

# HOLDSTONE DOWN INCLOSURE BOUNDARY AND MARKER STONES

## PROJECT REPORT

By Hazel Riley



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OASIS PROJECT NO 207931

## **ABBREVIATIONS**

EH English Heritage

ENPA Exmoor National Park Authority

GPS Global Positioning System

NMR National Monuments Record

OSGB36 Ordnance Survey National grid

OSTN02 Ordnance Survey transformation parameters for conversion of WGS84 coordinates to the Ordnance Survey National Grid coordinates

RCHME Royal Commission on the Historical Monuments of England

RICS Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors

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## ABSTRACT

This survey of a 19<sup>th</sup>-century boundary on the SE edge of Holdstone Down, together with an examination of documentary evidence, sets out the reason why only a few of the allotted plots on the down were enclosed on their SE edge by stone-faced banks. Three inscribed stones, which marked the plots prior to their enclosure, were located and recorded.

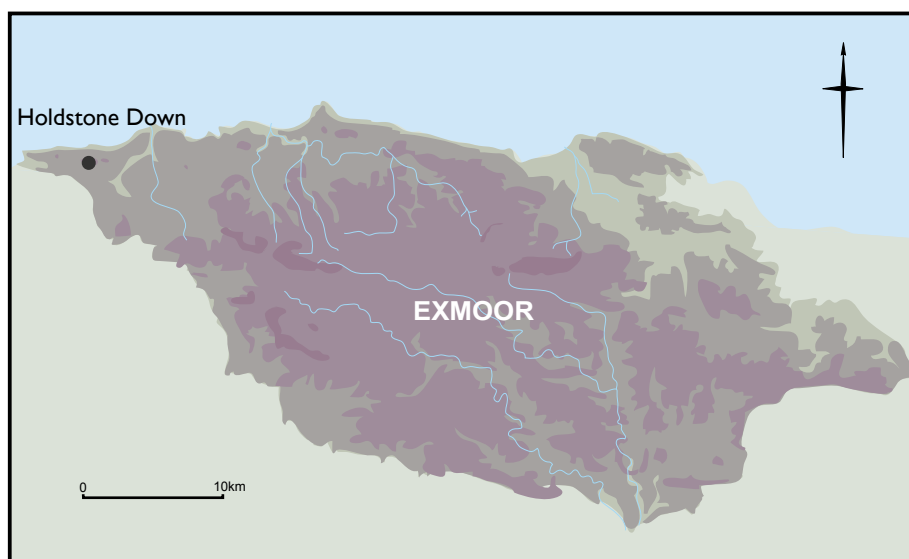
## INTRODUCTION

This survey of part of the inclosure boundary on Holdstone Down was undertaken on behalf of the ENPA Historic Environment Team as a result of proposals to reinstate the boundary to facilitate grazing on the down. The aims of the survey were to record the extent, location, morphology and condition of the boundary and any associated boundary markers.

The report consists of two sections: the archaeological features and their historic landscape context are outlined and interpreted in the first section. The second section contains the evidence base for this in the form of a Site Gazetteer which presents the detailed results of the survey work.

### Location, topography and geology

Holdstone Down lies at the NW edge of Exmoor National Park, between Combe Martin and Trentishoe, at SS 624 474. The inclosure boundary runs along the SE edge of Holdstone Down, at a height of c 300m OD (Figs 1 & 2). Although Holdstone Down was subject to Parliamentary Inclosure in 1871, the highest part of the down is unenclosed, coastal heathland (Front cover). The underlying geology of the Exmoor coast here is composed of sandstones of the Devonian Hangman Sandstone Formation ([bgs.ac.uk](http://bgs.ac.uk)).



*Fig 1 Location map*

## Administrative information

NGR: SS 624 474

Parish: Combe Martin

District: North Devon

County: Devon

Exmoor HER: MDE21579

## Site numbering

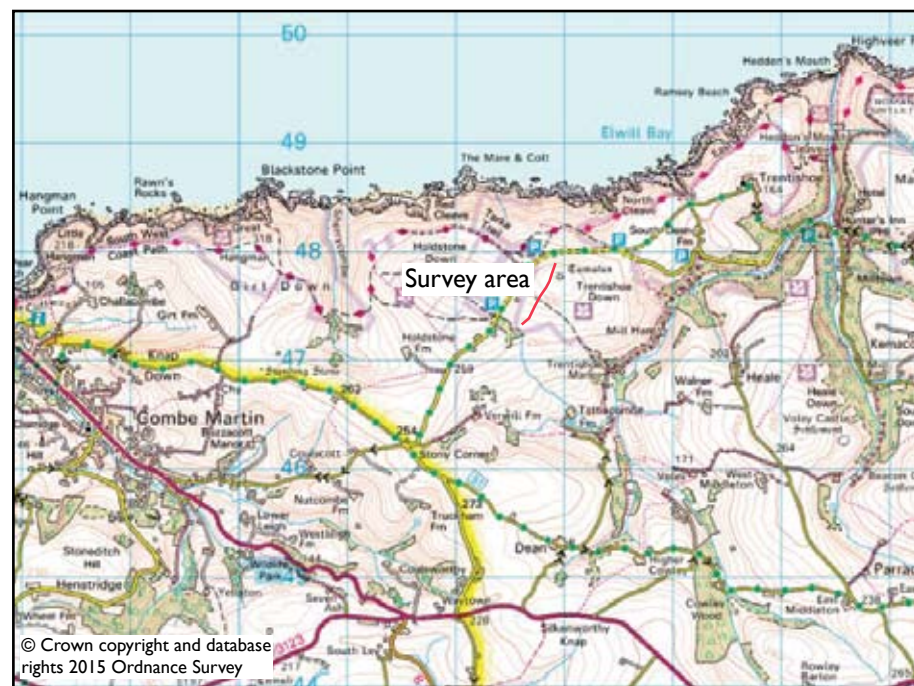
Each archaeological feature has been given a unique number with the prefix HD. These numbers are used throughout this report and are shown on Figure 6.

## HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The parish of Combe Martin contained four large areas of common ground: Knap Down, Purwell Down, Girt Down and Holdstone Down. These areas were an important resource for the people of the parish from at least as early as the medieval period. Owners of land had the right to graze cattle and sheep on these commons, which totalled some 1112 acres in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The Tithe Map for Combe Martin (1842) shows Holdstone Down as unenclosed 'Commons' with a wide droveway between the holdings of Holdstone Farm and Verwill Farm giving access for livestock to the grazing on Holdstone Down (Combe Martin Tithe Map 1842) (Fig 3). Holdstone Down was particularly important because every inhabitant of Combe Martin had rights of turbary on Holdstone Down – the right to cut turves for fuel (Beaumont 1989, 137).

The Inclosure Act of 1836 authorised the enclosure of common land, providing that two thirds of the people involved agreed to this. In 1845 a parish meeting in Combe Martin unanimously agreed to proceed with the enclosure of Combe Martin's commons. Following delays due to the negligence of the appointed surveyor, in 1871 the Inclosure Award for Combe Martin allocated plots of land on the commons to all

Fig 2 Survey location and topography





those with common rights in the parish (DRO Q/RR1/25). These are delineated on the map and details of the allocations are given in the award (Figs 4 & 5). The land was allotted according to the rights which already existed. For example, John Boyle, the owner of 63 acres at Wester Park, was awarded three plots: 219 on Purwell Down and 111 and 112 on Holdstone Down, a total of 6.5 acres. William Lathem, who owned a cottage at Wringers Meadow with rights of turbary, was allotted a plot of just over an acre on Holdstone Down (Beaumont 1989, 139).

The cost of the work involved in the process of this enclosure was offset by the Commissioners who sold 409 acres of the commons. Mr W B Hawkins from Surrey bought 235 acres on the coastal side of Holdstone Down for £655 which were later part of an unsuccessful scheme to develop the down as a coastal resort (Beaumont 1989, 139-140). These costs included the survey, copying the map and schedule, constructing new roads and marking out 270 plots on the four commons. The plots on Holdstone Down were marked by upright stones, inscribed with a number which corresponded to the plots shown on the Inclosure Map (Fig 5).



Fig 3 (above left)  
Extract from  
Combe Martin  
Tithe Map 1842

Fig 4 (left)  
Extract from  
Combe Martin  
Inclosure Map  
1871

Fig 5 (above  
right) Detail from  
Combe Martin  
Inclosure Map  
1871

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Archives & Local  
Studies Service)

The Inclosure Map shows one existing road across the commons, the 'Ancient Public Road,' now the metalled road between Trentishoe and Stoney Corner NE of Combe Martin. A road along the NE enclosure boundary on Holdstone Down, no IV on the map and award, was to be constructed to give access to plots following enclosure (Fig 4). Plot 35, 3 acres on Holdstone Down, was awarded to the Surveyors of the Highways for Combe Martin to be used as a public quarry for the repair of roads with the parish. This is now the ENPA car park.

The Inclosure Award notes that the owners of some adjoining plots on Holdstone Down wanted to enclose only the outer boundaries of these plots; this was allowed, and the award gives a date by which all of the enclosure boundaries on the four commons had to be complete: 4<sup>th</sup> May 1871.

The OS 1st edition map of 1889 shows that this process of enclosure was not completed. Just 18 years after the Commissioners' deadlines for the completion of the enclosure boundaries, the marker stones for the plots adjoining the road are shown, but only three boundaries and an enclosure are depicted (Fig 6). The partial enclosure of the higher areas of Holdstone Down, west of the road, did not result in the loss of this area of coastal heath. The owners of the plots surrendered their interests and in 1965 Holdstone Down was registered as common once again, under the Commons Registration Act (Beaumont 1989, 144).

## PREVIOUS ARCHAEOLOGICAL WORK

Holdstone Down was investigated as part of the RCHME's survey of Exmoor and the results of this are available in the Exmoor HER (summarised in Exmoor HER 8573). The archaeology was also mapped from air photographs as part of the Exmoor NMP project (Hegarty and Toms 2009). Michael Beaumont has studied the tithe and enclosure maps and awards for the parish of Combe Martin (Beaumont 1989).

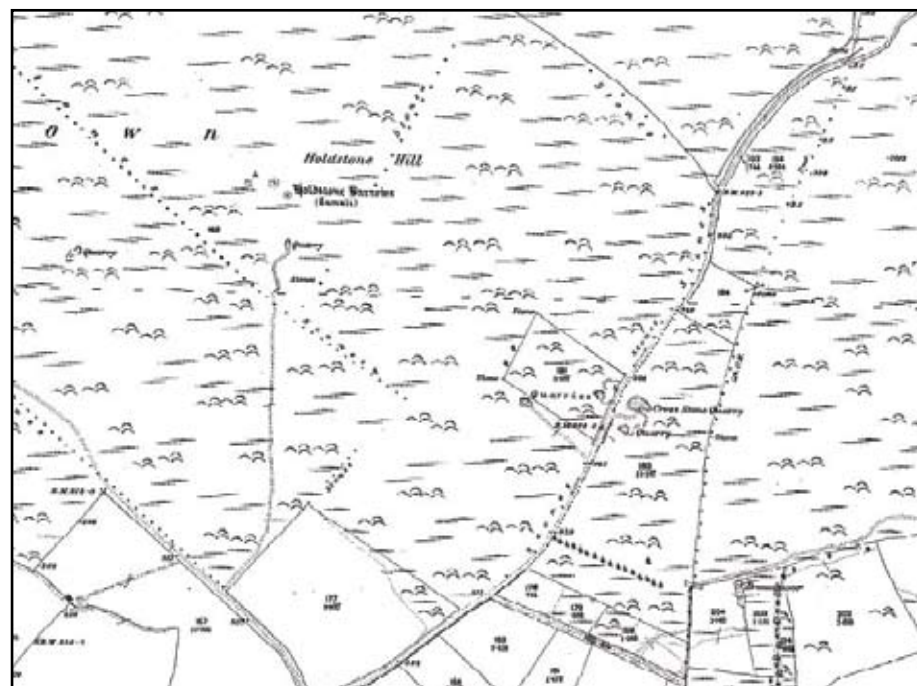


Fig 6 Extract  
from 1st edition  
map 1889

## THE SURVEY

The fieldwork was carried out in March 2015. The inclosure boundary between Moorlands, SS 62526, 47691 and the SW edge of the down at SS 62260, 47203 was surveyed at a scale of 1:2500 using survey grade differential GPS. Profiles were surveyed across sections of both the stone-faced bank and the low, stony bank (Figs 7 & 8). The GPS-derived geodetic WGS84 coordinates were transformed to the Ordnance Survey National Grid (OSGB36) using the Ordnance Survey's grid transformation (OSTN02) in Leica's GPS post-processing software. Observation times were based on those recommended by the OS and the RICS in order to obtain accurate heighting information (OS 2010; RICS 2010).

## THE INCLOSURE BOUNDARY AND MARKER STONES

The remains of the inclosure boundary on the east and SE part of Holdstone Down comprise four stone-faced banks; two low banks, and three marker stones (Fig 7).

### The stone-faced banks

The four stone-faced banks (HDI-4) are similar in size and construction. The boundary is constructed of an inner, earth and stone core, faced on both sides with stone slabs. The top is covered with a capping of earth and probably deliberately planted with gorse and/or heather to protect the structure from weather and rubbing by cattle. The stone-faced bank measures 0.8m - 1.5m wide and is 1m-1.3m high (Figs 8,9,10,11).

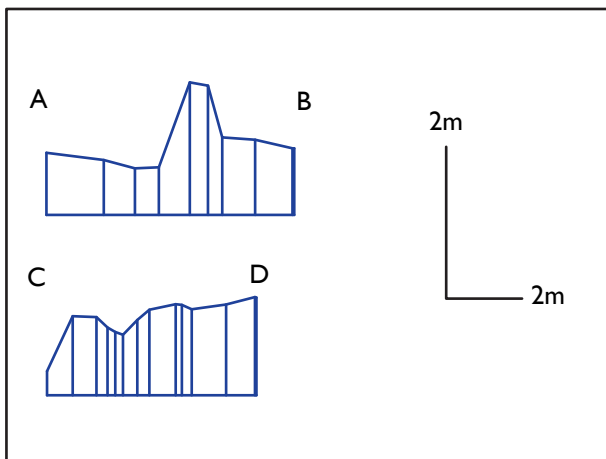


Fig 8 (above left) Profiles across the inclosure boundary (vertical scale x 2)



Fig 9 (above) Earth and stone core exposed where track cuts through the stone-faced bank HD2 (1m scale) (Hazel Riley)

Fig 10 Stone facing on the SE side of the inclosure boundary HD2 (1m scale) (Hazel Riley)



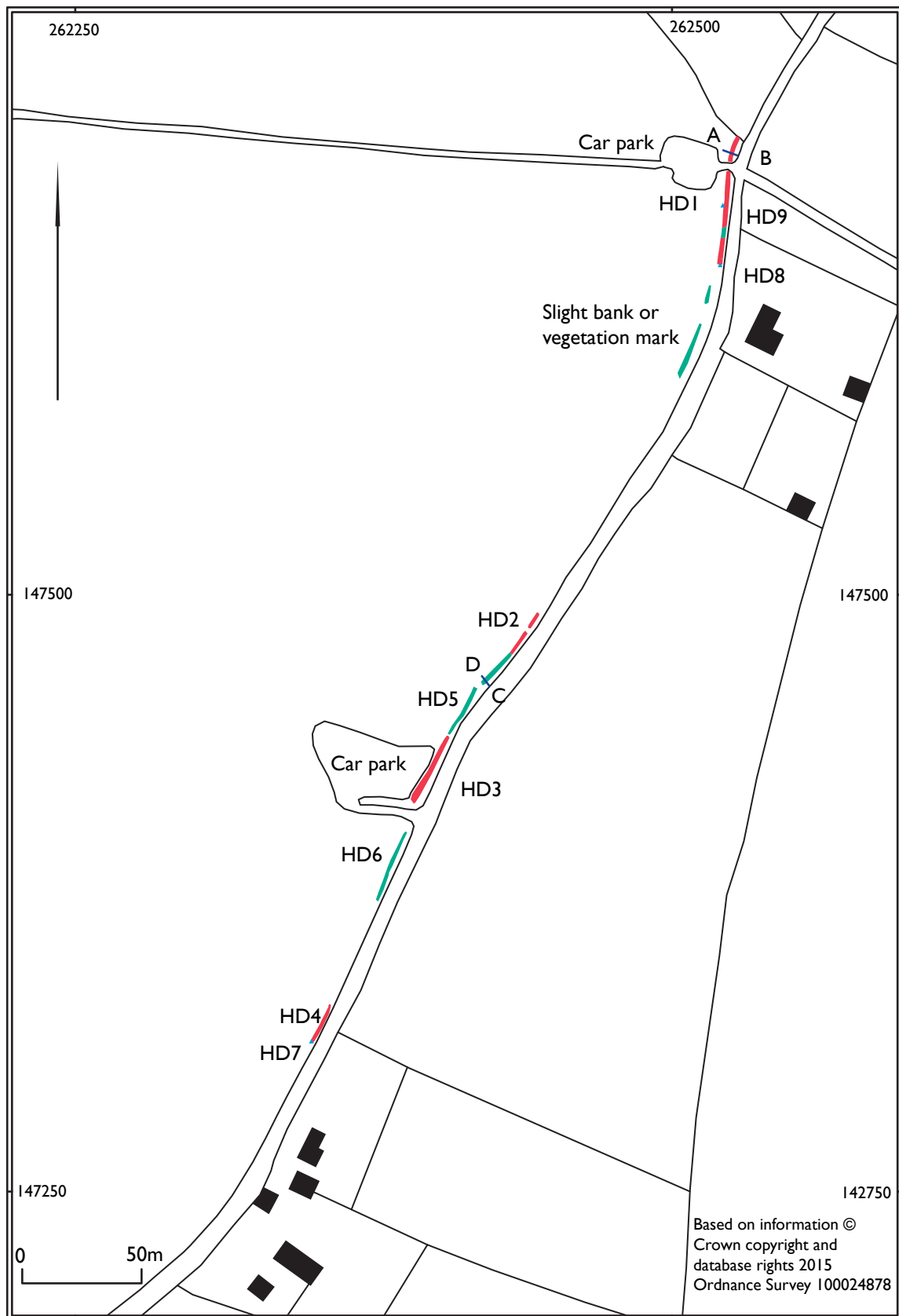


Fig 7 Plan of the SE inclosure boundary on Holdstone Down (1:2500)

The main inclosure boundary of the NE part of Holdstone Down lies to the north of the survey area. Part of it has been incorporated in to the boundary of Moorlands garden, the remainder survives in good condition (Front cover). It is a substantial stone-faced bank, with a ditch on its SW side. The stone-faced bank is 1.5m high, 0.8m high and has a capping of earth, gorse and turf; the ditch is 1m wide and 0.7m deep (Fig 12)

### **The low, stony bank**

Two low, stony banks lie within the study area (HD5,6). A low bank, HD5, between two stone-faced banks NE of the ENPA car park is the best example. It is 43m long, 1m wide and 0.6m high (Figs 7 and 13). A similar bank lies to the south of the ENPA car park (HD6). A slight bank to the south of the car park by Moorlands is more likely to be either a feature of the vegetation (stands of dead bracken) or perhaps tracks or routes across the down before enclosure.

### **The marker stones**

Three inscribed stone slabs lie within the study area. At the southern end of the stone-faced bank SW of the ENPA car park (HD4) is a thin stone slab, with a broken top, inscribed with the number 36 (HD7) (Fig 14). Marker stone 24 (HD8), lies at the south end of the stone-faced bank HD1, (Fig 15). A stone slab (HD 9) set into the west face of the stone-faced bank HD1 is probably marker stone 23, although the stone is broken and the inscription is unclear (Fig 16).



*Fig 11 (above left) Stone facing on the west side of the inclosure bank HD1 (1m scale) (Hazel Riley)*



*Fig 12 (left) Detail of the inclosure boundary on the NE side of Holdstone Down (1m scale) (Hazel Riley)*

*Fig 13 (Above) Low, stony bank and the stone-faced bank HD2 and HD3 (1m scale) (Hazel Riley)*

## CONTEXT AND DATE OF THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL FEATURES

The stone-faced boundaries and low banks on the SE side of Holdstone Down were constructed by May 1871, according to the dates set out in the Combe Martin Inclosure Award (DRO Q/RR1/25). The inscribed marker stones seem to have been set out as part of the process of drawing up the award, before the plots were allocated and the actual boundaries were constructed. The marker stones date from the time when the survey for the Inclosure Award and map was carried out. The negligent surveyor John Leversedge began the lengthy and complex process; he was replaced by William Wood in 1868. The OS 1st edition map of 1889 shows 22 of these stones along the boundary. By the 1980s many of the marker stones on Holdstone Down had disappeared:

*‘the remains of a few of these marker stones can be found in lines across the heath, but most have disintegrated under the assault of wind, rain, frost and heat from swaling fires. A few are intact with their numbers legible, most are fragmented’*  
(Beaumont 1989, 139-140).

Most of the plots on Holdstone Down are long and narrow, and about an acre in area. This is because they were designed to accommodate the many people in Combe Martin who had rights of turbary on the down: the plots were not really suitable for livestock or cultivation, although some people did grow potatoes in their plots.



Fig 14 (above right) Marker stone for plot 36  
(0.5m scale) (Hazel Riley)



Fig 15 (above) Marker stone for plot 24  
(0.5m scale) (Hazel Riley)



Fig 16 (right) Marker stone for plot 23  
(0.5m scale) (Hazel Riley)

The Inclosure Award and the presence of a few identifiable marker stones has allowed this study to suggest why only four stone-faced banks were built. Plot 35 was allocated as a stone quarry for the parish roads, but only 30m of stone-faced boundary bank was duly built, the remainder was marked with a low stony bank. The other plots, 22, 23, 24, 28, 29 and 36, were allotted to several people: Knight; Harris; Willis; Watson and Burgess. The Inclosure Award for Combe Martin has a further twist which explains the pattern of stone-faced banks along the SE edge of the down. It was recognised that some people would be liable for the expense of enclosing far longer boundaries than others. The Commissioners set out a complex schedule of payments from the owners of some plots to the owners of others. Some names appear in both columns.

The common factor for those particular plots on Holdstone Down plots is Sir Charles Watson, owner of a large estate in Combe Martin in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Sir Charles was allotted plot numbers 28 and 29, and he was also owed money from the owners of plot numbers 23, 24 and 36. Plot 22, a larger plot allocated to William Knight, had the edge of inclosure as its northern boundary which was constructed as a condition of the award (Front cover).

It seems that Sir Charles Watson followed the rules and had the boundaries he was liable for built, so did William Knight. The operators of the quarry built a stone-faced bank along the front of part of the quarry, the rest of their plot was marked by a low stony bank which joined the end of Sir Charles Watson's stone-faced bank (Fig 12). Despite, or perhaps because of, the complicated arrangements set out in the Inclosure Award, no other boundaries were built along the SE side of the down.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

Staff at the Devon Record Office and the ENPA Historic Environment Team provided research material and organised access to the site.

## **HOLDSTONE DOWN INCLSOURE BOUNDARY AND MARKER STONES (HD) SITE GAZETTEER**

HDI Location: 262526, 147691 to 262518, 147638

Type: WALL

Period: AD 19<sup>th</sup> century (1800AD-1899AD)

Description and interpretation: A stone-faced bank, 0.8 m wide, 1m high and 53m long, on the SE edge of Holdstone Down. It was constructed as part of the 1871 inclosure of Holdstone Down and formed the SE boundary of three plots numbered 22, 23 and 24 on the 1871 Inclosure Map.

References: HDI\_SW\_17MAR15\_HRILEY

HD2 Location: 262443, 147492 to 262432, 147475

Type: WALL

Period: AD 19<sup>th</sup> century (1800AD-1899AD)

Description and interpretation: A stone-faced bank, 0.5m wide, 1m high and 20m long, on the SE edge of Holdstone Down. It was constructed as part of the 1871 inclosure of Holdstone Down and formed the SE boundary of a plot numbered 28 on the 1871 Inclosure Map. The bank is cut by a modern track and this shows the structure of the



boundary: an inner bank of earth and stone, faced on both sides with stone slabs.  
References: HD2\_W\_17MAR15\_HRILEY

HD3 Location: 262405, 147440 to 262390, 147414

Type:WALL

Period:AD 19<sup>th</sup> century (1800AD-1899AD)

Description and interpretation:A stone-faced bank, 1.3m wide, 1m high and 30m long, on the SE edge of Holdstone Down. The feature is obscured with gorse. It was constructed as part of the 1871 inclosure of Holdstone Down and formed part of the SE boundary of a plot numbered 35 on the 1871 Inclosure Map. This was allotted to the Surveyors of the Highways for the Parish of Combe Martin to be used as a public quarry for supplying stone and gravel for the repair of roads within the parish.

References: HD3\_NE\_17MAR15\_HRILEY

HD4 Location: 262357, 147328 to 262349, 147312

Type:WALL

Period:AD 19<sup>th</sup> century (1800AD-1899AD)

Description and interpretation:A stone-faced bank, 1.5 wide, 1m high and 17m long, on the SE edge of Holdstone Down. It was constructed as part of the 1871 inclosure of Holdstone Down and formed the SE boundary of a plot numbered 36 on the 1871 Inclosure Map.

References: HD4\_NE\_17MAR15\_HRILEY

HD5 Location: 262432, 147475 to 262406, 147441

Type: BANK

Period:AD 19<sup>th</sup> century (1800AD-1899AD)

Description and interpretation:A low, stony bank, 1m wide, 0.6m high and 43m long. This was constructed as part of the 1871 inclosure of Holdstone Down and formed part the SE boundary of a plot numbered 35 on the 1871 Inclosure Map.

References: HD5\_NE\_17MAR15\_HRILEY

HD6 Location: 262388, 147400 TO 262375, 147372

Type: BANK

Period:AD 19<sup>th</sup> century (1800AD-1899AD)

Description and interpretation:A low, stony bank, 0.9m wide, 0.3m high and 31m long. This was constructed as part of the 1871 inclosure of Holdstone Down and formed part the SE boundary of a plot numbered 35 on the 1871 Inclosure Map.

References: HD6\_NE\_17MAR15\_HRILEY

HD7 Location: 262348, 147312

Type: BOUNDARY STONE

Period:AD 19<sup>th</sup> century (1800AD-1899AD)

Description and interpretation:An inscribed stone slab set into the SW end of a stone-faced bank on the SE side of Holdstone Down. The stone is 36cm long, 27cm high and 1cm thick, with a broken top. The number 36 is just visible on the stone. The stone is

one of many marker stones set out on Holdstone Down as part of the 1871 inclosure of the down.

References: HD7\_NE\_17MAR15\_HRILEY

HD8 Location: 262520, 147638

Type: BOUNDARY STONE

Period: AD 19<sup>th</sup> century (1800AD-1899AD)

Description and interpretation: An inscribed stone slab set against the SW end of a stone-faced bank on the SE side of Holdstone Down. The stone is 30cm long, 35cm high and 1cm thick. The number 24 is inscribed on the stone. The stone is one of many marker stones set out on Holdstone Down as part of the 1871 inclosure of the down.

References: HD8\_NE\_17MAR15\_HRILEY

HD9 Location: 262521, 147662

Type: BOUNDARY STONE

Period: AD 19<sup>th</sup> century (1800AD-1899AD)

Description and interpretation: An inscribed stone slab set into the west side of a stone-faced bank on the SE side of Holdstone Down. The stone is 25cm long, 30cm high and 2cm thick. The stone is broken but the number 3 is just visible and it is probably marker stone 23. The stone is one of many marker stones set out on Holdstone Down as part of the 1871 inclosure of the down.

References: HD9\_S\_17MAR15\_HRILEY

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