

HOAR OAK COTTAGE LYNTON & LYNMOUTH DEVON

Results of Historic Building Recording
&
Archaeological Monitoring



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Hoar Oak Cottage, Lynton & Lynmouth, Devon

Results of Historic Building Recording & Archaeological Monitoring

For

Rob Wilson-North

On behalf of

Exmoor National Park Authority

By



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Summary

Hoar Oak Cottage is a complex and much-altered structure, the earliest elements of which could date to the 17th century; it was perhaps originally a farm building attached to the farmhouse shown on the 1839 tithe map. In the early 19th century the site belonged to the Vellacotts and was part of the Furzehill estate. In the 1860s the Knights took a lease on it in order to accommodate shepherds and their families. During the 18th and 19th centuries a series of alterations and improvements were made, reflecting the development of farming activities. In the late 19th century Hoar Oak Cottage was acquired by the Fortescue estate. It was inhabited into the 1950s, but the building was never connected to the National Grid and lacked a bathroom; as a result it fell into a ruinous state. It was bought by Exmoor National Park Authority in 1967 and steps were taken to consolidate the structure. A subsequent phase of consolidation took place in 2013, when the structure was reduced in height and made safe.

This report was produced as part of the Exmoor Moorland Landscape Partnership Scheme. The EMLP is supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund and its local partners and funders www.heartofexmoor.org.uk. This survey informed a major conservation project carried out in 2012 and 2013 for Hoar Oak Cottage.



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1.0 Introduction

Location: Hoar Oak Cottage
Parish: Lynton and Lynmouth
District: North Devon
County: Devon

1.1 Background

South West Archaeology Ltd. (SWARCH) was commissioned by Rob Wilson-North of Exmoor National Park Authority to undertake a programme of recording and monitoring at Hoar Oak Cottage, Lynton and Lynmouth Parish, Devon. This work took place before and during the consolidation works undertaken in the summer of 2013. This followed on from an earlier appraisal of the structure (SWARCH report no. 101105) that recognized the unassuming 19th century cottage was in fact a complex multi-period structure that pre-dated the involvement of the Knight family on Exmoor.

This work was undertaken as part of the Exmoor Moorland Landscape Partnership Scheme. The EMLP is supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund and its local partners and funders www.heartofexmoor.org.uk. This survey informed the major conservation project carried out in 2012 and 2013.

1.2 Location and Topography

Hoar Oak Cottage stands on the western side of a combe on the northern side of Exmoor, just below The Chains and Dure Down, at a height of c.350m AOD. The soils of the combe are the well-drained coarse loamy soils of the Rivington 2 Association, while the higher slopes and interfluvial areas carry the loamy permeable upland soils with a peaty surface horizon of the Lydcott Association (SSEW 1983). These overlie the sandstones and slaty siltstones of the Hangman Sandstone Formation (BGS 2013).

1.3 Historical Background

The cottage formed part of the Furzehill estate, which belonged to the locally prominent Vellacott family of Lynton & Lynmouth. There are no early documentary references to Hoar Oak Cottage, although an enclosure of some kind is shown on the Ordnance Survey 1" map of c.1805. The early 19th century Lynton & Lynmouth Parish Registers contain the first documentary references to the cottage, which is depicted for the first time on the 1840 tithe map. The 1841 Census lists the occupant as John Bale, agricultural labourer. The farm lies outside of the Royal Forest and thus was never owned by the Knight family, although they briefly leased the property in the later 19th century. It was acquired by the Fortescues of Castle Hill in 1898, and passed to the Exmoor National Park Authority in 1967.

1.4 Archaeological Background

Hoar Oak Cottage lies within a landscape of high archaeological potential. The fields on the western side of the combe survive in good order and relate to the early modern and recent occupation of the cottage. Traces of an extensive fieldsystem also survive on the eastern side of the combe, and undoubtedly relate to the medieval and post-medieval cultivation of this narrow valley. Some limited mining activity took place within the combe in the 19th century,

and extensive areas of relict peat cuttings mark the flat interfluvial areas. Prehistoric remains in the form of stone settings, cairns and a possible enclosure can also be found nearby. Immediately to the south stands the eponymous Hoar Oak, and this marks the Devon-Somerset county boundary.

1.5 Methodology

The desk-based study was carried out by Terry Green and was undertaken with reference to IfA guidelines on the preparation of archaeological assessments. The necessary research was conducted at the Devon Record Office, the West Country Studies Library and the North Devon Record Office. The Devon County Historic Environment Service was also consulted. The original historic building appraisal was undertaken by Colin Humphreys and Robert Waterhouse in accordance with IfA and English Heritage Guidelines on the surveying of standing buildings. The subsequent recording and monitoring work was undertaken by Dr Bryn Morris and Tom Hooper in May-June 2013.

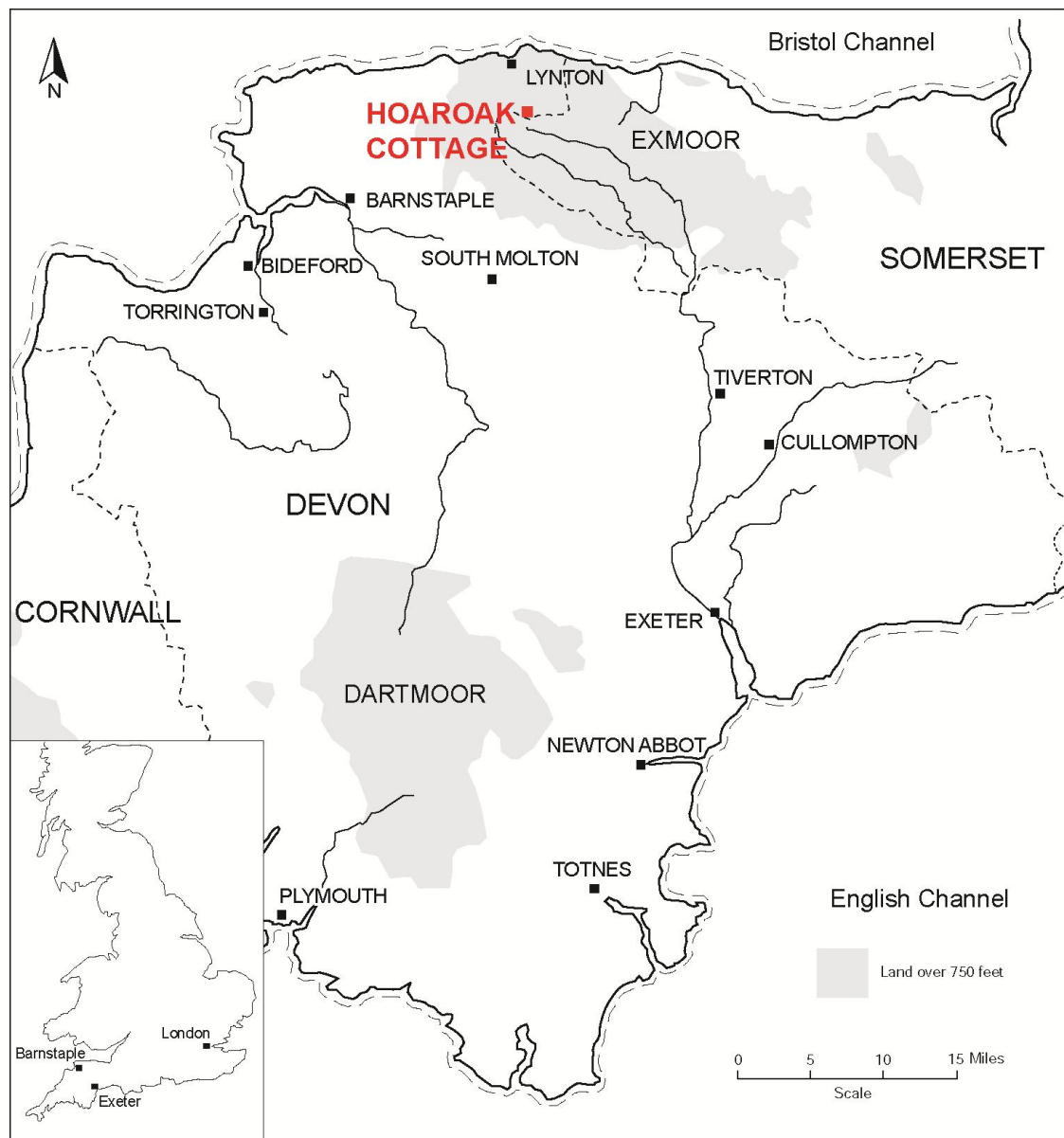


Figure 1: Regional location.

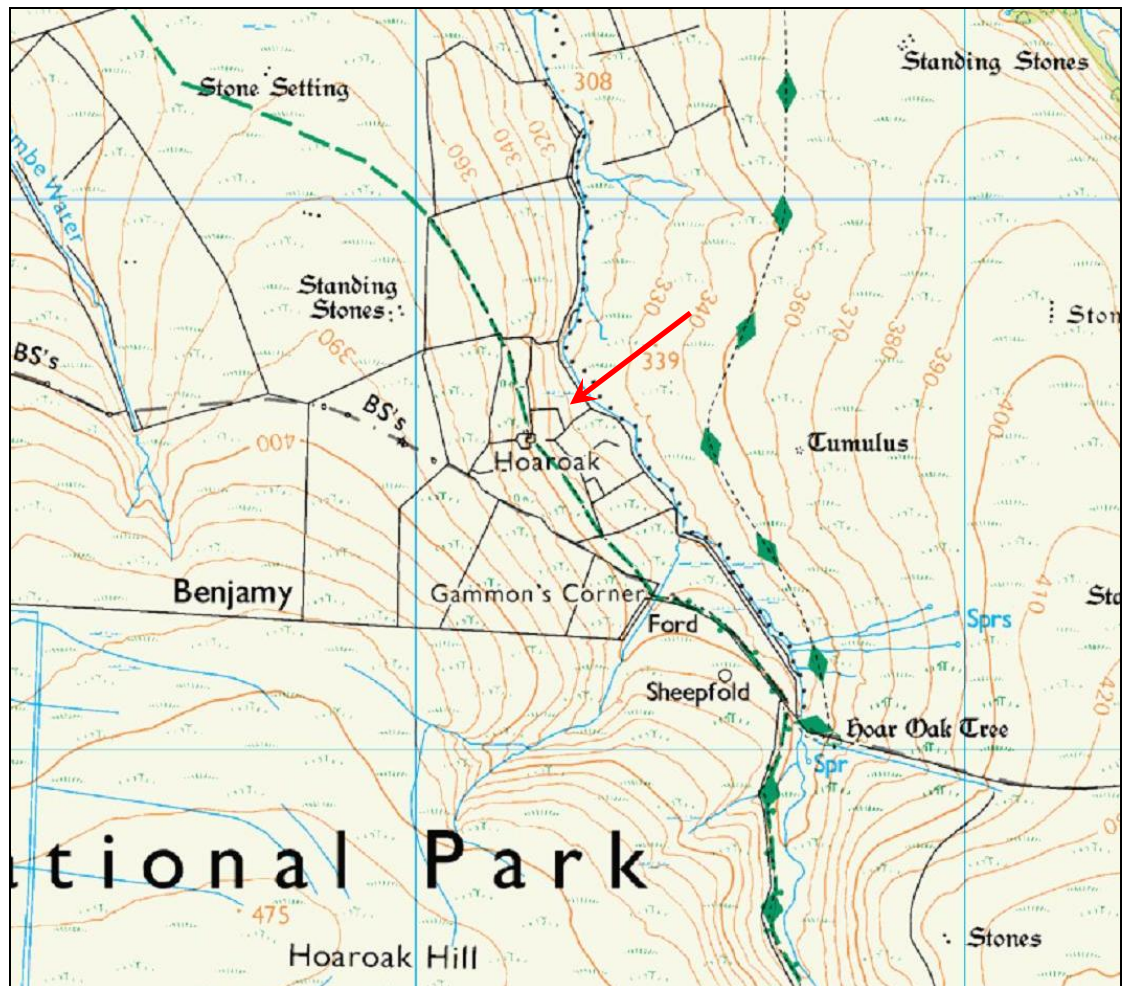


Figure 2: Site location.

2.0 Results of the Desk-Based Assessment

2.1 General History

2.1.1 Prehistory

In the general area of Hoar Oak there is extensive evidence of prehistoric activity in the form of standing stones, stone settings, barrows and cairns. Finds of leaf-shaped and barbed-and-tanged arrowheads in the vicinity (Devon HER 12241) might suggest Neolithic and/or Bronze Age hunting activity. Analysis of LiDAR data (see below) appears to have identified a Prehistoric enclosure and ?associated settlement 600m to the north-east.

2.1.2 Medieval and Post-Medieval

Situated in a combe within the bare uplands of Exmoor, Hoar Oak Cottage lies just beyond the northern boundary of the former Royal Forest of Exmoor and just within the county of Devon. The eponymous Hoar Oak tree was historically one of very few trees within or on the fringe of the Royal Forest. The 'Hoar' element of the name, from Old English *har*, often applied to boundary features, probably tells us why this tree is commemorated as significant and why it has been replanted several times.

Aerial photographs and the analysis of LiDAR data (see below) demonstrate that the eastern side of the valley is covered by a relict fieldsystem cut through by a catchwater leat. In morphological terms, these relict fields look medieval in date and show evidence of phasing. On this basis it is clear that, as with other parts of Exmoor (most notably Badgworthy), agriculture and settlement once extended much further up onto the Moor. It is likely Hoar Oak Cottage represents the last remnant of that landscape.

Being outside the bounds of the Royal Forest, the cottage and the land on which it stands were not part of the land purchased by John Knight in the early 19th century. Instead, they belonged to the Vellacotts, a prominent family in the parish of Lynton and Lynmouth, and held as part of their Furzehill estate. Nonetheless, the property was of some interest to the Knights, as they took a lease on it in the 1860s in order to accommodate shepherds and their families tending sheep on the Chains. In the late 19th century Hoar Oak Cottage was acquired by the Fortescue estates. It was bought by Exmoor National Park Authority in 1967.

2.2 Hoar Oak Farm/Hoar Oak Cottage: History of Ownership and Occupancy

The documented history of the cottage, as far as it goes, suggests that in its early days it was an agricultural holding within the Furzehill and Hoar Oak estate of the Vellacotts. From the 1860s however, it became bound up with the story of the Knights' development of Exmoor land, more specifically with the sheep farming enterprises of Frederic Knight. The care of the sheep on Exmoor was organised into geographically based 'herdings', one of which was the Hoar Oak herding. In the 1860s Frederic Knight took a lease on Hoar Oak Farm, and installed the first of a series of shepherds there to oversee the Hoar Oak herding. The acquisition of large parts of the Knights' Exmoor interests by Lord Fortescue Viscount Ebrington in the 1890s prompted the agent G. C. Smyth Richards to write to Viscount Ebrington about Hoar Oak Cottage in November 1898, pointing out that currently it was leased from a Mr Jeune for £54 per annum. He suggested that Mr Jeune might be prepared to sell the cottage together with three allotments, to which proposal Mr Jeune agreed. It is probable that Mr Jeune had acquired Hoar Oak in 1866 when part of the Furze Hill and Hoar Oak estate was put up for sale. From 1898 therefore, Hoar Oak Cottage was a Fortescue possession, in which Viscount Ebrington

took an interest, suggesting in early 1899 that a dairy might be added to the property (Burton 1989, 115-6). Hoar Oak passed out of the possession of the Fortescue Estates in 1959 and was acquired by Exmoor National Park Authority in 1967.

The Land Tax records for Lynton and Lynmouth dating from 1780 to 1832 give no suggestion of any occupation at Hoar Oak during that period. However, the parish registers for Lynton and Lynmouth appear to show Charles and Elizabeth Vellacott were resident there after their marriage in 1810. The earliest cartographic source showing the structure is the tithe map of 1840. The apportionment tells us that the owner and occupier of the plot numbered 958 was John Vellacott (who also owned Furzehill and Ratsbury). However, the 1841 census lists the occupier as John Bale, farm labourer, together with his wife and daughter. It is very unlikely that the landowner John Vellacott actually lived here, though he may have visited and had somewhere to stay.

On the other hand, the census records from 1851 to 1901 consistently record the occupation of 'Oar Oak' by single families. In 1851 the cottage was occupied by George Moule, agricultural labourer and his family; in 1861 'Oar Oak Farm' of 14 acres was occupied by John Vellacott himself together with his wife, six sons and a daughter. The 1860s brought an end to the Vellacott ownership when the property apparently came into the hands of Mr Jeune who leased it to the Knights' Estates. In 1871 the occupant was William Davidson, a shepherd from Scotland together with his wife; in 1881 John Renwick, shepherd, lived there with wife and daughter; in 1891 and 1901 the occupant was another Scottish shepherd, James Johnstone together with his wife and six children (Census Records).

It is probable that the shepherds of the Hoar Oak herding continued to live at Hoar Oak Cottage until after the Second World War. In the 1950s moves were made to re-accommodate shepherds in new bungalows nearer to main roads and to Simonsbath, Hoar Oak Cottage being perhaps the last to be abandoned. In 1958 the Fortescue holdings on Exmoor, which included Hoar Oak, were sold. Details provided in the sale brochure indicate that Hoar Oak Cottage remained without electricity or a bathroom, though it did have a water supply to a sink in the scullery. No longer viable or desired as living accommodation, it was allowed to fall into disrepair (based on Burton 1989, 229-234).



Figure 3: Hoar Oak Cottage, probably in the early 20th century, viewed from the south-east. The new slate roof on the 19th century extension (Room 2) can clearly be distinguished (FoHOC).



Figure 4: The cottage, viewed from the south-east. The trees have grown up around it, and the lean-to (Room 3) has weathered in (FoHOC).



Figure 5: The same view of the cottage from the mid 1930s, but showing the exterior of Room 3 clad in corrugated iron (FoHOC, showing Bill, Dorothy and Denise Little).



Figure 6: The cottage, viewed from the south-east, prior to works starting.



Figure 7: Hoar Oak Cottage, viewed from the north-east, prior to works starting.

2.3 Cartographic History and Commentary

2.3.1 OS ‘Old Series’ 1” map, surveyed c.1805, published 1809

This is the earliest published cartographic record of the site (Figure 8). The map records, at approximately the location of Hoar Oak Cottage, an enclosure lying to the west of Hoar Oak Water and straddling the county boundary. There is nothing depicted on the printed map that

can confidently be identified as a building, but the existence of this remote enclosure might conceivably suggest occupation.

It is clear from this that some form of landscape organisation had taken place before 1805 and this may be related to contour leats and 'catchwater meadows' noted to the east of Hoar Oak Cottage (Exmoor HER MMO1480131). There may also be a relationship with a rectangular ditched-and-banked enclosure noted from aerial photography to the immediate east of Hoar Oak Cottage (Devon HER 18181). In addition, the Exmoor National Park HER notes signs of a relict medieval fieldscape to the north and east of Hoar Oak Cottage (Exmoor HER MDE20820), which may be of relevance.

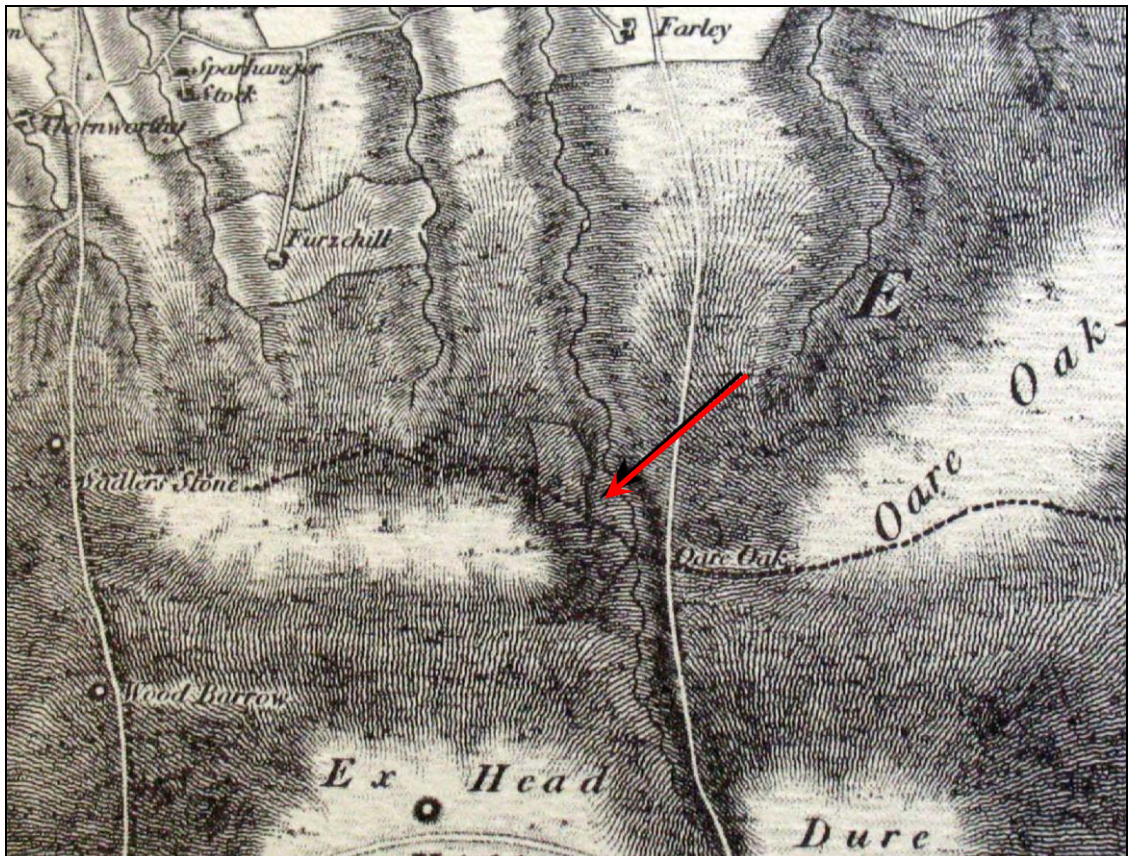


Figure 8: Extract from the OS 'Old Series' 1'' mile map, surveyed c.1805 (the site is indicated).

2.3.2 The Lynton Tithe Map 1840

This is the earliest detailed cartographic record available to this study (Figure 9). The tithe map shows a pair of buildings, set at right angles to each other, situated centrally within a group of fields surrounded by open moorland. The small enclosure containing the structures is described in the apportionment as 'Houses and Yard', suggesting that this was a pair of dwellings. This suggestion is borne out by the description of the field numbered 959 as 'Field under Houses'.

2.3.3 The OS 1st Edition map 1:2500, published in 1889

This source (Figure 10) presents quite a different picture, indicating that significant development had taken place during the mid-19th century. It appears at this date that the north-west building of the original pair had been removed, and that the southern building had been

furnished with an outshut on its north-west side. Something similar is also suggested at the west end, though this extension on the map may represent an external chimney stack. In addition, two small free-standing buildings had been erected to the north and to the north-east.

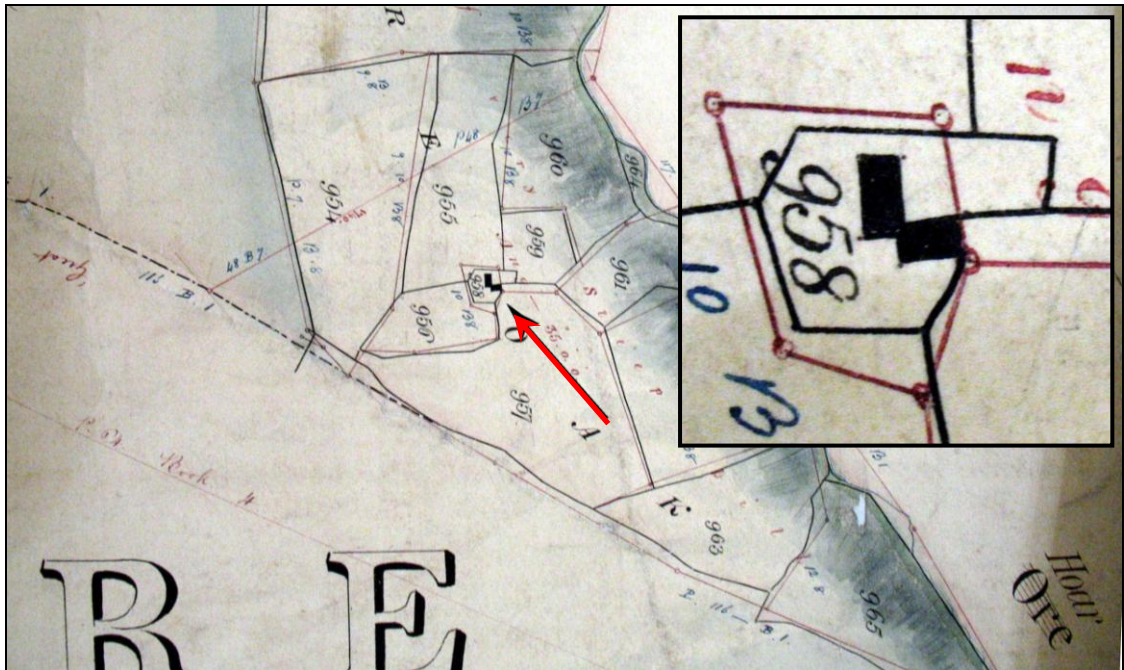


Figure 9: Extract from the Lynton tithe map of 1840, with enlargement (DHC).

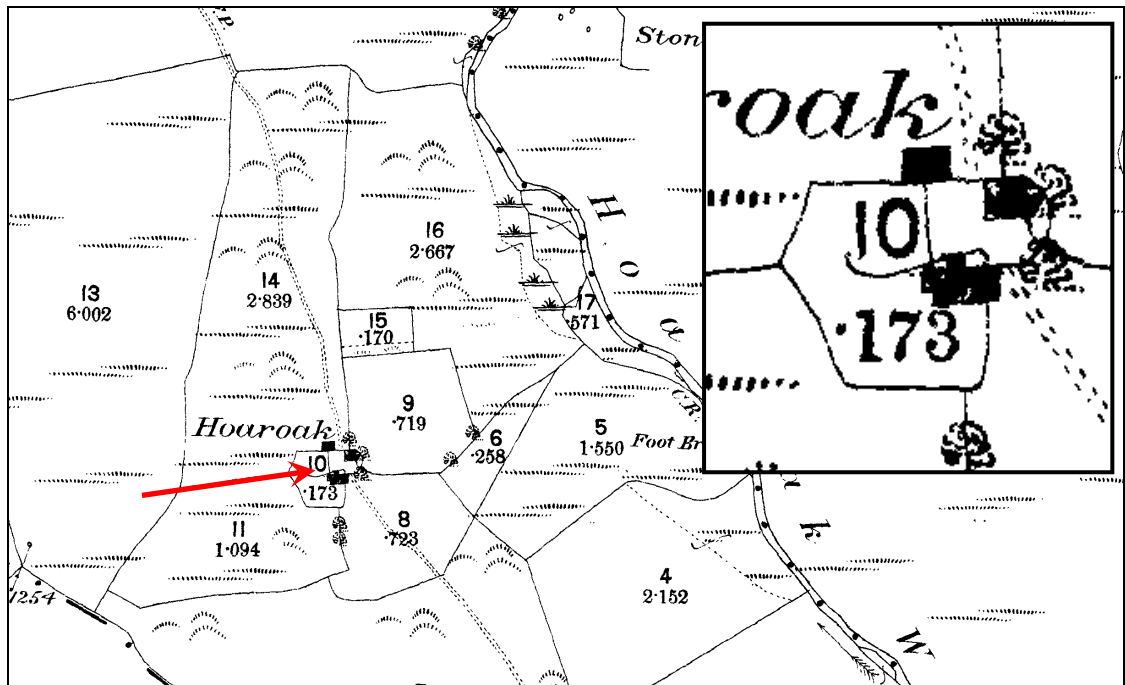


Figure 10: Extract from the OS 1st Edition map at 1:2500, published 1889, with enlargement.

There had also been some changes to the field pattern with new enclosures being made, indicating a development of farming activities during the mid 19th century. Analysis of the standing building (see below) suggests that it was considerably altered during the 19th century, correlating with the changes in the farming or shepherding regime.

2.3.4 The OS 2nd Edition map at 1:2500, published in 1905

This map (Figure 11) indicates no further change to the buildings, but records the loss of boundaries to the north-east, and thus a reduction in the number of enclosures.

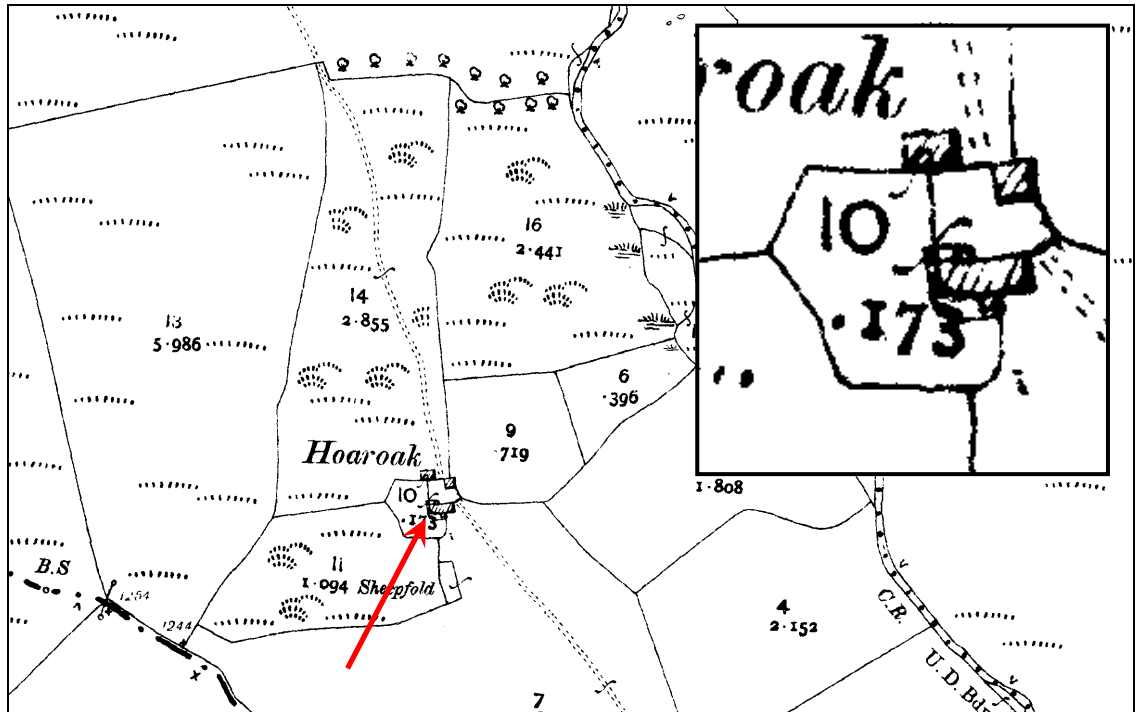


Figure 11: Extract from the OS 2nd Edition map at 1:2500, published 1905, with enlargement.



Figure 12: Aerial photograph from 1946; the Cottage is indicated (ENPA/NMR/RAF).

2.3.5 An aerial photograph of 1946

This indicates no significant change had taken place between 1905 and 1946 (Figure 12).

2.3.6 An aerial photograph of 1977

This also suggests no significant change, though it is evident that since the 1940s trees had grown up around the cottage (Figure 13).



Figure 13: Aerial photograph of 1977; Hoar Oak Cottage is in the centre of the image (ENPA).

2.3.7 LiDAR

LiDAR data provided by the ENPA (data copyright to the Geomatics Group and SWW) and processed using ARCGIS and SKYVIEW software packages was used to produce Figure 14. This clearly shows the extant hedgebanks around Hoar Oak Cottage, but also the morphologically distinct relict fieldbanks to the east. These have rounded corners and slightly sinuous boundaries, and one of the fields (right of centre) is subdivided into four equal parcels by slight banks. This, together with the evidence for phasing, would suggest an origin in the medieval period. A probable Prehistoric enclosure and ?associated settlement can also be identified. All of these features are cut through by a catchwater leat, carrying water to Cheriton.

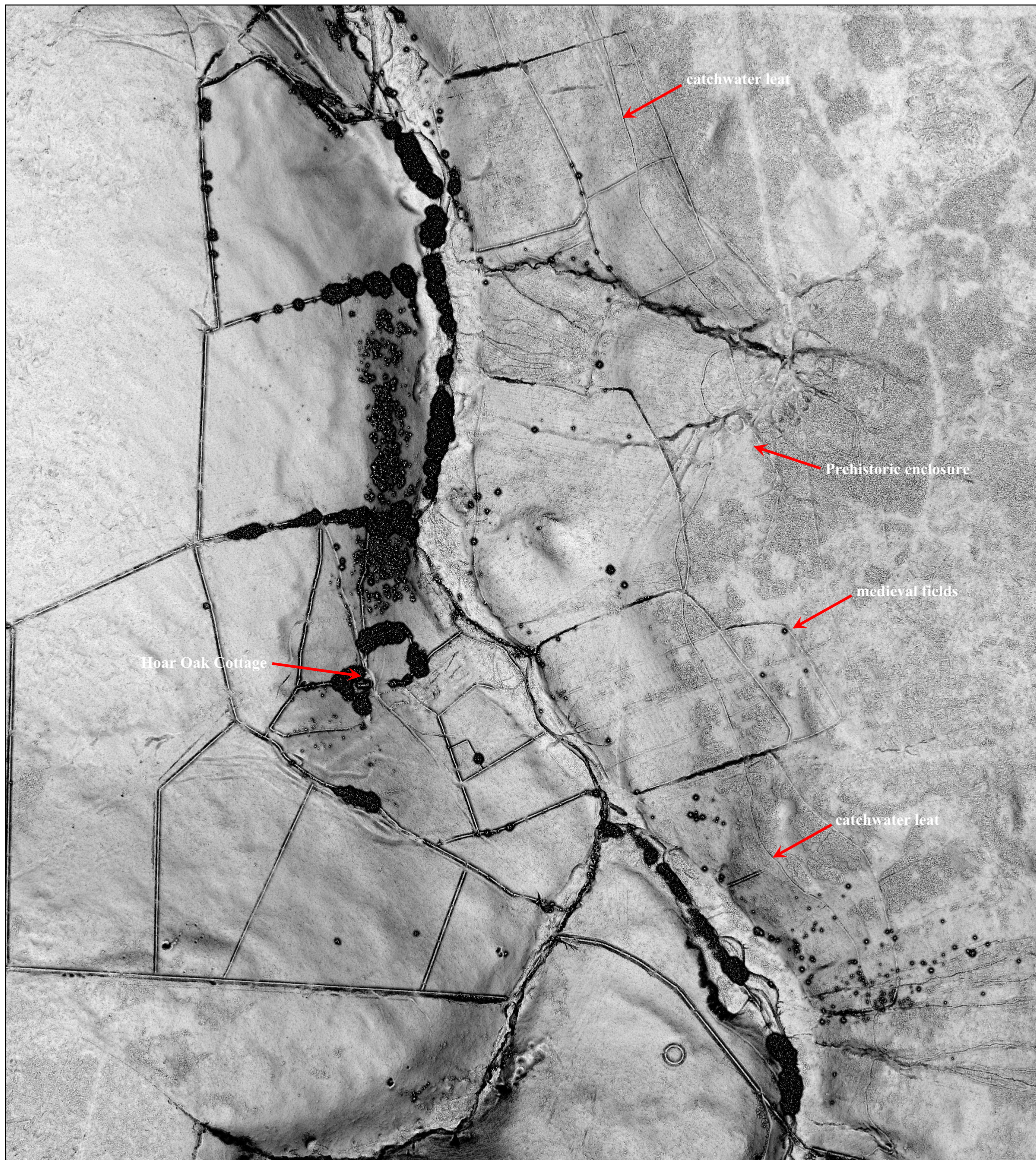


Figure 14: Image derived from LiDAR data provided by the ENPA (data copyright: Environment Agency Geomatics Group and South West Water).

3.1 General description

Hoar Oak Cottage is a small, multi-phase, one-and-a-half storey building set on an east-west axis and cut back into the hillside. It is important to note that on the tithe map a second structure is shown abutting the north-west corner, and thus it cannot be assumed Hoar Oak Cottage was in fact originally a farmhouse.

The original building appears to have been a small single-celled, single-storey building measuring 7.8×5.3m, with well-built, coursed, quarried slate-stone walls bonded with clay (Phase 1). The surviving elements of this building certainly predate the 19th century, and may well be 17th century in date. This building was improved and extended multiple times over the course of the later 18th and 19th centuries, but may have been ruinous when that sequence of works began.

At some point in the 18th century the single storey building was raised to 1½ storeys (Phase 2). Subsequent to this the western gable was rebuilt with a large external chimney stack (Phase 3); the form of the fireplace and stack would suggest it was built in the 18th century, but could be earlier. The south wall of the Phase 1 structure may have begun to fail under the weight of the Phase 2 additions, and this led to the addition of buttresses. In Phase 4 a two-storey extension was added to the east. Subsequent to this a small single-storey extension added to the west end of the north side – probably a dairy – and the single-storey extension to the east was probably a cart shed. The upper storey was later improved through the provision of fireplaces.

3.2 Condition

In 2006 the building was in a semi-derelict condition; there were no surviving internal wooden fixtures with the exception of lintels, and some door and window frames. A small amount of the internal plaster remained, and the floors were concealed below the detritus of animals and passing walkers. Following the acquisition of the property in the 1960s the EPNA had consolidated the walltops with concrete, blocked a number of the window openings, reduced the height of the building creating an asymmetric profile and roofed the structure with sawn pine and corrugated Onduline sheeting.

By 2010, the structure had deteriorated further; the Onduline roof had failed and some of the walls had become unsafe. The ENPA took the decision to remove the roof, clear the detritus and reduce and repair the walls. This work was undertaken in 2013.



Figure 15: The interior of Hoar Oak Cottage (R1), viewed from the east (scale 2m).



Figure 16: The interior of Hoar Oak Cottage (R1), viewed from the west (scale 2m).

3.3 Building Phasing

3.3.1 PHASE #1 – pre-18th century

Single-celled structure measuring c.7.8×5.3m (Room 1).

Surviving elements

North and south walls to first floor height, east gable to 0.6m (internally) and 1.0m (externally); 0.6-0.65m (24-26") thick. Well-built stonework of coursed, small, angular (quarried) slate rubble stone construction, with occasional sub-angular quartz stones in north wall; fine stonework with minimal gaps, bonded with light brown clay with no lime content. Stones 150-250mm long by 30-60mm thick, larger (up to 600×170mm) in external elevations. Parts of walls appear patched or rebuilt, e.g. west side of south door and stonework between door and window. Southern wall blowing under weight of Phase #2 wall above. North wall has best surviving stonework; south wall less consistently well-made – more weathered, rebuilt or different mason? Window (lintel failed, modern blocking) and door in south wall. Window appears to be splayed, and door is slightly splayed on east side; these appear original. South door opening probably originally a window, later modified to a door; oak lintel over door sits on oak wall plates with thin 19th century roof slate. Blocked window has ragged and inconsistent stonework below, suggesting door forced through and subsequently blocked, or perhaps window seat. Door in north wall appears original, with failing oak lintels over. Internal alcove in north wall also appears original, but purpose unknown.

3.3.2 PHASE #2 – 18th century

Phase #1 structure (Room 1) north and south walls raised to two storeys.

Surviving elements

North and south walls raised to two storeys. Walls slightly narrower than in Phase #1 and internal elevations step in on north and south wall. Stonework predominantly comprised of quarried angular slate rubble stone similar to the Phase #1 walls, but averaging slightly larger in size, less well coursed and less fine overall. Larger proportion of sub-rounded weathered siltstone. Bonded with light brown clay with some lime content. Parts of walls appear patched or rebuilt, e.g. east end of north wall is patched with hard pink mortar; also, stonework over the north door looks rebuilt. Collapsed stonework over alcove in north wall reveals small square opening, probably a joist socket. Stonework disturbed over south ground floor window where lintel has failed. Internal stonework between window and door in south wall possibly rebuilt at this time. Two windows with splays (now with concrete sills, modern blocking) in south wall; east window appears forced through. Joist sockets and occasional timber stubs visible for 1st storey floor in north and south walls. Some surviving plaster on south wall and in reveals of windows.

3.3.3 PHASE #3 – late 18th century

Phase #2 structure (Room 1) western gable rebuilt from ground up, ?with integral chimney stack, buttresses added to Phase #2 structure, north and south walls.

Surviving elements

West gable almost entirely rebuilt, including quoins to north and south walls, probably with integral chimney stack from start. Stonework roughly coursed, with large quoins, mostly all sub-rounded weathered siltstone but with some angular slate rubble stone. Individual stones up to 1.0m long in internal face (possibly rebuilt when bread oven added?); external quoins up to 600×160mm. Bonded with a hard but crumbly, coarse, light brown mortar, with lime

inclusions, badly weathered externally; multiple episodes of mortaring/pointing identified during works to reduce the height of the gable. Chimney stack projects 0.7m from gable and steps in twice; appears poorly tied-in to the gable, but build identical. Flue measures 0.05×0.45m and tapers nicely from base. Large fireplace, 1.42m wide, on ground floor with heavy timber lintel over; lintel is shaped on its internal face and partly burnt. Shallow alcove to south of fireplace.

Two buttresses constructed abutting the north and south walls of the Phase #2 structure; taper slightly to the top and are loosely tied into the Phase #2 walls. Largely composed of roughly-coursed sub-angular to sub-rounded weathered silt rubble stone, bonded with brittle earth and lime mortar with coarse inclusions. Buttresses on north wall may have framed a porch for the door.

3.3.4 PHASE #4 – 19th century

Phase #3 structure (Room 1) east gable partially rebuilt, north-east corner with Benchmark rebuilt.

Surviving elements

East gable of Room 1 from 0.6m (internally) and 1.0m (externally). Stonework predominantly comprised of quarried angular slate rubble stone similar to the Phase #1 walls, but averaging slightly larger in size, less well coursed and less fine overall. Bonded with a crumbly lime mortar. Incorporates an ‘external’ step, visible in north elevation but not in south elevation, presumably built to accommodate a wall plate for an earlier lean-to on east side of building. First floor fireplace inserted into west gables to provide heated first-floor room; handmade red brick reveals with crude red brick segmental arch; hearth of yellow bricks. During works to reduce the height of the gable a cast iron pipe (the flue) was revealed.

External north-east corner partially rebuilt to take an Ordnance Survey Benchmark. Large greenish-yellow sandstone with benchmark, and large hard pink sandstone/quartzite ‘lintel’ over.

3.3.5 PHASE #5 – 19th century

Phase #4 structure (Room 1) gains a two-storey addition to east (Room 2), bread oven built?

Surviving elements

North, east and south walls of one build, heterogeneous mix of larger sub-angular and sub-rounded slate and silt rubble stone 350×100mm, occasionally larger, roughly coursed. Walls 0.49m (19”) thick; bonded with a hard coarse buff white mortar with coal inclusions. Large square windows with concrete sills in north and south walls at ground and first floor height; ground floor windows have brick segmental arches with brick springers. Lintel for north window on ground floor lost and stonework partially collapsed above. Window frame of sawn pine survives in south window on ground floor, windows on first floor blocked. Chimney breast in east gable projects 0.3m into the room and stops at first floor; small fireplace with brick segmental arch. Narrow joist sockets in east and west walls, now blocked in brick with hard pink mortar. Doors forced through walls of Phase #3 structure to west at ground and first floor level, with ragged or obviously rebuilt stonework. Possibly bread oven added to west gable of Room 1 and accessed from fireplace. Currently roofed with large shaped and reused stone slates (one peg hole observed).

3.3.6 PHASE #6 – 19th century

Phase #5 structure (Room 2) gains a single-storey lean-to (cartshed? Room 3) to east.

Surviving elements

North, east and south walls of poorly-coursed heterogeneous stonework, with a high proportion of sub-rounded and rounded stones, bonded with a hard, coarse off-white mortar with large inclusions. Large opening in north wall (cartshed?) and single window with thin oak lintel in south wall. First floor fireplace inserted into east gable to provide heated first-floor room; red brick reveals with crude red brick segmental arches.

3.3.7 PHASE #7 – 19th century

Phase #6 structure (Room 1) gains a single-storey lean-to (diary) to north; porch to south, internal space re-organised.

Surviving elements

North, east and west walls of one build, coarse and poorly-sorted stone rubble stone with brick quoins and reveals to windows and door. Incorporates one of the northern buttresses. Height much reduced during prior consolidation; walls 0.38m (15”) thick. Windows in north and west walls; window in north wall blocked, window in west wall blocked but retains sawn pine frame. Door in east wall retains sawn pine frame with iron fittings. Porch added to south door, possibly indicating the building re-orientated to south, away from farm buildings. Porch utilised existing buttress; stonework of roughly-coursed mainly sub-angular to sub-rounded weathered silt rubble stone, bonded with a hard coarse white mortar. Walls 0.44-0.48m (17-20”) thick. Roof of sawn pine rafters with thin regular blue slates. Open front later partially closed in with re-used brick, rendered on the exterior, and a large white sink installed on brick piers. Small square window with brick reveals forced through north wall.

Internal organisation of Room 1

Room 1 divided into two small square rooms separated by corridors. Concrete floors in the two rooms, corridors floored with smooth pale blue slate flagstones, of which only a few survive. Floor steps down to the south doorway, implying interior floor levels may have been built up and historic features may thus survive. Stairs may have been located parallel with the north wall on the western side.

3.3.8 PHASE #8 – 20th century

Phase #7 structure gains an agricultural extension to the north; cast iron range inserted into fireplace.

Surviving elements

Pillar of concrete blocks and concrete floor and steps. Corrugated edge of concrete floor indicates north wall formerly of corrugated tin. Cast iron range (or replaced?) marked ‘CASTLE HILL 1944’ inserted into fireplace in west gable, original space closed in with shallow-frogged bricks.

3.3.9 PHASE #9 – later 20th century

Dilapidated Phase #7 structure ‘consolidated’ and asymmetric roof installed; other historic elements lost.

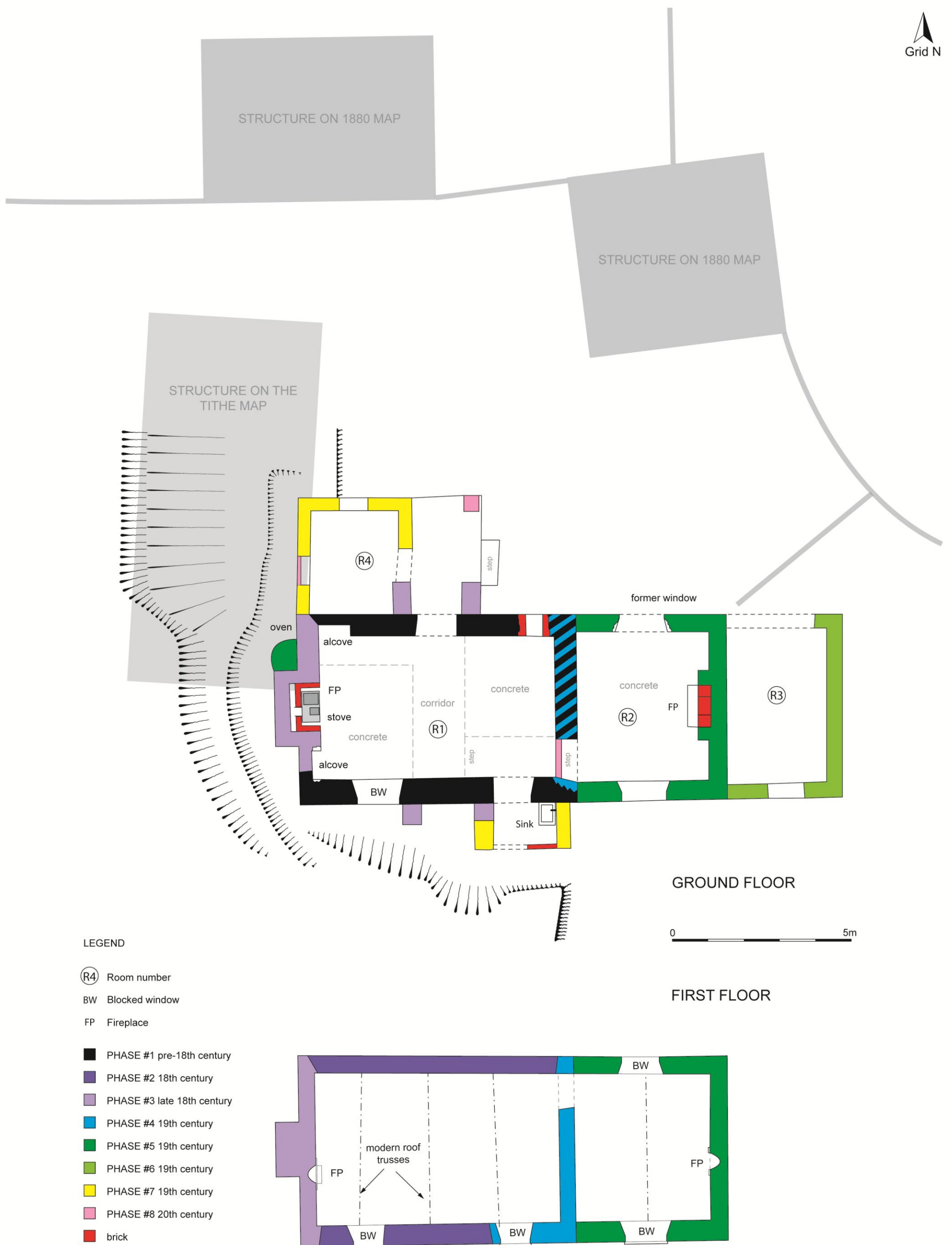
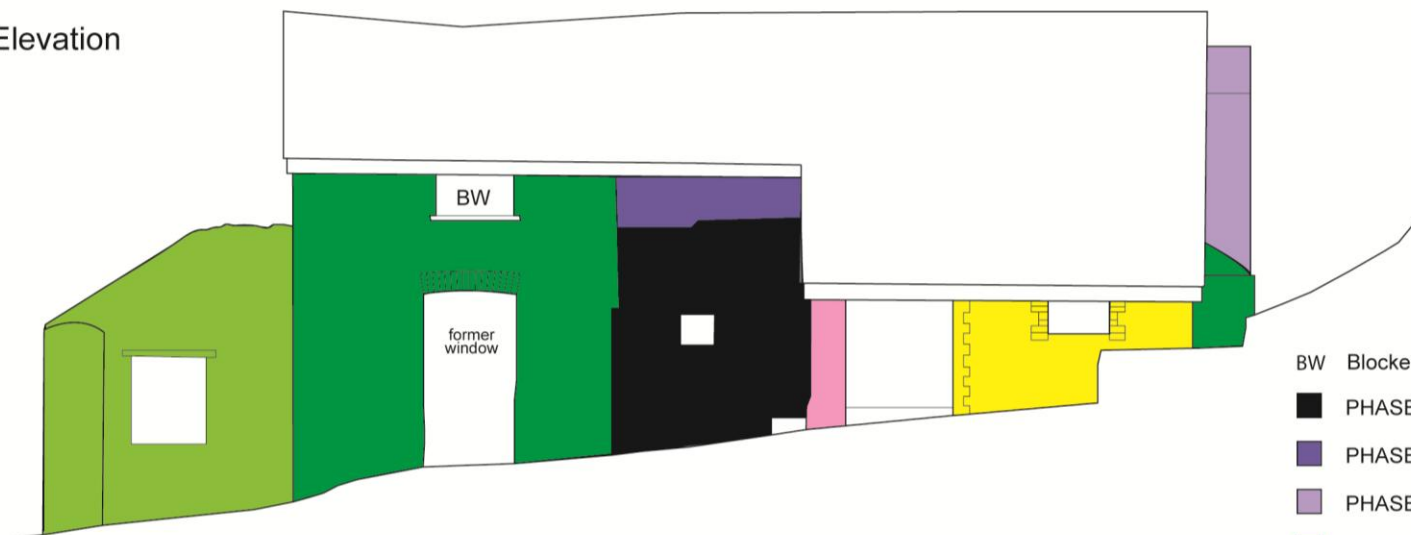
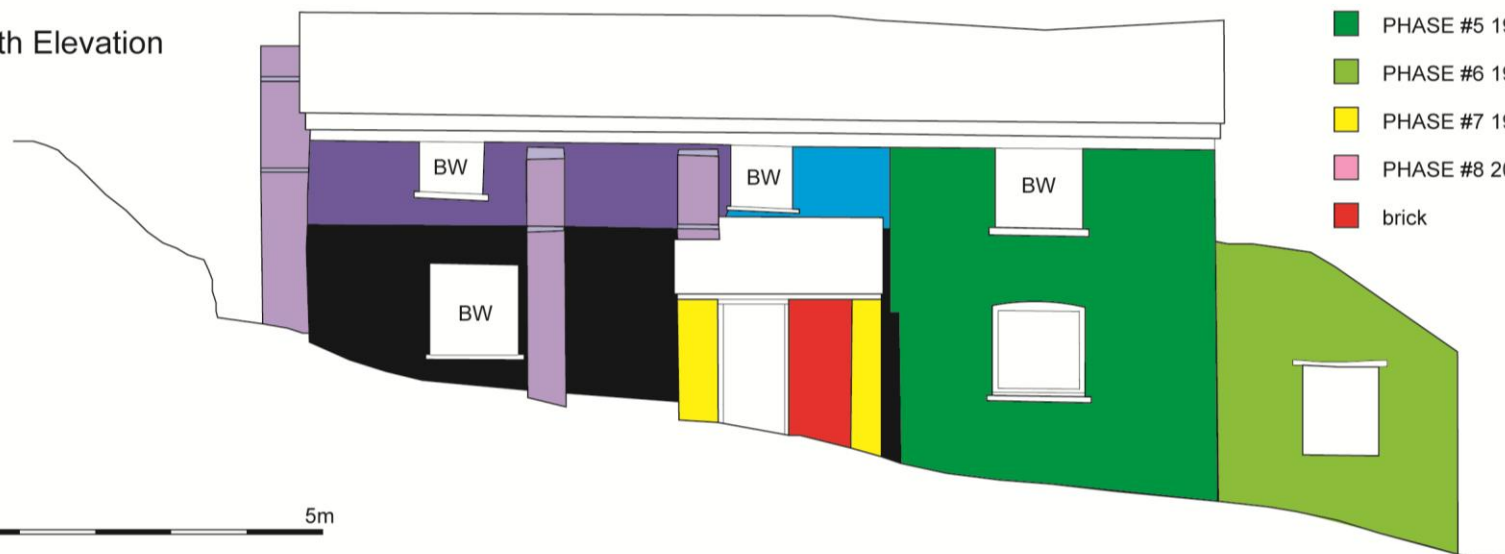


Figure 17: Revised phasing for Hoar Oak Cottage, showing the relationship with other structures on the site.

North Elevation



South Elevation

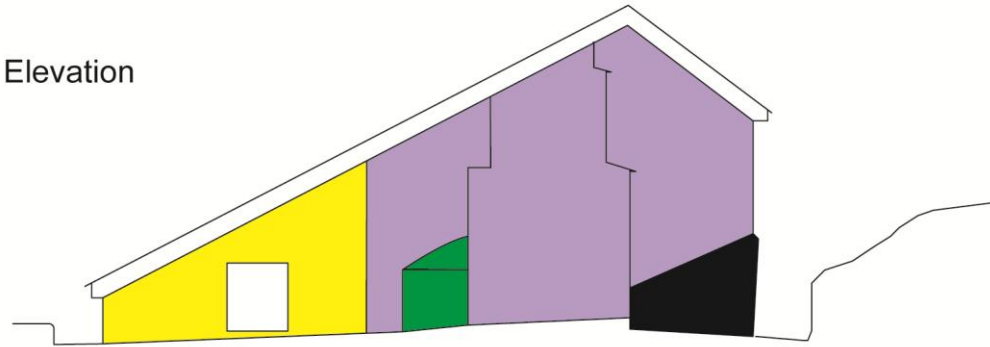


- BW Blocked window
- PHASE #1 pre-18th century
- PHASE #2 18th century
- PHASE #3 late 18th century
- PHASE #4 19th century
- PHASE #5 19th century
- PHASE #6 19th century
- PHASE #7 19th century
- PHASE #8 20th century
- brick

0 5m

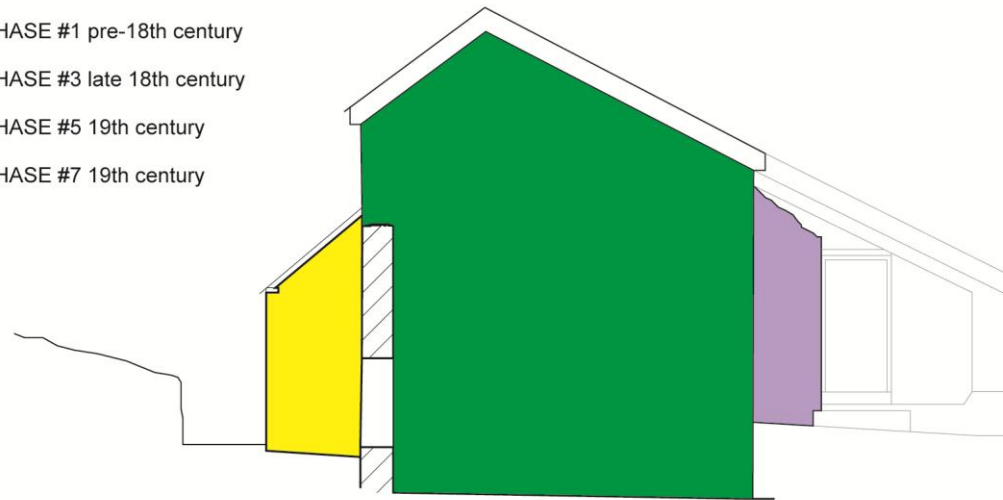
Figure 18: External north and south elevations.

West Elevation



LEGEND

- PHASE #1 pre-18th century
- PHASE #3 late 18th century
- PHASE #5 19th century
- PHASE #7 19th century



East Elevation



Figure 19: External east and west elevations.

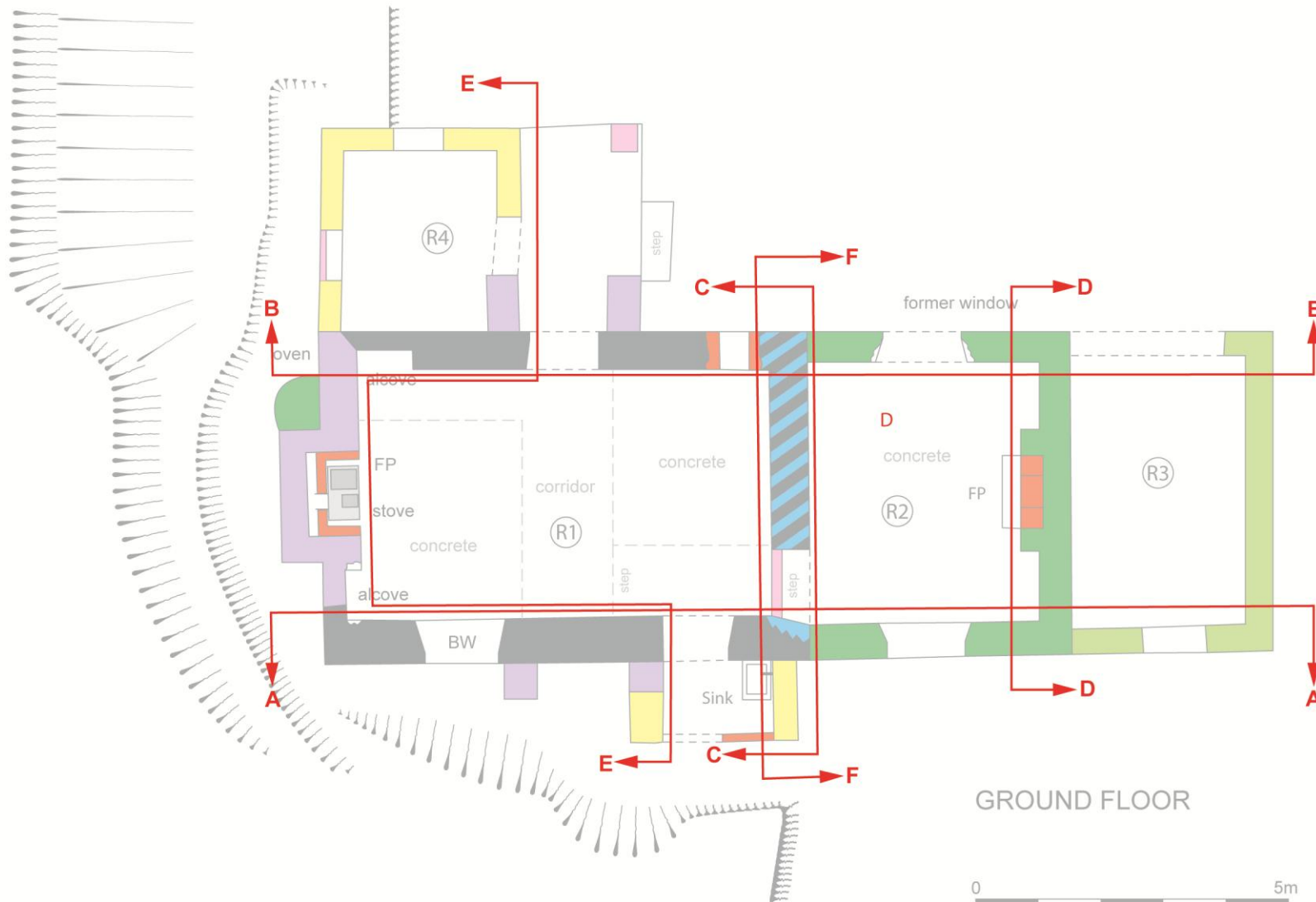


Figure 20: Ground floor plan showing the location of the internal elevations (Figure 20 and Figure 21).

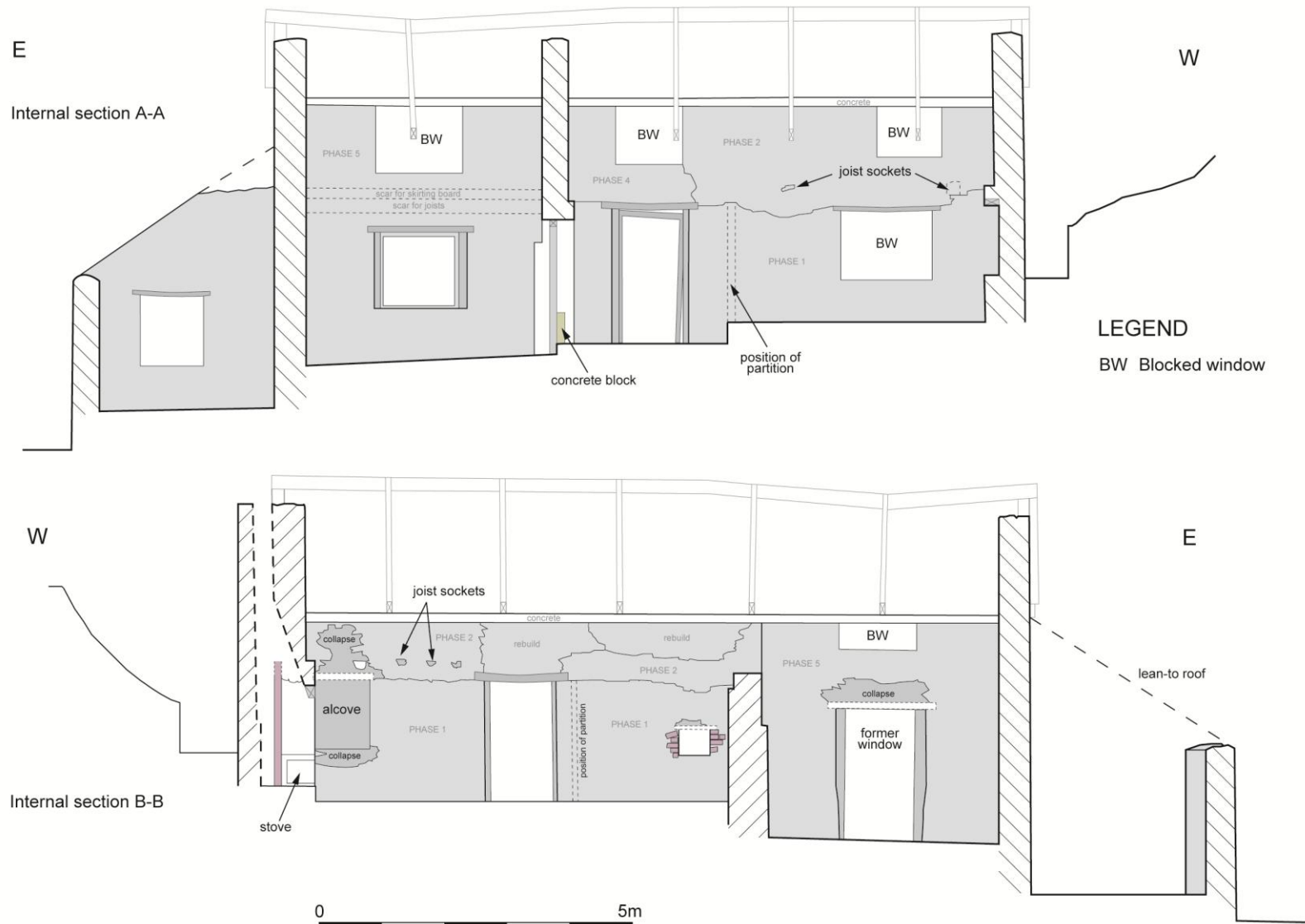
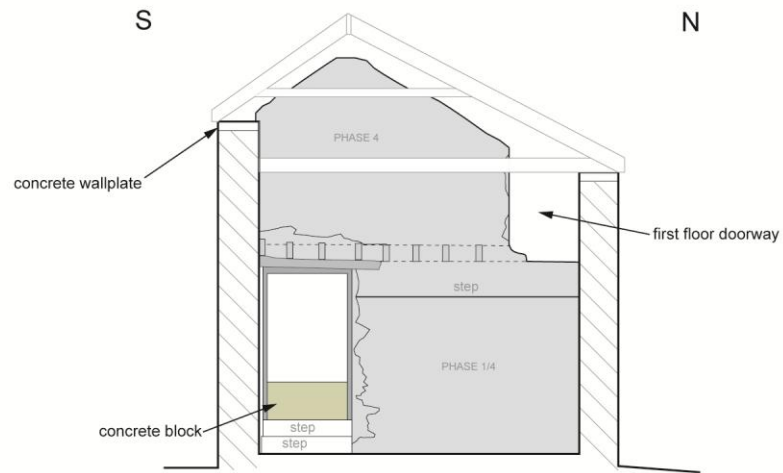


Figure 21: Internal elevations.

Internal section C-C



Internal Section D-D

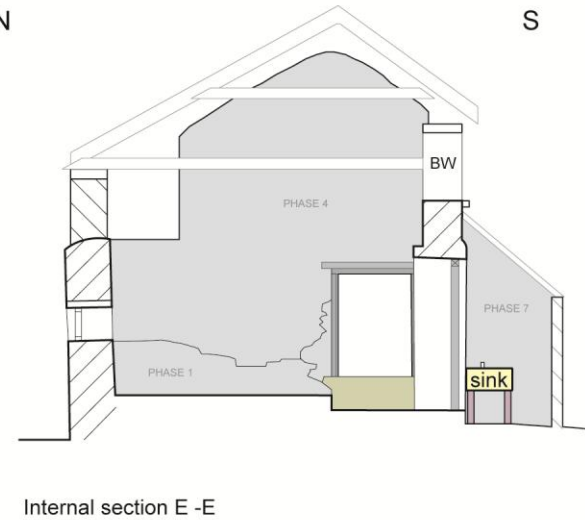
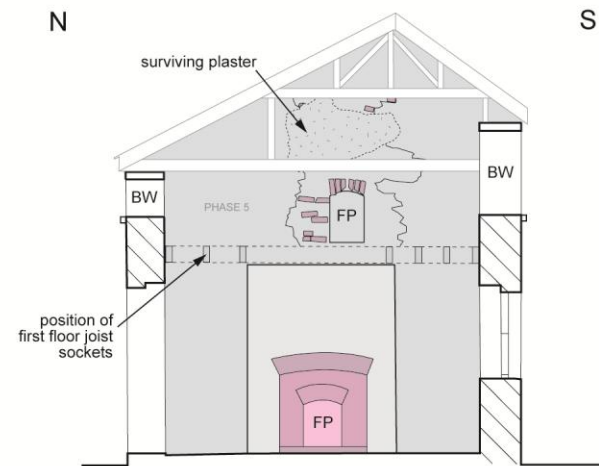


Figure 22: Internal elevations.



Figure 23: Room 1, north-west angle (scale 2m).



Figure 24: Room 1, north elevation, western end, showing the clear difference between the Phase 1 (lower) and Phase 2 (upper) stonework (scale 2m).



Figure 25: Room 2, from above, showing the fireplaces in the eastern gable (scale 2m).



Figure 26: Hoar Oak Cottage, following the reduction of unstable masonry; viewed from the south-west.

4.1 Hoar Oak Cottage in Historical Context

Hoar Oak Cottage is the final surviving remnant of Hoar Oak Farm. This was part of the Furzehill estate belonging to the Vellacott family and lay within Lynton parish. Vellacotts were present in Lynton parish at least as early as 1637, when Tomosin Vellacott was baptised there. Furzehill is recorded as early as 1198 (Gover *et al.* 1931, 65), and is one of the liminal settlements of the Exmoor upland fringe.

It is very probable that, like the other farms bordering the Royal Forest, the sheep of Furzehill would have been pastured on the moor in the summer, and that the shepherd(s) would have needed some form of accommodation.

The 1809 Ordnance Survey one inch map (surveyed *c.* 1805) shows an enclosure in the vicinity of Hoar Oak Cottage, and on the Exmoor Inclosure map of 1818 (SRO) there is an annotation immediately beyond the north-western boundary of the Forest reading *Hoar Oak Inclosure*.

The tithe map demonstrates that Hoar Oak Cottage (*née Farm*) sat within a group of fields, irregular in shape but with straight-sided boundaries. That would appear to suggest that the cottage and its curtilage lie at the heart of a venture in moorland cultivation of probable 18th century date. However, the evidence for a morphologically distinct set of field boundaries of probable medieval date on the eastern flanks of the same valley would indicate the extant fields at Hoar Oak merely represent the last phase of enclosure.

The documentary and cartographic evidence would indicate Hoar Oak Cottage was present from the start of the 19th century, and had nothing to do with the Knights until at least the mid-19th century.

4.2 Hoar Oak Cottage in Structural Context

A thorough – and in part destructive – examination of the standing building demonstrates the complexity of this multi-period structure. The earliest surviving remains point to a single-storey, single-cell building, perhaps with a sleeping or hay loft over. The quality and character of the stonework could suggest this structure was 17th century in date, although it may have been partially or wholly ruinous by the 18th century. During the 18th century the structure was raised to two stories, and later the western gable was rebuilt with an integral chimney stack. The form and character of the stack is crucial to the phasing of this building; it is archaic in form, as by the 19th century stacks were largely internal or flues incorporated into the wall thickness (as in Room 2), but the selection of building material – i.e. stone – restricts how easily such architectural niceties may be achieved. On balance, and assuming there was no deliberate attempt to mislead, this stack is 18th century in date. During the 19th century the building was extended to the east, and later to the north as well.

The key to understanding this structure is its relationship to the other main building shown on the tithe map. If we entertain the possibility this was originally a farm building, and was only subsequently converted into a domestic dwelling, then it becomes less inexplicable. The rather enigmatic reference to ‘houses and yard’ (plural) in the tithe apportionment would then suggest two dwellings, of which only one survives. Exploratory investigation of the earthworks behind Hoar Oak Cottage could help clarify this issue.

What remains inexplicable is the effort made to maintain this remote dwelling – we can only assume that (for whatever reason) the investment in repairs, rebuilds and extensions was warranted. A useful comparison can be made with the Listed farmhouses at North and South Furzehill Farm, which appear to be just as structurally complex, and are dated to the 16th and 17th century (see Listing, Appendix 3). The fact that John Vellacott was resident in 1839 would imply it was seen as a discrete property within the estate, and discredit the notion it was merely intended to be a seasonally-occupied shepherds hut.

4.3 Conclusion

Hoar Oak Cottage is an interesting, multi-period structure located in a remote and isolated part of Exmoor. The fact that it only enters the documentary and cartographic record in the 19th century is irrelevant: the character and complexity of the building, the possible parallels with North and South Furzehill Farm, and its relationship with its relict landscape, strongly suggests a ‘long chronology’ for the site is appropriate.

The building was renovated and extended several times in the 18th and 19th centuries, and was home to farmers as well as shepherds during that time. It may have been a farm outbuilding that was later converted to domestic accommodation, extensively renovated and finally abandoned, over the course of three centuries.

Given the plethora of relict field boundaries of probable medieval date on the eastern side of Hoar Oak Water, Hoar Oak Cottage should not be considered to be a new foundation on a virgin site: it was simply the last inhabited dwelling within a largely abandoned marginal medieval landscape. Historic research and standing building recording are unlikely to provide any additional information, and targeted fieldwork – including an assessment of the buildings at Furzehill – would be required to further our understanding of this settlement within its landscape context.

5.0 Bibliography and References

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Unpublished Sources:

Devon Record Office (DRO):

Lynton Tithe Apportionment 1839

Lynton tithe map 1840

Ordnance Survey Second Edition map at 1:2500

North Devon Record Office (NDRO):

Land Tax Records 1780-1832, Lynton Parish

Census Returns for Devon, 1841-1901

West Country Studies Library:

Ordnance Survey Surveyor's Draft, c.1805

Ordnance Survey First Edition map at 1:2500

Exmoor National Park Historic Environment Record:

HER MMO1480225; MMO1480131; MDE20822

Aerial photographs for 1946 and 1977

Devon County Historic Environment Service (DCHES):

HER 12241; 13967; 18181

Websites:

www.Ancestry.co.uk UK Census Records 1851-1901

www.hoaroakcottage.org: information and images

Appendix 1

Extracts from the Exmoor National Park Historic Environment Record & the Devon County Historic Environment Record

Exmoor National Park Historic Environment Record:

MMO1480225

NGR: SS 7420 4356

Description and Sources

Hoar Oak was probably constructed sometime in the early 19th century, after the Royal Forest of Exmoor ceased to exist. According to the Tithe Apportionment for Lynton of 1839, the house and land around it was owned by John Vellacott. The first edition Ordnance Survey map of 1889 shows at least three buildings centred around a courtyard. According to Burton, the farm was let to various tenants throughout the 19th century and leased to Frederic Knight sometime after 1867, who installed a Scottish Shepherd here and used it as a base for his sheep herd on The Chains. It was the longest-lived of the Knight family's herdings, and the house was not abandoned until 1959. It was acquired by Exmoor National Park Authority in 1967 and remains uninhabited in the possession of the Park Authority (1-3).

MMO1480131

NGR: SS 7423 4358

Description and Sources

A post medieval water meadow system, known locally as a catchwater meadow, is visible on aerial photographs as a series of earthworks east of Hoar Oak cottage, Lynton and Lynmouth. Centred at approximately SS 7423 4358, two parallel gutters are visible, running approximately north-south and measuring up to 65 metres long. The gutters run along the contours of the steep east-facing slope above Hoar Oak Water.

Catchwater meadows used a series of approximately parallel gutters to distribute flowing water evenly over the surface of the meadow, in order to prevent freezing in winter and encourage early growth in spring, thereby providing extra feed for livestock. This system appears to be connected to the farmyard at Hoar Oak, suggesting that this was an integrated system which also distributed liquid manure as fertiliser to the fields. Most catchwater meadows are believed to date to the post medieval period, although it is possible that they were first developed in the medieval period (1-2).

MDE20822

NGR: SS 7416 4352

Description and Sources

Hoar Oak. Deserted farm site. Good on 1977 and 1947 aps. (McDonnell). (1)

Extracts from Devon County Historic Environment Record:

HER 12241:

NGR: SS742-4350

Description:

Arrowhead: A leaf-shaped arrowhead found at Hoar Oak is illustrated by Chanter. A barbed-and-tanged arrowhead from Hoar Oak is illustrated in TDA Vol.38.

This is part of a group of several B&T arrowheads found near Hoar Oak by John Richards, labourer. (Grinsell)
Grinsell, L.V. 1970: *The Archaeology of Exmoor*, page 187.

HER 13967:

NGR: SS7398 4354

Description:

Ring Cairn: A circular half-covered stony bank, 1.0m wide and 0.3m maximum height, possibly with a kerb wall. Central area c.6.5m diameter at natural ground level. Within, an eccentrically positioned turf covered cairn 2.5m diameter and 0.20m high near the centre of which is a round topped slab, almost certainly a boundary stone (RCHME 1989)

HER 18181:

NGR: SS74364358

Description:

Enclosure: Small, rectangular ditched enclosure associated with Hoar Oak Farm. Very good on 1947 and 1977 AP's (McDonnell).

Appendix 2

Details from the Lynton tithe apportionment, 1839.

Number	Owner	Occupier	Name
952	John Vellacott	John Vellacott	Homer Field
956	"	"	Higher Hills
957	"	"	Lower Hills
963	"	"	Outer Piece
951	"	"	Bottom of Homer Field
953	"	"	Gate Field
954	"	"	Moory Field
955	"	"	Higher Six Acres
958	"	"	Houses and Yard
959	"	"	Field Under Houses
960	"	"	Lower Six Acres
961	"	"	Moor
962	"	"	Daisey Field
964	"	"	Bottom Piece
965	"	"	Goviers Lake
966	"	"	Bottom
967	"	"	Mountain

Appendix 3

Listings for North and South Furzehill Farms

Name: SOUTH FURZEHILL FARMHOUSE

List entry Number: 1290587

GV II

Farmhouse, used as holiday accommodation. C16 or C17, substantial later modifications, including added late C20 bay. Rubble, one gable rendered, slate roof. A long single depth range, stepped up at the left (E) end. A long single-depth continuous ridge, and unusual layout, with 2 large lateral eaves stacks on the entrance (N) side. 2 storeys. The entrance front has a large garage opening to concrete lintel to the left, then 2 separate but joined outshuts under swept down roofs; that to the left with plank door and a large rectangular opening, and to the right a 2-plank door set in reveals. Above this door is a small casement set in to the roof as a reversed dormer. The main wall has 2 small casements to the ground floor. The right gable, part of the C20 extension, has a gable casement above a wide steel casement. The rear wall includes 2 half-dormers with gables over, and casements at the ground and first floors, including 2 with rough drip-courses, and a small light similar to fire-bay or staircase light; there are 2 lean-to buttresses, and far right the house is linked by a covered passage to the new farmhouse (not included). INTERIOR: the main parlour has a large lateral fireplace at one end, with 2 bread ovens, and new bressumer, the floor is in stone flags and on the far wall a lateral timber staircase is enclosed by C19 panelling, with a plank door. This space has a very low ceiling, but with C20 joists. To the right, down one step, is the late C20 kitchen addition. To the left the remainder of the ground floor is closed off to the large garage space. Upstairs there are various thin C19 or earlier plank doors, and over the stair is an exposed rough principal, no longer supporting the roof, which appears to have been rebuilt, but there are early purlins at the upper end. An interesting early building, so much altered as to be difficult to interpret. That there was an early manor farm here is attested by the presence of the chapel (qv) which lies to the N, and the external form of the farmhouse suggests the possibility of C16 provenance, although no other detail remains from this period. (Chanter JF: History of the Parishes of Lynton and Countisbury: Exeter: 1907-).

Name: FORMER CHAPEL AT SOUTH FURZEHILL FARM

List entry Number: 1201152

GV II

Chapel dedicated to St John the Baptist, now outbuilding. Late medieval, much modified. Rubble, corrugated iron roof. Single-unit plan space with an attached outshut, approx 20m to the N of the old farmhouse (qv). The long roof-slope facing the farmhouse is contained in rough coped gable ends. It is entered from the S by plank doors, up wide stone steps to the 'nave', which retains no recognisable detail, but has an opening with wood lintels through a thick wall to the right, and evidence of blocked openings in the end gable wall and a small niche; this wall is not bonded to the 2 lateral walls. There is some transparent corrugated sheeting to the N slope. The pinnacles at North Furzehill (qv) and Ye Old Cottage (qv), Barbrook, said to have come from this chapel. (Chanter JF: History of the Parishes of Lynton and Countisbury: Exeter: 1907-).

Name: NORTH FURZEHILL FARMHOUSE WITH WALLS AND PINNACLES TO ENTRANCE

List entry Number: 1282805

GV II

Farmhouse. Late C16, later modifications. Rubble, painted to front and gables, tile roof. A 3-room cross-passage plan with heated outer rooms; the upper end, to the right of the passage, is at a higher level than the lower; at the lower end is a small rear wing, originally of 1 storey, raised to 2 in the C20. Garage to left added 1993-4. 2 storeys; 4-window range. Irregular fenestration, all C18 or C19 casements, with 4 or 6 panes, to wood lintels. At first floor is a small 2-light, then beyond a break in the wall, three further 2-light, those to the right at a higher level. The ground floor has a 3-light with rough stone drip-course, in the set-back part of the wall, then a C20 two-light and a further C19 flanking the doorway, with C20 door. Each gable end has a stack, that to the right stepped, in stone, and to the left the same, but the upper part in brick; this gable steps back beyond the stack. The eaves slopes down to the left, following the slope across the site, and providing a deeper soffit over the recessed wall. The right gable has a small single light, and the back has a C20 glazed door to the upper room, and 2-light beyond. There is a swept-down roof to right of centre, merging with the later gabled wing. INTERIOR: considerably modified, especially at the ground floor, but many historic elements remain. The upper room has a wide fireplace with late C16 ovolo-moulded and stopped bressumer; the first-floor room above has a crude pegged A-frame roof, with 2 purlins and

diagonal ridge purlin. The lower room also has a fireplace with deep bressumer beam, and a cloam oven. The upper level has trusses with curved feet (characteristic of an early date) and a pegged collar, with rough scarfed purlins; there were formerly pegged rafters. There is an early framed partition above and below the collar level. **SUBSIDIARY FEATURES:** flanking the main entrance are 2 dwarf walls, carrying on their outer ends remains of square stone pinnacles with gablet faces; these are said to have come from the former chapel (qv) at South Furzehill Farmhouse (qv).

Appendix 4

List of jpegs contained on the CD Rom at the rear of this report

Number	Description	From	Scale
1	North & west exterior elevations	NW	2m
2	West exterior elevation	W	2m
3	West exterior elevation, detail of stack & oven	NW	2m
4	West exterior elevation, detail of slates on oven	NW	2m
5	West exterior elevation, detail of stack	SW	2m
6	West exterior elevation, detail of stack joint	SW	2m
7	As above, first storey detail	SW	2m
8	West exterior elevation, detail of structural crack	W	2m
9	South & west exterior elevations	SW	2m
10	As above, showing detail of structural crack	SW	2m
11	South exterior elevation, Room 1	S	2m
12	South exterior elevation, Room 1, west end	S	2m
13	As above	S	2m
14	South exterior elevation, Room 1, centre	S	2m
15	South Porch exterior	SW	2m
16	South exterior elevation, Room 1, west end, above Porch	S	2m
17	South Porch exterior	S	2m
18	South exterior elevation, Room 2	SSE	2m
19	As above, detail of windows	S	2m
20	South exterior elevation, Room 3	S	2m
21	South & east exterior elevations	SE	2m
22	East exterior elevation, Room 3	E	2m
23	East exterior elevation, Room 2, top of gable	E	2m
24	North & east exterior elevations	NE	2m
25	East exterior elevation, Room 2	NE	2m
26	North exterior elevation, Room 2 and Room 3	N	2m
27	North exterior elevation, Room 2	N	2m
28	As above, detail of door	N	2m
29	North exterior elevation, Room 1, east end	N	2m
30	North exterior elevation, Room 1, centre, detail of door & buttress	N	2m
31	North exterior elevation, Room 4	N	2m
32	North exterior elevation, Room 1	N	2m
33	East exterior elevation, Room 4	E	2m
34	As above, detail of door	E	2m
35	West internal elevation, Room 4, detail of window	E	2m
36	As above	E	-
37	North internal elevation, Room 4	S	2m
38	North exterior elevation, Room 1, detail of west buttress	NW	2m
39	North exterior Elevation, Room 1, detail of east buttress	NW	2m
40	North exterior elevation, Room 1, detail of stonework over door & lintel	N	2m
41	North exterior elevation, Room 1, detail of east window	N	2m
42	North exterior elevation, Room 1, north-east corner, showing OS BM	N	2m
43	As above, detail of Benchmark	N	2m
44	Interior, Room 3	N	2m
45	North exterior elevation, Room 3, north-east corner	NW	2m
46	East exterior elevation, Room 2, oblique	NE	2m
47	North & east interior elevations, Room 2	SW	2m
48	East interior elevation, Room 2, fireplace	W	2m
49	As above, detail of first floor fireplace	W	-
50	South & east interior elevations, Room 2	NW	2m
51	South interior elevation, Room 2	N	2m
52	As above, detail of ground floor window	N	2m
53	Landscape photograph through window	NW	-
54	South & west interior elevations, Room 2	NE	2m
55	West interior elevation, Room 2, detail of door	E	2m
56	West interior elevation, Room 2, lower section	E	2m
57	West interior elevation, Room 2, central section	E	2m
58	West interior elevation, Room 2, upper section	E	-
59	West & north interior elevations, Room 2	SE	2m
60	West & north interior elevations, Room 2, detail of abutting stonework	SE	2m
61	North interior elevation, Room 2	S	2m

62	As above, detail of door	S	-
63	As above, detail of failing brick segmental arch	S	2m
64	North & east interior elevations, Room 1	SW	2m
65	As above	SW	2m
66	As above, detail of abutting stonework	SW	2m
67	East interior elevation, Room 1	W	2m
68	As above, detail of Phase 1 stonework	W	2m
69	As above, detail of door	W	2m
70	South & east interior elevations, Room 1	NW	2m
71	South interior elevation, Room 1, east end	N	2m
72	As above, detail of door	N	2m
73	South interior elevation, Room 1, centre	N	2m
74	South Interior elevation, Room 1, west end	N	2m
75	South & west interior elevations, Room 1	NE	2m
76	West interior elevation, Room 1	E	2m
77	As above, detail of fireplace	E	2m
78	As above, detail of the cast iron stove	E	2m
79	West interior elevation, Room 1, detail of alcove	E	2m
80	West interior elevation, Room 1, detail of first floor fireplace	E	2m
81	North & west interior elevations	SE	2m
82	North interior elevation, detail of alcove	S	2m
83	North interior elevation, west end	S	2m
84	North interior elevation, centre, detail of door	S	2m
85	North interior elevation, east end	S	2m
86	Interior, Room 1, from above	NE	2m
87	South interior elevation, Room 1, from above	NE	2m
88	North interior elevation, Room 1, from above	E	2m
89	East interior elevation, Room 2, from above	NW	2m
90	Interior, Room 1, from above	SW	2m
91	South doorway, Room 1, detail of west side	NE	2m
92	As above, detail of east side	NW	2m
93	Porch, interior, showing ceramic sink	SW	2m
94	South-east aspect, from a distance	SE	-
95	As above	SE	-
<i>Photographs during demolition</i>			
96	South interior elevation, Room 1, east end, showing unblocked window	N	0.3m
97	As above, west end, showing unblocked window	N	0.3m
98	South Interior elevation, Room 1, after window blocking removed	NE	-
99	As above	NW	-
<i>Photographs following demolition work</i>			
100	Phase 1 Interior and West Gable	NE	-
101	Phase 1 Interior, West end of South Wall	NE	-
102	Phase 1 Interior South Wall	NW	-
103	Phase 1 Interior East Wall	NW	-
104	Phase 1 Interior, East end of North Wall	SW	-
105	Phase 1 Interior, West end of North Wall	SE	-
106	Phase 1 Interior, West Gable	E	-
107	Phase 1 Interior, West Gable, Fireplace, oblique	NE	-
108	As above	E	-
109	South and West Exterior, with dog	SW	-
110	As above, without dog	SW	-
111	West Exterior Elevation, Chimney Stack	W	-
112	North and West Exterior Elevations	NW	-
113	As above, from corner of Phase 7 Dairy	NW	-
114	Interior of Room 1, from NW	NW	-
115	Phase 1 North Doorway	N	-



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