

THE ARCHAEOLOGY OF THE 19th-CENTURY
DESIGNED LANDSCAPE AT ASHLEY COMBE AND
CULBONE CHURCH, EXMOOR NATIONAL PARK
Project Report

By Hazel Riley



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OASIS PROJECT NO 306075

ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION AND DESIGNATIONS

Exmoor HER number MSO7970; MSO7973

County Somerset

District West Somerset

Parish Porlock

NGR SS 850 484

Exmoor National Park

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1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A programme of archaeological recording and survey in part of the Culbone Woodlands Estate, between Ashley Combe and Culbone in Exmoor National Park, investigated aspects of the 19th-century designed landscape associated with the (now demolished) house at Ashley Combe, built by the King family in 1799 and extended in the early 19th century. The survey has suggested that a large enclosure to the west of Ashley Combe may be an arboretum and is one of the earliest features of this designed landscape. A network of drives and paths, articulated via a series of tunnels which linked the woodlands with the house, characterised by drystone retaining walls and the presence of viewpoints, was also investigated.

2.0 INTRODUCTION

2.1 A limited programme of archaeological recording was required to inform woodland management in Yearnor Wood and Culbone Wood, part of the Culbone Woodlands Estate owned and managed by the Exmoor National Park Authority (ENPA) (ENPA 2017).

2.2 Ashley Combe and Culbone Church lie to the west of Porlock Weir, on the northern edge of Exmoor National Park, on the very steep slopes above the coastal cliffs of the Bristol Channel (Fig 1). The survey area, which lies in the parish of Porlock, was restricted to that part of Yearnor Wood owned by the Exmoor Park Authority and Culbone Wood east of Culbone Combe, centred at SS 850 484 (Fig 2).

2.3 The underlying geology of the survey area is Devonian sandstones of the Hangman Formation (bgs.ac.uk). The land rises very steeply from sea-level on the coast up to 230m OD where the enclosed land of Yearnor and Ash Farms border the woodland; Culbone Combe and Pitt Combe carry streams down to the foreshore at the west and east of the area.



Fig 1 Location map

2.4 The woodland includes chestnuts and oaks with yews and conifers, the latter two species represent survivals or descendants of the ornamental planting in the 19th century.

3.0 HISTORY AND ARCHAEOLOGY

3.1.1 Domesday records that the manor of Porlock contained 300 acres of woodland, this probably included the woods on the coastal strip. By the early 13th century, Culbone and Porlock were part of the Royal Forest of Exmoor and in the late 13th century it was recommended that Porlock with its woods and moors should be disafforested (Thorn and Thorn 1980; MacDermot 1973, 114).

3.1.2 By the end of the 18th century, the boundaries of Culbone Wood and Yearnor Wood and the enclosed farmland to the south were much the same as the present day (OS map 1804, North Molton bl.ac.uk) (Fig 3).

3.1.3 A house, known as Ashley Combe, was built by Peter King, 7th Baron King (1776-1833) in 1799. The site lies just to the west of Worthy, near Porlock Weir (SS 8570 4812), one of the manors owned by the King family, whose main residence was at Ockham Park in Surrey (Designed Landscape Survey Group 2015). The house is shown on the 1804 OS map where it is named 'Ashton Lodge' (Fig 3).

3.1.4 Peter King's eldest son, William, was born in 1805. William King entered the diplomatic service and became secretary to Lord Nugent, Lord Commissioner of the Ionian Islands. He was recalled to England in 1833 on his father's death and lived at Ockham Park. William married Augusta Ada Byron, the daughter of Lord Byron and his wife Anne Isabella Milbanke, in 1835. William King was made Earl of Lovelace in 1838, his wife became Countess of Lovelace (Ada Lovelace, mathematician and collaborator with Charles Babbage) (www.exploringsurreyspast.org.uk).

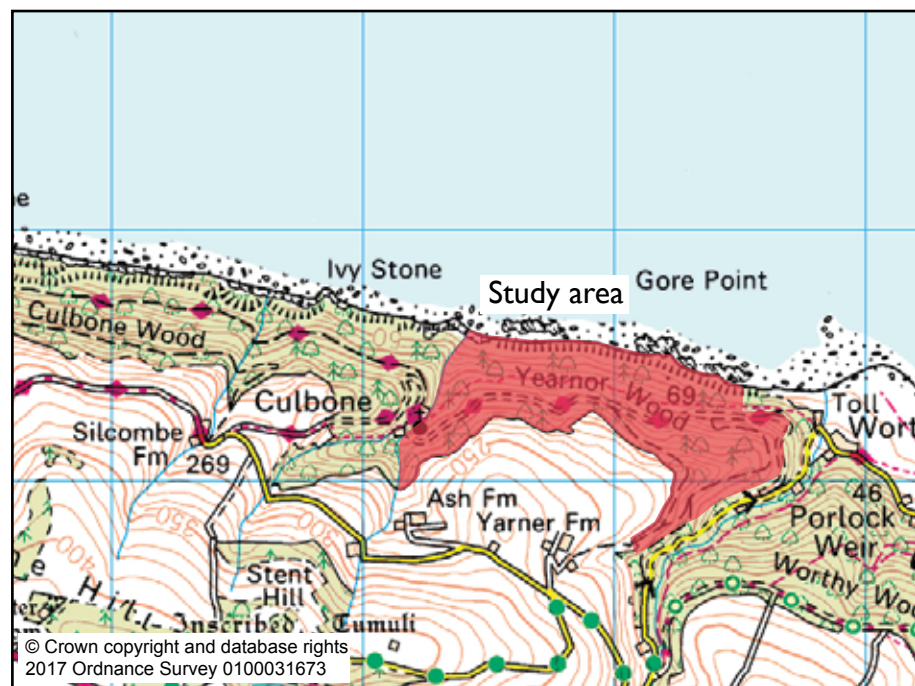


Fig 2 Survey location and topography

3.1.5 William and Ada spent their honeymoon at Ashley Combe and from 1835 to 1840 the house was extended and improved, gardens created and landscaping of the steep woodlands between Ashley Combe and Culbone Church carried out (Debois Landscape Survey Group 2015). The tithe map for Porlock (1841) shows the footprint of the house, now called 'Ashley Lodge,' a number of paths and rides to the north and south of the house, a road from Worthy to Culbone, and an irregular enclosure to the west of Ashley Lodge (Fig 4).

3.1.6 William King was appointed Lord Lieutenant of the County of Surrey in 1840 and in the same year he bought the East Horsley Estate in Surrey, with the intention of making a fit residence for someone of his new social standing. The family moved there in 1846 and the house became known as Horsley Towers. The works on the estate in Surrey included the building of 15 horseshoe shaped bridges, built of flint and bricks. This theme was echoed in the estate's Home Farm, with a similar tunnel through a range of buildings which was called the 'cow tunnel' as the livestock used it to access the fields from the farmyard (www.exploringsurreypast.org.uk).

3.1.7 Ada and William had three children between 1836 and 1839. During the 1840s Ada's name was linked various scandals involving affairs and gambling debts and in 1844 she began a relationship with John Crosse, the son of Andrew Crosse whose family home was at Fyne Court in the Quantock Hills. Ada died in 1852 and following her death William travelled abroad, returning to Horsely Towers to continue his building works on the house and estate: the Italian Tower, a highly ornate structure, was built in 1858 (www.exploringsurreypast.org.uk).

3.1.8 William King died in 1893; he was succeeded by his second son, Ralph King-Milbanke, who extended Ashley Combe and erected deer fences around the estate. Mary, the 2nd Countess Lovelace was an architect, she worked with Voysey on designs

for the Lodge (Toll House) and Worthy Manor in the late 19th and early 20th centuries (ENPA 2014, 4.12).



Fig 3 Extract from OS 1804 map (North Molton 1804 bl.ac.uk)



Fig 4 Extract from Porlock tithe map (D/D/Rt/M430 1841) (Somerset Archives and Local Studies Service, South West Heritage Trust)

3.1.9 The OS 1st edition map (surveyed 1888, published 1889) shows the extent of the designed landscape around Ashley Combe. There are two main routes to the house. The road from Porlock Weir and Worthy runs under an arch at the Lodge then turns sharply back on itself, past the garden terraces to the east front of the house. The road from Yearnor runs along a conifer-lined drive, past Yearnor Farm Cottage and enters the woods to SW of the house. The drive provides a gentle descent through the woods and turns back on itself to complete the descent through a long tunnel to the east front of the house. A third road from Porlock Weir and Worthy runs through the woods above the cliffs to Culbone Church; this is probably the route shown on both the tithe map of 1841 and the OS map of 1804 (Figs 3 and 4). Several other drives and footpaths run from the house through the woods to Culbone, the map shows that many of the drives are flanked by walls and that sharp corners are a feature on the drives. The woodland is shown on the map as a mixture of deciduous and coniferous trees (Fig 5).

3.1.10 Ashley Combe house was let to Dr Barnado's for a children's home in 1939; in 1950 it became a country club for a short time. The house fell into disrepair and was demolished in 1974 (www.minehead-online.co.uk).

3.1.11 The ENPA now own the woodland between Ashley Combe house and Culbone (part of the Culbone Woodlands Estate) which contains most of the remains of the designed landscape associated with the house.

3.2.1 The ENPA commissioned a survey of the archaeological remains in its Culbone Woodlands Estate; this included the designed landscape of Ashley Combe (McDonnell and Faxon 2002).

3.2.2 The archaeological survey recorded eight sites in the area (McDonnell and Faxon 2002, figs 3.1, 3.3). A charcoal burning platform, which presumably pre-dates the designed landscape, was located west of the Lodge (CW002). A stone wall, forming part of an enclosure which is mapped on the 1841 tithe map, was located to the west of Ashley Combe (CW001). Several terraced paths and rides, with some stone retaining walls, were located west and SW of Ashley Combe (CW003; 012) (McDonnell and Faxon 2002, fig 5.8), together with landscape planting in the form of pines and yews (CW005). Some stony mounds of uncertain function (CW035) lie in or close to the enclosure CW001 and part of the woodland boundary at the SW of Yearnor Wood was identified (CW036). The remains of a building of unknown date lies to the west of Ashley Combe (CW037). The corresponding Exmoor HER numbers are given Appendix 1.

3.2.3 A short scoping report was commissioned by the ENPA 'to explore a reading of the woods at Ashley Combe as a designed landscape with a view to incorporating this design into the future management of the woodland' (Debois Landscape Survey Group 2015, 1).

3.2.4 Subsequent field visits by R Wilson-North have noted some additional archaeological features associated with ornamental planting at viewpoints on the path between Ashley Combe and Culbone Church.

3.2.5 A detailed topographical survey of the woodland between Culbone Church and Viewpoint 2 (see Fig 6) was carried out for the ENPA in 2016 (Levett Surveying Drawing No. PLS2016EN01).

4.0 OBJECTIVES

4.1 The survey and recording work addressed three main objectives:

To record details of specific features within the designed landscape to enhance the archaeological record

To better understand the function of individual elements within the landscape

To enable future works and routine repairs within the designed landscape to be informed by the design of the original features

5.0 METHODOLOGY

5.1 Archaeological investigation and recording of three of the sites located by the 2002 survey:

CW001: an enclosure to the west of Ashley Combe formed by a stone wall and suggested to be an abandoned pasture field (McDonnell and Faxon 2002, 22-3) or William King's arboretum (Debois Landscape Survey Group 2015, 7). The enclosure was located and its location plotted using a handheld Trimble Yuma tablet with enhanced GPS (Global Positioning System). The enclosure was recorded with photographs, descriptions and measured profiles.

CW035: Stony mounds within or very close to the enclosure CW001 of unknown origin (McDonnell and Faxon 2002, 47). The site was located and its location plotted using a handheld Trimble Yuma tablet with enhanced GPS. A 1:200 earthwork survey was undertaken to record the morphology of the remains.

CW037: Building remains at the east end of Yearnor Wood recorded in the 2002 survey were not located during this survey, possibly because of landslips or because of the limitations of GPS in a woodland environment.

5.2 Analytical earthwork surveys of two viewpoints on the path between Ashley Combe and Culbone Church were undertaken at a scale of 1:200 and located by a handheld Trimble Yuma tablet with enhanced GPS.

5.3 The nature of the drives and paths was investigated and recorded using the information provided by the OS 1st edition map. Representative profiles of the retaining walls and other features were surveyed. The lower drives which have been affected by landslips were investigated and recorded where access allowed.

5.4 The tunnels lying within the survey area were located using a handheld Trimble Yuma tablet with enhanced GPS and recorded with photographs, descriptions and measured profiles.

5.5 The project archive is held at the Exmoor HER, ENPA.

6.0 RESULTS

6.1 The enclosure (CW001) is located on a long, narrow spur to the west and above Ashley Combe, centred at 285462 148055 (Fig 6). The enclosure is 206m long, 45m wide and is formed by a stone wall on the north, south and east sides; the west side is formed by the boundary of the enclosed farmland. The stone wall of the enclosure can be followed on the ground for much of the north, east and south sides; at the NW and SW sides, the vegetation and steep topography preclude access. The wall on the south side of the enclosure is a retaining, drystone wall, built of roughly coursed local stone slabs, 1.1m high. In places, a capping of horizontally laid stone slabs can be seen (Figs 7,8,9). The north side of the enclosure is also formed by a retaining drystone wall, 1m high, built on a terrace cut into the steep slope above Ashley Combe; at the SE corner the wall is ruinous and survives as a spread, stony bank, 2m wide and 0.6m high (Figs 10,11,12).

6.1.1 An entrance gap at the NE corner of the enclosure may be an original feature, although the change in the character of the stonework suggests that it has been modified. A path from this entrance descends to join Drive 1, NW of



Fig 7 (above) The retaining wall on the south side of the enclosure (1m scale) (Hazel Riley)

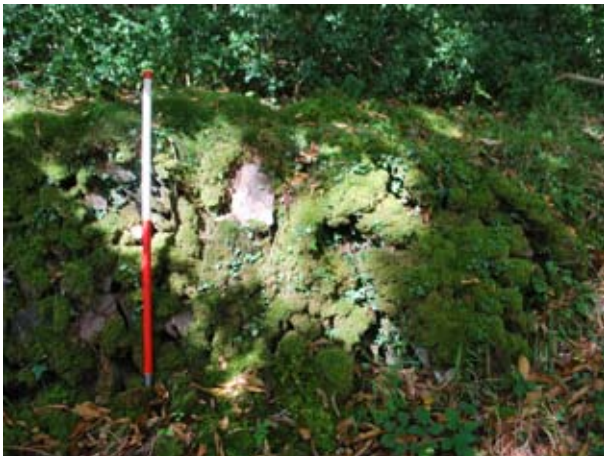


Fig 8 (left) Detail of wall on south side of enclosure (1m scale) (Hazel Riley)

Fig 9 (below left) Detail of stone capping, south side of enclosure (0.5m scale) (Hazel Riley)

Fig 10 (Below) Enclosure CW001 profiles, see Fig 6 (PR01-02) for locations

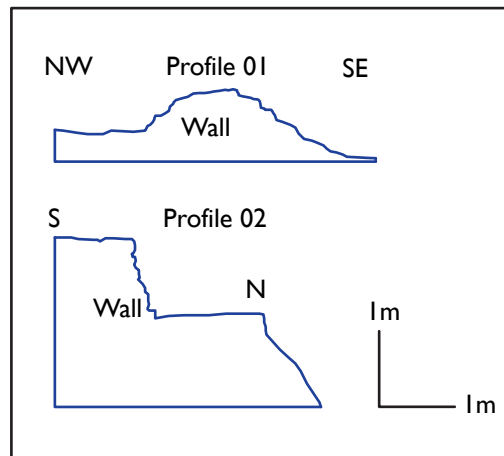




Fig 11 (above left) North side of enclosure (1m scale) (Hazel Riley)



Fig 12 (left) Wall at SE corner of the enclosure (1m scale) (Hazel Riley)

Fig 13 (top) Entrance gap at NE corner of enclosure (1m scale) Hazel Riley)

Fig 14 (below) Detail of entrance (0.5m scale) (Hazel Riley)

Fig 15 (right) Path up to enclosure with retaining wall, from Drive 1 (1m scale) (Hazel Riley)

Fig 16 (below right) Possible entrance on north side of enclosure (1m scale) (Hazel Riley)



Ashley Combe. A second path runs through the interior of the enclosure and across the eastern wall, then descends in a series of sharp bends to the house after crossing Drive 1 where it can be followed on the ground (Figs 13, 14, 15). A second entrance may lie on the north side of the enclosure at 285462, 148083, where a retaining wall runs for some 13m at right angles to the main entrance, but vegetation obscures the area (Fig 16).

6.1.2 An outcrop of rock runs along the centre of the enclosure; a quarry pit at its west end was probably the source of stone for the enclosure wall. A mound of stones may represent unused building stone, but the possibility remains that this area, within the enclosure, was utilised as part of the designed landscape (below, 8.1). The mounds identified during the 2002 survey lie at the west end of the enclosure, centred at 285317, 148039. A low mound, 4m long, 2m wide and 0.3m high lies on a platform, 14m long, 3.5m wide and 1m high. A second mound, 4.7m long, 2.8m wide and 0.8m high lies to the SE of the platform (Figs 17, 18). The function of the mounds and platform is unclear and the area is somewhat obscured by scrubby vegetation at the time of the survey. It could represent the remains of a viewpoint or structure associated with the designed landscape of Ashley Combe; OS maps dating from 1962-3 show a sub-rectangular close to this site (OS 1:10 560 map, 1962-3).



the survey. It could represent the remains of a viewpoint or structure associated with the designed landscape of Ashley Combe; OS maps dating from 1962-3 show a sub-rectangular close to this site (OS 1:10 560 map, 1962-3).

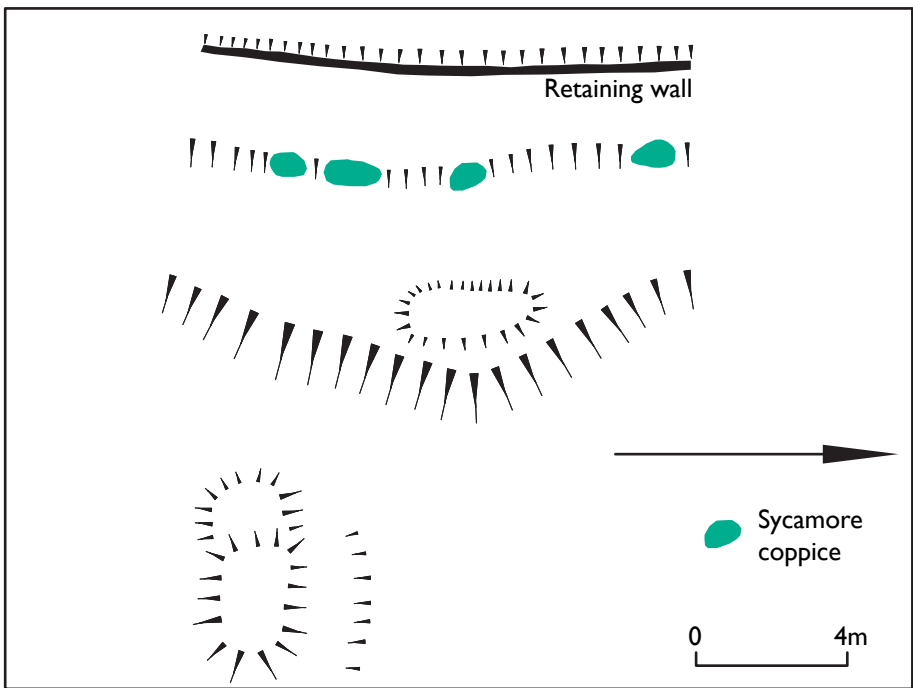


Fig 17 (left) Plan of platform and mounds CW035)

Fig 18 (above left) Detail of mound SE of platform, CW035 (1m scale) (Hazel Riley)

6.1.3 The enclosure was built before 1841 as it is shown clearly on the tithe map (Figs 4,19). The tithe map also differentiates between the composition of the woodland inside the enclosure with a mix of conifers and broad-leaved trees inside the enclosure but only broadleaved trees in the woods outside the enclosure (Fig 19). Only the south and east sides of the enclosure are shown on the 1st edition map and a drive clearly cuts through the south side of the enclosure, showing that the enclosure was not in use by the end of the 19th century. Although the OS map of 1804 is at a small scale, the enclosure is not shown suggesting that it is not an agricultural enclosure (Fig 3). The cartographic and field evidence, together with its location at a high point, combine to show that this enclosure is very likely to be the place 'above the house' where planting took place in 1835, and represents a pinetum and arboretum as suggested by John Phibbs (Debois Landscape Survey Group 2015, 7). The estate records mention planting 'many cypress in the wood above the house & some sycamore' in January 1835, and 'many pinaster Sc pine, larch and larcio &c in the wood above the house' in December 1835 (SRO 1740-1841).

6.2 Two viewpoints along the present day path from Ashley Combe to Culbone Church were surveyed.

6.2.1 Viewpoint 1 (284784,148294) lies at the junction of two drives (Fig 6), where recent felling now allows views down to the coast (Fig 20).



Fig 19 (left)
Extract from
Porlock tithe
map showing
enclosure and
Ashley Combe
(D\D\Rt\M\430
1841) (Somerset
Archives and
Local Studies
Service, South
West Heritage
Trust)



Fig 20 (top left)
Viewpoint 1
(Hazel Riley)

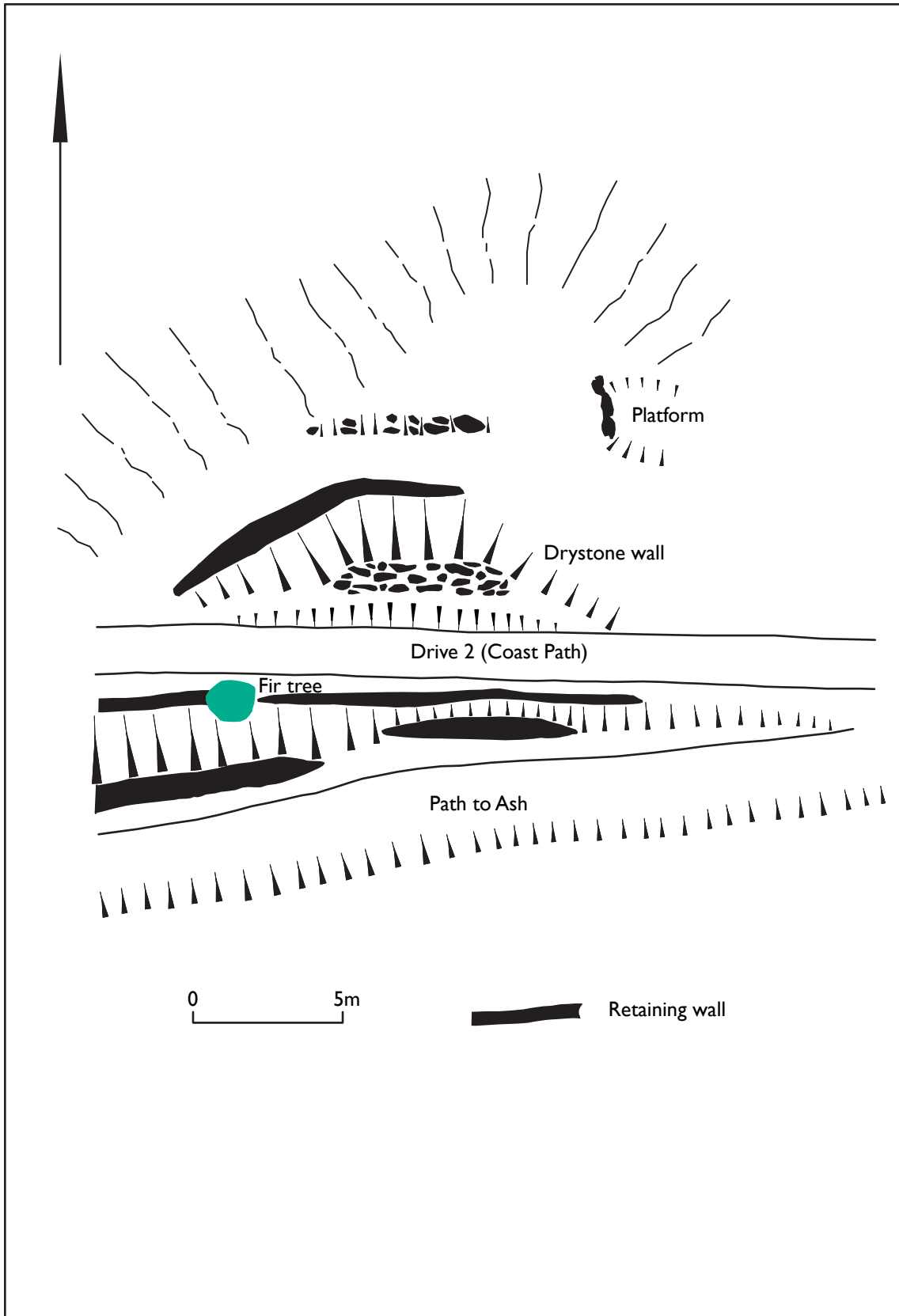


Fig 2 | Viewpoint 1 | 1:200 earthwork survey

A semi-circular flat-topped mound, 16m E/W, 4m N/S and 1m high, with a drystone retaining wall on its north side and a drystone wall on its south side, enhances a naturally occurring promontory (Figs 21,22,23). A small, sub-rectangular platform with a drystone wall at its west side on the NE side of the promontory may have been for a seat (Fig 24).

Fig 22 (below) Retaining wall on north side of platform (1m scale) (Hazel Riley)



Fig 23 (right) Drystone wall on south side of platform (1m scale) (Hazel Riley)

Fig 24 (below right) Small platform on NE of promontory (1m scale) (Hazel Riley)



6.2.2 Viewpoint 2 lies at 284481, 148346, where the drive turns sharply to the SW to make the descent into Culbone (Fig 6). A flat-topped mound, 8.2m long, 3.3m wide and up to 1.3m high, has a yew tree and a strawberry tree growing on it (Figs 25, 26). A retaining drystone wall lies on the south side of the platform. The other side of the drive has a retaining wall and the drive has the effect of being sunken below the viewpoint (below, 6.3.2) (Fig 31).

Fig 25 Viewpoint 2 with yew tree (Hazel Riley)



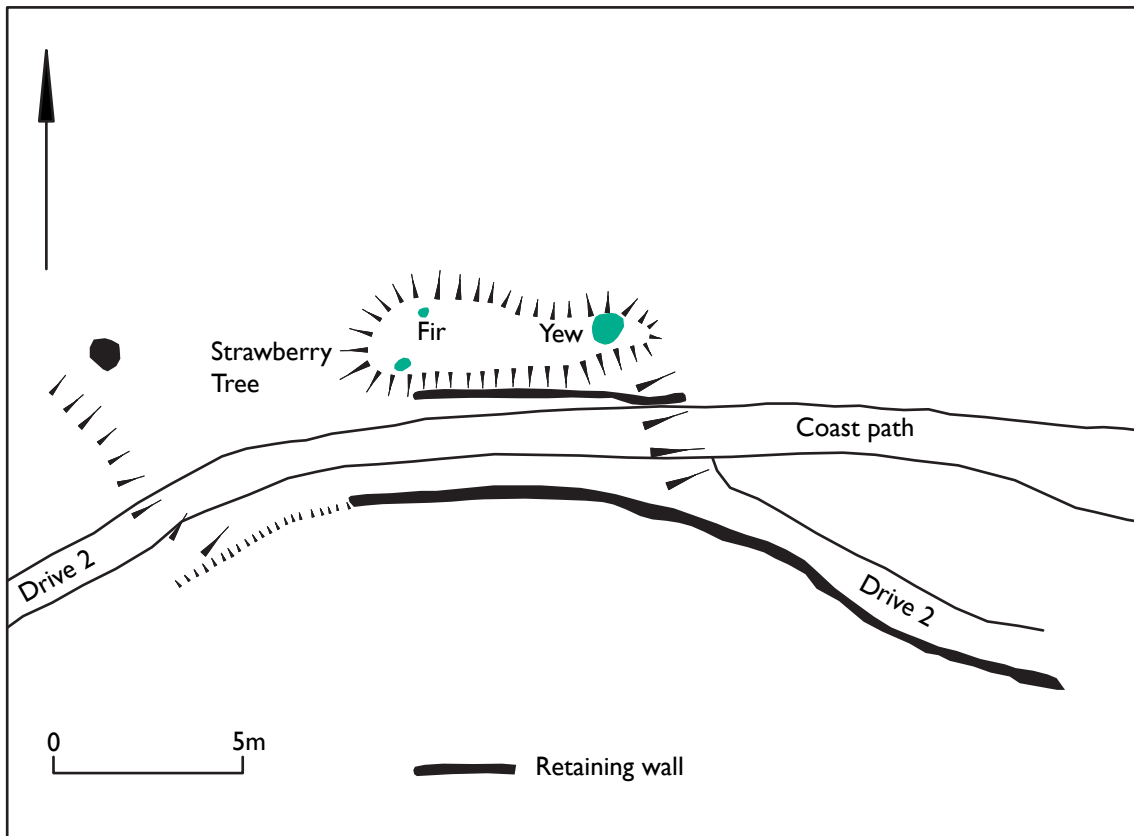


Figure 26 Viewpoint 2 1:200 earthwork survey

6.3 The carefully designed and well built drives and paths form the most extensive remains of the designed landscape associated with Ashley Combe.

6.3.1 A drive from Yearnor (Drive 1) runs through the farm and fields, then descends through the woods before turning into a tunnel to reach Ashley Combe (Fig 6). This survives in very good condition for much of its course. From Yearnor to the edge of the woods it is visible as a level, grass covered track with a retaining wall on the edge of a pasture field (Fig 27). In the woods the drive is characterised by the presence of drystone walls on both sides. A good example of this can be seen at 285630, 148054, where a path up to the enclosure CW001 crosses this drive. Here, the retaining wall on the upslope side is built at the base of a rock outcrop, it is built of small, horizontally laid stone blocks and is 1m high and 0.3m wide; the wall on the downslope side is 0.5m high, 1m wide and the level drive is 2.5m wide (Figs 28-30). To the north of this, as the drive descends towards Ashley Combe and as it approaches the junction of several paths and drives at 285597, 148166, the path is hidden to the east by a stony bank, 2.5m wide, 1.5m high and 34m long, with retaining walls on both sides (Figs 31, 32).

6.3.2 A drive from the entrance to Yearnor Wood east of Yearnor (Drive 2) runs along the boundary of the woods with the enclosed farmland to the west. It descends to run along the side of Culbone Combe and reaches Culbone Lodge west of the church where a path to Ash Farm continues under a tunnel (Figs 6, 33). This drive is characterised by the presence of retaining walls along much of its course. A good



Fig 27 (above left) Drive 1 in Yearnor Farm (Hazel Riley)

Fig 28 (above) Drive 1 west of Ashley Combe (Hazel Riley)

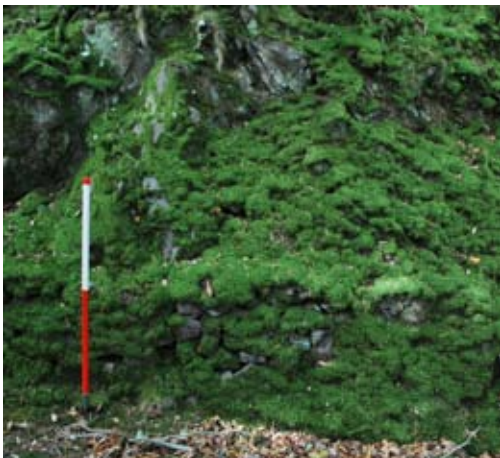


Fig 29 (left) Detail of retaining wall, Drive 1 (1m scale) (Hazel Riley)

Fig 30 (below) Detail of flanking wall, Drive 1 (1m scale) (Hazel Riley)

Fig 32 (right) Drive 1 hidden by embankment above Ashley Combe (1m scale) (Hazel Riley)



Fig 33 (below right) Bridge and tunnels at Culbone Lodge (Hazel Riley)



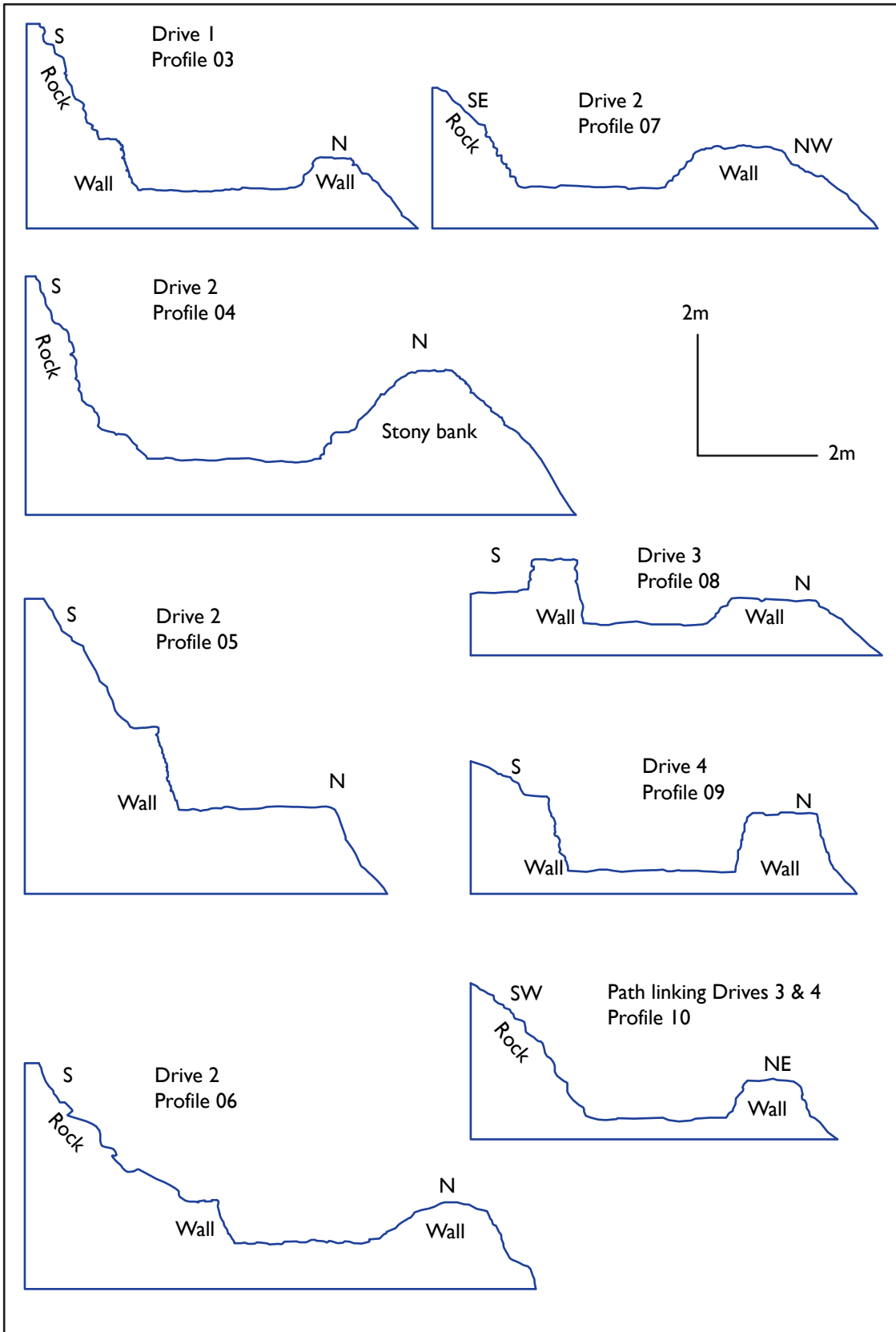


Fig 31 Profiles across Drives 1-4, see Fig 6 (PR03-10) for locations

example is at the junction of this drive with a path at 285219, 148102 (Fig 34). Here, the drystone wall, built of pitched, small stone blocks, is 1.4m high and the level drive is 2.5m wide. Before the path leaves the edge of the farmland and turns to descend through the woods, it is flanked by drystone retaining walls with bare rock outcrops on the upslope side. The presence of several yew trees on the edge of the drive here serve to emphasise this point on the drive. The upslope retaining wall is 0.8m high, the level drive is 2.5m wide and the downslope drystone wall is 2m wide and 0.7m high (Figs 35, 31). Between Viewpoint 2 and Culbone, Drive 2 is characterised by the presence of a bare rock outcrop on the upslope side, 100m long and over 3m high and the level drive is 2.4m wide. The junction of Drive 2 with a path up to Ash Farm is marked by a retaining wall 7m long and 0.6m high (Figs 36,37,31).

6.3.3 A drive from the tunnels north of Ashley Combe (Drive 3) runs through the woods above the cliffs for c 1.2km then turns up Culbone Combe to join Drive 2 at Culbone Lodge west of the church (Fig 6).



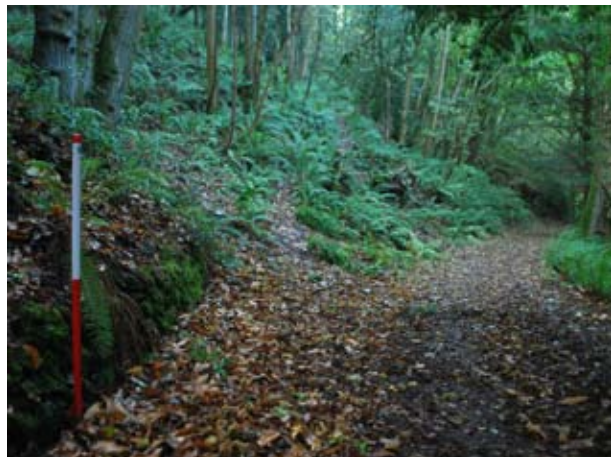
Fig 34 (above right) Junction of Drive 2 and path at edge of Yearnor Wood (Hazel Riley)

Fig 35 (right) Drive 2, flanked by drystone walls, as it turns to descend through the woods towards Culbone (Hazel Riley)



Fig 36 (below) Drive 2 as it approaches Culbone (1 m scale) (Hazel Riley)

Fig 37 (below right) Retaining wall at junction of Drive 2 with a path to Ash Farm (1 m scale) (Hazel Riley)



Much of this drive is now inaccessible due to fallen trees and landslips (Fig 38), although it can be reached fairly easily from the current coast path in two places: west of the tunnels and between Culbone and Ashley Combe. The Ordnance Survey 1st edition map (Fig 5) shows a retaining wall on the upslope side from the tunnels for some 440m. This retaining wall appears to survive in good condition where the drive survives and can be reached at 285242, 148299, just to the west of the tunnels, and at 285242, 148299, where the drive is characterised by a level path, 2m wide, with a retaining drystone wall, built of horizontally laid, small stone blocks and 1.2m high on the upslope side, and a stony bank 2.4m wide and 0.5m high on the downslope side (Figs 39, 31). Below this bank is a level, semi-circular platform, 10m E/W, 4m N/S and 0.8m high, similar to Viewpoint 1 (6.2.1).

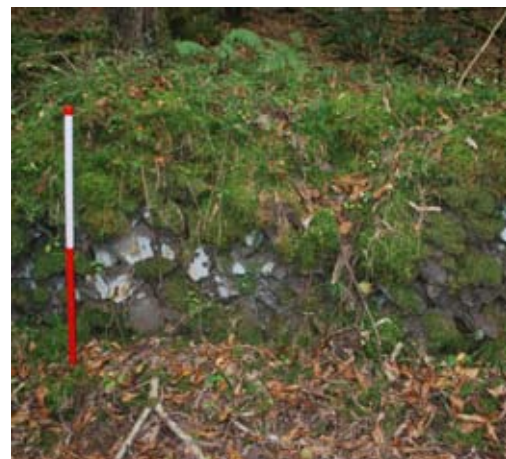
6.3.4 Drive 4 is the lowest of the drives through the woods. It runs from the north side of Ashley Combe, over Tunnel 1, then along the top of the cliffs for some 1.2km before turning to run along the side of Culbone Combe, where it crosses the stream via a bridge to run past Culbone Cottage, along the north side of the churchyard to join Drives 2 and 3 at Culbone Lodge (Fig 6). Like Drive 3, Drive 4 is also largely inaccessible due to vegetation and landslips but between 285101, 148395 and 285256, 148370 c 57m be reached (Fig 40). Here, the drive is characterised by a drystone retaining wall on the upslope side and a substantial drystone wall on the cliff side. The retaining wall, built of pitched, small stone blocks, is 1.2m high, the level path is 2.7m wide and the cliff side wall is 0.9m high and 1.2m wide (Figs 41, 31).



Fig 38 (left) Drive 3 destroyed by landslip, west of Ashley Combe (1m scale) (Hazel Riley)

Fig 39 (below) Detail of retaining wall, Drive 3 (1m scale) (Hazel Riley)

Fig 40 (below left) Drive 4 destroyed by landslip between Ashley Combe and Culbone (1m scale) (Hazel Riley)



6.3.5 Although the OS 1st edition map shows the network of drives and paths together with retaining walls in considerable detail, it is clear from field investigation that not all of the 19th-century drives and paths are mapped in the lower part of the woods. For example, at 285155, 148375 an unmapped level drive flanked by drystone walls links Drive 4 with Drive 3 and is apparently contemporary with them, and at 285101, 148395 an unmapped path leads from Drive 4 to the beach (Figs 42, 31).

6.4 Several tunnels lie to the north and NW of Ashley Combe. The boundary of the survey area runs through an important junction of drives and paths which includes two tunnels; two tunnels lie on the current coast path just to the east of the survey area and these four have been included in this survey. A long tunnel from the NW corner of Ashley Combe to Drive 4, outside the survey area, was not investigated (Fig 6).

6.4.1 Tunnel 1 lies on the path from Worthy Lodge at 285720, 148270, where it takes Drive 3 under Drive 4 (Fig 6). The approach to Tunnel 1 is flanked by two stone walls, 1.6m high and 0.3m high. The tunnel itself is 145m long, 2.5m wide with brick arches 2.5m high and a stone parapet (Fig 43).

6.4.2 Tunnel 2 lies some 6m to the west of Tunnel 1 at 285698, 148273 and is a more elaborate structure with two towers, one built into the parapet, the other built into the top of the high retaining wall. The towers have openings which take a narrow path

Fig 41 (right) Drive 4 flanked by drystone walls (Hazel Riley)



Fig 42 (below right) Unmapped path linking Drives 3 and 4 (1m scale) (Hazel Riley)

Fig 43 (below) East end of Tunnel 1 (1m scale) (Hazel Riley)



across the top of the tunnel to Drive 4 and also provide vantage points down onto Drives 3 and 4. The tunnel is 2m long, 2.5 wide and 2.5m high with a brick arch (Figs 44, 45).

6.4.3 Tunnel 3 lies to the NW of Ashley Combe at 285651, 148239, where it forms part of a complex of tunnels which take several drives and paths from the house into the woods (Figs 6, 46). The roof of the tunnel has collapsed but stonework and the lower courses of the brick arch survive at the west end to a height of 2m (Fig 47). The tunnel is blocked to the east by a concrete block wall, but it continued for a further 31m to take Drive 1 to the north side of Ashley Combe (Fig 5).

6.4.4 Tunnel 4 lies adjacent to Tunnel 3 at 285645, 148232, and provided an alternative route to the house via several steep paths to the gardens on the south of Ashley Combe. It is in a ruinous state, with only the south side remaining as a stone wall with 9.7m long and up to 1.5m high (Fig 48).

6.5 Two features which pre-date the 19th-century designed landscape at Ashley Combe were noted during the course of the survey.

6.5.1 On the north and NE side of the enclosure CW001, centred at 285428, 148086, several linear hollows, obscured by dense scrub and bramble, may be hollow ways, representing former routeways through the woods.

6.5.2 An area of shallow quarry pits and associated spoil mounds, which appears to pre-date the drives of the designed landscape, lies between Drives 2 and 3, centred at 285245, 148278 (Fig 49).

7.0 CHRONOLOGY

7.1 The chronology of the designed landscape at Ashley Combe relies on documentary research carried out by John Phibbs (Debois Landscape Survey Group 2015), the cartographic evidence from the Porlock tithe map (1841) and the OS 1st edition map (surveyed 1888; published 1889), together with field evidence noted during this survey.

7.1.1 The tithe map of 1841 shows that only a small part of the designed landscape was laid out by this time. The road from Worthy to Porlock, marked on the 1804 map, is clearly marked on the tithe map; Drive 4 appears to follow its route, perhaps indicating that this older route was the starting points for the design of the drives and paths through the woods. The enclosure CW001 to the west of Ashley Combe, here interpreted as a pinetum and arboretum and dating from 1835, is also one of the earliest features of the designed landscape (6.1.3).

7.1.2 The OS 1st edition map shows most but not all of the 19th-century drives and paths between Ashley Combe and Culbone; the tunnels are also depicted on the map. Documentary evidence suggests that the drives were laid out in the 1840s and perhaps largely completed by the early 1850s, when Lord King travelled abroad following his wife's death in 1852 (3.1.7). Only the southern part of the arboretum (enclosure CW001) is mapped, suggesting that it was not in use by the late 19th century.



Fig 44 (above left) East end of Tunnel 2 with northern tower (Hazel Riley)

Fig 45 (left) West end of Tunnel 2 with high retaining wall and southern tower (Hazel Riley)



Fig 46 (above) Tunnels 3 and 4 at the junction of several drives and paths (Hazel Riley)

Fig 47 (right) West end of Tunnel 3 (1 m scale) (Hazel Riley)



Fig 48 (below right) West end of Tunnel 4 (1 m scale) Hazel Riley

Fig 49 (below) Quarries south of Drive 3 (1 m scale) (Hazel Riley)



7.2 The uniform nature of the structure of the drives and their retaining and flanking walls, suggests that they were laid out over a relatively short period of time as part of a carefully planned landscaping scheme.

8.0 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE DESIGNED LANDSCAPE

8.1 The survey work has highlighted the possibility that the enclosure CW001 may well be the remains of an early 19th-century pinetum or arboretum, planted in 1835 (Debois Landscape Survey Group 2015, 7). Arboretums – special places for the cultivation and display of a wide variety of both deciduous and coniferous trees – developed during the late 18th and early 19th centuries. They were a combination of plantation – usually a few varieties of trees – and botanical gardening. Repton adopted the idea for his landscape gardens: at Woburn (Bedfordshire) in 1804 and at Ashridge Park, (Herefordshire) between 1813 and 1815. Arboretums and systematic tree collections became popular from the 1830s within private and public gardens, estate parks and botanical gardens. The Chatsworth arboretum, designed by the 6th Duke of Devonshire and Joseph Paxton, served as an important model and stimulus for the development of other estate arboretums. This was because Chatsworth was visited by thousands and described in Paxton’s publications and also because of the major Victorian landscape gardeners who trained under him, including Edward Kemp (1817-91) and Edward Milner (1819-94). Paxton’s pinetum and arboretums at Chatsworth were arranged botanically along curving paths with views from the slopes behind the Duke’s palace providing most of the picturesque beauty. The focus of the arboretums at Biddulph Grange (Staffordshire), Bicton (Devon), Elvaston (Derbyshire) and Westonbirt (Gloucestershire), was more on the beauty and picturesque effect of individual or grouped specimens laid out without botanical sequence. Carriage rides and viewing bays were incorporated around the Westonbirt arboretum, providing avenues so that exotic trees could be enjoyed from horse or carriage. At Eastnor (Herefordshire) there was also a carriage ride three miles long from the lodge to the castle, flanked by evergreen as well as deciduous trees and shrubs including yews, the wild service tree, *Arbutus* and many varieties of *Crataegus* (Elliot *et al* 2015, 1; 171).

8.1.2 No examples of arboretums are recorded in the Exmoor HER (search for keyword ‘arboretum’, all periods, all parishes), although Walter Halliday planted a pinetum at Glenthorne with seeds from Veitch of Exeter but no details of its form seem to be recorded (Exmoor HER MSO7777; Halliday 1995, 48). As the study by Elliot *et al* (2015) showed, the arboretums in public parks and large country estates are well documented but the survival of this small enclosure, with much of its original surrounding walls and the detailed cartographic information from the tithe map of 1841 appears to be a rare survival of such a feature on Exmoor and as such deserves further study and protection (9.1.2; 9.1.3; 9.3).

8.2 The drives and paths through the woods from Ashley Combe to Culbone, together with tunnels, viewpoints, and the use of bare rock outcrops and planting recorded by the 2015 survey, all combine to form a remarkably complete relict designed landscape dating from the mid-19th century. Documentary evidence suggests that there were few modifications to this landscape and that the structural remains which survive in the woods between Ashley Combe and Culbone are part of William King’s original design.

8.2.1 The coastal location of Ashley Combe is paralleled at the 19th-century designed landscapes at Glenthorne and Lee Abbey. At Glenthorne, the natural landscape was an important part of its setting and enhancements to it took the form of buildings and a terraced walk close to the house (Halliday 1995); at Lee Abbey a drive linked the house with the cliffs through Cuddycleave Wood but this was on a much smaller scale than the layout at Ashley Combe (Riley 2017).

8.3 The scoping report makes the point that the place is significant due to the people who lived there (Debois Landscape Survey Group 2015, 8-9). The results of this survey suggest that the surviving structures of the mid- 19th-century designed landscape are significant in their own right both within the National Park and in a wider context of designed landscapes in a coastal setting. The woods between Ashley Combe and Culbone contain a fossilised designed landscape with many references to the picturesque in its layout: the sight and sound of the sea; the romantic aspect of Culbone Church; the use of the topography, bare rock outcrops and planting to frame or hide parts of this landscape. An additional factor is that Ashley Combe was the first place where William King exercised his passion for the Italianate. After Ashley Combe he went on to re-invent East Horsley as Horsley Towers, with bridges and tunnels, an elaborate tunnel for the cows at Home Farm, and the magnificent Italian Tower by the lake at the house.

9.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

9.1 The woodlands between Ashley Combe are managed by the ENPA as part of their Culbone Woodlands Estate.

9.1.1 The drives are sometimes used for access for forestry operations. The retaining and flanking walls are an integral part of the 19th-century designed landscape and are at risk from damage by vehicles and by the accidental stacking of timber following clearance of fallen trees. For example at 285247, 147838 on Drive 1, the low flanking wall has been damaged by this process (Fig 50). Staff and contractors should be made aware of the 19th-century structures.

9.1.2 The wall of the enclosure CW001, which has been interpreted here as an early 19th-century pinetum or arboretum, is at risk from trees growing very close or on it,

Fig 50 (far right) Damage to drystone wall, Drive 1 (1m scale) (Hazel Riley)



Fig 51 (left) Chestnut growing on top of the wall of the 19th-century arboretum above Ashley Combe (Hazel Riley)



for example at 285382, 147990, where a chestnut is growing on top of the wall (Fig 51). Care should be taken if these trees are to be removed to safeguard the integrity of the structure and advice from the HE team should be sought.

9.1.3 A metric survey of the enclosure CW001 should be undertaken at an appropriate scale; this should be accompanied by a photographic record and written description.

9.1.4 Dating of trees which may be contemporary with the enclosure CW001 should be considered.

9.2 The South West Coast Path runs through the woods, mostly on the course of Drive 3; it uses Tunnels 1, 2 and 3, passes through Tunnel 4 and takes in Viewpoints 1 and 2. There is scope for the interpretation of this 19th-century designed landscape within the context of the ENPA and the South West Coast Path.

9.3 Parts of the enclosure wall have been rebuilt (compare Figs 11 and 51 with Fig 52); parts of the retaining wall on Drive 1 have been rebuilt with modifications (Fig 53). Future work on the maintenance of the 19th-century structures should be carried out under consultation with the HE team.

9.4 The designed landscape between Ashley Combe and Culbone is divorced from the house which lay at its heart. Although the house was demolished in 1974, the cartographic evidence and the remaining structures show how this landscape was articulated. A complex of drives and paths led through and over tunnels, and the presence of the sea was evident both on the lower and higher drives. Parallels for these tunnels are found in William King's East Horsley estate, but there is scope for further work on the landscape context of this articulation of routes and structures within the designed landscape.



Fig 52 (below) Recent rebuilding of the 19th-century arboretum wall (1m scale) (Hazel Riley)

Fig 53 (left) Recent modifications to the retaining wall to create a seat, Drive 1 (1m scale) (Hazel Riley)



10.0 REFERENCES

Debois Landscape Survey Group 2015 *Ashley Combe and Culbone Woods. A Scoping Report on the Landscape*

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MacDermot, E T 1973 *A History of the Forest of Exmoor*

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Thorn, C and Thorn, F 1980 *The Domesday Book: 8 Somerset*

APPENDIX I: SITE NUMBERING CONCORDANCE TABLE

| McDonnell and Faxon 2002 | Exmoor HER No |
|--------------------------|---------------|
| CW001 | MEM15533 |
| CW002 | MEM15534 |
| CW003 | MEM15535 |
| CW005 | MEM15537 |
| CW012 | MEM15544 |
| CW035 | MEM15567 |
| CW036 | MEM15568 |
| CW037 | MEM16569 |

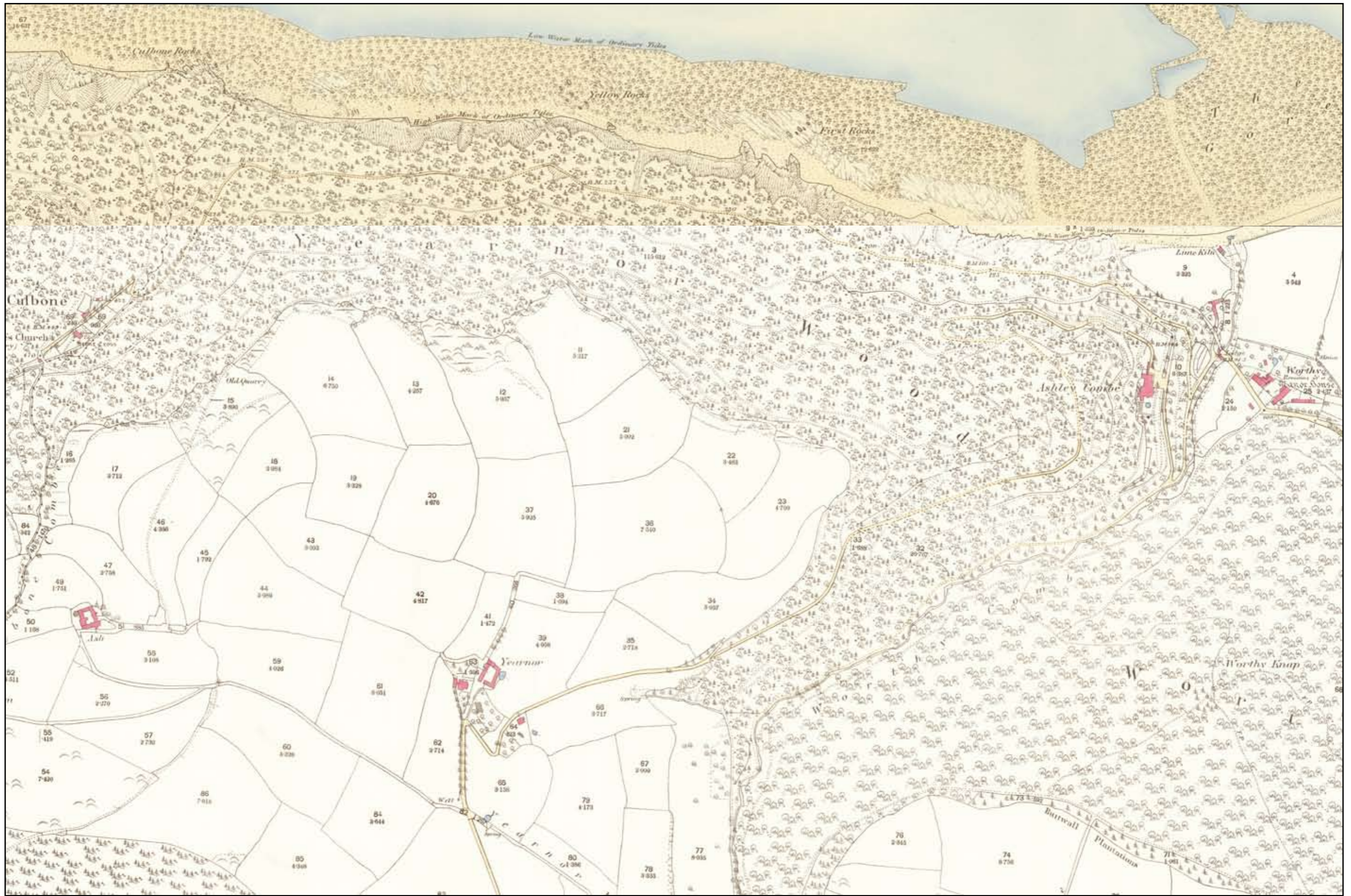


Fig 5 Extract from OS 1st edition map 25" map (reproduced with the permission of the National Library of Scotland)

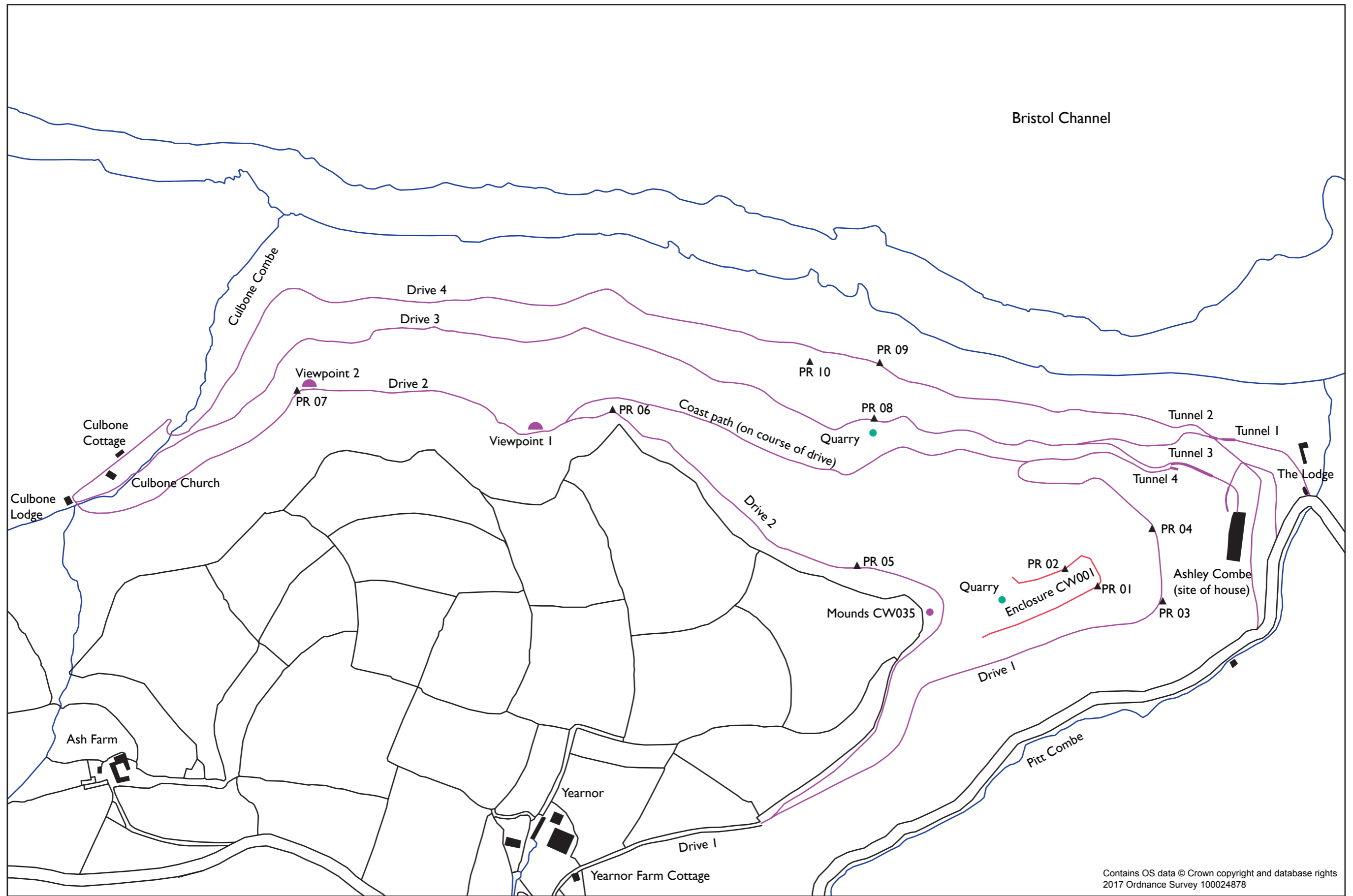


Fig 6 Map showing the location of the major aspects of the 19th-century designed landscape

