

**Documentary Research  
and Assessment  
of  
LOWER DUNSCOMBE FARM,  
CHERITON FITZPAINE, DEVON.**

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For Mr D. Fox



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Fig. 1 Extract from the 2nd edition OS Map Devonshire Sheet LV. N.E, surveyed 1887, revised 1903 and published in 1906, showing the location of Lower Dunscombe (circled) in relation to Cheriton Fitzpaine village.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

This report describes the results of documentary research and assessment of a settlement site at Lower Dunscombe, Cheriton Fitzpaine, Devon (SS 8881 0594). The site lies a short distance to the east of Cheriton Fitzpaine (Fig. 1) and includes the site of a farmhouse (now demolished) two historic farm buildings and earthworks relating to other structures and features.

The current works were undertaken as part of an archaeological recording project required under conditions attached to the grant of planning permission (Application Nos 13/00356/FULL) for the repair and conversion of the surviving farm buildings for residential use. These works would necessarily involve subdivision of the interiors to provide domestic accommodation and associated groundworks for drainage, landscaping and access. The archaeological conditions sought to ensure that history, development and significance of the farmstead were understood prior to the commencement of any works and that any historic building fabric, architectural detail or archaeological deposits affected by these works would be adequately recorded.

The archaeological works were undertaken by Richard Parker Historic Buildings Recording and Interpretation in October and November 2013 in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation agreed with the Devon Historic Environment Service. The works included a documentary study and assessment of the site, an archaeological building survey of the standing structures and a watching brief on the excavation of drainage trenches associated with a temporary building to be utilised as a residence during the conversion works.

This report outlines the results of the documentary research which explored readily available published sources and documents in local archive centres to establish the rough outline of the development of the buildings and set the site in its historic and archaeological context. A full archaeological report, including the results of the historic building survey and watching brief will be produced at a later stage, after the completion of the site works





Fig. 2 The site of Lower Dunscombe seen from the east, showing the surviving barn occupying a raised site between two depressions. The surrounding area is full of evidence of earthworks for lost hedgerows and field boundaries.



Fig. 3 The remains of the farm complex from the south, showing the barn (centre right) and linhay (centre left) and the remains of enclosures representing gardens. The house lay at the further end of the barn, running across this view behind the mound of debris in the foreground.

## 2. THE SITE

### 2.1 Topography

Lower Dunscombe lies to the east of Cheriton Fitzpaine, south of the road linking the village to Cadbury. The site lies in a well-watered valley lying between the farmsteads of Hannabeth on the south west, Stockadon, to the north and the deserted farmstead of Grue to the east (Fig 1). The site of Lower Dunscombe is approached through a modern farmyard at the roadside near its junction with Stockadon Lane, by a long, rough track from the roadway. The track descends steeply southwards to the site of Higher Dunscombe, then turns at a right angle to the east and south east before crossing a ford over a stream at the valley bottom. Lower Dunscombe lies on a raised area of ground immediately beyond the ford. The site of the farmhouse, buildings and yard occupies a raised platform to the south of the stream and is bounded on the south by a further depression, now waterlogged, which might represent a ditch or watercourse (Fig. 2). To the south and north the hills rise on either side and show slight traces of depressions and linear alignments of trees representing former hedgerows, field boundaries and also the course of a track leading southwards from the farm site. Although this track may have provided access to fields only, the alignment of hedgerows beyond this suggest that it may originally have communicated with lanes and farms further south, near Lower Burrow Coombe.

Two farm buildings survive: a threshing barn on the raised platform at the nucleus of the farm and an open-fronted lincay at a lower level to the north, close to the ford over the stream. Near the farm buildings are a number of short lengths of banks and hedges which define a sub-rectangular enclosure representing gardens associated with the demolished farmhouse (Fig. 3). The topography of the site is very suggestive of a shrunken medieval settlement, however the field names given in the tithe apportionment of 1838 are not particularly revealing. The nucleus of the farm is given as 'house, outhouses and yard', with gardens adjoining. Most of the fields near the site are former orchards, named 'Back Orchard', 'Barns Orchard' or just 'Orchard'. The other fields have descriptive titles like 'Long Meadow', 'Low Meadow' or 'Lower Hill'. 'Mow Barton' was a small field lying immediately south of the surviving barn and presumably served as an enclosure for hay ricks; it is now part of a larger field.

### 2.2 Documentary sources (based on notes by Lucy Browne).

The settlement at Dunscombe is of great antiquity, being recorded in Domesday in 1086 as 'Danescoma'. Further references give the name as 'Denescumbe' (1198), 'Dynescumbe' (1281) and 'Donescumb' (1303). The name is considered to preserve the personal name of an early owner, meaning Dynni's combe or valley (*The Place Names of Devon*, 414). Dunscombe appears listed under West Budleigh Hundred in Tristram Risdon's *Survey of Devon*, written in c.1630 and first published in 1714 (Risdon 1714, 438); however, examination of County Histories such as William Pole's *Collections Towards a Description of the County of Devon* (1791), Richard Polwhele's *The History of Devonshire* (1793) and Daniel and Samuel Lyson's *Magna Britannia* (1822) show no references to Dunscombe in Cheriton Fitzpaine. The hearth tax records for Cheriton Fitzpaine do not survive.

The division of the estate into two farmsteads perhaps occurred in the mid 18th-century though, of course, ownership of both properties may have been held by a single individual and tenanted separately at a much earlier date without this fact necessarily being recorded. At the Devon Heritage Centre (DHC) the Cheriton Fitzpaine Churchwardens and Overseers account books (DHC 1633A/PO 1-3, 1676-1812) and an account book with rates and disbursements (DHC 1633A - 1/PW 1 1704-1845) show that by 1688, and possibly earlier, the property was owned by Will. Langworthy. Langworthy is described as 'of Dunscome' in 1699, 'of



Dunscomb' in 1702 and 'of Dinscomb' in 1707. During the early 18th century he also held Hannabeth, variously spelled as 'Henebear', 'Henebreth' or 'Hanabreth'. Langworthy may have let the farms in the mid 1730s, since by 1735 one Thomas Parkhouse is listed for Dunscombe and, in 1736, Thomas ?Lane was at 'Hanabreth' and Thomas Parkhouse at 'Dunscombe'. Langworthy's name also appears, presumably as Landlord.

By about the mid 18th century Higher and Lower Dunscombe begin to be identified separately in the records, and it may be that Langworthy, or one of his successors, had divided the farm to try and maximise profits. 'Higher Dunscombe' and 'Lower Dunscombe' first appear in 1749, but unfortunately the records list only 'the occupiers' and do not record their names. By 1756 Henry Weston is listed for Lower Dunscombe, and by 1759 Mr Philip Western is listed for 'Lower Dunscombe' and Mr Geo. Bodley for Higher Dunscombe.

The two Dunscombe farms appear to have been held together in the late 18th century, both being held by Mr Bodley in 1768 and both by Henry Esworthy in 1770. Esworthy appears to have remained in occupation until 1803-4, after which the tenant's name at Lower Dunscombe is given as Robert Manley. The two farms were not necessarily in the same ownership, since the tithe apportionment records Charles Bodley as the owner of Lower Dunscombe in 1838, with John Luxton as the occupier. Higher Dunscombe, however, was in the ownership and occupation at this time of John Tuckett.

The entry for Cheriton Fitzpaine in White's *Directory of Devonshire* (1850) makes no mention of either Higher or Lower Dunscombe, neither does it mention Charles Bodley. One Joshua Body, surgeon, is listed among the occupants of the village and it is possible that his name has been misprinted. A George Luxton is mentioned as both a farmer and as the owner of his own farm, but the name of the farm is not given and it is not possible to be certain that he had succeeded John Luxton at Dunscombe. No Tucketts appear in the list of residents. Robert Manley (possibly the same Robert who farmed Lower Dunscombe in 1804?) is listed as a corn miller and John Manley's name is given as a farmer owner/occupier. It has not been possible to identify a house at Lower Dunscombe after 1850 and it is clear from map evidence, discussed below (Figs 4, 5), that neither of the Dunscombe farmhouses survived into the late 19th century. Higher Dunscombe farm had entirely disappeared by the late 1880s whereas Lower Dunscombe had been reduced to the surviving farm buildings only.

By 1910 the valuation book covering Cheriton Fitzpaine (DHC 3201V/1/56) lists the owner and occupier of Dunscombe as William Tuckett of Hayne, Newton St Cyres. The property then contained Land: (extent: 125 acres, 3 R, Gross Annual Value: £155, Rateable Value: £137, 2s) and Buildings: (GAV: £10, RV: £7, 5s). At Dunscombe the only dwelling mentioned was a cottage, called 'Dunns Cottage', which was occupied by James Alford and owned by William Tuckett of Hayne. It is probable that this dwelling was identical with 'Mile End Cottage', near the entrance to the site. Records of a farm sale by Husseys Auctioneers in June 1937 of Barnshill and Lower Dunscombe (quarry) Farms describe the 'buildings, yard etc.' at Lower Dunscombe. The buildings were 'cob and stone built and covered with corrugated iron and comprise: Barn, 3-stall Stable with loft over, Cattle Shed with loft over. There is a four-bay open Linhay in Ordnance no. 349' (DHC 62/9/2/Box2/63 25).

### 2.3 Map sources

The earliest maps to record the name 'Dunscombe' in Cheriton Fitzpaine, such as the OS 1st edition 1" map of 1809, and the OS Surveyors' Drafts give the name without distinguishing Higher and Lower Dunscombe, but do not show the site in sufficient detail. The earliest detailed map known to the author is the tithe map of Cheriton Fitzpaine dating from 1839 (Figs 4, 6). This shows Lower Dunscombe as an 'L'-shaped complex of buildings with the farmhouse occupying the western wing. This is a large, rectangular building, aligned east-west, with a



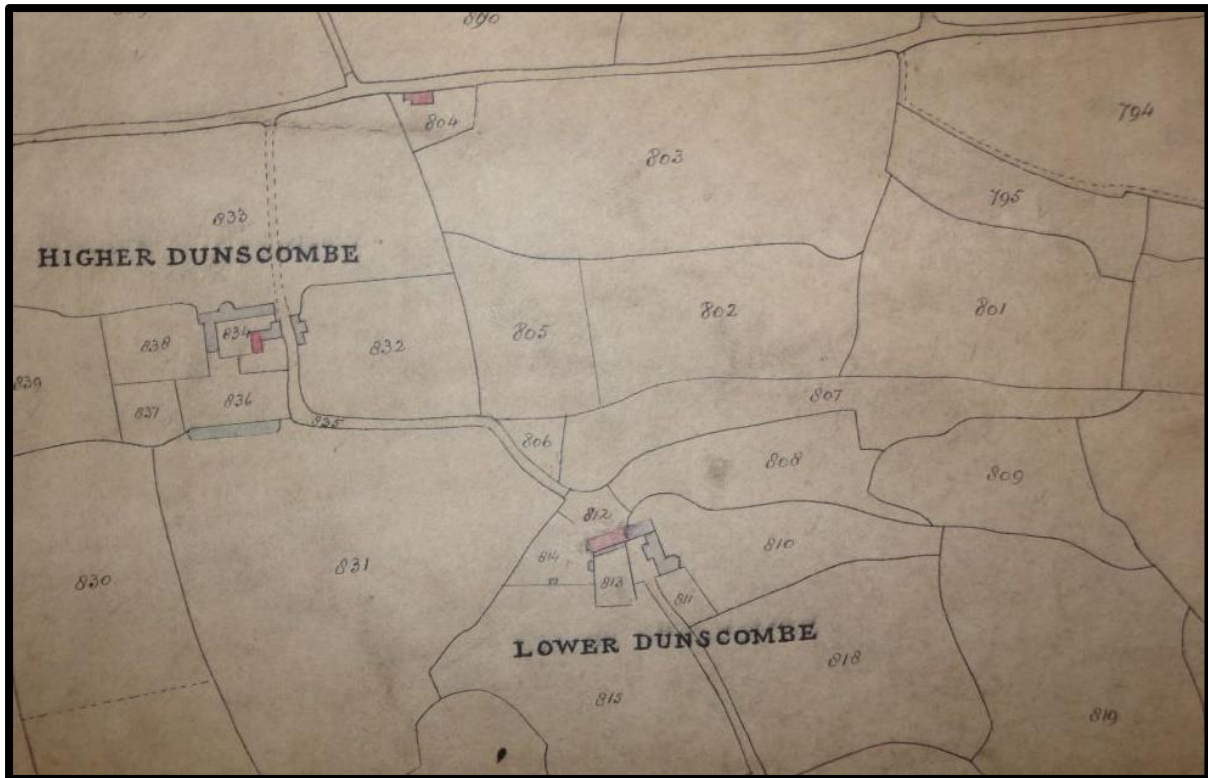


Fig. 4 Higher and lower Dunscombe as depicted on the Cheriton Fitzpaine tithe map of 1839, showing the houses at both sites (coloured pink) and the configuration of the farm buildings (grey). A horse engine house is shown at the end of the surviving barn.

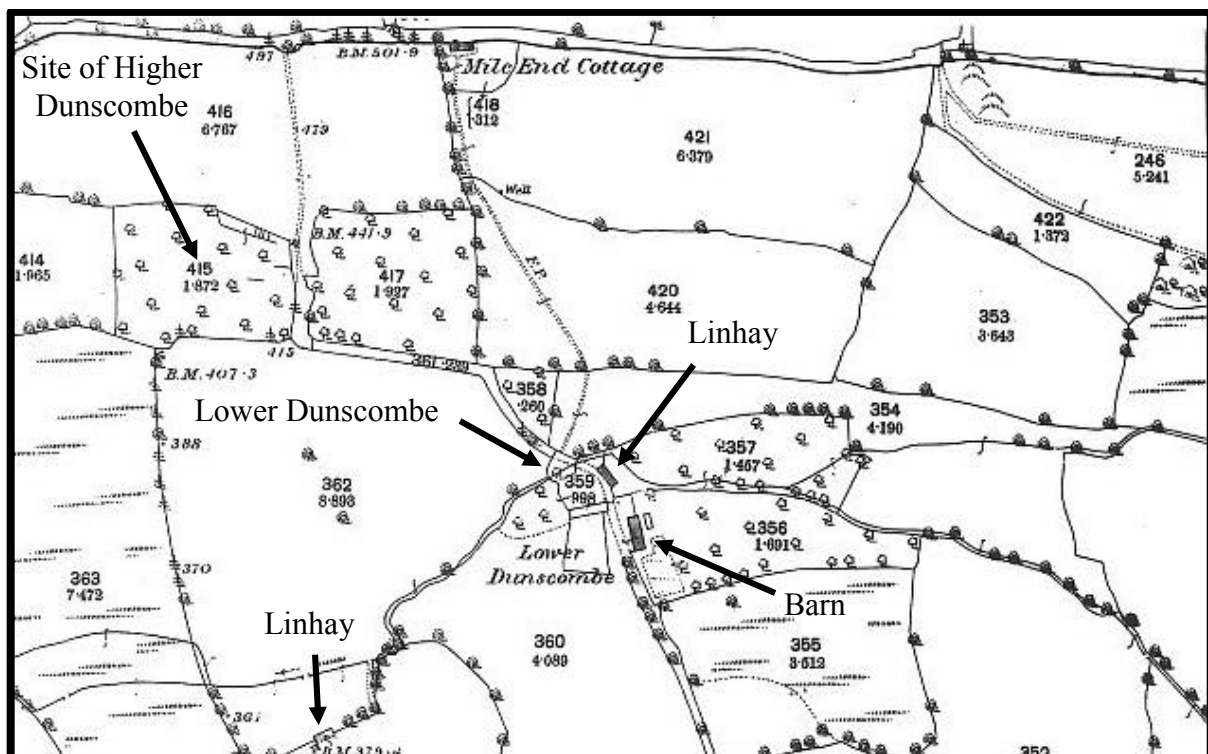


Fig. 5 Higher and Lower Dunscombe as depicted on the OS 1st edition 6'' to 1 mile map Devonshire Sheet LV.8, dating from 1888-9, showing the demolition of the houses at both sites, including the total loss of the farmstead at Higher Dunscombe (Plot 415).

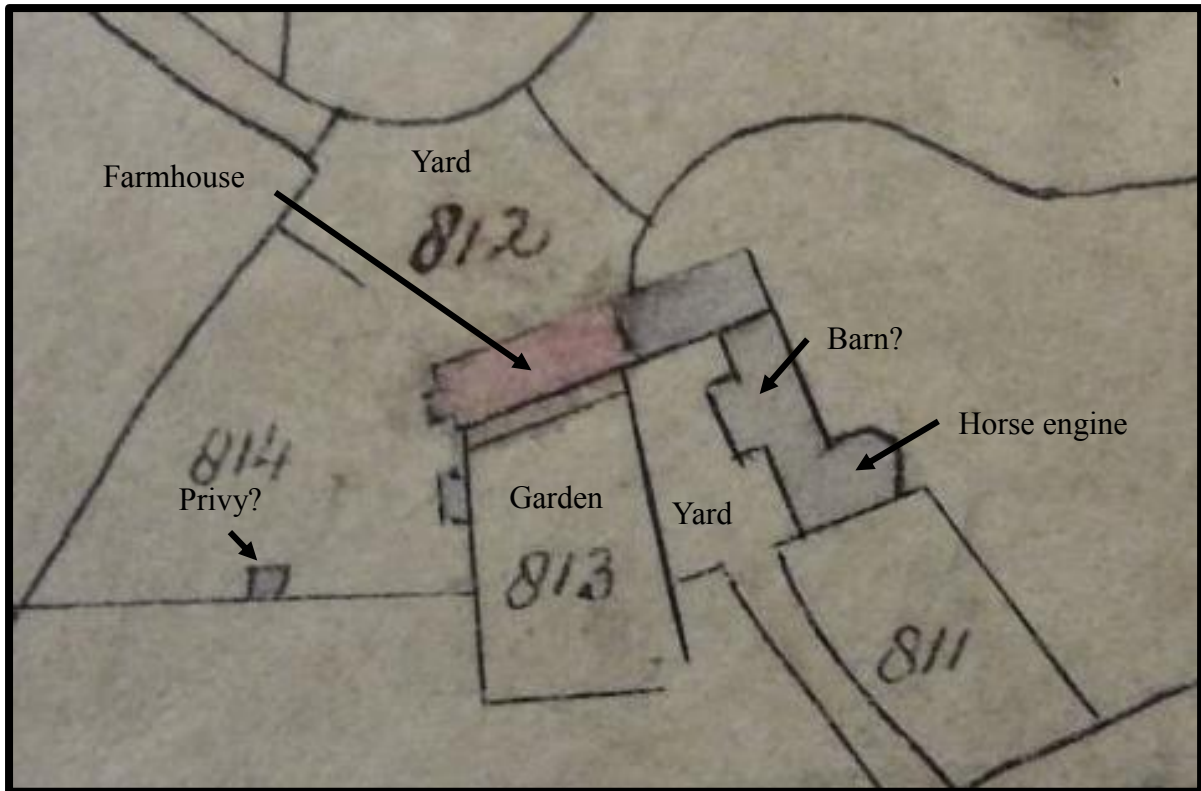


Fig. 6 Detail of the house and farm buildings at Lower Dunscombe from the tithe map of 1839.

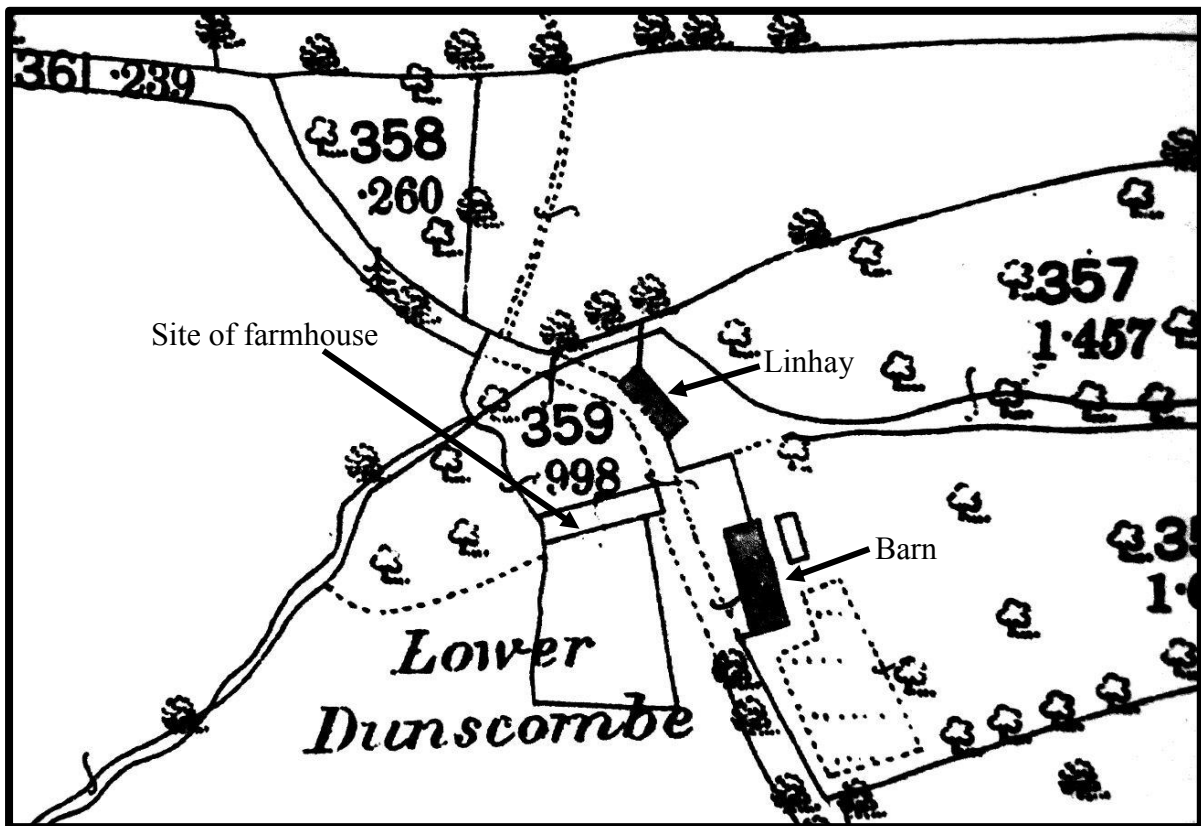


Fig. 7 Detail of the OS 1st-edition map of 1888-9 showing the empty site of the demolished farmhouse, the truncated or rebuilt barn and the new linhay to the north.

curious projection on its western gable, possibly representing a large chimney. A long rectangular structure, shaded grey and therefore presumably an outbuilding such as an outshut or an open structure such as a verandah, extends the length of its southern elevation, facing the gardens. Immediately adjoining the eastern gable and abutting against it is a further rectangular structure, coloured grey and evidently not part of the residence. This must represent an agricultural building, perhaps stables or, given the large number of orchards on the farm, a poundhouse. The long, south range of the complex was also in agricultural use. This appears to have consisted of a large rectangular building with a substantial projection into the adjoining yard in the centre of its western façade. This might represent a porch or possibly a lean-to structure. At the southern end of the building, to the rear, is a very large structure with a curved eastern wall; this almost certainly represents a horse engine house for powering a threshing machine or apple crusher. The field known as Mow Barton adjoined the southern gable of this range and the likelihood is that this structure was a threshing barn, with a large projecting porch with wide doors to catch the prevailing winds for winnowing and a horse engine house off the southern end to power a mechanical threshing machine. Two smaller buildings are shown to the west of the garden attached to the house. One is a small rectangular structure, of uncertain function; the other, a small square structure at some distance from the house, is probably a privy.

The same map depicts a much larger complex of farm buildings at Higher Dunscombe, including a long 'L'-shaped range of agricultural buildings to the north of the site incorporating a curved-walled projection, probably a horse engine house. A further 'L'-shaped range to the south-east, part of which is coloured pink clearly represents the farmhouse and an adjacent building and there is a further building on the east side of the lane leading to lower Dunscombe. Further south, fronting a large farmyard, is another long range. The small size of the farmhouse at Higher Dunscombe, and the rational planning of the farm buildings and yards, suggest a later date for this complex than that at Lower Dunscombe; earlier settlements generally seem to include random and scattered arrangements of buildings. Regularity in the planning of farmsteads seems to have been a feature of the 18th and early 19th centuries, culminating in the 'model farms' of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Unfortunately none of the buildings at Higher Dunscombe survive and their date and character cannot now be known.

Later maps show that, by the late 19th century, both farmhouses had been destroyed and that the number of farm buildings had been much reduced. The first-edition OS map of 1888-9 (Fig. 5) shows no buildings at all surviving on the site of Higher Dunscombe, which appears to have been planted as an orchard. At Lower Dunscombe (shown in more detail in Fig. 7) a rectangular, unshaded area is shown on the site of the farmhouse; this presumably represents its ruins. The track through the site continues unbroken through the site of the northernmost farm building, which appears to have been entirely demolished. Only the southern end of the south range remains, and this has lost both its projecting porch structure and its horse engine. An entirely new farm building is shown to the north of the former farmhouse. This must represent the existing linhay to the north of the site, near the ford over the stream.

Later maps of the site, including the revised edition of 1891 and the 2nd-edition OS map (Fig 1) show no changes to the layout of the buildings and it is unnecessary to reproduce them here. The documentary research has revealed no evidence of a house at Lower Dunscombe later than the mid 19th century. A local tradition communicated to the current owners of the site, of a fire destroying the house in the mid 20th-century (Mr Fox, pers. comm.), cannot therefore be true, but may perhaps represent a folk memory of an earlier fire in the middle of the 19th century. This is borne out by the results of the drainage trenching undertaken in November 2013, which revealed a thick layer of burnt deposits overlying surviving flagged floor surfaces within the eastern part of the former farmhouse (Parker forthcoming).

The details of the observations made during the watching brief on the drainage trenching will be described in a forthcoming report, along with a full description and interpretation of the standing buildings. The surviving buildings appear to fit the description of the farmstead given in the farm sale of 1937 (see above). The barn to the south of the former farmhouse is divided into two parts, the southern part, with its opposed doorways clearly representing the threshing barn and the northern part the '3-stall Stable with loft over'. The Linhay to the north is probably the 'Cattle Shed with loft over', since this has six bays and cannot be identical with the 'four-bay open Linhay in Ordnance no. 349'. The existing linhay lies within an area numbered '359' on the 1st-edition OS map, (Figs 5, 7) The field labelled '349' lies some distance to the south west of the farm settlement and contains a ruined building. The tithe map of 1839 shows an unshaded rectangular outline on the northern edge of this field but the apportionment for plots 828 and 831 (then part of Higher Dunscombe) do not mention a linhay. Later maps show the same rectangular outline shaded or hatched representing a building (Fig. 5). Today the ruins of three walls survive as an island in the middle of a large cultivated field. This ruin surely represents the remains of the four-bay open linhay described in the particulars of the 1937 farm sale.

### 3. CONCLUSION

The desktop study and drainage trenching have established the site of the farmhouse and north range of farm buildings at Lower Dunscombe as lying a little to the north of the surviving barn on the edge of the slope leading down to the ford over the stream. The farmhouse appears to have been a large rectangular building, much larger and perhaps older than that at Higher Dunscombe, which was smaller and had a more compact footprint. It is assumed here that Lower Dunscombe was the more ancient and important site and possibly the centre of the Domesday manor. The date of the demolished farmhouse could not be established from the surviving remains; however, a large reused beam built into the existing barn has ogee stops of 17th century date, and it may safely be assumed that the vanished house was of this date if not earlier. The floor surfaces still remain, buried about half a metre below modern ground levels and archaeological deposits below these floor levels may be assumed to survive undisturbed.

The farmhouse at Lower Dunscombe appears to have been unoccupied after the middle of the 19th century, perhaps as the result of a devastating fire, after which the site of the farmhouse was left vacant. The farm buildings appear to have been reconstructed and much reduced at this time. The large barn still surviving (Figs 8, 9) may retain some fabric from the earlier building, but it is considered more likely that it was substantially rebuilt following the abandonment of the house. The linhay to the north of the barn (Fig. 10) did not exist in 1838 and was perhaps constructed in the mid 19th century, though whether before or after the destruction of the farmhouse remains unknown. The linhay in the fields to the south west is shown as an open, unshaded area on the tithe map; the significance of this is uncertain, but we may conjecture that the building was perhaps still under construction when the map was surveyed. This linhay, whose ruins have not been examined, appears to have belonged to Higher Dunscombe Farm. Despite its extensive and well planned ranges of farm buildings Higher Dunscombe appears, for reasons unknown, to have been completely abandoned and demolished in the mid 19th century. The site of this farm complex was subsequently planted as an orchard and no historic buildings now remain.

Today, the farm at Dunscombe occupies a new site on the roadside and both historic houses have been replaced by a modern bungalow. The proposed development will see the farmhouse return to its ancient site in the valley.





Fig. 8 The east elevation of the surviving barn (1 metre scale).



Fig. 9 The west elevation of the surviving barn (1 metre scale).



Fig. 10 The linhay near the site of the farmhouse, seen from the south (1 metre scale).



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This report was commissioned by David Fox, the current owner of Dunscombe Farm, on the recommendation of Mark Ledgard of Smiths Gore and in fulfilment of a brief for historic building recording and archaeological monitoring and recording of groundworks supplied by the Devon County Historic Environment Service. The archaeological work was carried out by Richard Parker Historic Buildings Survey and Interpretation. The Documentary work was undertaken by Richard Parker and Lucy Browne, and the watching brief on the site work by Marc Steinmetzer. We are grateful to Mr Fox and his building contractors for assistance on site, and to the staff of the Devon Heritage Centre. This report represents a preliminary report on the archaeological works at Dunscombe. The results of the building survey and a full account of the results of the watching brief will be described in a later report following the completion of the conversion works on the buildings.

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