northern barn threshing floor is a particularly good example, associated with original doors, beams and the survival of a low boarded screen.

Some simple timber feeding troughs remain at Stetfold Rocks, but only one (in the shippon under the northern barn) might be in its original position. This is associated with roughly-hewn boarded partitions creating a loose box for cattle in the central section. None

remain at Lyshwell or Stone. Ashway preserves two types of trough. There is a small stall-wide plain timber trough in the riding horse stable, but a more unusual tile-lined trough, probably original, in the linhay.

The significance of the partitions, mangers and feeding troughs in the lambing shed at Stetfold Rocks has been noted above. The mangers are probably the only original examples in original situ on the four farmsteads. Some timber mangers remain under the feeding gap in the working horse stable at Ashway, but these seem to be association with conversion from a stable to a cattle house.

## **A Couple of Points of Definition**

Whilst Keystone has been involved in the extensive and intensive recording of hundreds of farmsteads in Kent and southwest England, we have never had an opportunity to research the subject in any depth. Our interpretation is based on stylistic comparison, discussion of last use of the buildings with farmers old enough to remember mixed agricultural regimes on the farm (sometimes using horses), and attempting to keep up with the subject in academic terms through journals and the odd conference. In short we are not specialists.

### **Chaff**

In terms of Victorian farming chaff has two meanings. Firstly there are the husks of the corn or other grain removed during the threshing or winnowing. This is refuse matter. Secondly there is the chaff, stored in chaff houses, which is used to feed the livestock. This is chopped straw. 19th century commentators seem to indicate that wheat could be used when fresh, but barley or oat chaff, and even pea or bean haulm, was preferred (e.g. Henry Stephens, *The Book of the Farm*, vol 1, pp 348-351).

### **Thatch**

In most farms in Devon and Somerset a proportion of the wheat straw, or reed as it was known locally, would have been reserved for thatching. Although one small shed at Lyshwell was recorded as thatched in 1911 all the buildings of all four farms seem to have been designed for slate or corrugated iron as the cheap alternative. Thus thatching straw was not considered when preparing the flow diagrams.

April 2007

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## Appendix 1

*The relevant information from the valuers' field books for the Inland Revenue  
Increment Value Survey, undertaken between c.1911 and 1915 (PRO, IR58)*

### Ashway

**No surviving notebook for the parish**

#### **Stone Farm (Sketch Plan)**

**Extent 588 acres Acland Estate**

- A. Stone built stuccoed and slated farmhouse (poor roof) comprising **Gd flr** 2 sitting rooms, kitchen, hall, dairy, pantry (3 underground cellars) **1st flr** 7 bedrooms **2nd flr** 4 attics only fit for lumber. 3 poultry houses, Ash House & WC – stone and slate.
- B. Stone and slated traphouse, wood house and 2 pig styes.
- C. Stone stucco and slate store rooms and 2 pig styes.
- D. Stone timber and iron 4-bay cart linhay.
- E. Stone and iron implement linhay, 7 stall stable, loft over (roof iron) Barn (wooden floor), hay store and shed for 8 bullocks under. Root house adjoining, granary over – 3 calves houses adjoining harness room and 2 stall stable. All stone and slate. 6 cow pens, pen for 4, hay store – Shed for 15 bullocks, loft over, Chaffhouse adjoining, stone and slated – Waterwheel adjoining.
- F. Stone and iron shed for ensilage. Hay store and pens for 6 bullocks with yard – stone and slate.
- G. Timber and iron rick cover for hay.

An extensive hill-country farm extending from 1000 to 1500 feet above sea level. Some very useful meadows, pastures vary, arables mostly inferior. Hill land for most part boggy and poor. Premises good. Rent reasonable and on the whole very useful farm. Water supply good.

**Stetfold Rocks (No plan)**

**Extent 392 acres John Tucker, Owner and occupier**

- D. Farmhouse, stone and slate, contains 2 Sitting Rooms, Back Kitchen, Cellar and Dairy on GF. 6 bedrooms on 1st floor. Pumphouse and Wood House at rear.
- E. Pigsty } with loft over  
 5 stall stable }  
 Cow stall for 8 cows and Calves House with barn over.
- F. Cow stall for 28 cows }  
 Pigsties }  
 Root House }  
 Chaff House } Corn stores and loft over all  
 Yearling House }  
 Calves House }  
 Implement Shed }
- G. Potato House and 3 stall Hack Stable.
- H. Store shed and Waggon shed.
- J. Hay shed, timber and galvanised iron and stone wall on west side.
- K. Trap House.
- L. Granary with Manure Store under, timber and slate.
- M. Ash House.
- N. Sheep House, divided with 4 rack partitions.

A very good farm for the hill country district in a very good state of cultivation and managed in excellent style. Arables fair, meadows good, pastures useful. House and Buildings adequate, in good repair and very convenient, being built around a large yard with manure pit in centre. 2 good Cottages in good repair. 13 miles from Station and Market which is the greatest disadvantage, 35 acres of Commons near Staddon Hill. Timber (shade and shelter value only.)

**Lyshwell (Sketch Plan)**

**Extent 162 acres Throckmorton Estate**

- A. Stone, Plaster and Salted House containing 3 Bedrooms and 3 Back Bedrooms, Sitting Room, Kitchen, Back House, Dairy, Cellars.
- B. Stone and Slate Leanto Turf House
- C. Stone and Slate WC.
- D. Stone and Thatch Poultry House (old and dilapidated)
- E. Stone and Slate Cart Shed.
- F. Stone and Slate Yearlings House, 2 Pigs Houses
- G. Stone and Slate Stable 3 Calves House Bullocks House for 8 and loft over.
- H. Stone and Slate Barn.
- J. Stone and Slate Ash House.

*No K is mentioned. Actually J is a horse Engine House.*

Lyshwell and Landcombe Farmhouse and Buildings and land having an area of 162.0.  
 32. Chiefly plain quality rearing farm. Plenty of water on farm. House and Buildings old and in good repair. Bad approach. Timber no value. Shooting £5.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

We are most grateful to the owners of the farms for their patience and hospitality during the on-site survey, and also for the intimate and practical knowledge of past use of family farms without which this report would be much poorer.

The staffs of the Devon and Somerset Record Office

Debbie Horton was site assistant and Sebastian Pope linesman.

Sandi Ellison input the text.

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