

# **Westcott Barton, Thelbridge, near Tiverton, Devon.**

*An Archaeological Building Assessment.*



**CONTEXT ONE**  
ARCHAEOLOGICAL SERVICES LTD

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# Westcott Barton, Thelbridge, near Tiverton, Devon.

An Archaeological Building Assessment.

for

Woodward Smith Chartered Architects

by



Brickfield Offices, Maperton, Wincanton, Somerset. BA9 8EG

T: 01963 824696

F: 07092 259858

E: [mail@contextone.co.uk](mailto:mail@contextone.co.uk)

W: [www.contextone.co.uk](http://www.contextone.co.uk)

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**Fieldwork team:** Richard McConnell and Dr Cheryl Allum

**Report:** Dr Cheryl Allum

**Research:** Neville Hall and Dr Cheryl Allum

**Graphics:** Elizabeth Gardner

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## Non-technical summary

*Context One Archaeological Services Limited (COAS) carried out an Archaeological Building Assessment at Westcott Barton, Thelbridge, near Tiverton, Devon (centred on NGR SS 80171 11803) on the 20<sup>th</sup> of March 2007. The project was commissioned by Woodward Smith Chartered Architects on behalf of their clients, Mr and Mrs Bigsby.*

*The investigation was requested by the Mid Devon Conservation Officer, in response to a Listed Building Application for the conversion of a house to permanent living accommodation, and two barns into holiday accommodation.*

*Westcott Barton is an important example of a Devon farmstead with late medieval to early post-medieval origins. The farmhouse originates as a cross-passage house probably dating from the 16<sup>th</sup> century, consisting of a hall, with an inner room to the west and a cross-passage to the east. The service end to the east of the cross-passage is probably part of the original building, with a pegged jointed cruck roof, which is almost identical to that exposed above the first floor rooms over the hall and inner room. Whilst there are indications that the service end may be slightly later, the byre and hayloft is certainly contemporary with it. The recently exposed roof trusses in the first floor rooms above the hall and inner room are heavily smoke blackened, indicating that smoke from a central hearth eddied without interruption. However, the farmhouse was most likely a partially open rather than a fully open hall, as there is a solid wall between the inner room and hall. The first floor and northern stair turret were probably added during the 17<sup>th</sup> century, although the inner room may have already had a first floor room, as this was not dependant upon the hearth being replaced by a chimney. This was constructed in the north-east corner of the hall backing onto the cross-passage, with axial rubble chimney stack above the eastern end of the hall. Later alterations include the construction of the brick bread oven and smoking chamber at the northern end of the cross-passage; the late 18<sup>th</sup>/ early 19<sup>th</sup> century western extension; and the 19<sup>th</sup> century dairy at the rear of the hall. In the late 19<sup>th</sup> century there were further significant alterations to the farmstead, including the raising of the eaves by several courses.*

*The south range byre and linhay probably date from the 17<sup>th</sup> century, whilst the north range linhay barn attached to the east of the farmhouse is thought to be 17<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup> century. The massive oak posts resting on stone pads, and the oak crossbeams for the haylofts are certainly earlier than the late 18<sup>th</sup> to early 19<sup>th</sup> century A-frame roof trusses with pegged lap-jointed collars. The farmbuildings have undergone numerous alterations, additions and demolitions. This includes the construction of a building at the eastern end and at right angles to the linhay, an angled building with sunken floor and evidence for a first floor at the eastern end of the southern linhay, and a lean-to between the byre and linhay of the northern range.*

## 1. Introduction and Planning Background

- 1.1. Context One Archaeological Services Limited (COAS) carried out an Archaeological Building Assessment at Westcott Barton, Thelbridge, near Tiverton, Devon (centred on NGR SS 80171 11803) (hereafter referred to as the Site) on the 20<sup>th</sup> of March 2007. The project was commissioned by Woodward Smith Chartered Architects on behalf of their clients, Mr and Mrs Bigsby.
- 1.2. The investigation was requested by the Mid Devon Conservation Officer, in response to a Listed Building Application for the conversion of a house to permanent living accommodation, and two barns into holiday accommodation. The reason for the requirement was to understand the “*complicated structural history*” of the buildings, so that any further works could be based on “*informed conservation principles*”.
- 1.3. The request for the archaeological work follows advice given by Central Government as set out in *Planning Policy Guidance Note 1 (PPG1)*, *General Policy and Principles*, 1997 and *Planning Policy Guidance: Note 15 (PPG15)* issued by the DoE in 1990. The recommendation also conforms to Policy CO7 of the *Devon Structure Plan 2001 to 2016* (adopted October 2004), and Policy ENV9 of the *Mid Devon Local Plan* (adopted July 2006).
- 1.4. This report summarises the topographical, geological, archaeological and historical setting of the Site, and presents the results of the Archaeological Building Assessment.

## 2. Definition and purpose of an Archaeological Building Investigation and Recording of Standing Buildings or Structures

- 2.1. Archaeological Building Investigation and Recording is defined by the Institute of Field Archaeologists (IFA) as:

*“...a programme of work intended to establish the character, history, dating, form and archaeological development of a specified building, structure, or complex and its setting, including buried components, on land, inter-tidal zone or underwater.” (IFA rev.1999)*

- 2.2. The purpose of an Archaeological Building Investigation and Recording is similarly defined by the IFA and is:

*“...to examine a specified building, structure or complex, and its setting, in order to inform:*

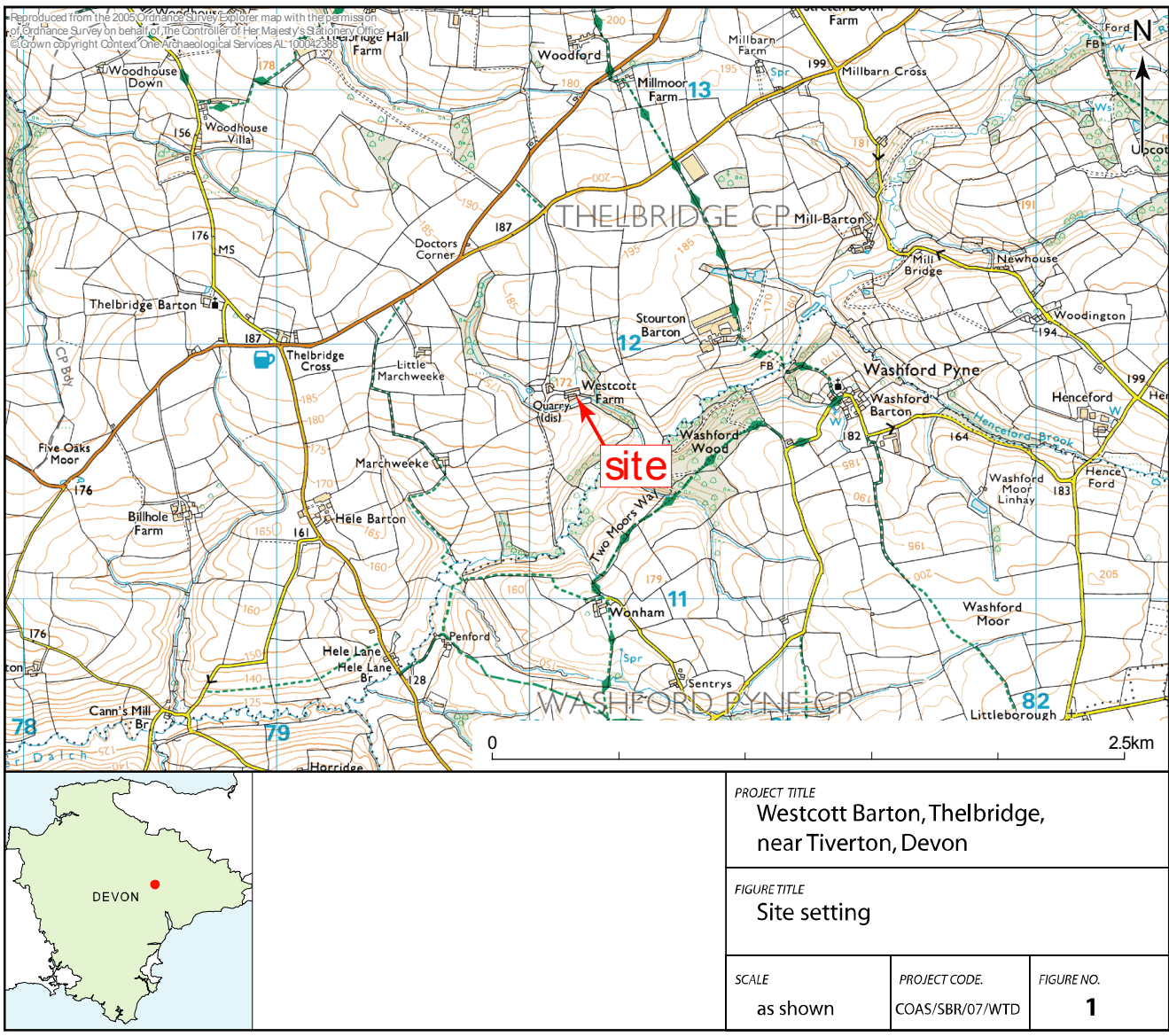
- *the formulation of a strategy for the conservation, alteration, demolition, repair or management of a building, or structure, or complex and its setting; and*

*or*

- *to seek a better understanding, compile a lasting record, analyse the findings/ record, and then disseminate the results.”*

3. Topography and geology

3.1. Westcott Barton is situated c. 1km to the east of the small settlement of Thelbridge, c. 2.5km to the south of Witheridge, and c. 16km to the west of Tiverton, within the District of Mid Devon. Westcott Farm is specifically located at the southern end of Westcott Lane (centred on NGR SS 80171 11803), and in an isolated rural position (**Figure 1**). The Site occupies ground that slopes downwards from c. 172m above Ordnance Datum (AOD) in the north-west to c. 165m above AOD in the south-east. The general topography is undulating with the ground rising gently to the north and west of the Site, and sloping downwards to the south and east. The underlying geology consists of the Palaeozoic Upper Carboniferous Namurian (Millstone Grit Series), Lower Westphalian (mainly Productive Coal Measures) and Upper Westphalian (including Pennant Measures) (British Geological Survey, 2001). The soils in the area are characterised by freely draining slightly acid, loamy soils (Multi Agency Geographic Information for the Countryside (Magic), 2006).



## 4. Archaeological and historical setting

4.1. The historical background for the Site and its environs has been drawn from both primary and secondary sources held at the Westcountry Studies Library (WSL), and the Devon Record Office (DRO) in Exeter. Listed building data was obtained from the Listed Buildings Record of the National Monuments Record (NMR) of English Heritage.

4.2. Much of the parish of Witheridge consists of wet moorland, which was occupied during the Bronze Age. Numerous barrows are located on Witheridge Moor and the Dart Raffe (Hoskins 1954).

4.3. At the time of the Domesday Survey of AD1086, the manor of Witheridge was held by the King, where it is referred to as *Wirigs* (VCH nd). The Domesday entry for *Wirigs* is as follows:

*"This (sic manor) 3 ploughs can till. Thereof the King has one third of a virgate and 1 plough in demesne and the villeins have 2 thirds of that virgate and 3 ploughs. There the King has 3 villeins, 3 bordars, 2 serfs, 26 sheep, 12 acres of woodland, 6 acres of meadow and 40 of pasture".*

4.4. At Domesday, the manor of *Westfort* or *Wesforda* (Westcott) in Witheridge was held by Tetbald or Tetbalds. Colbert held the manor at the time of King Edward the Confessor (AD1042-AD1066) (Morris 1985). The manor rendered geld for one virgate of land, which was enough land for one plough.

*"There Tetbald had two villeins who have in it half a plough, and two bordars and two acres of meadow, and it is worth by the year ten shillings and it was worth as much when he received it".*

4.5. Following Domesday, and during the medieval period it is possible, from contemporary documentary sources, to trace the lineage of the various landowners of the manor of Westcott. From a deed of AD1138-1160, the manor was held by Robert de Meron, which then passed to Agnes his daughter and thence her heirs. By AD1233, a further deed details the manor in the hands of Richard Stretch or Strech of *Wasford*. Between AD1243 and the mid 14<sup>th</sup> century, lands in *Wasford*, *Westcote*, *Westecote* or *Westcot*, were held by the Prior of Barnstaple and various generations of the de Horton family. By AD1428, John Raynesbury, John Luyt and the heirs of Guy Ayssh hold half a fee in *Westecote*, *Dert*, *Waysford* and *Strecche*, which "the prior once held" (Rev. J.A.S. Castlehow in 'Catalogue of Ancient deeds', Vol. VI No. 4092, p31).

4.6. Witheridge was granted borough status in AD1248, and was governed by a portreeve. It was situated in the Hundred of that name and in the Deanery of South Molton. From the 14<sup>th</sup> century onwards, the village held a weekly market, two markets yearly held in September and November, and a small annual cattle fair on the 24<sup>th</sup> of June (Lysons 1822). The lay subsidy of 1542 valued the community at 9 pounds six shillings and two pence (Stoate 1979). In 1641-2, 150 adult males signed the Protestation Returns (Hoskins 1954).

4.7. The manor and Hundred of Witheridge belonged at an early time to the family of Fitzpayne. It then passed by female heirs from Fitzpayne to the Lords Bottreaux and thence to Lord Donegal from whom it was purchased by William Fellowes. By the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, it was held by his descendant the Honourable Newton Fellowes (Polwhele 1806, Lysons 1822, White

1850). The first population census of 1801, there were 875 inhabitants in the parish of Witheridge. By the census of 1901, this had increased to 1,024.

4.8. The parish church of St John the Baptist in Witheridge is built of the local brown dun-stone. The chancel is early 14<sup>th</sup> century, while the remainder of the church was rebuilt during the 15<sup>th</sup> century, and was much restored in 1876 (Hoskins 1954).

4.9. White in the *Devonshire Directory of 1850* describes the town of Witheridge as:

*“small, clean and well-built with an open square or market place in the centre.....”*

4.10. In 1850, the parish of Witheridge contained 1399 inhabitants with an area of 9958 acres of land, and included many scattered farmhouses such as Westcott (White 1850).

4.11. The Site at Westcott was, until local government reorganisation by Act of Parliament in 1888, situated in the parish of Witheridge. After 1888, it then became located in the parish of Thelbridge.

4.12. The Land Tax Returns from 1780 to 1832 for Westcott details the following owners and tenants there:

Date	Owner	Tenant
1780, 1785	Sir Thomas Ackland	Mrs Chave
1791, 1798	Heirs of Sir Thomas Ackland	James Matthews
1810, 1815	Richard Comins & James Matthews	John Lake
1815, 1832	Richard Comins & William Mussell	William Elworthy

**Table 1.** Land Tax Returns 1780-1832, Landowners & Tenants at Westcott

4.13. The tithe map apportionment of 1842 (see below) details the tenant at Westcott as William Elworthy. Details of the Census returns pertaining to Westcott from 1841-1901 were obtained from the Wincanton Library, Somerset.

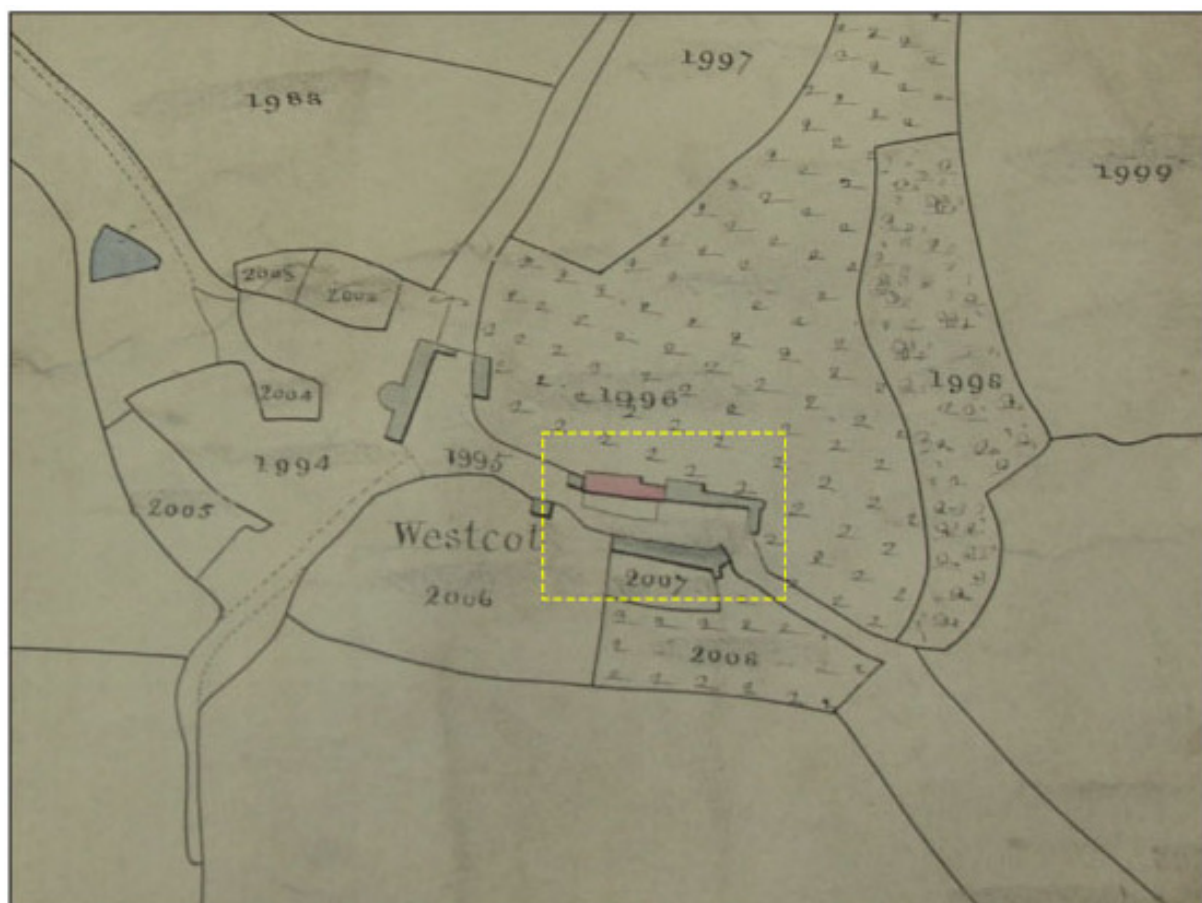
4.14. In the Census of 1841 (the preceding year of the tithe map), William Elworthy is detailed as a Yeoman aged 45 with his son William (10), wife Elizabeth (40) and daughter Elizabeth (10). Also detailed are: Maria Wood, (25, maidservant); Mary Crook (10, agricultural apprentice); William Addicott (20, manservant); John Arters (25, manservant); William Tucker (15, agricultural apprentice) and Thomas Thorne (15, agricultural apprentice).

4.15. By the Census of 1851, William Elworthy (55) was a tenant farming 150 acres, with an additional 30 acres of moorland, and was employing 6 labourers. His son William was then aged 22. However, his wife, Elizabeth, was deceased. The return also details: Elizabeth Gardner (26) as a housekeeper; Elizabeth Stornlake (17) servant; and Henry Lewis (46), also a servant.

- 4.16. By 1861, William Elworthy (senior) was also deceased. His son William (31) appears to have taken over the tenancy, and was farming 160 acres and employing 4 labourers and “2 boys”. Elizabeth Gardner (34) remains as the housekeeper. Susan Eakens (16) was a dairywoman, while William Hole (22) and Henry Fisher (19) were listed as carters. Henry Bodley (13) is listed as a servant.
- 4.17. The Census of 1871 shows William Elworthy as a tenant farmer of 200 acres, and employing 3 labourers and 2 boys. Elizabeth Gardner remains as the housekeeper, while Roger Davey (20), Charles Davey (17) and Henry Tomkins (11) are all listed as servants.
- 4.18. This position remains the same at the 1881 Census. William Elworthy was still the tenant farming 200 acres, and Elizabeth Gardner retains her status as housekeeper. Her sister Fanny (45) is also listed, as are: Peter Davey (33); George Roberts (18); Richard Addicott (12) and Mary Hammond (17), listed as farm or general servants.
- 4.19. By 1891, Elizabeth Gardner (now aged 66) has taken over the farm tenancy. Living at Westcott were: her widowed sister Jane Bodley (69), described “as living on her own means”; her daughter Elizabeth (30), general servant; Roger Davey (24) Farm Bailiff; and William Mildon (17) farm servant.
- 4.20. The 1901 census details the occupant at Westcott as William Blackford (37, farmer) with his wife Ann (39) and four children; his mother-in-law Jane Cole (64) and Charles Cockrain (22, servant).
- 4.21. These census returns show that between 1851 and 1881 William Elworthy and his son, managed to expand their land holdings, which testifies to their commercial success as tenant farmers. However, it is unfortunate that these details are absent from 1891 onwards.
- 4.22. From the various Kelly’s Directories held in the Devon Record Office, the farm occupants at Westcott are listed as William Blackford, farmer in 1910 and 1923, and as Frederick Elias Blackford, farmer in 1930 and 1939.
- 4.23. The Listed Buildings Record of the National Monuments Record (NMR) of English Heritage details two records for Westcott Farmhouse with byre and linhay to the east, and the byre and linhay to the south, both of which are Grade II listed.

### **Map Regression**

- 4.24. A search of the map and plan card index and the main documentary card indices of the Devon Record Office were undertaken for the parishes of Witheridge, Thelbridge and Washford Pyne. The earliest map consulted for this study was an estate map of Witheridge of 1769 (archive ref. 211M/P3). However, this map only features part of this parish, mainly around the village of Witheridge, and does not cover the southern and detached portion of the parish, that covers Westcott.
- 4.25. Westcott was not located on the tithe maps for the parishes of either Washford Pyne nor Thelbridge, but was situated on a southern detached portion of the tithe map for the parish of Witheridge of 1842 (tithe map. No. 4). Both a tracing and digital photographs were taken of this map, of which a digital image is reproduced below (**Figure 2**).



**Figure 2.** Extract from the tithe map for the parish of Witheridge of 1842

- 4.26. This map shows Westcott Farmstead at the western end (in red) of the north range of buildings, with the byre, linhay and store to the east respectively. To the south, the south range comprises a barn, linhay and unidentified building. To the north of the north range is an orchard, with a coppice beyond to the east. The north range is separated from the south range by a lane and courtyard. At the rear of the south range are gardens, orchard and meadow. The accompanying tithe apportionment details the following field and plot names in the immediate vicinity of the Site:

Plot No.	Field Names
1988	Bere Close Mead
1994	Waste & Courtlage (Curtilage)
1995	House, Courtlage & Lane
1996	Back Orchard
1997	Hayes Meadow
1998	Broom Coppice
2002-2005	Plot nr Courtlage
2006	Park Meadow
2007	Garden
2008	Park Orchard
2009	Lower Bottom
2011	East Hill

**Table 2.** Extract from the Tithe Map Apportionment

- 4.27. The majority of the field names detailed in the tithe apportionment for the enclosures in the immediate vicinity of Westcott (**Table 2**) refer to contemporary land use such as “Coppice”; “Orchard”; “Garden” and “Meadow” or “Mead”. These denote a variety of agricultural land use from managed woodland to pastoral farming activity or have a highly localised topographical derivation such as “Lower Bottom” and “East Hill” etc. (Field 1998).
- 4.28. A copy of the First Edition 25” – 1 mile scale Ordnance Survey map of 1889 was obtained from the Westcountry Studies Library (**Figure 3**). This map shows the north and south ranges of buildings very much as they were in 1842. The lane, which formerly extended to the south-east and beyond both ranges, has now been enclosed and planted with trees. The orchard to the north of the northern range has been subdivided into two plots by the inclusion of a north-south orientated field boundary. The coppice to the north-east has similarly been divided into a number of smaller plots with a reduction in the size of the coppice to the north.
- 4.29. A copy of the Second Edition 25” – 1 mile scale Ordnance Survey map of 1905 was also obtained from the Westcountry Studies Library (**Figure 4**). By 1905, there was virtually no change to the Site and its immediate environs.
- 4.30. The Westcountry Studies Library also held copies of the 1:10,560 scale O.S. map of 1963, the 1:10,000 scale O.S. map of 1972, and the 1:2,500 scale O.S map of 1971 (not illustrated). The larger scale O.S. maps of 1963 and 1972 show the two ranges, but only in outline, and in not so much detail as the 1:2,500 map of 1971. The 1971 map shows no change to either range since 1905, and no change to the immediate environs of the Site.

Date	Title
1769	“A Map of Plan of the several messuages Lands & Tenements of an belonging to the Revd Mr Henry Hawkins Tremayne in the Parish of Witheridge and County of Devon Taken in 1769 by Wm Hole & Thos Call. Scale 1” – 3.6 chains. 211M/P3
1842	Tithe map & apportionment for the parish of Witheridge, southern portion (no. 4). No scale.
1889	First Edition 25” – 1 mile scale Ordnance Survey map. Sheet No. Devon 44.5.
1905	Second Edition 25” – 1 mile scale Ordnance Survey map. Sheet No. Devon 44.5.
1963	Ordnance Survey map, scale 1:10,560. Sheet No. SS 81 SW.
1972	Ordnance Survey map, scale 1:10,000. Sheet No. SS 81 SW.
1971	Ordnance Survey map, scale 1:2,500. Sheet No. SS 8011-8111.

**Table 3.** Maps used in this Study

- 4.31. There are no records of any previous systematic archaeological investigations on the development site.

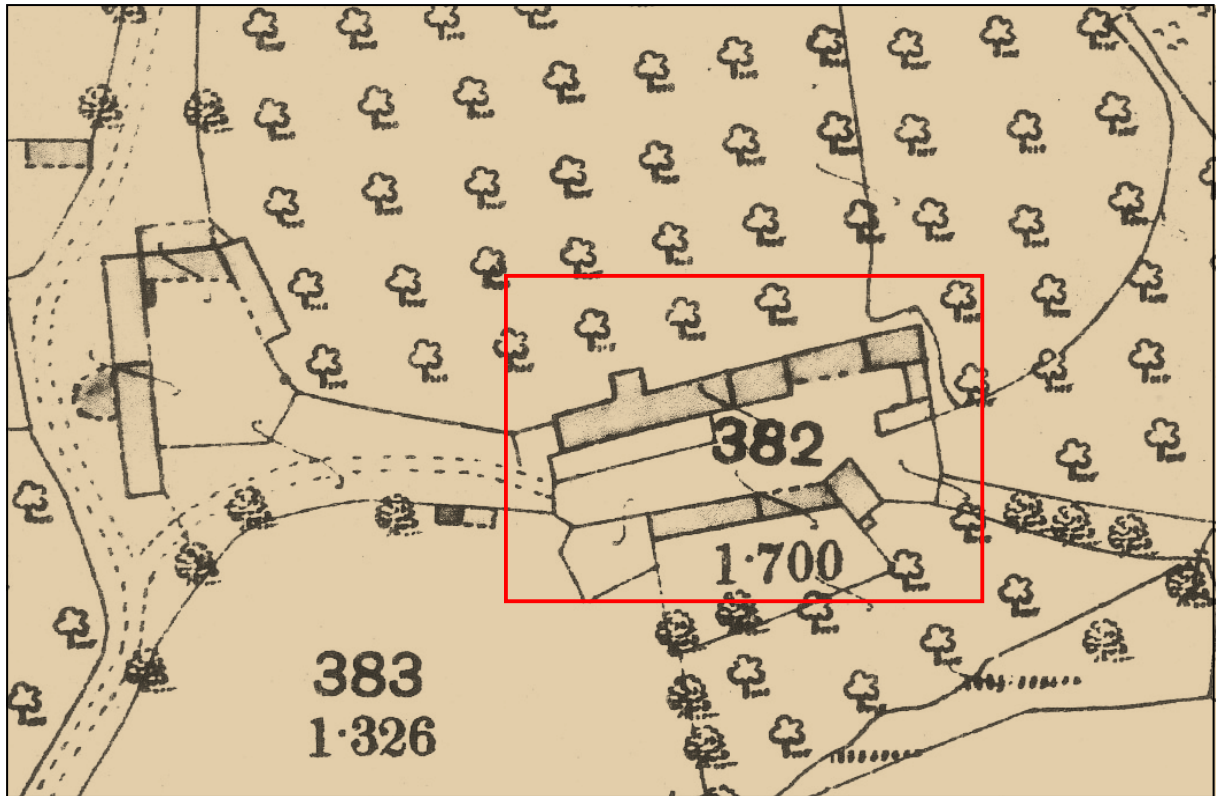


Figure 3. Extract from the First Edition O.S. map of 1889

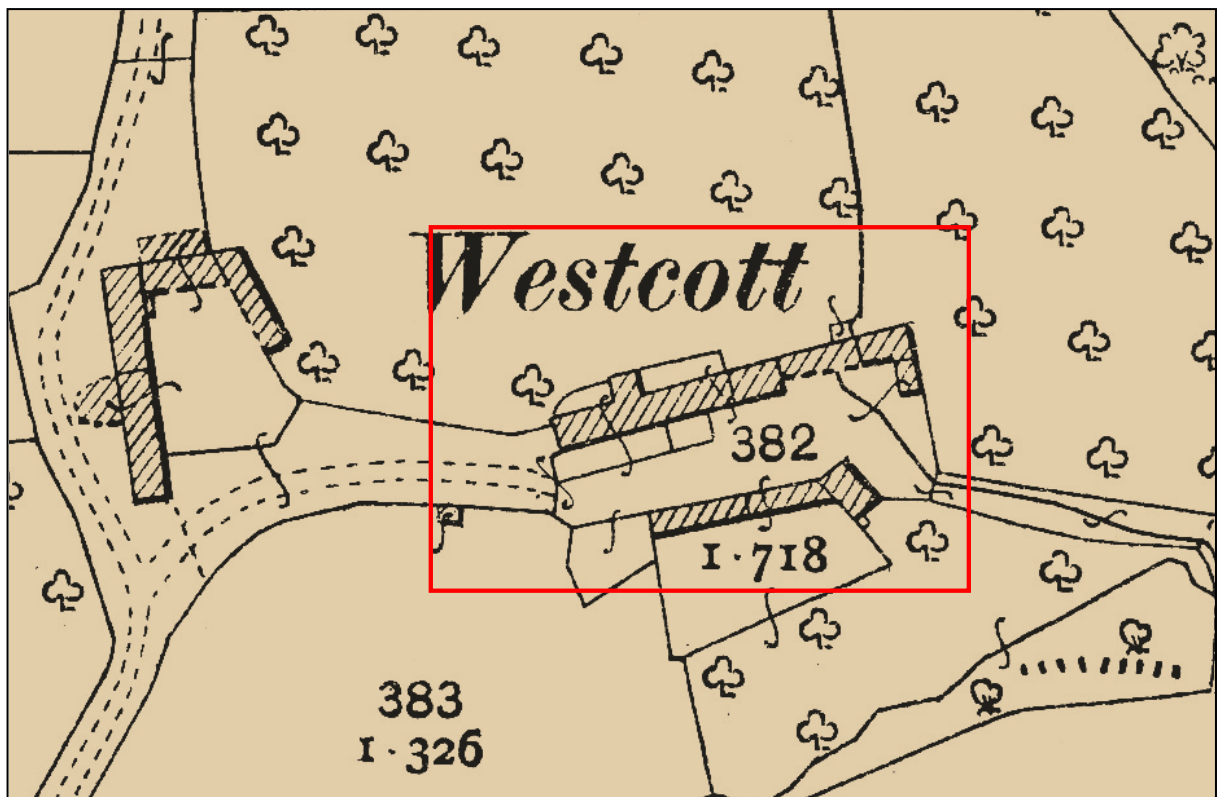


Figure 4. Extract from the Second Edition 25" - 1 mile scale O.S. map of 1905

## 5. Methodology

- 5.1. The survey was broadly carried out to Level 1 as set out in *Understanding Historic Buildings – A guide to good recording practice* (English Heritage, 2006). This states:

*“Level 1 is essentially a basic visual record, supplemented by the minimum of information needed to identify the building’s location, age and type. This is the simplest record, not normally an end in itself but contributing to a wider aim. Typically it will be undertaken when the objective is to gather basic information about a large number of buildings – for statistical sampling, for area assessments or historic landscape characterisation, for a pilot project, to identify buildings for planning purposes, or wherever resources are limited and much ground has to be covered in a short time. It may also serve to identify buildings requiring more detailed attention at a later date.*

*Level 1 drawings will generally be of exteriors only, although they may include superficial interior inspection for significant features. Only if circumstances and objectives allow will any drawings be produced, and these are likely to take the form of sketches.”*

- 5.2. COAS adhered to the *Code of Conduct* of the IFA and the *Code of Approved Practice for the Regulation of Contractual Arrangements in Field Archaeology* (IFA) during the course of the archaeological building survey. The fieldwork methodology is summarised below.
- 5.3. A survey of the standing structures was undertaken by COAS buildings archaeologist, Dr. Cheryl Allum. A written account of the structure included the Site location, plan, form, function, age, development sequence and relationship to its setting.
- 5.4. A digital photographic record was undertaken of the interior and exterior, including features of historic and architectural significance.
- 5.5. Plans provided by the architect were used as a basis for the recording of the development of the buildings.

## 6. Results

**General description** (see **Figure 5** for phased plan).

- 6.1. The north range of Westcott Barton consists of a central farmhouse with byre and hayloft to the east, with later extension to the west (**Plate 1**), and a small dairy on the northern side of the farmhouse (**Plate 2**). At the eastern end of the range is a linhay barn, a small lean-to building between the byre and linhay, and a small outbuilding at right-angles to the eastern end of the linhay (**Plate 3**). The south range is on the opposite side of a metalled lane, 15m to the south, and consists of a byre and hayloft at the west end, with attached linhay to the east, and a further building at an angle to the west end (**Plate 4**).
- 6.2. The fabric of the buildings predominantly consists of low rubble walls (up to c. 1.2m high) with cob walling above, although recent removal of render from the western extension and the ground floor of the central building has revealed that most of the south and west wall are faced in rubble. A late 19<sup>th</sup> century photograph of the farmhouse (**Plate 5**) reveals that the west wall above the western lean-to (now demolished) consisted of cob, whilst the south wall was rendered. The stone used for the rubble walls is a local Pennant sandstone with abundant mica fragments. The west wing of the farmhouse and the central residential range has been

recently re-roofed in slate; however the building was originally thatched (**Plate 5**). The roofs of the other buildings are covered with corrugated iron sheets.

- 6.3. There are four rubble stack chimneys serving the farmhouse, three of which are topped with 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century brick, whilst that at the eastern end of the hall is of rubble (**Plate 2**).

### **The northern range**

#### *Farmhouse exterior*

- 6.4. At the western end of the southern elevation (where the original farmhouse meets the later western extension), the render curves around at first floor level where the wall once met the thatched roof (**Plate 1**). The first floor is still rendered, however much of it has been removed from the ground floor, revealing an area of cob walling above the level of the French doors (**Plate 1**). Otherwise, with the exception of an area of rubble walling below the cob, the ground floor of the south elevation has undergone repair and re-facing in rubble, which obscures the location of any earlier openings.
- 6.5. The roof and floor level step down to the service end (modern kitchen) and byre with hayloft (**Plate 6**). The south elevation consists of a low rubble wall with rendered cob above, with a window blocking the west doorway, an east stable doorway into the byre and a loading hatch for the hayloft above and to the right. The elevation has been extended to the east by the addition of a lean-to. The eastern gable of the hayloft is visible above the roofs of the lean-to and the linhay barn, and is constructed of exposed cob. A small ventilation slit is centrally placed (**Plate 7**), and the end of the circular ridge pole protrudes.
- 6.6. At the eastern end of the north elevation is a narrow blocked rectangular opening with lintel above, a small blocked rectangular opening to the west of the modern window (**Plate 8**), and a blocked 1.28m wide rectangular opening in the approximate location of the well within the kitchen (**Plate 9**). None of these openings cut through the low rubble wall, but are visible as rubble blockings within the cob. The service end of the central farmhouse is slightly offset from the location of the original cross-passage (see **Figure 5**). At the northern end of the cross-passage are two semi-circular chimneys associated with the bread oven and smoking chamber (see **Figure 5**). The north wall of the hall has undergone extensive remedial work to the cob, probably associated with the later construction of the stair turret (**Plate 10**). The square rectangular dairy building (**Plate 4**) was added later than the stairwell, as it abutts the stonework, and the cob is at a different level.
- 6.7. To the west of the original farmhouse building is the western extension. The north elevation is constructed of a higher rubble wall than seen in the earlier building, with cob above, and the eaves level has been raised by several courses (**Plate 2**). The gable end has been extensively refaced probably as part of late 19<sup>th</sup> century re-modelling (**Plate 11**), including major alterations to the chimney stack and removal of the western lean-to seen on a late 19<sup>th</sup> century photograph (**Plate 5**). The northern part of the west wall appears to be original, with the rounded north-west quoin contrasting to the square south-west quoin (**Plate 11**). The southern elevation has also undergone radical alterations. Comparisons between the late 19<sup>th</sup> century photograph and the modern elevation reveal that the original central doorway has been blocked, and at first floor level the two bedroom windows have been added, whilst a small window has been inserted into a blocked central window (**Plate 12**). The height of the eaves has also clearly been raised, although this is obscured by the presence of render.





**Plate 1.** The north range from the south-west consisting of central farmhouse with byre and hayloft to the right, later extension to the left, and linhay barn to the right with outbuildings



**Plate 2.** North range from the north-west, with central farmhouse to the left, dairy to the north, and later extension to the right



**Plate 3.** Linhay barn of the north range from the south south-west, with small outbuilding to the left in front of the western bay, and outbuilding at right angles from the eastern bay



**Plate 4.** South range from the north-east, with byre and hayloft to the right, linhay to the left, and outbuilding at an angle to the linhay



**Plate 5.** Late 19<sup>th</sup> century photograph of Westcott Barton farmhouse from the south-west, showing central farmhouse and extension to the left with lean-to. The family in the foreground are probably the Blackford family.



**Plate 6.** North range from the south-east



**Plate 7.** Eastern gable of hayloft, constructed of cob with ventilation slit in centre



**Plate 8.** Three rubble-filled blocked openings at eastern end of north elevation of original building, from the north-west



**Plate 9.** Rectangular blocked opening in north elevation of original building, to the left of one of the bread oven and smoking chamber chimneys



**Plate 10.** North elevation of original building, between the bread oven and smoking chamber chimneys to the left and the stair turret to the right, showing remedial work in the cob walling



**Plate 11.** Gable end of western extension, from the south-west west



**Plate 12.** Front (south) elevation of later western extension

*Farmhouse interior*

- 6.8. The eastern room of the farmhouse has a gallery protruding from the eastern wall, extending approximately halfway into the kitchen. The room is open to the roof, which is constructed of side-pegged jointed cruck trusses with trenched purlins and ridge (**Plate 13**). Although the cruck blades, purlins, ridge and wall plates survive, there are no common rafters and the ceiling is modern. There is some evidence of smoke blackening to the cruck blades around the hip joint (**Plate 14**). The gallery is supported on a massive 17<sup>th</sup> century north to south chamfered crossbeam with stops. There are regularly spaced beam slots pointing to the west (**Plate 15**). The absence of beam slots at the southern end of the supporting beam is the only remaining evidence for the stairway that gave access to the gallery. At ground level, the solid eastern wall of the kitchen has a blocked recess with timber lintel offset from the centre of the room. However, at first floor level there is a partition wall between the gallery and the hayloft. There is a well in the north-west corner of the kitchen, although close inspection was not possible. The western wall of the kitchen (between the service end and the cross-passage) is solid, although it thickens below the purlins (**Plate 16**), and again at first floor level. The doorway in the west wall of the kitchen gives access to the cross-passage.
- 6.9. The c. 2.26m wide north-south cross-passage survives, although the south doorway is blocked by a window (obscured by render), and the northern entrance is blocked by the insertion of a brick oven and smoking chamber (**Plate 17**). Although most of the original fabric of the cross-passage is concealed behind modern studwork, a section of the eastern wall reveals whitewashed rubble to 1.8m (**Plate 17**) with whitewashed cob above. The only part of the west partition wall exposed consists of horizontal timber cladding to 1m above ground level. A doorway in the west wall gives access to the hall.
- 6.10. The hall has an external south doorway and a south facing window, a chamfered crossbeam with stops, further first floor beams and a large stone rubble fireplace with chamfered oak lintel in the north-east corner (**Plate 18**). At the western end of the north wall is an opening leading to a circular stairway providing access to the first floor (**Plate 19**). At the northern end of the west wall are two doorways (**Plate 19**); the northern doorway leads into a lobby, with a further door (in the north wall) leading into the dairy; the southern doorway gives access to the inner room. The rendered solid wall between the hall and the inner room is 0.55m thick.
- 6.11. A substantial east to west beam extends across the centre of the inner room, supporting the first floor, with two vertical beam-slots indicating that this timber has been re-used from elsewhere (**Plate 20**). The floor is cobbled; there is a doorway and modern French doors in the south wall, a fireplace in the west wall and an opening at the northern end of the west wall leading into the western wing of the house.
- 6.12. A passageway against the northern wall of the west wing provides access to a south facing room, a wide stairway to the south and a large lounge at the western end of the house. A substantial north-south crossbeam extends across the centre of the latter, and is supported by a re-used horizontally placed cruck blade in the north wall (**Plate 21**).
- 6.13. Upstairs are two bedrooms in the western extension, with the junction of two A-frame rafters and wall plates visible in their walls (**Plate 22**). A doorway in the eastern bedroom provides access into a bathroom, located in the original part of the house (above the inner room).

- 6.14. The bathroom above the original inner room is open to the side-pegged jointed cruck roof trusses, identical to those above the kitchen except that there are common rafters present (**Plate 23**). The curved King Post, which formed the western end of the original house, is also visible supporting the ridge pole (**Plate 24**). All the timbers are heavily smoke blackened. The height of the external walls has been raised, creating extra space between the purlins and the eaves. A doorway gives access to a small landing at the top of the circular stairwell which leads downstairs to the hall.
- 6.15. From the landing is a doorway to the south leading into a south-facing bedroom, with a blocked doorway in the east wall, and an east to west crossbeam across the ceiling. The eastern hallway door leads into a bedroom with a bathroom beyond. The lime rendered solid west wall is 0.38m thick and is located directly above the thick solid ground floor wall between the hall and inner room. The bedroom is open to the roof, once again of side-pegged jointed cruck construction (**Plate 25**). An additional horizontal beam and two short vertical timbers have been inserted into the west facing wall, along with some simple decoration using triangular stakes (**Plate 26**). Of particular interest is the presence of two lapped vertical timbers supporting the ridge pole against the east facing wall (**Plate 27 & 28**). These timbers are heavily smoke blackened, along with the rest of the roof trusses. There is a blocked doorway adjacent to these supports, which would have led into the adjacent chamber (**Plate 27**). The raising of the eaves has created extra space between the purlins and eaves, as seen in the adjacent bedroom and western bathroom as described above (**Plate 29**).

#### *Byre and hayloft interior*

- 6.16. The byre and hayloft is constructed of a rubble wall to 1.2m height and cob above, with a doorway and a loading hatch for the hayloft in the south elevation, and a splayed window in the north elevation (**Figure 5**). The original first floor is still intact with a massive 0.38m square north-south timber beam with chamfered corners, which is probably 17<sup>th</sup> century in date. The floor joists clearly extend into the solid cob wall between the byre and the kitchen to the west, and the floor boards rest on top of the cob wall, which ceases at this level. There is a 1.28m wide blocked opening with a timber lintel offset to the north of the centre of the west wall (between the byre and the kitchen). Access to the hayloft was not possible; however, there appears to be a framed division between the hayloft and kitchen.

#### *Linhay barn and attached buildings*

- 6.17. The linhay barn is attached to the eastern end of the byre and hayloft (**Figure 5**). The south side of the linhay is open-fronted and of seven bays, although the western bay is obscured by a later lean-to structure attached to the byre, and the two eastern bays have been infilled to create stabling (**Plate 3**). The roof is supported on massive oak posts resting on stone pads, and crossbeams at first floor height supporting a hayloft. The A-frame roof trusses have pegged lap-jointed collars (see **Plate 30**).
- 6.18. At the eastern end is a narrow lean-to, which extends towards the south at right angles to the linhay (**Plate 3**). The eastern cob and rubble wall of the linhay has been partially demolished in order to create access to the eastern building. The north wall of the linhay is of solid rubble and cob walling, although a small circular rubble infill is present in the north wall towards the east.



**Plate 13.** Partition between the gallery and the hayloft, from the west



**Plate 14.** Cruck hip with pegs and protruding wall plate in the north-east corner of the gallery



**Plate 15.** View from gallery looking down into the kitchen, from the east. Note the beam slots in the crossbeam pointing towards the west



**Plate 16.** Wall between the service end and the cross-passage, from the east. Note the change in the depth of the render above the purlins



**Plate 17.** Bread oven and smoking chamber at the northern end of the cross-passage, with part of the original rubble wall to the right



**Plate 18.** Fireplace and crossbeams within the hall from the west



**Plate 19.** Spiral staircase and doorways leading to lobby and inner room, in the north-west corner of the hall, from the south-east



**Plate 20.** Two vertical beam slots within the east to west crossbeam in the inner room, from the north-west



**Plate 21.** Re-used cruck blade supporting the crossbeam in the lounge of the western extension, from the south



**Plate 22.** Junction of A-frame rafter and wall plate visible in the northern wall of the eastern bedroom within the western extension



**Plate 23.** The side-pegged jointed cruck roof trusses within the bathroom (above the inner room), from the north



**Plate 24.** The curved King Post supporting the ridge pole of the roof above the bathroom (above the inner room), from the north



**Plate 25.** Roof of side-pegged jointed cruck construction in the main bedroom above the hall, from the west



**Plate 26.** West facing wall of main bedroom above hall, from the south-west



**Plate 27.** East facing wall of the main bedroom showing two lapped vertical timbers supporting the ridge pole, and a blocked doorway, from the south-east



**Plate 28.** Close-up of two lapped vertical timbers supporting the ridge pole in the east facing wall of the main bedroom, from the south-east



**Plate 29.** The main bedroom above the hall from the north-west, showing the extra room created between the original eaves and purlins after the eaves were raised



**Plate 30.** The linhay barn hayloft and roof of the northern range, from the south-east, showing the A-frame roof with pegged lap-jointed collars



**Plate 31.** The western bays of the byre of the southern range, from the north



**Plate 32.** A-frame truss roof with pegged lap-jointed collars within the byre of the southern range, from the north-east



**Plate 33.** Close-up of a the ridge element of the A-frame truss roof with pegged lap-jointed collars within the byre of the southern range



**Plate 34.** Original crossbeam of southern byre with joist slots, below new crossbeam supporting hayloft floor, from the north-east



**Plate 35.** Rear of southern linhay and byre, with angled building in the foreground, from the south-east



**Plate 36.** Interior of angled building at east end of southern linhay showing joist holes in cob wall, and rubble wall on the right, from the north-west

**South range*****Byre and hayloft***

- 6.19. The original west wall of the byre and hayloft consists of a low rubble wall with cob above, whilst the rear (south) wall has been entirely re-built in modern brick. The eastern bays of the byre have been infilled with rubble and horizontal timber boarding above, although the timber uprights are still exposed (**Plate 31**). To the east is a wide doorway with large timber lintel above, a door with wrought iron strap hinges, and a small window to the right with a loading hatch above to the hayloft. Internally, the roof is an A-frame truss roof with pegged lap-jointed collars (**Plate 32**). However, the roof differs slightly to the linhay barn of the north range, as the principal rafters support two ridge poles as opposed to one (**Plate 33**). There are four timber partitions creating the stalls. The first floor was supported on massive timber crossbeams, however new crossbeams have been inserted above to support the joists (**Plate 34**).
- 6.20. The partition between the byre and the linhay to the east is constructed of lathes infilled with cob, and later vertical weatherboard cladding above. The ends of sawn off timber joists protrude from the cob at first floor level, possibly extending through from the linhay.

***Linhay and eastern building***

- 6.21. The south wall of the 4-bay linhay barn is constructed of low rubble with cob above (**Plate 35**). The north side of the linhay is open to the roof, which is supported on massive timber posts resting on stone pads which also support the crossbeams for the hayloft (**Plate 4**). The roof is of the same A-frame with pegged lap-jointed collars as described for the byre.
- 6.22. At the eastern end of the linhay is a further large rectangular building set at an angle to the linhay, and orientated north-west to south-east. This building is predominantly constructed of low rubble walls with cob above, however the west wall (which replaced the rubble and cob wall of the linhay) is of rubble (**Plate 36**). The earthen floor steps down to 0.60m below the present ground level. The roof is a lean-to, although the presence of joist holes from the eastern eaves indicates that this building was once floored and the roof was higher (**Plate 37**). The eastern wall has been substantially altered.

**7. Discussion and conclusions**

- 7.1. The earliest identifiable phase within the northern range of buildings is the central part, which originated as a cross-passage house. This consisted of a hall, with an inner room to the west and a cross-passage to the east. The service end to the east of the cross-passage is probably part of the original building, conforming to the typical cross-passage houses of the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries (Child 1990, 35 and 40). The pegged jointed cruck roof of the service end is almost identical to that exposed above the first floor rooms over the hall and inner room. The only structural difference is the lack of common rafters at the service end, however these may have been removed when the ceiling was replaced, although thick thatching spars were sometimes used instead of rafters. There are indications that the service end may be slightly later, perhaps by only a few years. The northern elevation of the service end is slightly offset from the cross-passage, and there is a thick rubble and cob wall between the cross-passage and the service end, although thickening of the render at first floor level and again at purlin height, suggests that this wall may have been raised in several stages.

- 7.2. The service end and byre with hayloft are certainly contemporary as, according to the Listed Building data, the roof of the hayloft is of the same construction as the service end. Also, whilst there is a solid wall at ground floor level between the service end and byre (with a blocked doorway), at first floor level there is a framed partition indicating that the hayloft once continued uninterrupted into the service end. Indeed, the hayloft may have extended across the entire span of the kitchen as there are west facing joist slots in the service end crossbeam. In addition, the original location of the staircase in the south-west corner of the service end is indicated by the lack of joist slots at the southern end of the crossbeam.
- 7.3. The recently exposed roof trusses in the first floor rooms above the hall and inner room are heavily smoke blackened, indicating that smoke from a central hearth eddied without interruption. However, the farmhouse was most likely a partially open rather than a fully open hall, as there is a solid wall between the inner room and hall. This wall may have originally been a low partition which was raised at a later date, accounting for the smoke-blackening above. Open or partially open halls are thought to date to before c. 1550, whilst jointed cruck construction lasts until the later 17<sup>th</sup> century (*ibid.*, 40), suggesting that the central range of Westcott is 16<sup>th</sup> century.
- 7.4. From the mid 16<sup>th</sup> century it became common to insert floors and partitions into previously open or partially open halls (*ibid.*, 39), and from the early 17<sup>th</sup> century there was an increased desire to divide domestic functions into separate rooms (*ibid.*, 36). At Westcott, the inner room may have already had a first floor room, as this was not dependant upon the hearth being replaced by a chimney. However, the hall (where the hearth was located) could not have been floored until the chimney had been built. This was constructed in the north-east corner of the hall backing onto the cross-passage, with axial rubble chimney stack above the eastern end of the hall. This is an unusual location for a chimney, as they usually occur at the front of the house (*ibid.*, 40). Once the chimney was constructed, it would have been possible to insert the first floor above the hall, with the stair turret on the north side of the hall added at the same time, to provide access to the first floor. Upper chamber fireplaces occur from the late 16<sup>th</sup> century, therefore it is likely that the additional axial chimneys at either end of the farmhouse were added simultaneously, making a 17<sup>th</sup> century date most likely for these improvements. However, the construction of the brick bread oven and smoking chamber at the northern end of the cross-passage, with separate chimney on the outside wall, is thought to date to the 18<sup>th</sup> century.
- 7.5. The south range byre and linhay probably date from the 17<sup>th</sup> century, whilst the north range linhay barn attached to the east of the farmhouse, is thought to be 17<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup> century. The Listing states that the posts and hayloft beams of the northern linhay appear to be earlier than the late 18<sup>th</sup> to early 19<sup>th</sup> century A-frame roof trusses, which have pegged lap-jointed collars. As the roof of the southern barn is very similar, although with two ridge poles as opposed to one, this would suggest that the roof of this barn is also a late 18<sup>th</sup> or early 19<sup>th</sup> century replacement. Indeed, the massive oak posts resting on stone pads, and the oak crossbeams for the haylofts are certainly earlier than the roofs.
- 7.6. Also of the late 18<sup>th</sup>/ early 19<sup>th</sup> century is the western extension to the farmhouse. Map regression analysis indicates that the dairy at the rear of the hall was added between 1842 and 1889, and in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century there were further significant alterations to the farmstead. This included the raising of the eaves by several courses, which created more interior space

between the purlins and the eaves. There is also evidence for the blocking and insertion of several openings.

- 7.7. The farmbuildings have also undergone numerous alterations, additions and demolitions. These include a building at the eastern end and at right angles to the linhay; and an angled building with sunken floor and evidence for a first floor at the eastern end of the southern linhay. Both these structures are shown on the 1842 tithe map, and the latter may have been a 19<sup>th</sup> century root house, providing storage for roots for feeding cattle. Such buildings would usually be of two storeys with direct access to the cattle yard or cow sheds (*ibid.*, 70). Finally, the lean-to between the byre and linhay of the northern range post-dates 1905 as it is not shown on the O.S. map of this date.
- 7.8. The farmstead and farmbuildings at Westcott demonstrate an interesting sequence of development from the 16<sup>th</sup> century until the present day. With the exception of minor collapse and damage, the farmstead has altered very little since the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and consequently is an important example of a Devon farm with late medieval to early post-medieval origins.

## 8. Archive

- 8.1. The Site archive is currently held at the offices of Context One Archaeological Services Limited and consists of 138 digital images in .jpg format, and notes. Arrangements will be made to deposit the archive with the Royal Albert Memorial Museum and Art Gallery, Exeter, within 12 months following the submission of this report.
- 8.2. Copies of the archaeological building survey report will be deposited with:

**Woodward Smith Chartered  
Architects**  
7 Riverside Court  
Castle Street  
Barnstaple  
Devon  
EX31 1DR

**Devon County Historic Environment Service**  
Devon County Council  
County Hall  
Exeter  
Devon  
EX2 4QW

- 8.3. As part of our commitment to public archaeology, an e-report will be available to view online or download as an Adobe Acrobat™ file from the COAS website at [www.contextone.co.uk/devon.htm](http://www.contextone.co.uk/devon.htm) following entry onto the Devon Historic Environment Record where it will become a publicly accessible document.

## 9. COAS acknowledgements

- 9.1. Context One Archaeological Services Limited would like to thank Mr and Mrs Bigsby for their kind assistance throughout the course of the investigation; Mr G Edwards (Woodward Smith Chartered Architects) for permission to reproduce elevations and sections; and to staff at the Westcountry Studies Library (WSL), the Devon Record Office (DRO) at Exeter, and the National Monuments Record (NMR) at Swindon.

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