

# A Monastic Homestead on Dean Moor, S. Devon

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THE excavation of an upland steading on Dean Moor was undertaken in 1956 as part of emergency work on land to be submerged by a reservoir by the South Devon Water Board.<sup>1</sup>

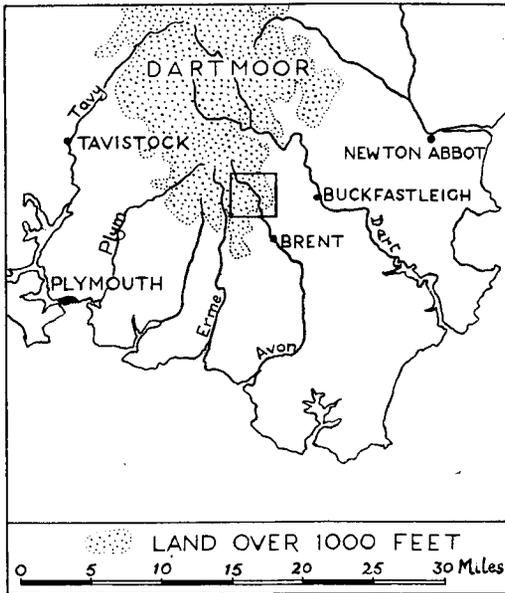


FIG. 35

MAP SHOWING LOCATION OF THE DEAN MOOR HOMESTEAD

The Dean Moor area within the rectangle is shown on a larger scale on FIG. 39, p. 151

The homestead is situated on the southern part of Dartmoor, in the upper Avon valley, about 5 miles above South Brent (FIG. 35). Until the building of the new road to the reservoir, this part of the valley was very remote, and virtually uninhabited, though it had been extensively occupied in prehistoric times.<sup>2</sup> Dean Moor is a strip of land, 1,000-1,200 ft. high, lying on the left bank of the river, and belongs to the upland grazings of the parish of Dean Prior, to which it is linked by a ridgeway. Another ancient track, the Abbot's Way, connects it with Buckfastleigh, which lies 4 miles to the east in the Dart valley (FIG. 39). It is one of the numerous tracts of common which border the royal forest of Dartmoor, on which the adjoining lowland parishes had Venville rights.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> O.S. 6 in. sheet SX66 NE. (new series): 113 SE. (old series). O.S. 1 in. sheet 188. Grid Ref. 679654.

The excavation was arranged by the Ancient Monuments branch of the Ministry of Works: I am grateful to them, to the engineers, Messrs. Lemon and Blizard, and to the contractors, Messrs. Tarmacadam, for facilities. Students of Exeter University and other volunteers recruited through the *Calendar of Excavations* issued by the Council for British Archaeology, took part, and Mr. Desmond Bonney of the Royal Commission on Historic Monuments (England) was my assistant-supervisor; he has drawn the plans, maps and sections, for which I am much indebted. I should also like to acknowledge Mr. G. C. Dunning's help with the pottery. A report on the late-bronze-age settlement excavated here in 1954-5 has been published in *Trans. Devon. Assoc.*, LXXXIX (1957), 15 ff.

<sup>2</sup> There are some 30 settlements, containing over 200 huts; *op. cit.* in note 1, p. 21, fig. 2.

<sup>3</sup> E. G. Fogwill, *Trans. Devon. Assoc.*, LXXXVI (1954), 89.

The homestead is in the valley on the south-facing slope, about 50 ft. above the river, just west of its junction with a small tributary, the Brockhill stream (PL. XV, A). The country here is predominantly grass moor, with a little heather, some bilberry patches, and bracken up to 1,100 ft. The only trees are isolated thorns, but lower down the Avon there are stunted oakwoods on the slopes. Similar vegetation is likely to have existed in medieval times, on the evidence of the analysis (p. 155) of charcoals from the excavation.

The whole of Dartmoor is composed of igneous rock, extruded through the Devonian formations. At Dean Moor the underlying rock is a felsitic granite, which is covered by an acid yellow sub-soil and by a thick peaty turf in which no metal or bone can long survive. Tin is obtainable in the area and there are piles of debris from streaming beside the river and the Brockhill brook, as well as the remains of a late-medieval foundry (blowing house) about a quarter of a mile higher up the Avon valley.<sup>4</sup> There was, however, no indication that the inhabitants of the homestead were interested in the metal. The site seems to have been chosen for its comparative shelter, its proximity to water and to good grazing. The other determining factor must have been an easy supply of building stone and a ready-made enclosure available from the remains of a late-bronze-age enclosed settlement of nine huts, which was partly incorporated in the layout (FIG. 36).

The farm buildings (PLS. XV-XVI) consist of a house and a byre set side by side and linked by an enclosed yard, and with a shed or pen butted up against the west side of the house; all are constructed of granite boulders. Before excavation, they were deeply overgrown with bilberry and rushes and the position of their walls was hardly apparent. The house and byre had been levelled into the hillside, and set with their long axes parallel to the slope, thus resembling the early medieval platform-houses of Wales.<sup>5</sup> South of this row of building a roughly rectangular cultivation plot or paddock has been enclosed by a low drystone wall: it measures 91 by 61 ft. (0.2 acre) and was entered through a 4-ft. gap on the east side.

A larger wedge-shaped tract of moorland based on the river is also associated with the homestead; it is defined on the west side by a bank dug from an external ditch, extending from the river bank up to the NW. corner of the late-bronze-age pound. From here onwards the old enclosure wall, originally 9 ft. wide, has been rebuilt to a reduced width of 4-6 ft. (shown as a darker line on FIG. 36). On the east side, facing the Brockhill, a low drystone wall continues the line from the SE. corner of the pound down to the stream; the river forms the south side. The area thus enclosed is 4 acres; it was presumably for stock-keeping. The entrance was from the NE., through a 6-ft. gap in the pound wall. The pound wall has also been breached on the west to build three small round huts or pens,<sup>6</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Excavated by Malcolm Spooner in 1956: a report will appear in *Trans. Devon. Assoc. For Dartmoor tinning in general* see R. H. Worth, *Dartmoor*, pp. 272 ff. and G. R. Lewis, *The Stannaries* (1924).

<sup>5</sup> *Archaeol. Cambrensis*, 1936 and 1938 (A. Fox): 1956 (C. Gresham).

<sup>6</sup> The structures inside the pound wall were prehistoric and were apparently pens, since there were no fire places. One external pen was excavated: it had a cobble floor, no hearth, a door space 1½ ft. wide, and masonry neater than the prehistoric examples.

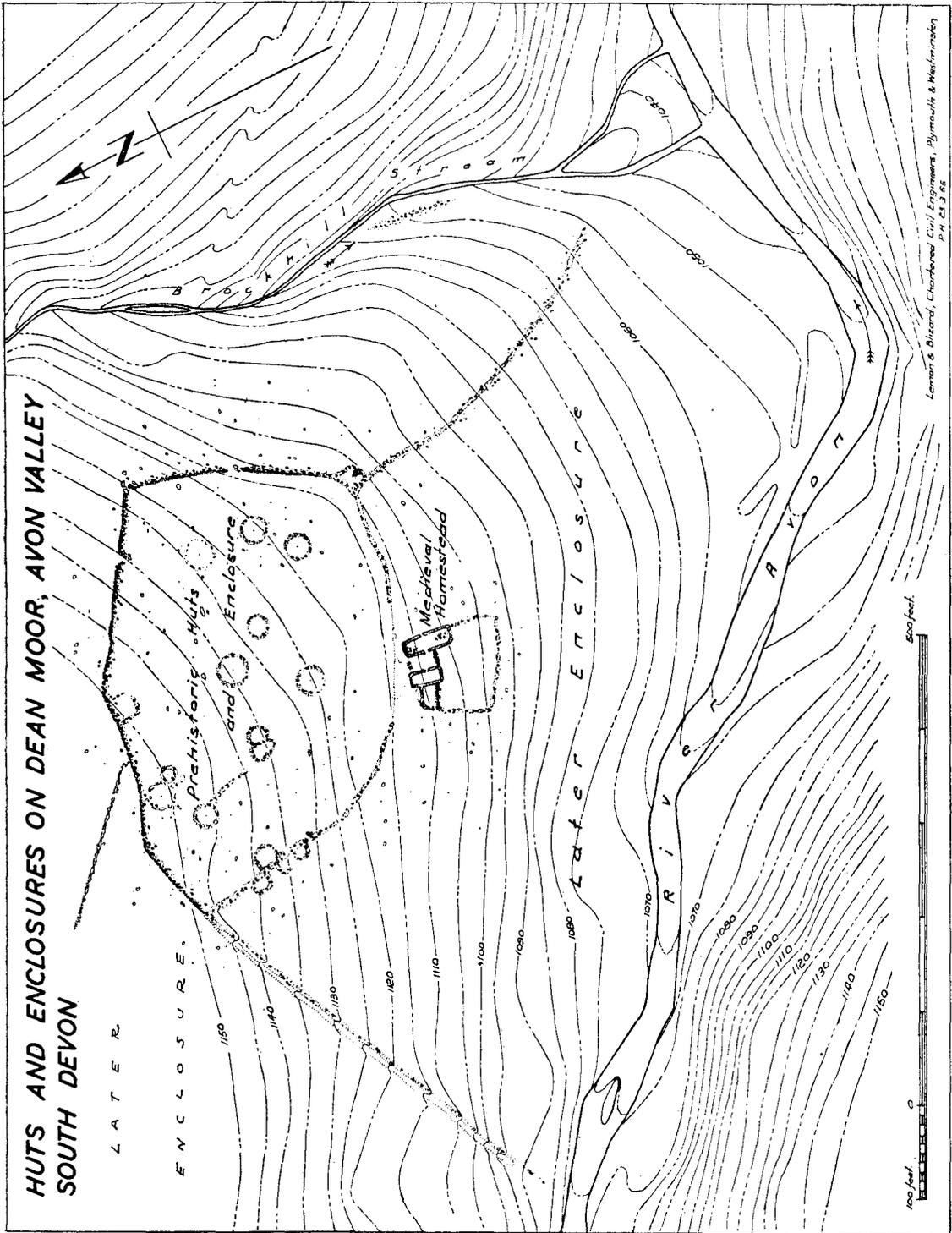


FIG. 36. Contoured site-plan, showing the Dean Moor homestead and associated enclosures in relation to the late-bronze-age settlement (pp. 142 ff.)

8-10 ft. in diameter and butted up externally against it (FIG. 36). There are also remains of a large outer enclosure of some 50 acres apparently added to the homestead complex on the west side. A small stony bank, dug from the south side, measuring 8 ft. overall, joins the pound wall at an acute angle on the upper side (FIG. 36): it continues straightly aligned along the hillside for a third of a mile and then turns down to end on the river.<sup>7</sup>

### THE EXCAVATIONS

The house, byre, and intervening yard were totally excavated, after initial axial and cross sections had been cut (FIGS. 37-8). All were covered with a mass of fallen debris matted together by bilberry roots, which has been omitted from the sections for the sake of clarity.

#### THE HOUSE (PL. XVI, B)

The dwelling house was a sub-rectangular structure measuring 27 ft. long by 12 ft. wide internally: the external angles were rounded and the inner ones approximated to right angles, except the NW. one, which was acute and so produced the curious distortion at the upper end. The walls,  $2\frac{1}{2}$ -3 ft. wide, were neatly built of undressed granite; large boulders were laid at the bottom of the walls and above the smaller stones, which were coursed as far as possible (PL. XVIII, A). Seven courses were preserved on the east side, standing 4 ft. 2 in. high. The external joints of the south wall were filled with a light sandy mixture, which Dr. Norman Davey analysed to find that it was not a true mortar, though it could well have been used for bedding (p. 155). This wall is the most exposed to the weather and therefore would need stopping.

The house was entered from the yard, the doorway being in the centre of the east side (FIG. 37). The gap between the wall-ends was 4 ft. wide, but there was evidence that it had been narrowed to 3 ft. by the insertion of a timber door-frame. An L-shaped slot, 2 ft. long, 8-10 in. wide, and 9 in. deep, and another, 8 in. square, showed where the jambs had been bedded: both holes were filled with soft dark soil, indicative of decayed timber. The small gap between the post-hole and the stone wall on the south side suggests that a large timber had been used to hang the door, cut with a tenoned base. The threshold was paved with large slabs (PL. XVII, A): those on the outside had been laid after dirt, which included scraps of medieval pottery, had accumulated in the yard.

The interior was divided by a partition wall,  $1\frac{3}{4}$ -2 ft. wide, and contemporary with the house wall, which extended  $8\frac{1}{2}$  ft. from the door. The lower room and the paved area inside the door were deep in dirt, but in the upper room the floor was firm, gritty sub-soil and relatively clean: it was obvious that it had been lowered, exposing the base of the wall, by being periodically cleared out. A patch of charcoal and some staining indicated where a small fire had been lit near the west wall of this room, which can be identified as sleeping quarters or a storeroom.

<sup>7</sup> It can be seen on the air-photographs C.P.E./U.K. 1890, nos. 4271-2, and can be easily traced on the ground.

The lower room, 12 ft. by 10 ft., had a central hearth laid on flat slabs: analysis of the charcoal showed that oak had been burnt. Beside it was a drain, dug 9 in. to 1 ft. deep in the subsoil and covered by flat slabs; it went through the base of the south wall for water to soak away on the hillside. Its efficiency was demonstrated during the prevailing thunderstorms as shown on PL. XVIII, B. Occupation-dirt ('silt' on section, FIG. 38) had accumulated to a depth of 1½ ft. on the floor at the SW. corner; it was very wet and greasy from the seepage from the drain, but did not seem to be sewage.<sup>8</sup> Although it was clear that most of the rubbish had been thrown on to the midden in the yard, 21 small and featureless pieces of pottery were found in the lower room, which can be tentatively identified as the kitchen (see p. 149).

The house roof was thatch and it had finally caught fire; large black chunks of it were found scattered on top of the occupation-layer in the lower room, on the pavement leading to the door, and outside in the yard, where it had blown and fallen: some charred pieces of squared timber from the framework were found with it. Analysis of the remains showed that the wood was oak (p. 155) and the burnt thatch included some grass or reed stems (p. 156). As for the roof structure, a ridge-pole and rafters will have carried the thatch; the ends were probably not gabled since there was no extra fallen stone and the roof here will have been constructed with the same pitch as at the sides, the thatch being gently rounded as is normal today in cottages in south Devon.

#### THE BYRE

This was a massively-built, rectangular structure, measuring 49 ft. long by 14 ft. wide internally, with its upper end levelled into the hillside (PL. XVI, A, FIG. 37). Some very large slabs and boulders were built into the walls, measuring up to 5 ft. long and 2½ ft. thick: these heavy stones will have come from the prehistoric enclosure wall, which at this point is only 20 ft. above the homestead (FIG. 36). They were all built into the upper end of the byre (PL. XVII, B). The lower end was built of smaller stones, 1-2 ft. long, which were roughly coursed. The walls varied from 3 ft. 4 in. to 4 ft. 2 in. wide, and considering the difficulties inherent in the use of granite, were faced with surprising regularity (FIG. 37). The external angles were rounded, with the exception of the NW. one.

There were two opposite entrances, about a third of the way down the sides, more or less in a line with the doorway to the house: they measured 3 ft. 6 in. and 4 ft. 8 in. wide. Outside the east entrance was a large fallen slab, 4 ft. 6 in. by 2 ft. 10 in., probably the lintel; the threshold was marked by a bedded sill-stone, but there were no post-holes to indicate a door frame. The house wall, however, was rebated on the south side of the opening, forming a recess in which a door could have swung, or a hurdle have been kept ready for use. The sides of the west entrance were ruinous; a piece of badly corroded iron door-fastener was found outside it, in the yard.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Analysis by Dept. of Pathology, Royal Veterinary College: P2 O5, 37 mg. per 100 g.

<sup>9</sup> Identified by X-ray photograph at the Ancient Monuments Laboratory. A piece of a similar fastener was identified from beside the hearth in the byre. For the type, see *Bull. Inst. Archaeol. Univ. London*, 1 (1958), 59, fig. 4.

The interior of the byre was, thus, naturally divided by the line of the passage between the entrances. The upper part (PL. XVII, B) had been cut up by the insertion of rough cross-walls, 1½-2 ft. wide, to form two small compartments,

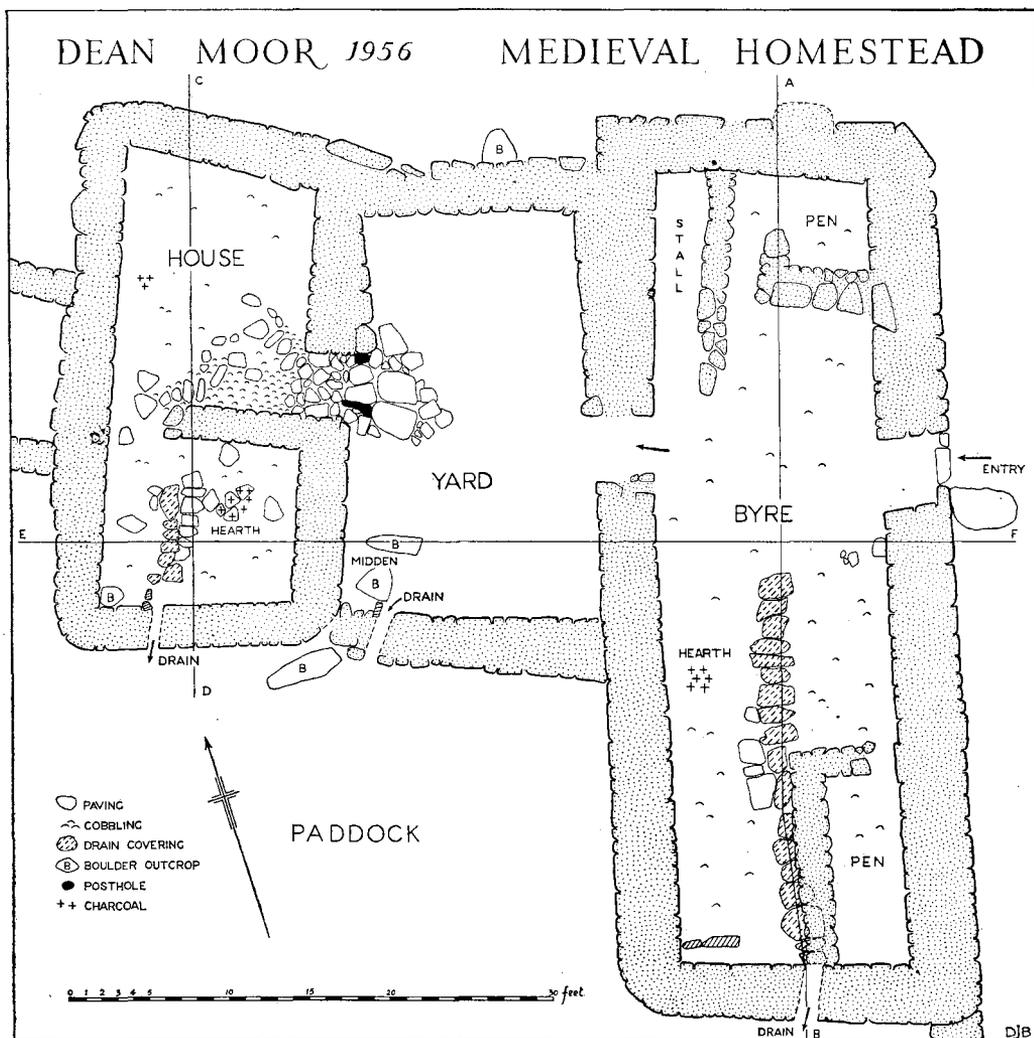


FIG. 37

Plan of homestead (pp. 144 ff.): for sections, see FIG. 38

measuring 12 ft. by 4 ft. and 6 ft. by 8 ft. respectively; they had narrow entries and in shape were suited to be a pony-stall and a pen for sheep or cattle. Their floors were covered with 6 to 9 in. of fine, loose dirt, beneath a mass of debris. Outside the compartments the floor was cleaner and was lightly cobbled. Pieces of medieval coarse pottery were found in the pen, in the floor outside and under-

neath the stall dividing-wall, which confirmed the impression that it was an insertion; there were 20 small sherds in all, including a bung, FIG. 40, no. 7.

The lower part of the byre was much cleaner. There was a small hearth laid on the floor on the west side, with two stake-holes beside it, perhaps supports for a pot-hanger: a whetstone (FIG. 42, no. 2), an iron hook from a door and some pottery were found near by (FIG. 41, nos. 15, 17, 22-3). The floor sloped slightly inwards from both sides towards a covered drain which ran down the centre of

## DEAN MOOR, 1956

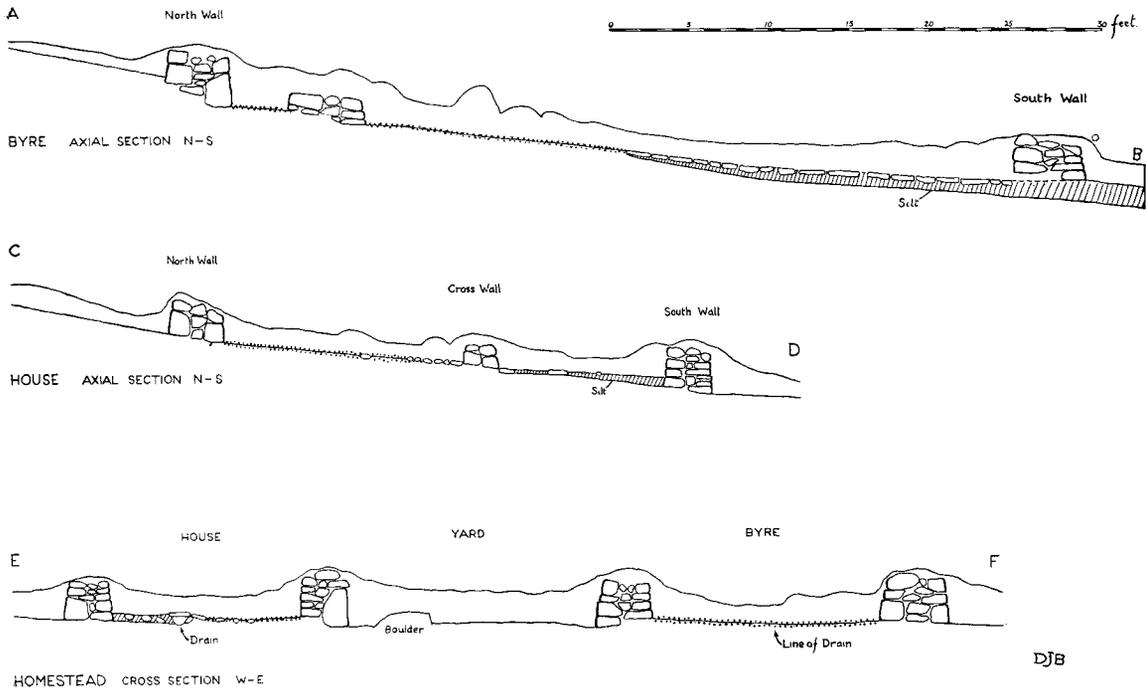


FIG. 38

Sections through the homestead (pp. 144 ff.): for position, see plan, FIG. 37

the house. The drain started 9 in. wide and 4 in. deep and expanded to 1½ ft. wide and 1 ft. deep when it went under the end wall of the byre, to discharge on the hillside. It was lined with small pitched stones and filled with grey silt; its passage under the wall was carefully built, using a slab 3½ by 2½ ft. as a cover (PL. XVIII, c). Another roughly-built pen, 11¾ by 4¼ ft., had been made in the SE. corner, its wall overlying the cover slabs of the drain (PL. XVIII, d). It had a narrow entrance, 1½ ft. wide, appropriate to a lambing pen or calf-box.

There was no evidence of how the byre was roofed; again a simple ridge-pole construction carrying thatch with rounded angles may be assumed. At the

NW. corner there was some stonework corbelled inwards in order to round the angle on the inside.

#### THE YARD

The space between the house and byre, 26 ft. by 16½ ft., had been enclosed by drystone walls, which on the lower side were butted up against the house and not bonded into it (FIG. 37). On the upper side, it was not possible to be certain, owing to the presence of very large boulders, but the yard wall here had the appearance of being contemporary with the house. The yard was deep in dirt underneath the stone debris and particularly in the SW. corner, where there was a midden 18 in. deep covering two natural boulders. The soil was full of pottery, some glazed, and nearly all small pieces—46 rims, 33 bases and 250 other small fragments; the deposit continued south of the yard, thinning out against the wall of the house, thus confirming the structural evidence that the lower yard wall was a later insertion. As originally planned, therefore, the approach to the house was through the paddock.

The sealing-off of the yard checked the natural drainage and, to overcome this, an open drain had been made in the wall base, beside the midden; it was a rough construction, not carefully framed like those in the house or byre. Oddly enough, nothing had been done on the upper side of the homestead to divert the surface water. There was a hollow growing rushes (FIG. 36), but the axial sections (FIG. 38) showed no evidence of a drainage channel underneath it and it must be due to puddling. As a result the subsoil was deeply stained.<sup>10</sup>

#### THE DATE AND CHARACTER OF THE HOMESTEAD

The objects recovered from this upland site were limited to some pottery and whetstones (FIGS. 40-42 and p. 152), since no bone or bronze survives for more than a few years in the acid soil of the moor. The medieval character of the pottery was not in doubt; it consisted of numerous small sherds from 15 to 20 vessels, most of them being from coarse cooking-pots but others belonging to glazed pitchers decorated with applied stripes, slashes, or roulette stamping (FIG. 40, nos. 1-6). All date from the thirteenth or fourteenth centuries, covering at the most a period of a hundred years, *c.* 1250-1350.

The character of the steading as revealed by excavation is obviously pastoral. Its position, as we have seen, had been chosen for good moorland grazing, for nearness to the river, and for the ready-made enclosures that the prehistoric settlement in part provided. The larger building, with opposite doors and with its three compartments and covered drain, is well suited for animal husbandry; the small hearth at one side with potsherds near it suggests a herdsman temporarily housed there for lambing or calving.

The other building was a two-room dwelling, with the dividing wall contemporary with the external walls. It is difficult to be sure of the use to which

<sup>10</sup> See Appendix, p. 156 for a report by Mr. L. Biek, of the Ministry of Works Ancient Monuments Laboratory.

the rooms were put. The upper room was clean and had had a small fire at one side; it may be tentatively identified as sleeping quarters and store room, though entered direct from the outside door. Theoretically the lower room with its drain and dirty floor should have been designed for animals, as in the well-known long-house series in Wales and the north. But this room had a large central hearth, and was entered circuitously by a narrow door that seems to preclude its use for stock. A way of resolving this problem is to suggest that this building originally stood alone, the upper room for the man, and the lower room available for young beasts. Later, with increasing stock, first the byre and then the yard and paddock were constructed, and at that time the lower room in the house became the kitchen. In the latest period, the only approach to the house was through the barn and across the dirty yard.

It is doubtful whether the small quantity of pottery found is sufficient to imply a continuous or permanent occupation and it may well be that the homestead was used seasonally. It seems significant that no spindle-whorls or loom-weights were found, those signs of women's work in the long winter evenings. Querns are also absent, but this may only imply that any corn grown, as in the paddock, was taken to be ground at the appropriate mill, or more likely, that flour was purchased or exchanged for animal products at the nearest market.

### HISTORICAL INTERPRETATION

Up to this point, the little structure on Dean Moor has been studied and interpreted by archaeological methods; by means of field-survey, excavation, analysis of the finds and structures and their analogies. It remains to present the documentary evidence relating to the site and to see if the building can be identified by this means.

At the time of the dissolution of the monasteries, there is good evidence that the area which subsequently became Dean Moor<sup>11</sup> belonged to Buckfast abbey and was part of what was then known as Buckfast Moor. The abbey also held the adjoining Brent Moor, as part of the manor of Brent, and South Holne Moor. The boundaries of these three parcels of moorland with the King's forest of Dartmoor (i.e. Lydford parish, comprising the centre of the moor) were the subject of an inquiry by a Royal Commission in 1531, and their bounds as then determined are recorded in a surviving fragment of the Buckfast abbey cartulary.<sup>12</sup> After the dissolution in 1539 they passed with the abbey buildings to Sir Thomas Dennis of Holcombe Burnell, but were sold again in 1547 to King Henry VIII's Secretary of State, Sir William Petre.<sup>13</sup> The same bounds are again on record

<sup>11</sup> Dean Prior manor belonged to Plympton priory in the middle ages. After the dissolution, it was acquired by John and William Giles of Totnes in 1543: see J. Youings, *Devon Monastic Lands* (Devon & Cornwall Record Soc. no. 37). The parish, not necessarily of the same extent as the manor, had Venville rights, however, during the sixteenth century: E. G. Fogwill, *op. cit.* in note 3, p. 98. The problem of when Buckfast Moor became Dean Moor has yet to be solved.

<sup>12</sup> The cartulary was printed as an Appendix to *Bishop Grandisson's Registers*, ed. F. C. Hingeston-Randolph, III (1899), 1563. The bounds are on p. 1608 (folio 143). The original is now at Buckfast abbey, having been discovered by a waste-paper merchant in 1895 in Exeter.

<sup>13</sup> J. Youings, *op. cit.* in note 11, p. 9, no. 12; p. 11 (Deeds enrolled, Devon Record Office V. m.3); and p. 84, no. 83.

in a newly-discovered document in the Petre papers, from Writtle, Essex.<sup>14</sup>

The text, as printed by Hingeston-Randolph from the cartulary, runs as follows; the bounds are shown on the map (FIG. 39) and it is plain that Dean Moor is included within them:

'Bunde de Buckfastmore.

Hee sunt bunde de Bukfastmore. A Hurburnewelne [Harbourne Head] descendendo versus austrum usque a la Fenforde [not identified, but probably near Dockwell Hole]. A la Fenforde ascendendo versus occidentem usque a la Blakeovere [Black-over = ? Black Top: now crest of Dockwell ridge; the line is shown by the Brent-Dean Prior parish boundary]. A la Blakeovere descendo versus occidentem usque ad Smalebrokes fet [the foot of Small Brook]: Ascendendo versus boream per Avene [River Avon] usque ad ultiores Wellebroke [the West Wellabrook]. Ab ulteriorem Wellebrooke capite, girando versus orientem usque ad Popaburghe [Puper's Hill]. A Popaburghe versus austrum girando per la Rowerewe ['Rough row'; from O.E. *Ruh* and *raw*, see *Eng. Place-Name Elements, II*: the term is also used in the Brent bounds: slight ditching marks the line today north of Water Oak corner<sup>15</sup>] usque ad Dokastone [probably the menhir standing 500 yards east of Harbourne Head: R. H. Worth, *Dartmoor*, pl. 55]. A Dokastone directe usque Hurburnewillene.'

In both the cartulary and the Petre papers a note has been appended to these bounds stating that, up to the time of the first pestilence (presumably the Black Death in 1348-9) the abbots were accustomed to send a succession of lay brothers, with a herdsmen under them, to look after their stock on the moor, and that there was a dwelling (*mansio*) for him, and an enclosure beside it of about 100 acres into which the stock were driven at nights. Grazing over the royal forest, which marched with this and Buckfast's other moors, was technically only permitted by day, and hence the need to enclose the herds at night, as well as for their own security.<sup>16</sup> The text is as follows:

'Memorandum quod Abbas et Conventus de Bukfast toto tempore ante primam pestilenciam habuerunt in vasto et mora eorum de Bukfast quemdam conversum laicum fratrem eorum continue, unus post alium, manetem in quadam mansione in vasto et mora eorum de Bukfast, habentem sub se unum pastorem, ad pascenda et custodienda overia dictorum Religiosorum diurniter in vasto et mora eorum de Bukfast et Brenta, et ad fugando et imparcando dicta overia noctanter in quodam clauso eorum prope dictam mansionem, continente in se C acras terre: quorum ultimus conversus qui in dicta mansione ultimo mansit vocabatur frater Henricus Walbroke. Et huesque muri et fossata dicte mansionis apparent et aperte ibidem noscuntur.<sup>17</sup>

This description could well apply to the homestead, which is situated on

<sup>14</sup> Now at the Devon County Record Office, the Castle, Exeter. I am much indebted to the archivist, Miss Joan Sinar, for the transcript and help with it.

<sup>15</sup> Visible on air-photo C.P.E./U.K. 1890, no. 4271 and traceable on the ground.

<sup>16</sup> Fogwill, *op. cit.* in note 3, p. 94.

<sup>17</sup> Hingeston-Randolph, *op. cit.* in note 12, p. 1608.

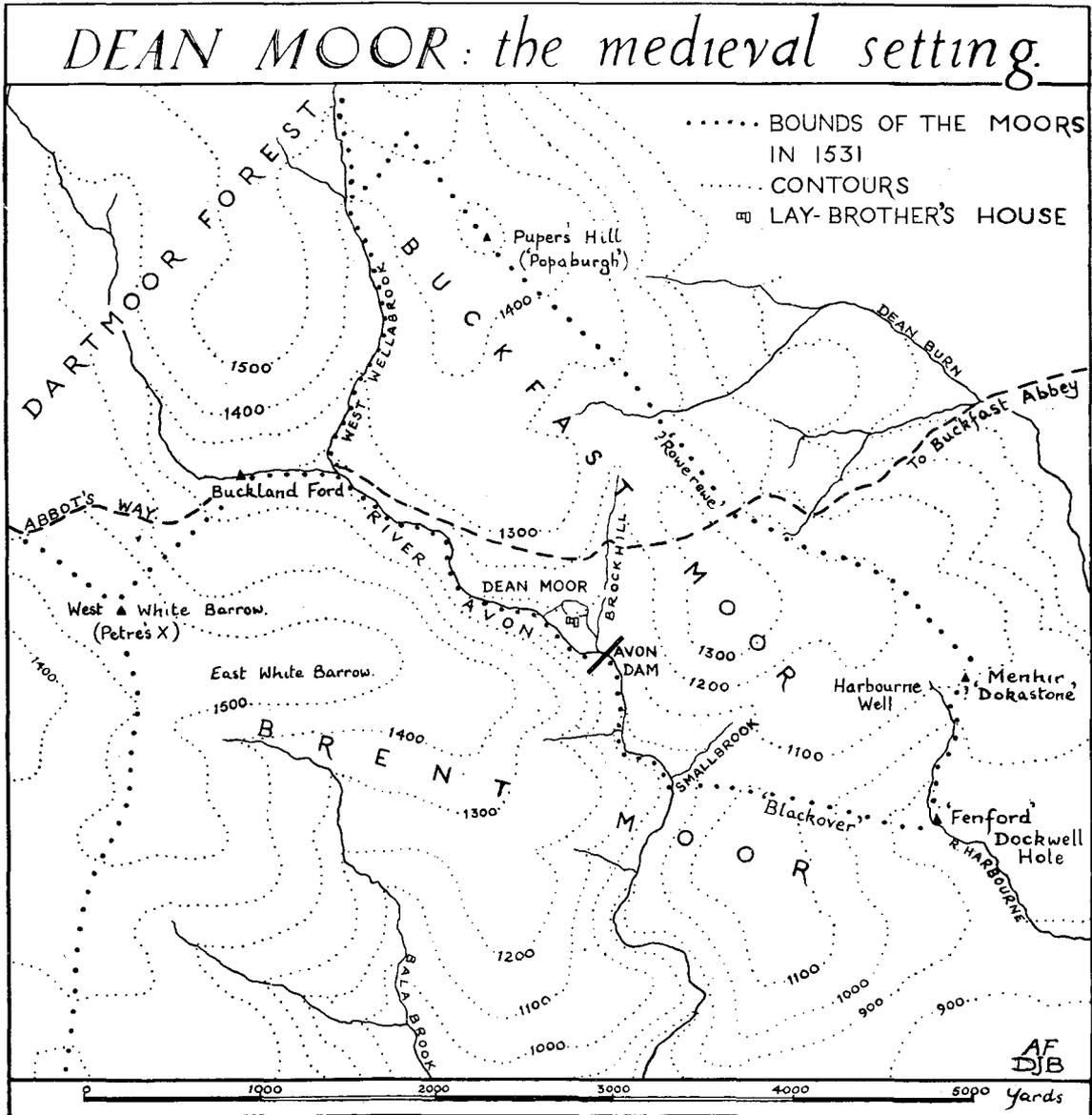


FIG. 39

the former Buckfast Moor, and near to its boundary with Brent Moor<sup>18</sup> (FIG. 39), and so suited for grazing stock on both the abbey properties. Excavation has shown that the buildings contain accommodation suitable for a lay brother (in

<sup>18</sup> Brent Moor bounds, from Glaze-meet to the Harbourne, via White Barrow and the Avon are also given in the cartulary; *op. cit.* in note 12, p. 1607.

the upper room of the house) and for a herdsman under him (in the lower room and in the byre); the absence of women's gear is noticeable. One building is a byre, divided up for housing stock, and there are enclosures by the adjoining river suitable for enclosing the beasts at night (p. 144): admittedly the 55 acres are half that set down in the record. The structure is massively built and the walls therefore are likely to have been visible after 200 years, as the document states. The succession of lay brothers could have reached the site easily by the

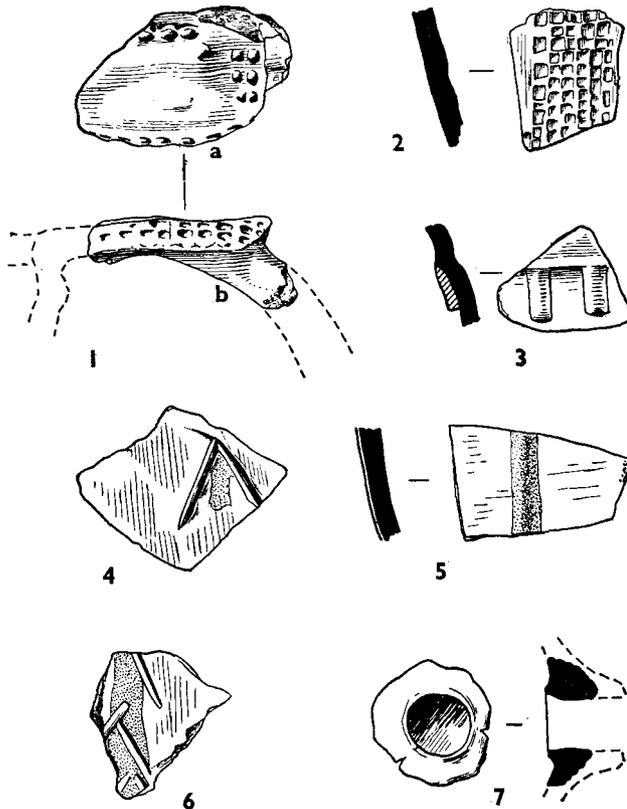


FIG. 40

Glazed pottery, 13th to early 14th century (p. 152 f.). Sc.  $\frac{1}{2}$

#### Glazed

1. Upper part of a handle, fine pinkish-red ware, soft and abraded, coated externally with a thin olive-green glaze, which has mostly flaked off. It is rouletted on the edge and sides of a flat thumb-hold, on its upper surface. Yard.
2. Small sherd, typical of many others, in similar ware to no. 1, decorated with stamped or roulette pattern, producing close-set rectangular impressions. Yard.

<sup>19</sup> An unrecorded deserted-village settlement, east of Hound Tor, Ilsington (Grid SX/745789), contains long, narrow, drystone buildings resembling the byre at Dean Moor before it was excavated. Compare also Trewortha Marsh, Bodmin Moor, *J. Roy. Institution of Cornwall*, xi, 57, 289.

track from Buckfast to Tavistock across the moor known as the Abbot's Way which passes just above it (FIG. 39). Finally the terminal date of 1348-9, the year of the Black Death, accords with that determined independently from the pottery (p. 148) for the occupation. This identification of the homestead as a pastoral establishment run by a lay brother of Buckfast abbey is reinforced by the fact that nothing is known on Dartmoor that is similar in layout.<sup>19</sup>

### THE FINDS

#### THE POTTERY (FIGS. 40-41)

The pottery falls into two categories, glazed and unglazed: all of it was wheel-made and all of medieval character. It forms a small homogeneous group of some 20 vessels that can be assigned to the thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries.

3. Neck or rim sherd, similar ware to no. 1, with applied decoration. Yard.  
 These sherds are all from pitchers. Roulette decoration was used in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries as at Old Sarum (*Antiq. J.*, xv (1935), 189, fig. 5, nos. 17-19). Similar ware has been found at Totnes castle, and ascribed to the early thirteenth century (S. Rigold, *Trans. Devon Assoc.* LXXXVI (1954), 242).

- 4-6. Small sherds, typical of others, of hard grey ware, evenly coated externally with mottled brownish-green glaze, and decorated with thin strips of applied clay, left unglazed and rough, producing the effect of brown stripes. Diagonal knife-slashes, in herring-bone pattern, occur on some sherds, as no. 6. Yard.

Pitchers decorated with applied strips are normally of thirteenth-century date, as in the group from Carfax, Oxford (E. M. Jope, *Oxoniensia*, vii (1942), 72, fig. 17, no. 1).

8. Cooking pot, very hard pinkish-buff ware with smooth surface, rim and shoulder decorated externally with spots of thin yellowish-green glaze. The glaze has been carelessly applied with a small brush, leaving streaks between the spots. The base is indented. Yard in midden, and outside the end wall of the house.

This is a later type of pottery, probably mid-fourteenth century in Mr. Dunning's opinion.

#### *Unglazed*

There are two sorts of similar fabric in this group of coarse wares, probably representing no more than variations in a potter's mix or firing. Most sherds have a light grey paste with fine quartz grits, which fires to a brick-red or a light pinkish-brown; the surface feels gritty and is easily abraded. The remainder are a darker, heavier ware, with fine white grits, firing to a dark reddish or purply-brown with a smoother surface: nos. 7, 13, 16, 18, 21 are in this fabric. Some rims and all the bases are blackened by soot or smoke.

7. A small bung, indicating that some vessels probably held cider: this has an apple sediment, known locally today as 'squirly-gogs'. Compare an example from Bantam, S. Devon, where the type is figured and discussed (A. Fox and G. C. Dunning, *Antiq. J.*, xxxv (1955), 64, fig. 6). Byre, near hearth.
- 9-12. Pieces of cooking pots with plain rims, upright or slightly everted. The moulded and concave rim-forms characteristic of Exeter cooking-pots of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries are not represented (A. Fox and G. C. Dunning, *Antiq. J.* xxxi (1951), 180, fig. 1). Compare also the Totnes castle series, again with different profiles (Rigold, *Trans. Devon. Assoc.* LXXXVI (1954), 242). Yard.
- 13-17. Small cooking pots or jars with narrow rims, widely everted, and with an internal moulding or bevel on the inner slope. These may be compared with the small-sized pots from the Bedford kiln in Exeter, which have similar profiles, but are in a superior fine buff ware, and probably were glazed: these date from the first half of the fourteenth century (A. Fox and G. C. Dunning, *Antiq. J.*, xxxvi (1957), 43, fig. 4). Nos. 15 and 17, Byre, near hearth; 13-14, 16, Yard.
19. Shallow bowl with incurved rim; compare an example from the Bodleian site in Oxford assigned to the twelfth century (R. L. S. Bruce-Mitford, *Oxoniensia*, iv (1939), 130, fig. 27, no. 1). Yard.
- 18, 20-23. Sagging bases belonging to the cooking pots: nos. 18 and 22 have a small external moulding at the angle: nos. 20-21 are rounded internally. Nos. 18-21, Yard; 22-23, Byre, near hearth.

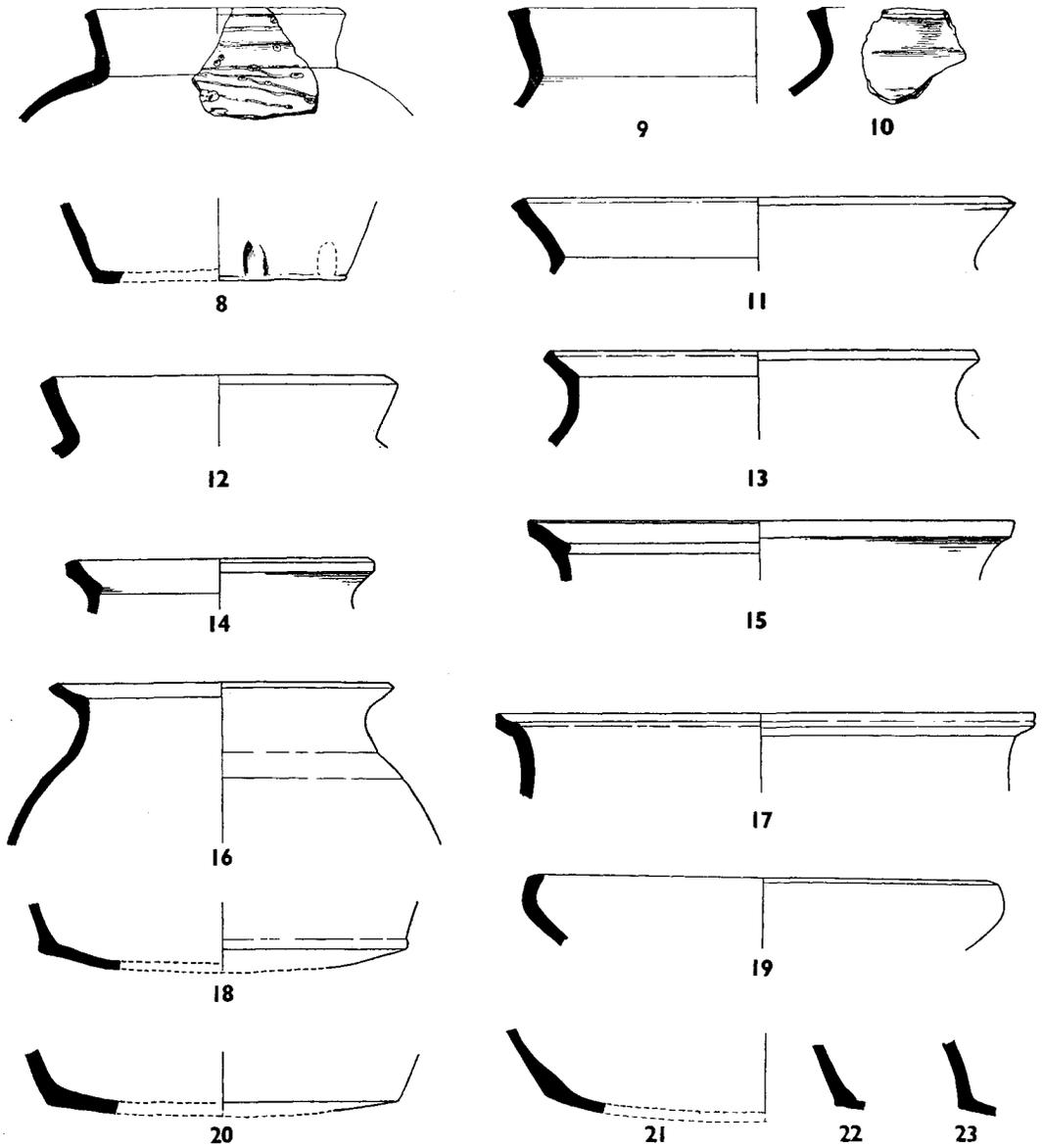


FIG. 41

Pottery, 13th to early 14th century (p. 153): no. 8 is glazed. Sc.  $\frac{1}{4}$

## WHETSTONES (FIG. 42)

Whetstones of fine-grained sandstone, smoothed and heavily worn down on all sides as indicated by arrows on FIG. 42. There are scratch marks where points have

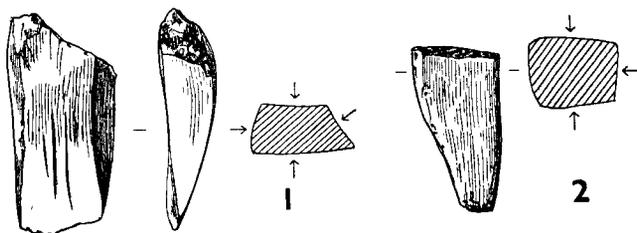


FIG. 42  
Whetstones. Sc.  $\frac{1}{3}$

been sharpened on no. 1: this stone has been worn by use to its curved shape. No. 1, Yard, midden; no. 2, Byre, near hearth.

## APPENDIX

## LABORATORY REPORTS

## i. Sand

Dr. Norman Davey, of the Building Research Station, reports:

We have looked at the sample of material you sent from the south wall of the medieval house on Dartmoor. It can be described as a fine silty sand with over 50 per cent. passing through no. 100 British Standard sieve. There is no evidence of a cementing material such as lime and in that sense it can hardly be described as a true mortar. None the less, I presume that such material could quite well have been used for bedding the blocks of stone and stabilizing the work during construction of 'dry walling'.

## ii. Charcoals and fibres

(a) Mr. J. F. Levy, Department of Botany and Plant Technology, Imperial College, London, reports:  
Byre, hearth.

Several small fragments of wood charcoal. Structure considerably distorted, longest dimension of any fragment 1-1 $\frac{1}{2}$  in: all same species, oak (*Quercus sp.*).  
Byre, under rubble, in stall.

Two small fragments of wood charcoal. Both the same species, oak (*Quercus sp.*). One piece much distorted, the other probably from small branch 2-3 in. diameter.

House, lower room, on floor.

Six clumps of charred material in soil. No identification possible.

House, lower room, in SW. corner.

Charred material in roughly squared lumps  $\frac{1}{2}$  in. by  $\frac{1}{2}$  in. by 1 in. This is not wood charcoal. It appears to consist mainly of a collection of grass-like stems with their long axes all orientated in approximately the same direction. It could be a type of thatch made from a comparatively thin-stalked material, i.e. grass rather than cereal straw. Turf or peat seems unlikely because of the regular orientation of the stem-like structures.

House, upper room, on floor.

Charred material similar to that described above. Also some small fragments

of wood charcoal from small twigs. Identification somewhat doubtful, but possibly hawthorn (*Crataegus sp.*).

House, on pavement, inside entrance.

Charred material similar to that described above.

House, hearth, lower room.

Mostly charred material similar to that described above. Also some dozen small fragments of wood charcoal, all oak (*Quercus sp.*). Some are from very small twigs, others from small branches. There is considerable variation in rate of growth of wood: one sample is extremely slow-grown, having about 50 rings per half-inch diameter, whereas others are much faster grown with 5 rings per half inch. They may therefore not have belonged to the same tree.

(b) Samples of the charred material were also submitted to the Jodrell Laboratory, the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew; Dr. G. Taylor reports:

All of this material has been very unsatisfactory from our point of view because it is so completely carbonized that it exhibits very few characters of diagnostic value. We really cannot usefully say very much about the botanical identity of material of this type for fear that the archaeologists will draw incorrect conclusions through having the material wrongly or imperfectly identified.

In addition to carbonized wood fragments, we have found a few silica bodies that look as if they originated from the epidermis of a grass, but they are not the type of silica body that occurs in any of the grasses that are likely to be used as thatching materials. The silica bodies are much more like those of the Purple Moor-Grass (*Molinia caerulea*), which is very common in peaty areas. Very few of these silica bodies were observed, however, which suggests that only a small amount of the grass that produced them was present.

Other grass fragments may have been derived from reed culms (*Phragmites communis*) which would support your theory that the material represents carbonized thatch. I must emphasize, however, that the botanical evidence on this point is very inadequate. In some of the grass particles it was possible to detect fungal hyphae.

### iii. Soil Samples

Mr. L. Biek, Ancient Monuments Laboratory, Ministry of Works, reports:

The site was visited during excavation and samples were taken from sections exposed by 'road' construction (A, B) and associated trenching (C). In addition a section was studied (D) but not sampled, which included possible old land surfaces. Samples of this were later supplied by the excavator.

A and B were about 20 yards apart on the same slope, C somewhat lower in a level basin, some 200 yards away. A was under fern, grass and moss, B under fern, heather and bilberry. C was in peat.

The samples were fired at the Ancient Monuments Laboratory by Mr. W. E. Lee under reducing and oxidizing conditions, as previously described,<sup>20</sup> in an attempt to follow the vertical variation of organic matter and iron. Several observations of general interest were made. At A there was negligible iron until the weathered bedrock was reached. The iron colour was, however, to some extent masked by a dark, almost dull black material resistant to 500° C. under oxidizing conditions. This dark colour (possibly due to manganese?) increased in intensity down the profile but entirely disappeared in the weathered bedrock (though possibly by being masked, in turn).

B showed no such dark material but instead a clear zone of iron enrichment about 1 ft. down, apparently containing more iron than the weathered bedrock did. C had a very light-coloured sandy basal layer to great depth; this appeared to be 'leached' but turned out to have an iron content comparable to that of the other

<sup>20</sup> Scientific note by L. Biek in J. S. Wachter, 'Excavations at Wattisfield, 1956' *Proc. Suff. Inst. of Archaeol.* (in the press).

weathered bedrock samples. The mineral 'ash' of the thick peaty layer above showed some of the dark material found in A.

There appears to be no definitive account of the pedology of the area. Conditions are clearly variable, both horizontally and vertically, and there is constant disturbance probably to great depth, especially on the exposed ground occupied by the site. This was shown by the work carried out on material from the excavations of 1954-5.

In the circumstances, little can be said beyond recording the observations in the hope that they may be useful when the area has become better understood in this respect. Section D showed no black material and negligible iron. The variation in colour was clearly matched by similar changes in the content of organic matter, but in view of the natural disturbance in depth mentioned above no definite interpretation can be put on this from the recorded evidence. It is likely that the visible differences in the section provide the best guide for assessing the amount and nature of human activity.

Pollen analysis would almost certainly provide valuable information but so far it has not been possible to find a specialist interested in the particular set of conditions here involved.

I am indebted to Mr. Harding (Water Board Engineer), by courtesy of Messrs. Langford and Ross (of Messrs. Lemon and Blizard) for informing me that the pH of the Avon's water at that point varies from 4.8 (quick run-off from the bogs after rain) to 6.6 (springs in bogs).

#### NOTE

*The Society is much indebted to the Ministry of Works for a grant towards the cost of publishing this paper.*