

Historic Building Survey
of
**FARM BUILDINGS AT EAST PEEKE,
WRANGATON, DEVON**

By R.W. Parker

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Contents

1.	INTRODUCTION	<i>Page:</i> 1
1.1	Methods	1
2.	DOCUMENTARY SOURCES	2
	<i>Map sources</i>	2
	<i>Listing description</i>	4
	<i>Limited structural report</i>	4
3.	BUILDING SURVEY	4
3.1	Barn: exterior	4
	<i>South-west elevation</i>	4
	<i>South-east elevation</i>	6
	<i>North-east elevation</i>	6
	<i>North-west elevation</i>	7
3.2	Barn: interior, ground floor	8
	<i>South-western room</i>	8
	<i>North-eastern room</i>	8
3.3	Barn: interior, first floor	10
3.4	North-eastern lean-to structures	12
	<i>The secondary lean-to</i>	12
	<i>The lincay</i>	14
4.	DISCUSSION	16
	<i>Phase I: mid-to-late 18th century</i>	16
	<i>Phase II: late 18th century</i>	17
	<i>Phase III: late 18th or early 19th century</i>	17
	<i>Phase IV: early 19th century, prior to 1843</i>	17
	<i>Phase V: mid 19th century</i>	17
	<i>Phase V: 20th century</i>	18
5.	CONCLUSION AND STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE	18
	ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	21
	SOURCES CONSULTED	21

List of Illustrations

Fig. 1	Location of site (circled) from the 1886 OS 1st edition 6 inch map Devonshire Sheet CXIX SE.	<i>Page:</i> 1
Fig. 2	View of the farmhouse and barn from the south.	2
Fig. 3	Extract from the 1834 Ugborough Tithe Map showing the footprint of the barn.	3
Fig. 4	Extract from the 1905 OS 2nd edition map sheet CXIX.12, showing no significant change in the footprint of the building.	3
Fig. 5	The south-western elevation, looking east, showing the changes in level between the road to the south west of the barn and the farmyard on the north west.	5
Fig. 6	The south-eastern elevation of the barn, showing the ventilation slits and superimposed doors (partially concealed by ivy) with the remains of a canopy over the first-floor doorway	5
Fig. 7	View of the barn from the east, looking west, showing the lean-to structures against the north-eastern wall and the half-hipped gable of the original structure showing above these.	6
Fig. 8	North-western elevation of the barn showing the modern accretions hiding the blocked ground-floor doorways and the change in level of the farmyard due to the embanking of the pond.	7
Fig. 9	Interior of the ground floor, looking west, showing the wide blocked doorway in the north-west wall, which is balanced by a similar doorway opposite.	9
Fig. 10	Interior of the shippon, looking to the north east, showing the concrete stalls and the beams reinforcing the threshing floor above.	9
Fig. 11	Interior of the first-floor threshing barn showing the opposed doorways in each side, the blocked ventilation slit in the north-eastern gable and the structure of the roof.	11
Fig. 12	View of the lower end of the building, showing the clear building break between the end of the barn and the adjacent lean-to structures.	11
Fig. 13	Detail of the lintel above the lean-to loft doorway showing the series of holes suggesting reuse of the timber from a rod and muntin partition.	12
Fig. 14	Detail of the north-east wall of the lean-to showing the blocked, splayed opening at a low level in the end wall of the building and (arrowed) the sawn off stumps of timbers probably relating to an earlier ceiling, possibly removed when the levels of the farmyard were altered to embank the pond.	13
Fig. 15	Interior of the earlier of the two lean-to structures showing the narrow stalls, possibly for calves.	14
Fig. 16	View of the north-eastern wall of the lincay, showing the positions of some of the granite monoliths (marked by arrows).	15
Fig. 17	Interior of the lincay showing the modern roof structure and the wall (right) infilling the gaps between the monoliths.	15
Fig. 18	Plan at ground-floor level showing suggested phasing. Based on drawings by DMR Design.	19
Fig. 19	Plan at first-floor level showing suggested phasing. Based on drawings by DMR Design.	20

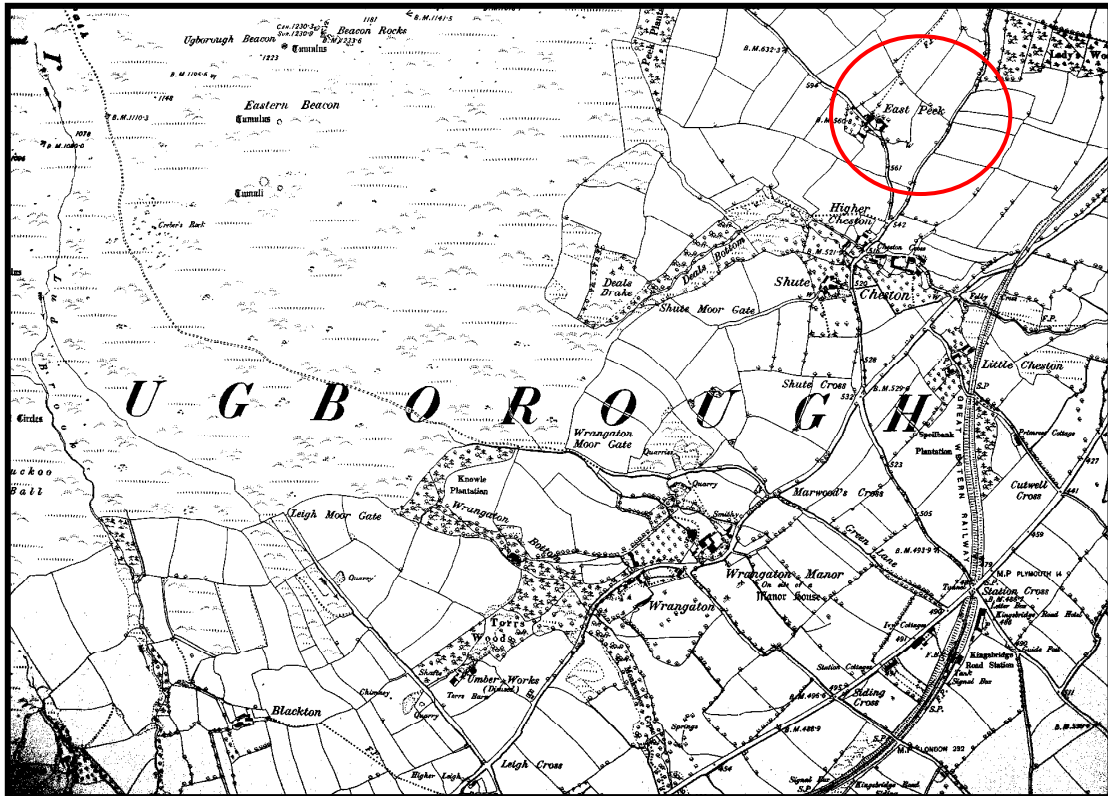


Fig. 1. Location of site (circled) from the 1886 OS 1st edition 6 inch map Devonshire Sheet CXIX SE.

1. INTRODUCTION

East Peeke Farm (Fig. 1) lies within the historic parish of Ugborough in Southern Dartmoor, north of Wrangaton and south west of South Brent, (SX 68142 58900: Fig. 2). This report was commissioned by Ian Hodgson of DMR Design, on behalf of the current owner of the property, in advance of the submission of an application for Planning Permission and Listed Building Consent for the repair of a barn close to the house. The barn is a grade II Listed Building which is currently in a poor state of repair and is identified by the Dartmoor National Park Authority (DNPA) as a 'building at risk'. The current proposals are for the restoration and reinstatement of the barn in its present form for continued use as an agricultural building.

1.1 Methods

The survey was undertaken on the 4th of May 2010 by Richard Parker, and involved the following elements:

- A written description of the barn in the form of manuscript notes (which form the basis of this report);
- A detailed photographic record of the barn in digital format;
- Rapid study of historic maps in the Devon Record Office (DRO), Devon and Exeter Institution (D&EI) and the Westcountry Studies Library (WSL);
- Examination of listed building records and other readily available published sources.



Fig. 2. View of the farmhouse and barn from the south.

2. DOCUMENTARY SOURCES

W.G. Hoskins identifies ‘Peek’ as a Domesday manor (Hoskins 1954, 509). East and West Peeke farms lie at some distance from one another, but may perhaps represent portions of an earlier and larger land holding. The spelling of the name is inconsistent; the name is frequently rendered as either ‘Peak’ or ‘Peek’. In the present document the spelling ‘Peeke’, which appears on modern mapping, is employed.

Both farms retain historic farmhouses; that at ‘East Peak’ is identified by Cherry and Pevsner as of late 17th or early 18th-century date (Cherry & Pevsner 1989, 879), though the present rendered façade with ‘Gothick’ windows (Fig. 2) is likely to be the product of early 19th-century remodelling. The same source describes the barn thus: ‘a bank barn, built into the hillside, with a shippon below, dated 1755’ (*ibid.*). The date stone survives in the south-western gable, above the main doors, though much obscured by lichen. The only other visible inscription on the building was cut with a trowel in a patch of modern cement render above the doors in the north-east wall and, as far as it can be discerned, reads ‘TS VS AR..(illeg.)’.

Map Sources

Historic maps held at local record libraries were examined for evidence of changes to the footprint of the barn. Comparison of the earliest map, the tithe map of 1843 (Fig. 3) with the OS 1st edition map of 1886 and the 2nd edition map of 1905 (Fig. 4) reveals little change to the footprint of the buildings during the 19th century; we may thus assume that the majority of the existing fabric must predate the 1840s.

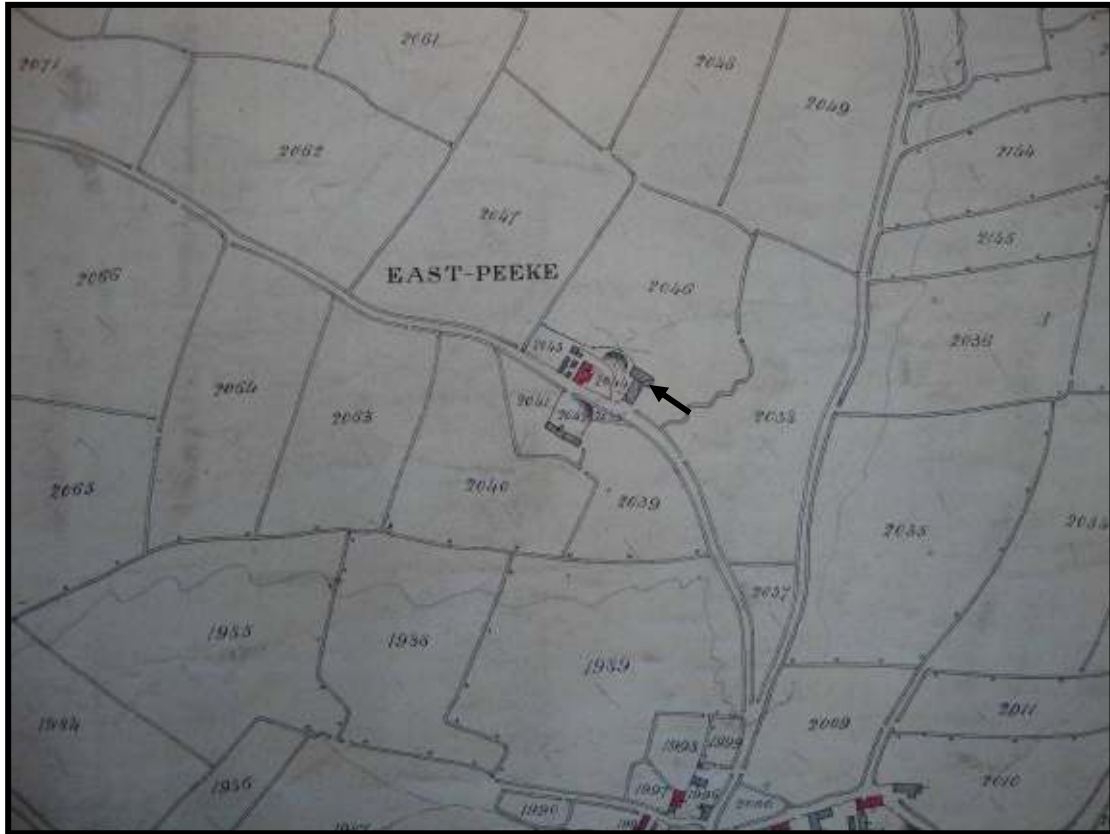


Fig. 3. Extract from the 1834 Ugborough Tithe Map showing the footprint of the barn (arrowed).

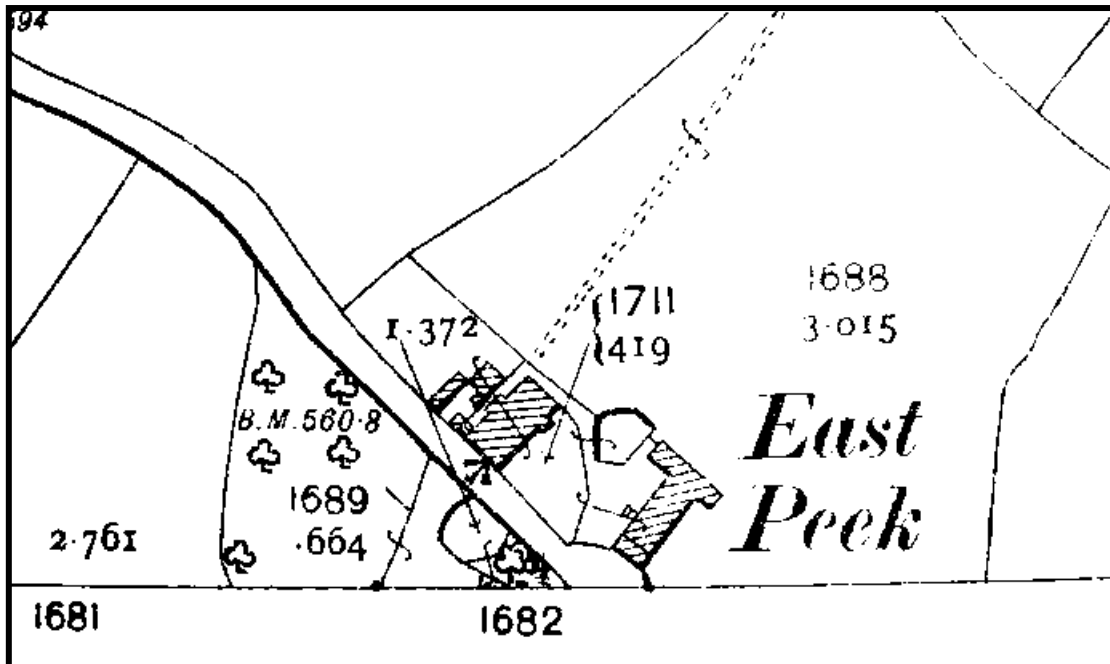


Fig. 4. Extract from the 1905 OS 2nd edition map sheet CXIX.12, showing no significant change in the footprint of the building.

The only apparent difference is a small circular feature with a dashed outline, barely discernible on the 1886 map. On the OS 25 inch map dating from 1887 (not suitable for reproduction) this feature shows more clearly; it is likely to represent a horse engine house with open sides supported by posts or columns in which a horse could work a capstan to provide power for mechanical threshing. The horse engine house was presumably added to the building in the mid 19th century and was demolished before 1905.

Listing Description

The English Heritage Listing description for the building is as follows:

9/94. Barn 40 metres south east of East Peek
GV II

Bank barn over shippon. Circa C18/19. Stone rubble with granite quoins. Scantle slate half-hipped roof with some early crested ridge tiles. 2 storeys. Barn doors at higher end to road. Row of shippon doors (some blocked) on north-west side to farmyard with barn ventilation slits and loft door above, and with row of pigeon holes above that. Ventilation slits and loading door to barn on opposite side

Limited Structural report 2005

A Limited Structural Report undertaken by Paul Carpenter Associates in December 2005 (Gallon 2005) provides a record of the condition of the building as it was in 2004-5. The building was already by then in poor repair. No significant changes have been made since that time and the building survives as described, though perhaps in still worse condition.

3. BUILDING SURVEY

The barn and farmhouse stand high up on a north-east facing hill slope overlooking South Brent in the valley below. The Barn and the house lie parallel with each other on a SW/NE alignment, separated by a diagonal wall which divides the domestic gardens from the farmyard. At the lower end of the yard is a large circular duckpond, retained by embankments above the natural level of the hill slope. The barn lies on the south-east side of the farmyard. Further historic farm buildings lie to the west and south west on the opposite side of the lane from Chelston to Owley and Bullhornstone.

3.1 **Barn: exterior**

South-west elevation

This elevation (Fig. 5) is partially built into the hillside, which rises to within 0.7m of first-floor level. The half-hipped gable end contains a wide opening closed by a pair of tall double doors. This elevation appears to be constructed in a single phase; it is massively constructed of randomly-coursed squared granite rubble, with very large granite quoins to the corners and the edges of the doorway. The doors are relatively modern and retain a varied assortment of strap hinges, some with square terminals and one with spear-head terminals; these may well have been reused. The upper part of the opening, above the doors is infilled with a fixed, boarded tympanum.



Fig. 5. The south-western elevation of the barn, looking east, showing the changes in level between the road to the south west of the barn and the farmyard on the north west.



Fig. 6. The south-eastern elevation of the barn, showing the ventilation slits and superimposed doors (partially concealed by ivy) with the remains of a canopy over the first-floor doorway.

South-East elevation

This elevation (Fig. 6) has two storeys, the ground falling sharply away towards its north-eastern end, where two lean-tos extend the building to form a 'T' shape.

The south east elevation is also constructed of random rubble in granite, with very large squared quoins, both at the corners and forming the jambs of the primary windows. On the ground floor towards the north-east end is a small rectangular opening which might have been associated with the drive shaft of the putative horse engine. This is cut into the main walling and is certainly a secondary feature.

Above this opening, two primary ventilation slits serve the first floor. To the north east of the centre of the main body of the barn is a pair of superimposed double doors, now much obscured by ivy. The lower door has been blocked in concrete blocks and replaced by a steel-framed 'Crittall' window, but the upper floor has retained a pair of double doors, one of which is divided horizontally. The doors are hung in a plain, unchamfered frame, with a good array of spear-headed strap hinges. The doors are probably of 19th- or 20th-century date. Above the doorway was a canopy supported by short cantilevers, but this has largely perished. To the south west of the door a section of walling below the eaves has been rebuilt; this might suggest that the roof has been raised, though this is unlikely as the primary masonry near the central doorway rises higher. It is possible that this represents the repair or replacement of a cob wall at the wall tops, in which the feet of the principal rafters were formerly seated. To the north east of the double doors is a further slit ventilating the first floor (now completely obscured). There does not appear to have been an opening on the ground floor in this area.



Fig. 7. View of the barn from the east, looking west, showing the lean-to structures against the north-eastern wall and the half-hipped gable of the original structure showing above these.

North-east elevation

This elevation (Fig. 7) is now obscured by two lean-tos, one of which is earlier than the other, though both are additions. The upper part of the gable wall of the primary

barn is largely of cob and contains a high-level ventilation slit. There does not appear to have been a corresponding opening below.

Numerous sockets and holes in the north-east wall may be related to earlier lean-to structures; however, they do not really form a very coherent pattern and it is possible that they are cut in, or that they represent putlogs. The two lean-to structures will be discussed below.



Fig. 8. North-western elevation of the barn, showing the modern accretions hiding the blocked ground-floor doorways and the change in level of the farmyard due to the embanking of the pond.

North West Elevation

This elevation is very much more complex and forms the principal façade of the barn (Fig.8). On the ground floor at the south-western end is a pair of doorways, both with timber lintels. These doorways are probably cut in as they have badly-formed jambs. The lintels of both doorways also appear to have been reinforced or repaired, as patches of a hard white mortar cutting into the yellow clay bonding of the earlier masonry would seem to show. It is possible that the south-western jamb of the most south-westerly doorway has been retained from an earlier opening.

On the first floor, above this, is a pair of primary ventilation slits. The row of seven dove holes immediately below eaves level appear to have been introduced in a rebuilt part of the wall. This might again represent rebuilding of an earlier cob wall top securing the feet of the principal rafters.

Towards the centre of the façade is an area of cracked and disturbed masonry which seems to relate both to a repair and an earlier opening. The lower part of the elevation at this point appears originally to have been a single wide doorway, which was subsequently converted into a pair of separate doorways. One of the original

timber lintels is visible within the interior (Fig. 9). The present external lintels are presumably replacements but are obscured by concrete render. Both doors have been blocked: one in stone and the other in concrete blocks incorporating a steel-framed window of mid 20th-century date.

The first-floor doorway may also originally have been a wide opening containing a pair of double doors. This appears to have been altered and narrowed to provide a single door, only part of the north-eastern jamb of which is primary. The original lintel over the ground-floor doorway may perhaps have failed, and the masonry above collapsed, leaving a triangular tear in the façade of the building. This was repaired and narrower doors substituted for the original wide openings. The original first-floor opening may have extended to roof height and no evidence of a canopy over the doorway now remains. The upper door has a varied selection of interesting strap hinges and a large, circular cat or owl hole. Given the high position of the door the latter interpretation is more likely, unless an external stair formerly existed. Further to the North-East are a row of eight dove holes below the eaves and a blocked ventilation slit (the blocking of which is now about to fall).

To the north east, the façade is obscured by a small 20th-century shed of concrete blocks adjoining which is a further door with a simple plank door in an unchamfered frame with spear ended strap hinges and twisted hook stays. The lintel is of timber and the jambs are crudely formed. This doorway may well be cut in.

3.2 **Barn: interior, ground floor**

South-western room.

This small rectangular room is lit by the small window in the south-eastern wall and is divided from the rest of the barn by a partition wall of stone, which may not be a primary feature. At either end of this partition are doorways: one to the headwalk serving the adjacent shippin and the other to the main cowshed area. Both doorways are apparently cut in, as they incorporate concrete blockwork.

The room is furnished as a cattle shed with a broad double stall defined by concrete partitions. There is a passage to the south west communicating with the headwalk to the south east. The walls to the north west and south west are rendered with cement for reasons of hygiene and the present floors are also of modern concrete, possibly concealing earlier floor surfaces beneath. The joists run parallel with the building and are largely concealed by hardboard cladding. Where visible, they appear to date from no earlier than the 19th century; they may have been renewed during a period of remodelling. The present door is modern, though hung in an earlier frame. The room is now converted to a chicken shed and only one tethering post, retaining its metal staple, survives from any early scheme of furnishings.

North-eastern room

The north-eastern part of the barn is furnished as a cattle shed, with four double cattle stalls, each with two troughs and two tethering staples. To the south east is a broad head walk running to a short passage against the north-eastern wall. The stalls are divided by concrete partitions of 20th-century date and the walls are rendered for the sake of hygiene. The render covers the blocking of both of the doors in the south-east wall. The ceiling joists run parallel with the building except in the area of the former double doors, where the ceiling is crossed by four massive, crudely squared beams of a very blond wood, retaining much bark, probably elm. These appear to represent reinforcement of the threshing floor on the upper storey.



Fig. 9. Interior of the ground floor, looking west, showing the wide blocked doorway in the north-west wall, which is balanced by a similar doorway opposite.



Fig. 10. Interior of the shippon, looking to the north east, showing the concrete stalls and the beams reinforcing the threshing floor above.

3.3 Barn: interior, first floor

This storey appears to have housed the main threshing area, with good ventilation and lighting and the facility to create a draught through the opposed doors on each side. It may also have been used for the storage of fodder, since it has plastered walls and torching between the rafters (Fig. 11).



Fig.11. Interior of the first-floor threshing barn showing the opposed doorways in each side, the blocked ventilation slit in the north-eastern gable and the structure of the roof.

There is clear evidence that the large door in the north-western wall has been narrowed; the original dimensions of the doorway survive just below eaves level and a timber lintel remains. The alteration must have been made prior to the application of the existing plastering of the walls, which extends over the blocking. The ventilation slits in the north-west and the south-east walls are well splayed to maximise the lighting. The single slit in the north-east wall has been blocked and rendered over and survives only as an embrasure. The plastering at eaves level is clearly secondary and may be contemporary with the common rafters, slating and torching of the roof. The floor is considered to be unsafe and the first floor was therefore not entered.

The roof is of six and two half bays defined by seven relatively low-pitched 'A'-frame trusses. These consist of pairs of principal rafters halved and pegged together at the apex with two square pegs and additional iron fixings. The collars are applied and secured by square pegs and iron fixings. This roof structure could be of 18th- or early 19th-century date, and was perhaps renewed after the eaves were rebuilt. There are two levels of purlins on each side, and a diagonally-set square ridge tree. The purlins continue unbroken over the backs of the principals, as does the torched ceiling between the rafters. These purlins are probably 19th-century replacements of the originals, though there is no visible provision for any earlier purlins, in the form of sockets, cleats or housings. Pegged slates remain in place, presumably dating from the 19th century. The early crested ridge tiles which survive over much of the length of the ridge are rare survivors. Tiles of this type were frequently employed on the roofs of 15th-, 16th- and 17th-century houses and it is possible that these tiles may have been reclaimed from an earlier domestic building.



Fig. 12. View of the lower end of the building, showing the clear building break between the end of the barn and the adjacent lean-to structures.

3.4 North-eastern lean-to structures

The secondary lean-to

The north-eastern lean-to structures are clearly additions. These structures can be seen to butt against the earlier barn (Fig. 12) and the present rooflines rise higher than the slit window in its gable, entirely blocking it. There is a single, tall opening in the north-west wall of the earlier lean-to, serving both levels of the interior. The upper part of this opening is now completely blocked by boarding. The opening has a timber lintel with a series of drill holes (Fig. 13). This may be a reused vertical stud or muntin from an early partition featuring rod laths to support a plaster panel.



Fig. 13. Detail of the lintel above the lean-to loft doorway showing the series of holes suggesting reuse of the timber from a rod and muntin partition.

This part of the building is of particular interest in that it reveals that the ground levels both internally and externally have been substantially altered. Inside the lean-to two openings are visible at a low level, one of which, in the north-east wall, appears to represent a splayed window. A further opening of similar type is just visible in the south-east wall. Both have sills at the present floor level, implying that the floor surface has been raised by up to 0.5m or more. This may be linked to the raising of the farmyard to embank the pond, and we may suggest that the original levels of the yard continued steeply downwards with the hillside. It has already been noted that the doors in the lower part of the north-western elevation of the barn have makeshift jambs without the massive quoins found in the primary openings. These doorways respect the raised level of the yard and must have been cut in after the ground levels were altered, long after the lean-to was built.

Built into the north east wall of this room at the level of the window heads of the blocked windows are the stumps of substantial timbers which appear to have been built into the wall. These timbers lie well below the level of the present loft floor. The stumps do not appear to extend through the wall to the north east and therefore are presumably unrelated to the roof or ceiling structures of the adjoining linhay. It therefore seems likely that these timbers represent beams supporting an internal ceiling and floor structure lower than the present one, which was presumably removed when the ground levels in the yard and within this room were altered to embank the pond. The original floor levels and possibly also historic surfaces may well survive beneath the present floor. This buried floor may well preserve evidence of earlier fixtures and perhaps of the original function of the room.



Fig. 14. Detail of the north-east wall of the lean-to showing the blocked, splayed opening at a low level in the end wall of the building and (arrowed) the sawn-off stumps of timbers probably relating to an earlier ceiling, possibly removed when the levels of the farmyard were altered to embank the pond.

The interior of this part of the building is fitted out with very narrow stalls, probably for calves (Figs. 14, 15). The joists of the present loft floor are of undressed poles cut into the gable walls of the earlier barn. The loft floor is entirely gone but does not appear to have been of any great antiquity.

The roof of this area has roughly squared principals with applied collars, iron fixings and three sets of purlins; it is possibly of 19th-century date, and is now covered with modern corrugated sheeting.



Fig. 15. Interior of the earlier of the two lean-to structures showing the narrow stalls, possibly for calves.

The linhay

At the north east end of the building is a further stone lean-to which extends to a greater width than the earlier building. This appears to have originated as an open linhay with its NE wall supported by either six or eight granite monoliths (Fig. 16). These stones are very closely spaced, which may preclude its use as a cart linhay.



Fig. 16. View of the north-eastern wall of the linhay, showing the positions of some of the granite monoliths (marked by arrows).



Fig. 17. Interior of the linhay showing the modern roof structure and the wall (right) infilling the gaps between the monoliths.

The lincay has clearly been built against and incorporates the side wall of the earlier lean-to, blocking the splayed window in its north-east wall. The junction between the fabric of the lincay and the eastern corner of the lean-to is easily discernible; however, the corresponding corner is not visible; the wall extends to the north-west of the lean-to and contains a further blocked opening. This opening may conceivably have lit a shed or enclosure at the north-west end of the lincay, but this appears to be a modification, since the north-east wall of the lincay was presumably open and supported by monoliths. The open side of the lincay may have been infilled in stages. Now fully enclosed, the lincay has a small door in its north-western wall, a small window more or less centrally to the north-east and a wide opening (now partially collapsing) in the south-eastern elevation. The existing roof is modern, of seven bays, supported by undressed softwood poles and covered in corrugated iron (Fig. 17). Parts of the walls infilling the open sides of the lincay are bonded with very hard cement mortar and may be of mid 20th-century date, though this perhaps replaces earlier stone or timber walling, since the lincay appears to be shown as fully enclosed on the early OS maps.

4. DISCUSSION

The bank barn is an impressive and well-built structure of a type common in this part of Devon in the late 18th and 19th centuries. Some features of the present building, however, may point to an earlier date than is usual, and this conjecture may be supported by the date of 1755 inscribed on a date stone above the main doors. The roof structure (though perhaps not original) appears to be an early one, with pegged 'A'-frame trusses rather than the king-post roof construction usual in 19th-century farm buildings. The absence of brick dressings is also suggestive of an early date, as is the use of hand-made crested ridge tiles, though these may well have been reused from elsewhere. It is also clear that the barn developed in at least three stages and that it had reached its present extent by the time of the tithe survey in 1843.

The probable development of the barn may be summarised thus (See also Figs 18-19):

Phase I: mid-to-late 18th century

As originally constructed, perhaps in the mid-to-late 18th century, the barn appears to have been a two-storey building designed for threshing and storage. The upper storey appears to have been a relatively conventional threshing barn. It is spacious, well-lit and well ventilated, with opposed doors to create a draught for winnowing and access to the upper floor from the road for loading and unloading. The lower storey also has opposed doors and could also have been used for threshing and winnowing, though it has low headroom, making the use of hand flails awkward, and does not appear to have been provided with good lighting or ventilation. All the openings except the two wide doorways appear to have been cut in. Although it is possible that the present first floor is inserted, and that the original volume was open to the full height of the building, so that the lower storey received light from the high-level windows, the position of the barn built into the hillside suggests a floor at this level from the start.

The two storeys could have been used for processing and storing different types of produce, perhaps corn and barley. Alternatively, the lower storey may simply have been a store for animal feed, or a shippon. It is unlikely that the opposed doors were intended to provide a through route for vehicles from the yard, since the height

of the internal floors would provide insufficient headroom. Pack horses and other animals may, of course, have been brought into the yard from the fields by this route.

Phase II: late 18th century

The earliest addition to the barn is probably the lean-to against the north-eastern wall. The original function of this building is uncertain; however, it is evident that the floor was lower than at present and that it was lit by two windows, in addition to any lighting provided by the tall opening in the main elevation. There appears to have been a tall loft storey above the ground-floor room, with a floor supported by substantial beams. This loft might well have served as a granary. If the lower storey of the adjacent barn was used for milking, this ground floor room could have been a dairy, though these rooms are more usually connected with or closer to the farmhouse.

Phase III: late 18th or early 19th century

The third addition to the building was the open linhay at the north-eastern end of the earlier building. Again, the original function of this building is uncertain. It cannot have served as a cart linhay, since the granite monoliths in its open side were too closely spaced. It does not appear to have been associated with enclosures or pens, as one might expect were it sheltering a row of pigsties. It is possible that this building simply provide an open shelter of some kind, perhaps a store for fuel.

The building may predate the alteration of the levels in the farmyard, and this alteration may provide a context for the enclosure of parts of the building and the rebuilding of its north-western section.

Phase IV: early 19th century, prior to 1843

In the early 19th century the building may have been substantially remodelled. These alterations took place at the same time, or after, the alteration of levels in the farmyard to allow the creation of the duck pond. The lower storey of the barn appears to have been converted into a shippon; new doorways were cut at its north-eastern and south-western ends and the central doorway facing the yard was replaced with a pair of doorways. These doors may have provided separate access for cattle and to head walks serving stalls aligned with the building. A separate room appears to have been created at the south-western end of the barn, possibly as a bull pen or as a separate stall for sick or nursing animals. The upper storey of the barn was also remodelled; the north-western door was narrowed and it is likely that the wall tops, which may have been of cob, were replaced by new stone wall tops containing the dove or pigeon holes. The roof structure may also have been renewed at this period; its slack pitch certainly suggests the early 19th rather than the mid 18th century.

The levels within the lean-to at the north-eastern end of the barn were raised to reflect the new levels of the farmyard and its remaining window was blocked. The original loft floor was removed at this stage and it is likely that the building was converted into an animal house. At the same time, the north-western end of the linhay appears to have been rebuilt and enclosed, possibly to create a small shed or store.

Phase V: mid 19th century

The main alteration in the mid 19th century appears to have been the provision of the horse engine house to the south east of the barn, with a new opening in the south-east wall to allow the drive-shaft to pass through into the interior. The new building appears to have been open sided and insubstantial, perhaps little more than a roof supported on posts or monoliths. It did not survive long and had already been

removed by 1905. The lincay may have been further enclosed at this period, since it does not appear as an open structure on the late 19th-century OS maps. Some of the existing doors serving the buildings may survive from this period, but no other fixtures or fittings remain.

Phase VI: 20th century

In the 20th century the building was reorganised and refurnished, while still serving as a barn and shippon. The 19th-century furnishings were removed and new, concrete, cattle pens were provided on the ground floor at right angles to the main axis of the building. Doorways were broken through the partition at the south-western end of the building to provide access to the new head walk and the earlier doorways in the centre of the long sides of the building were blocked. New sheds constructed of concrete blocks were built against the building and the roof of the lincay was replaced. This part of the building may have been partially rebuilt at this stage, and a doorway was broken through its south-eastern wall to allow it to serve as a (remarkably inconvenient and narrow) shed for storing farm machinery.

5. CONCLUSION AND STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The barn is a well-preserved bank barn of a type common in the South Hams, where such barns are generally built with their gables embedded in the hillside to allow high level access to the lofts or to the main threshing floor (Child 1990, 64). Another typical feature of the South Hams barn is to have only a small door in one elevation opposing double doors in the opposite wall (*ibid.*). At East Peeke this feature is, as we have seen, a modification, perhaps made in the early 19th century to make an earlier building conform more closely to local custom and practice.

The building has the character of a ‘model’ farm building, designed to be impressive as well as efficient. The size and quality of the blocks of masonry employed, and the use of decorative features such as crested ridge tiles suggest a wealthy landowner or tenant farmer investing substantially in the premises. The owners of the property in the 18th century have not been researched, but by the time of the tithe survey of the area in 1843 the landowner was Servington Savery, then owner of the Fowelscombe estate in Ugborough Parish. It may be that the property had been part of that estate for a long period before this.

If the date stone attributing the construction of the building to the mid 18th century can be trusted, which seems likely, this is an unusually early example of such a building type. The great majority of farm buildings of this type are of late 18th or 19th-century date, with architectural features typical of the period (such as king-post roofs). The character of the barn is earlier than this; it retains a potentially early roof of pegged ‘A’-frames which may be a late 18th-century replacement for the original. The decorative cresting of the roof is a particularly significant feature and a rare survival on a farm building. The significance of the building is further enhanced by the fact that it remains, and, hopefully, will remain, unconverted; an impressive and attractive example of a traditional farm building in agricultural use.

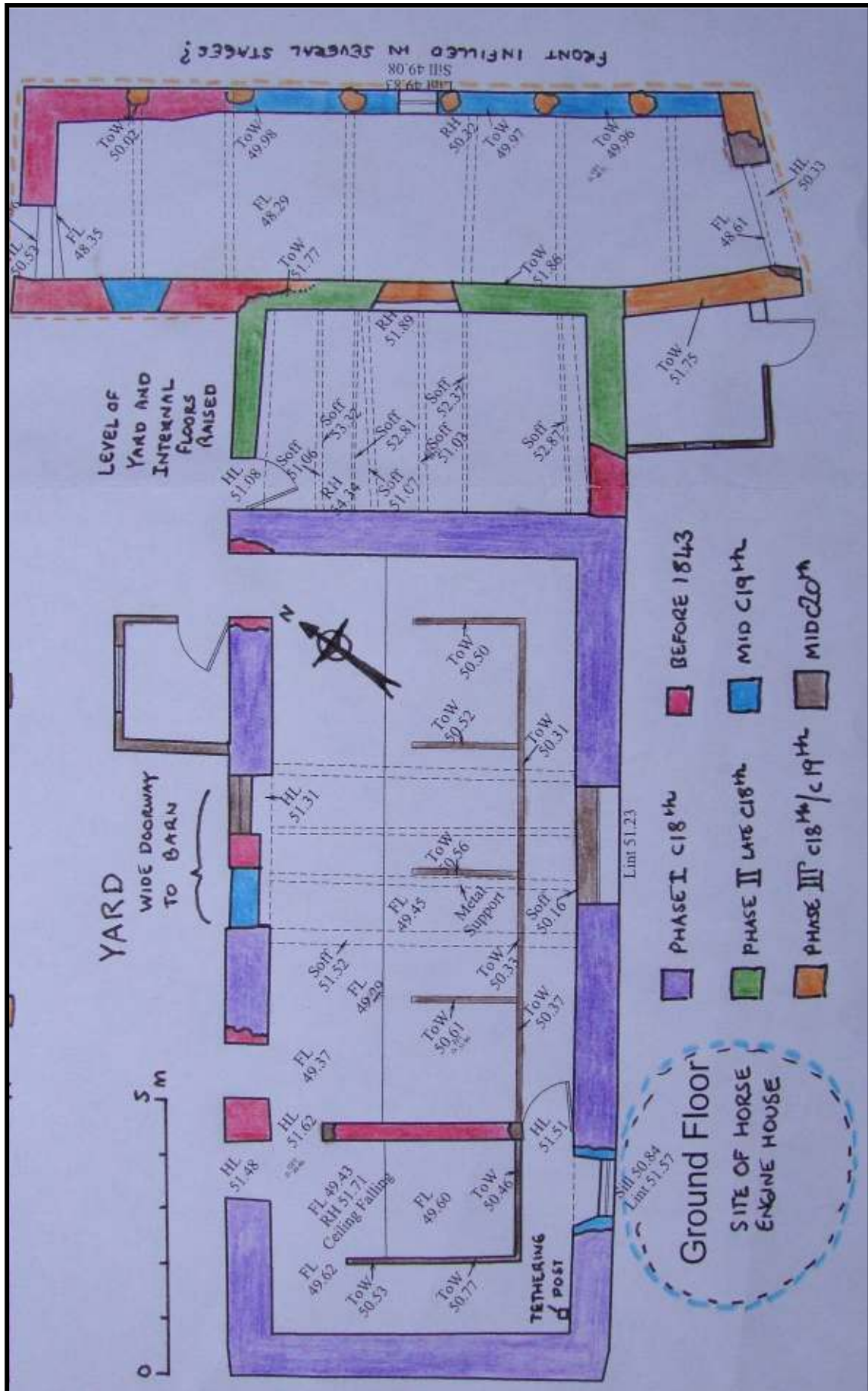


Fig. 18. Plan at ground-floor level showing suggested phasing. Based on drawings by DMR Design

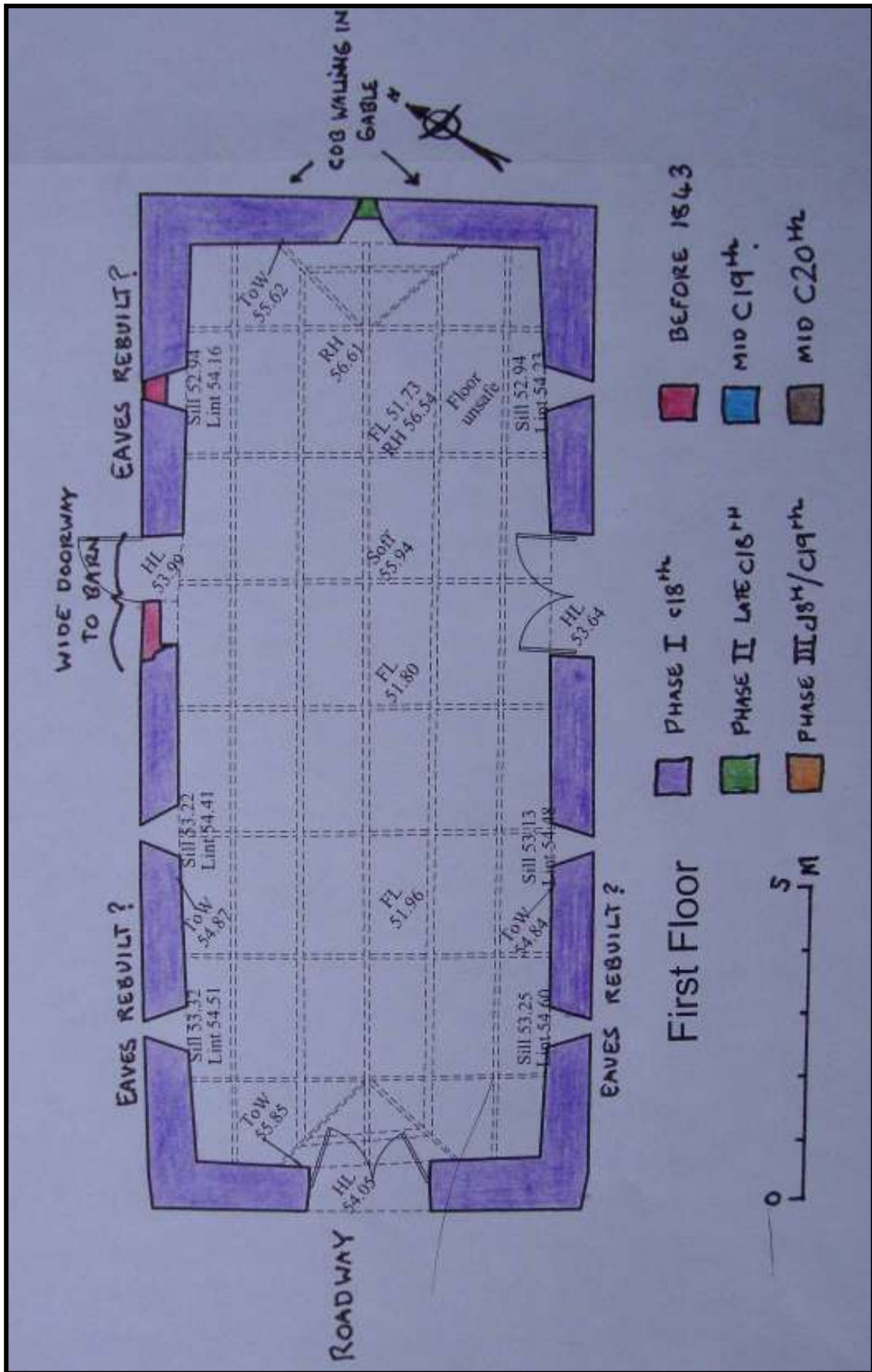


Fig. 19. Plan at first-floor level showing suggested phasing. Based on drawings by DMR Design

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 DRO Devon Record Office, Ugborough Tithe Map and Apportionment.
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