

ARCHAEOLOGICAL SURVEY AT GLENTHORNE IN
COUNTISBURY, DEVON AND OARE, SOMERSET,
EXMOOR NATIONAL PARK
The Combe SS 79947 49497 to The Towers SS 79425
49776

PROJECT REPORT

By Hazel Riley



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By Hazel Riley

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OASIS PROJECT NUMBER 421527

ABBREVIATIONS

ECP England Coast Path

ENPA Exmoor National Park Authority

ENPHER Exmoor National Park Historic Environment Record

GPS Global Positioning System

HE Historic England

HECO Historic Environment Conservation Officer

HER Historic Environment Record

OS Ordnance Survey

RCHME Royal Commission on the Historical Monuments of England

ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION AND DESIGNATIONS

HE List Entry 1212846

ENPHER MSO7777

County: Devon and Somerset

District: North Devon and West Somerset

Parish: Countisbury and Oare

NGR: SS 79947 49497 to SS 79425 49776

Exmoor National Park

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The owners kindly allowed access to the proposed route of the new England Coast Path through the Glenthorne Estate; Sue Applegate (ENPA) facilitated the fieldwork; Shirley Blaylock (ENPA) commented on the draft report, and Catherine Dove (ENPA) provided background material for the survey work. The author is grateful to George Halliday for making family photographs of Glenthorne available for study.

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Fig 1 Location map

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

An archaeological survey along part of a proposed route of the new England Coast Path through the Glenthorne Estate on Exmoor recorded a number of structures associated with the 19th-century designed landscape around Glenthorne House. These include paths and terraced walks and a small lynchay fronted by a pond.

2.0 INTRODUCTION

2.1 This report sets out the results of an archaeological survey at Glenthorne along the proposed route of the new England Coast Path (ECP). The survey was commissioned by the Historic Environment Conservation Officer (HECO) of the Exmoor National Park Authority (ENPA) in order to record, and inform future management of, the surviving features affected by the development of this part of the new ECP route (Blaylock 2021).

2.2 The Glenthorne Estate lies on a remote part of Exmoor's coast between Lynton and Porlock, north of County Gate, centred at SS 7985 4960 (Figs 1 and 2).

2.3 The geology of the survey area comprises Quaternary deposits of clay, silt, sand and gravel over Devonian sandstones of the Hangman Sandstone Formation (bgs.ac.uk).

2.4 The route utilises 19th-century estate paths and terraced walks along the north side of The Combe, to the west and NW of Home Farm. It crosses the main drive to Glenthorne House and drops down a steep combe to join the route of a 19th-century path on the west side of this combe then runs along a short stretch of the main drive to Glenthorne House to The Towers (Figs 2 and 6).

3.0 HISTORY AND ARCHAEOLOGY

3.1 The Glenthorne Estate was created in the 19th century by the Rev W S Halliday, who purchased the whole of the parish of Countisbury between 1829 and 1866 (Halliday 1995, 68). Countisbury was a Domesday Manor, held by Aelmer in 1066 and by William de Capra in 1086. The OS map of 1804 shows a landscape of small farms to the north and south of the East Lyn River, with the unenclosed common of Old Barrow

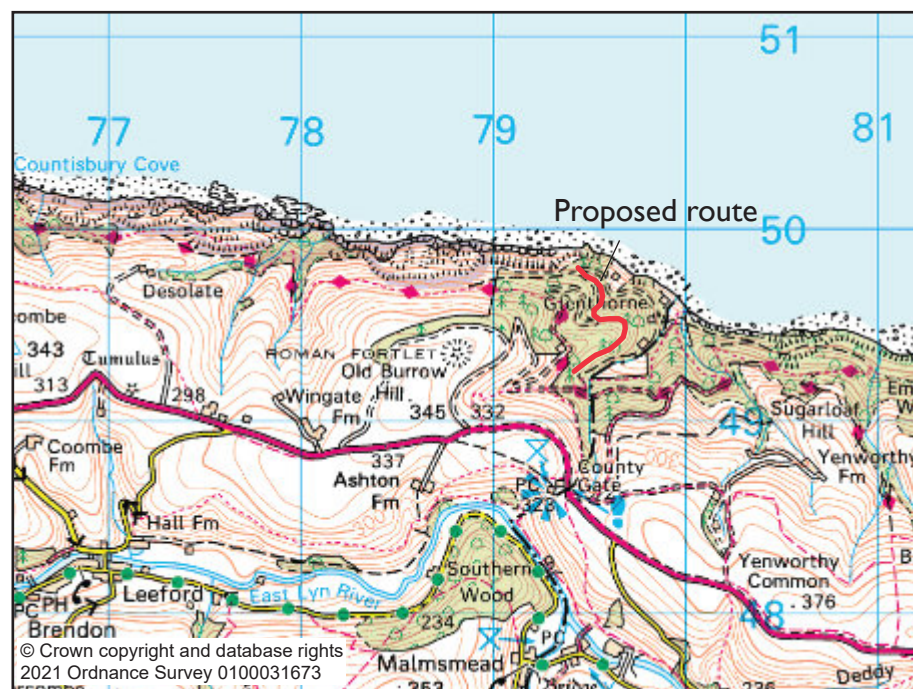


Fig 2 Survey location and topography

Down on the coast west of Coscombe Bay, and woodlands on the cliffs north of Yenworthy and Broomstreet Farms (Fig 3). Coscombe, a holding of some 94 acres, purchased by Halliday in 1829, formed the heart of the Glenthorne Estate (Chanter 1906, 166-7).

3.2 The Rev W S Halliday built a large house – Glenthorne House – on the edge of the cliffs overlooking the Bristol Channel. It was largely complete by 1831, with an extension for new kitchens and servants’ quarters built in 1839 and a library wing in 1846. A drive to the house from Windgate Farm was constructed, with a lodge, two gateways and several disconcerting hairpin bends, but most of the materials for the new buildings came by sea and a lime kiln, store rooms and a boat house were built at the landing place on the beach below the house. Home Farm, the Garden Cottage and kitchen garden, an icehouse, a bath house and a reservoir were constructed in the period 1830s-1850s (Halliday 1995, 19-43). The network of terraced walks and paths around Glenthorne was in place by the late 19th century (OS 1890) (Fig 4).

3.3 The tithe maps for Countisbury (1841) and Oare (1842) (available on <https://www.somersetheritage.org.uk>) show the principal features of the Glenthorne Estate built by Halliday in the 1830s. The house, Garden Cottage, Home Farm, coach house, lodge and buildings by the beach are all shown. At this time the drive to Glenthorne left the Countisbury to Porlock road at Windgate Farm across Old Burrow Down to north of Old Burrow. The tithe maps depict a narrow strip of woodland – Little Wood - between Old Burrow Down and the sea in Countisbury and a block of woodland – Manor Wood and Stag’s Head Wood - between the enclosed land of Yenworthy and Broomstreet Farms in Oare.

3.4 The Ordnance Survey 1st edition 25” map (OS 1890) shows the extent of the designed landscape around Glenthorne. A network of terraced walks and paths traverse the slopes between the main drive, and link the house with the walled gardens and Garden Cottage, Home Farm, Glenthorne Beach and Yenworthy Combe. Five lincays to the south and SE of Home Farm are named on the map: Coscombe; Five Acre; Whitebloom; Hemlawn and Rodhill. A road links the drive with the Countisbury

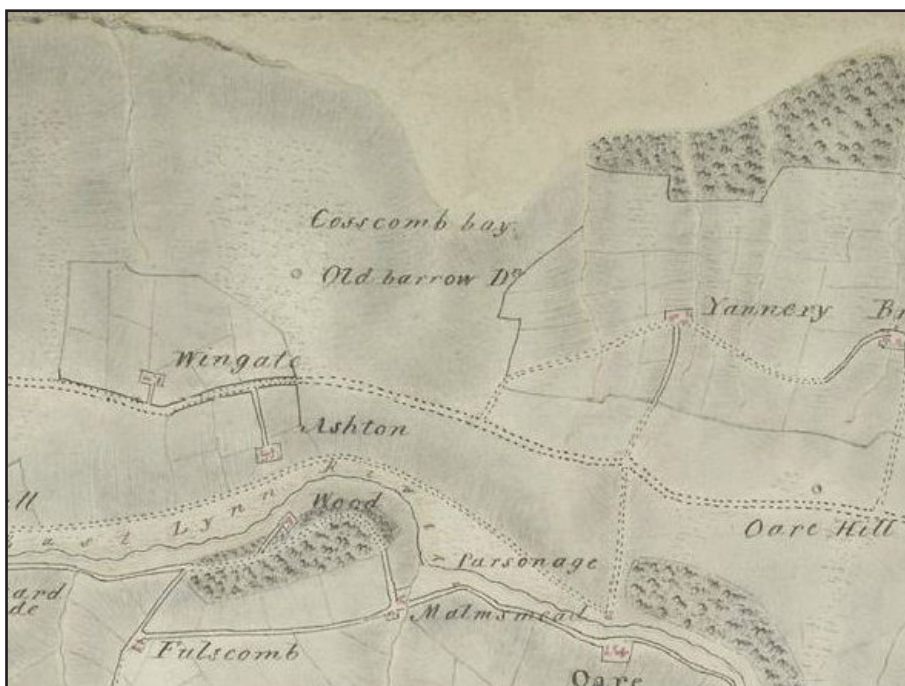


Fig 3 Extract from OS map North Molton 1804 (bl.ac.uk)

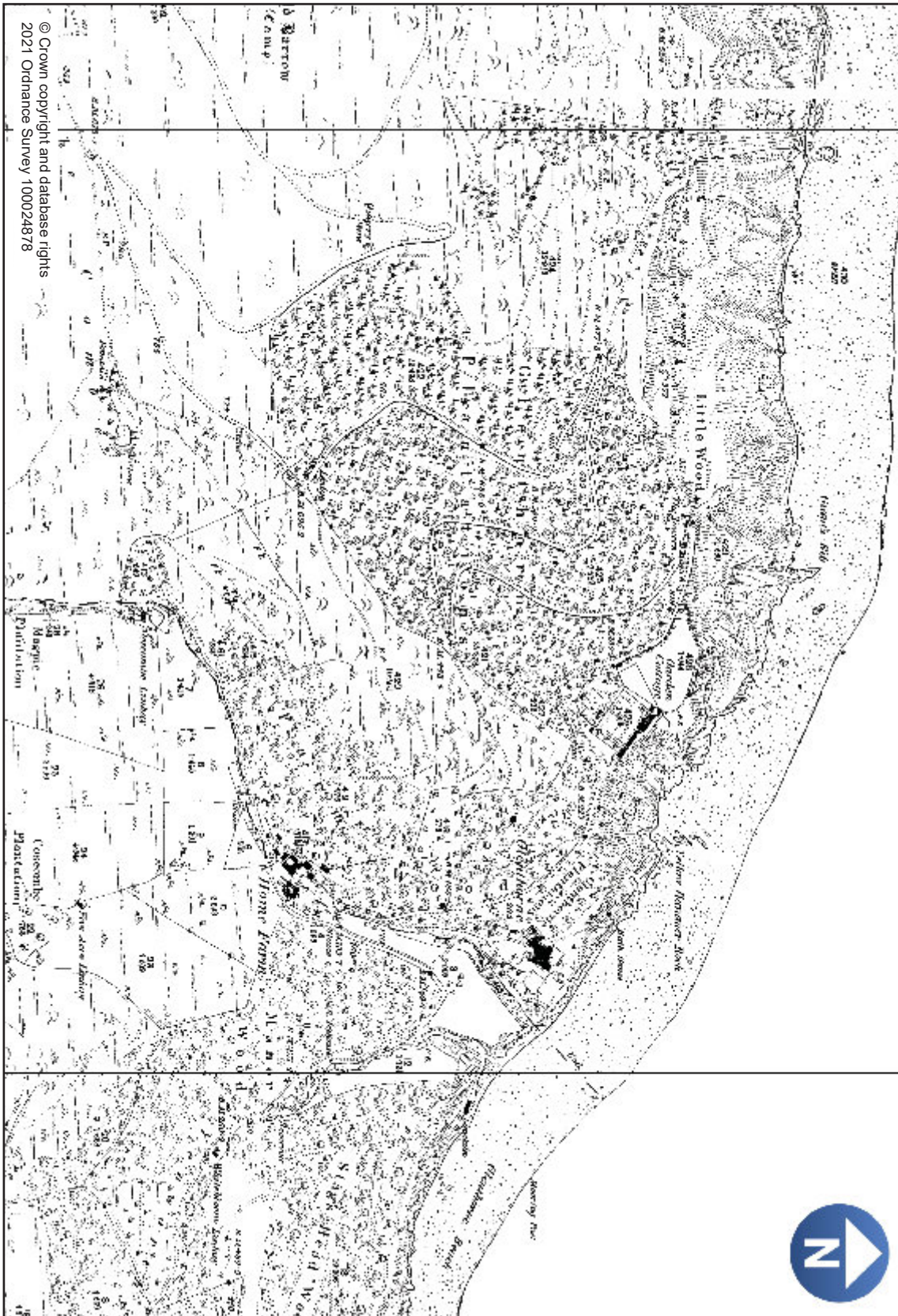


Fig 4 Extract from 1st edition OS map, Devon 3.12 (1890)

to Porlock Road south of Old Burrow, and several small buildings and structures are shown: a fountain; 'The Towers'; a bath house, an icehouse and a reservoir and ponds. Coniferous woodlands are depicted in Glenthorne Plantations and in Manor Wood (Fig 4).

3.5 Photographs from the Halliday family collection show a landscape of enclosed fields south of Home Farm. These are not dated but were probably taken in the late 19th century (Fig 5).

3.6 A history of the Halliday family at Glenthorne was written by Ursula Halliday (1995).

3.7 Previous archaeological work on the Glenthorne Estate includes some recording work by the Royal Commission on the Historical Monuments of England (RCHME) on Glenthorne Beach and the Historic England (HE) list entries for the estate. An earlier route for the new ECP through the estate was the subject of an archaeological survey in 2018 (Riley 2018).

4.0 OBJECTIVES

4.1 The main objective of the survey was to record the surviving archaeological features affected by the development of the new ECP route through this part of the Glenthorne Estate, and to inform future management of these features.

5.0 METHODOLOGY

5.1 The desk-based assessment located records relevant to the survey in the following: HE List Entry (www.historicengland.org.uk)

List UID 1289230 The Towers; 1212846 Glenthorne House

Exmoor National Park Historic Environment Record (www.exmoorher.co.uk)

Fig 5 The Combe south of Home Farm in the (?) late 19th century (Halliday Family Collection)



MEM24547 Glenthorne Designed Landscape
MEM22834 Coscombe Linhay

5.2 The following historic maps and air photographs were consulted

North Molton 1804 (www.bl.ac.uk)

Tithe maps: Countisbury (1841) and Oare (1842)

Ordnance Survey 1st edition 25" map (surveyed 1888, published 1890)

Ordnance Survey 2nd edition 25" map (revised 1902 to 1903, published 1904)

Ordnance Survey 1st edition 6" map (surveyed 1887 to 1888, published 1889)

Ordnance Survey 2nd edition 6" map (revised 1902 to 1903, published 1905)

RAF vertical air photographs (1946-48)

5.3 A collection of photographs of Glenthorne, dating from the 19th and 20th centuries, from the Halliday family collection was consulted in the ENPHER in 2018.

5.4 A walkover survey of the route of the new ECP from The Combe (SS 79947 49497) to The Towers (SS 79425 49776) was undertaken by the author on March 5th 2021. All of the archaeological features on or close to the route were recorded. The locations of the features were obtained from current and historic mapping or using a handheld Trimble Yuma tablet with enhanced Global Positioning System (GPS) (Fig 6).

5.4.1 Three profiles across the terraced walks were surveyed at a scale of 1:100 to illustrate their morphology across the course of the route (Fig 12).

5.4.2 Each archaeological feature has been given a unique number with the prefix GT21, and these numbers are used throughout this report: GT21001 to GT21004. These numbers are cross referenced to known sites in the ENPHER in the Site Gazetteer where appropriate.

5.4.3 Photographs of the archaeological features were taken and form part of the project archive.

5.4.4 The survey archive has been deposited with the ENPHER.

6.0 RESULTS

6.1 The results of the surveys are set out in the Site Gazetteer (below, 6.2) and the location of each site is shown in Figure 6. Four sites were recorded during the course of the survey, all of the features date from the 19th century and are associated with the Glenthorne Estate.

6.2 GT21 Glenthorne Site Gazetteer

GT21001 ENPHER MEM22834 Coscombe Linhay

LOCATION SS 7951 4919

TYPE LINHAY

PERIOD POST-MEDIEVAL

DESCRIPTION AND INTERPRETATION The remains of a small building lie to the SW of Home Farm, close to the proposed new ECP route, by a footpath to Glenthorne Beach (Front cover). The remains comprise two drystone walls on a level platform. The west wall is 3m long, 1.3m high and 0.6m thick; the southern wall is 4m long, 0.7m high and 0.6m thick (Fig 7). A path runs across the front of the building and this is marked by stone gateposts on the west and east ends (Figs 8 and 9). To the north of the building is a pond which has been drained and filled in, with the remains of a substantial dam and

retaining wall at its northern end (Fig 10). Coscombe Linhay is one of five named linhays close to Glenthorne Home Farm shown on the 1st edition map. Whitebloom Linhay was considered as part of a survey of an earlier proposed ECP route (Riley 2018). Both it and Coscombe Linhay are sited on the edge of combs in locations not ideally suited for a purely utilitarian agricultural function. All five were probably part of the Glenthorne designed landscape and formed focal points on walks or drives around it.

REFERENCES GT21001a_NE_05MAR21_HRILEY; GT21001b_S_05MAR21_HRILEY; GT21001c_W_05MAR21_HRILEY; GT21001d_W_05MAR21_HRILEY; GT21001e_S_05MAR21_HRILEY; GT21001f_S_05MAR21_HRILEY



Fig 7 (left) The remains of Coscombe Linhay (1m scale) (Hazel Riley)

Fig 8 (right) Stone gateposts at west end of path by Coscombe Linhay (Hazel Riley)



Fig 9 (bottom right) Stone gate post and the path by Coscombe Linhay (Hazel Riley)

Fig 10 (below) The retaining wall and dam of pond by Coscombe Linhay (1m scale) (Hazel Riley)



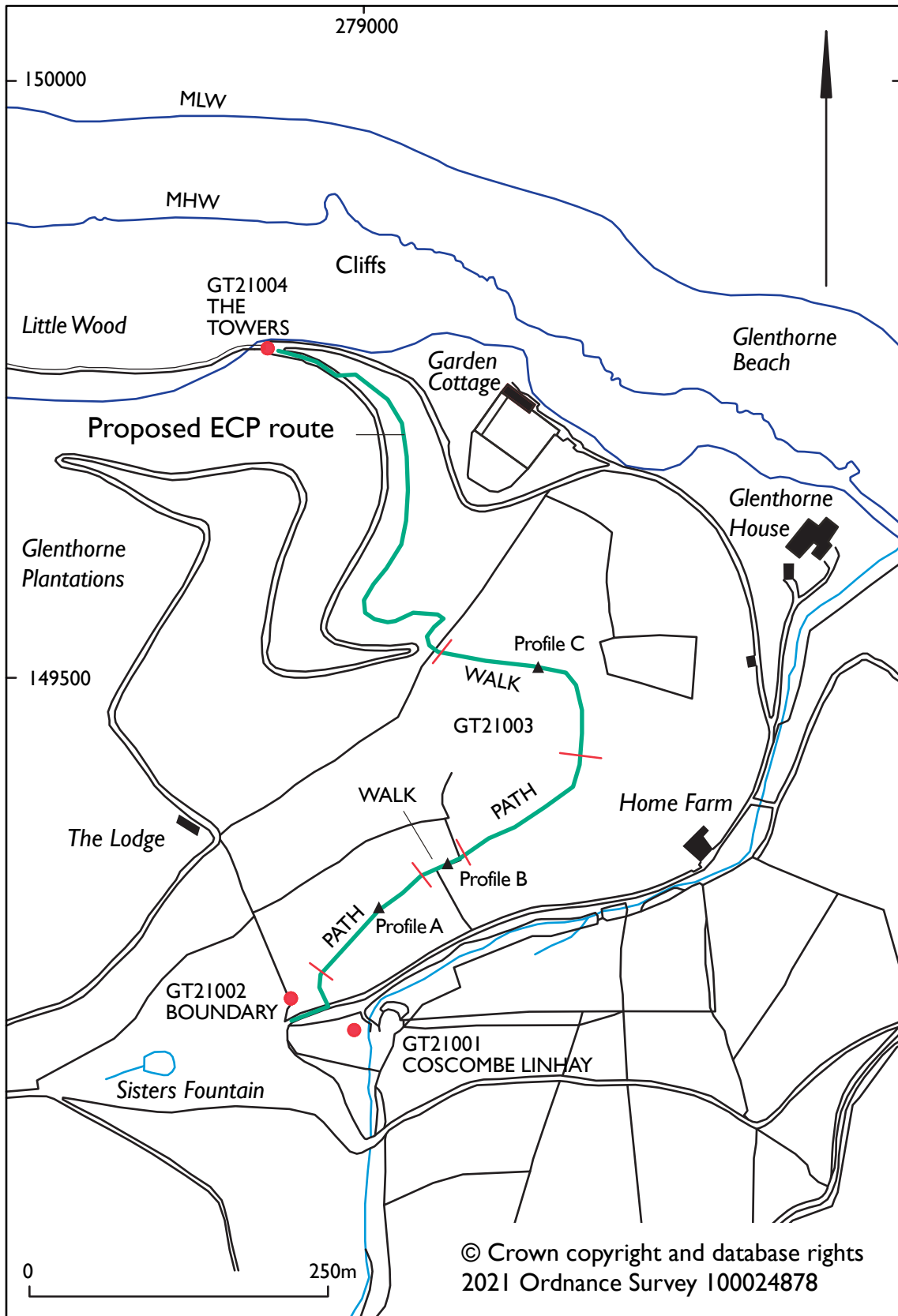


Fig 6 Location of the archaeological features in the survey area

GT21002

LOCATION SS 7994 4949

TYPE BANK (EARTHWORK)

PERIOD POST-MEDIEVAL

DESCRIPTION AND INTERPRETATION A massive stone faced boundary bank at the beginning of the proposed route is a distinctive feature of this part of the Glenthorne Estate (Fig 11). The bank is 2m wide with a dry stone retaining wall up to 1.2m high on both sides and a substantial ditch, 2m wide and 0.7m deep, on the west side. This was the 19th-century boundary between the open moorland of Coscombe and the plantations and farm land surrounding Glenthorne House.

REFERENCES GT21002_NW_05MAR21_HRILEY



Fig 11 The boundary bank at the S end of the proposed route (Hazel Riley)

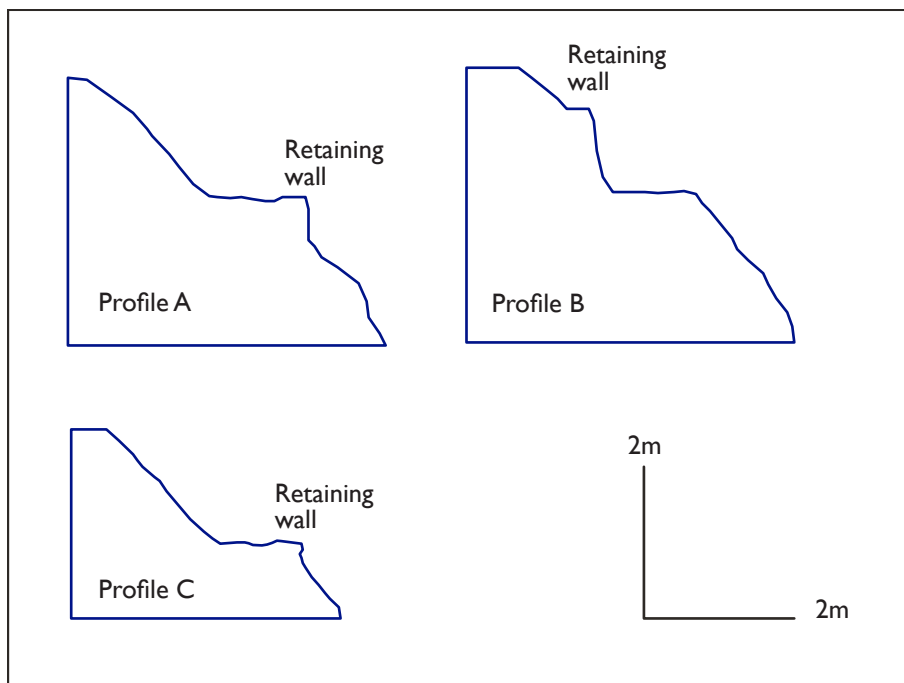


Fig 12 Profiles across paths and terraced walks

GT21003

LOCATION

TYPE TERRACED WALK; PATH

PERIOD POST-MEDIEVAL

DESCRIPTION AND INTERPRETATION The proposed route utilises several stretches of paths which are part of the 19th-century designed landscape around Glenthorne and which are mapped on the OS 1st edition map (OS 1890) (Fig 4):

SS 7944 4922 to SS 7954 4932 a narrow path, 1m wide, cut into the steep hillside to a depth of some 0.9m, with a dry stone retaining wall up to 0.5m high and 0.4m wide visible in places on the down slope side. The retaining wall is ruinous but a distinctive capping of horizontally laid slabs of local stone is evident in places (Figs 12 and 13).

Fig 13 (below left) Narrow path along hillside N of Coscombe Linhay (1m scale) (Hazel Riley)

Fig 14 (below right) Terraced walk and retaining wall NW of Home Farm (1m scale) (Hazel Riley)



SS 7954 4932 to SS 7957 4934 a terraced walk, 1.2m wide, with a dry stone retaining wall, built of vertically pitched local stone of a similar size, with no obvious capping, 1.2m high and 0.3m wide on the upslope side (Figs 12 and 14).

Fig 15 (below left) Path with retaining wall NW of Home Farm (1m scale) (Hazel Riley)

Fig 16 (below right) Detail of retaining wall (1m scale) (Hazel Riley)



SS 7957 4934 to SS 7968 4941 a path through a laurel dominated plantation, 0.8m wide, terraced into the hillside by 0.9m with a retaining dry stone wall, 0.4m wide and 0.3m high, on the down slope side evident in several places. The wall is rather obscured by the laurel, but a distinctive capping of horizontally laid large slabs of local stone can be seen (Figs 12, 15 and 16).

SS 7968 4941 to SS 7955 4952 a terraced walk through Pollard Wood with a recently erected deer fence built along it (Fig 17). The path is cut into the rocky hillside to a depth of some 0.5m and is 2m wide. Some rather dilapidated stretches of retaining wall, up to 0.5m high, on the upslope side are visible in places. At SS 7955 4952 the path crosses a distinctive stone faced boundary bank.

SS 7955 4952 to SS 7952 4958 a new path down a steep combe. At c SS 7954 4955 the new route would cross an estate path shown on the 1st edition map. It is visible as a narrow, rock cut path, 1m wide and terraced into the slope some 0.7m (Fig 18).

SS 7952 4958 to SS 7948 4974 the route follows the course of a footpath shown on the 1st edition map but not discernible on the ground. No archaeological features were noted in the area.

REFERENCES

GT21003a_NE_05MAR21_HRILEY; GT21003b_SW_05MAR21_HRILEY;
GT21003c_NE_05MAR21_HRILEY; GT21003d_NE_05MAR21_HRILEY;
GT21003e_W_05MAR21_HRILEY; GT21003f_NE_05MAR21_HRILEY



Fig 17 (left) Terraced walk through Pollard Wood (Hazel Riley)

Fig 18 (above left) Estate path at head of combe SW of Garden Cottage (1m scale) (Hazel Riley)



Fig 19 The hairpin bend at The Towers on the main drive to Glenthorne House (Hazel Riley)

GT21004 ENPHER MDE21306 The Towers HE List entry 1289230

SS 7948 4974 to SS 7942 4977 the route follows the drive to Glenthorne House as it approaches the hairpin bend at an ornate gateway known as The Towers (Fig 19). The drive is a spectacular feature in the landscape, with views out across the Bristol Channel. The drive is 2.5m wide, rock cut and terraced into the cliffs to a depth of over 2m. The Towers are formed of two hexagonal turrets, linked by an archway, with a carved stone lion on top of the arch and stone birds on top of each tower. The gateway forms the start of a terraced walk along the cliffs through Little Wood.

REFERENCES GT21004_W_05MAR21_HRILEY

7.0 DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 The survey work undertaken for a proposed ECP route through the Glenthorne Estate in 2018 highlighted the extent of the 19th-century designed landscape and associated structures which survive in the estate (Riley 2018).

7.2 The proposed new ECP route which is the subject of this survey uses some of the paths and terraced walks which are an integral part of this designed landscape. These walks were deliberately constructed to link key points in the designed and natural landscape of the estate with Glenthorne House and their structure, with the level paths and retaining drystone walls, should be taken account prior to any repair work or structural work such as the construction of steps, handrails etc.

7.3 Coscombe Linhay is one of five linhays on the Glenthorne Estate which are named on the Ordnance Survey 1st edition 25" map (OS 1890). Coscombe Linhay lies at the head of The Combe, which was a block of small fields south of Home Farm in the 19th century (Fig 5). The large pond directly in front of the linhay is one of a series of ponds in The Combe and Yenworthy Combe described as 'built partly to regulate water flow for safety's sake, partly for decoration and, in the case of the one near the farm, for convenience' (Halliday 1995, 47). Coscombe Linhay is close to Home Farm and may have served an agricultural function but it may also have been part of the designed landscape, perhaps functioning as a shelter or summer house but designed as a vernacular agricultural building.

7.4 Glenthorne is one of three 19th-century estates on Exmoor which use the coast and cliffs as part of their landscape settings: Lee Abbey to the west and Ashley Combe to the east. A plan for the interpretation of the Glenthorne Estate from the new ECP route should be drawn up in conjunction with work which has been carried out on these coastal 19th-century designed landscapes (Riley 2017a;b; 2018).

8.0 REFERENCES

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Halliday, U 1995 *Glenthorne A Most Romantic Place*

Oare 1842 Tithe map D\Rt/M/360

Ordnance Survey 1890 1st edition 25" map (surveyed 1888, published 1890)

Ordnance Survey 1904 2nd edition 25" map (revised 1902 to 1903, published 1904)

Riley, H 2017a *Assessment and Metric Survey of Archaeological Features at Lee Abbey, Exmoor National Park*

Riley H 2017b *The Archaeology of the 19th-century Designed Landscape at Ashley Combe and Culbone Church, Exmoor National Park*

Riley, H 2018 *Archaeological Survey at Glenthorne in Countisbury, Devon and Oare, Somerset*

