

**FORMER LINHAY AT POST OFFICE LANE,
WESTLEIGH, BURLESCOMBE,
DEVON**

HISTORIC BUILDING RECORDING

November 2017

Martin Watts

1 Trinity Cottages
Cullompton
Devon
EX15 1PE

Project WBL260

HISTORIC BUILDING RECORDING OF A FORMER LINHAY AT POST OFFICE LANE, WESTLEIGH, BURLESCOMBE, DEVON

Summary

A former agricultural building, which forms part of a group - part of which was in use as a hotel and public house in the 19th and early 20th centuries - on Post Office Lane, Westleigh, Burlescombe, was recorded prior to its conversion to domestic use. The building, which is of late 18th or early 19th century date, appears to have been constructed as a linhay, a traditional Devon farm building which provided shelter for stock at ground level and fodder storage above. It is built of stone and timber under a corrugated sheet metal roof.

Introduction

This report has been compiled at the request of the site owner to record the historic fabric which will be affected by the proposed conversion of a former linhay at 'Antioch', Post Office Lane, Westleigh, Tiverton, EX16 7HY. The works comprise the conversion of the building to domestic accommodation and are the subject of a planning consent granted by Mid Devon District Council in August 2017 (ref 16/01/01504/FULL). It follows a Written Scheme of Investigation submitted to the Historic Environment Team (HET) of Devon County Council for an archaeological/historic building survey and recording required in accordance with paragraph 141 of the *National Planning Policy Framework* (2012) and the Local Development Framework Policy on Archaeology.

The building, which is currently in use as a wood shed and store, is not listed nor understood to be within the curtilage of a listed building.

A non-intrusive site survey was carried out on 25 September 2017. The building recording broadly conforms to Level 2-3 as set out in *Understanding Historic Buildings: a guide to good recording practice* (English Heritage 2006).

Digital copies of this report will be deposited with the Devon County Council Historic Environment Service and uploaded onto the OASIS (Online AccesS to the Index of archaeological investigationS) database under the identification number martinwa1-297888.

This report is intended to be read with the drawings and photographs attached. The drawings are based on plans and elevations prepared by Clive Jackson Building Design of Bristol.

Location

The former linhay backs on to Post Office Lane, Westleigh, a village in the north of Burlescombe parish, NGR ST 05989 17141. The site stands at about 117m above Ordnance Datum. The underlying geology is at the junction of the Aylesbeare Mudstone group, comprising Triassic siltstone and sandstone, and the Carboniferous Westleigh limestone (BGS). There are extensive limestone quarries immediately to the north of the site.

Historical background

Westleigh is a former manor and tithing, now a small village, within the parish of Burlescombe. The Carboniferous limestone which outcrops to the north of the village has been extensively exploited since at least the 18th century and the production and transport of lime was one of the incentives for the construction of the Grand Western Canal in 1810-14

(Fenn 2005). Quarrying and lime-burning, together with agriculture, were the principal activities of the inhabitants of Westleigh in the 19th century. The Westleigh Lime and Stone Company Limited appears to have been started by Henry Dunsford, a Tiverton banker, who had a variety of commercial interests. In 1797 he was described as a draper and grocer; in 1810 as a lime-burner and vendor, and in 1830 as an attorney. His son, also Henry, was born in 1801 and joined the company in 1846, continuing the Dunsford connection with the Westleigh quarry until his death in 1888, when the Company was put up for sale by auction (Fenn 2005, 5; 32). The tithe apportionment of c.1840 records Henry Dunsford's total holding in Burlescombe parish as a little over 78.5 acres (31.8 hectares), including the property at Westleigh, which is listed in the apportionment under the heading *Gwynns*. This property was occupied by John Sansome and described as 'Hotel Garden and Barton' (Burlescombe TA, 9, Figure 1). In 1850 it was noted that 'a great part of the parish [Burlescombe] belongs to the heirs of the late Sir Wm. Follett, R. H. Clarke, Esq., Henry Dunsford, Esq., and other freeholders' and under Westleigh, J. McLead is listed as victualler at Farmers' Inn (White 1850, 324-5). The first edition 1:2500 Ordnance Survey map (1888-9) marks 'Farmer's Hotel' and the second edition (1903-4) 'Farmers' Hotel (PH)' (Figures 2 & 3). The building which is the subject of this report is shown on both the tithe map of 1840 and the Ordnance Survey maps.

Farmer's Hotel, Westleigh, is recorded in trade directories from 1878 to 1919 (from <http://pubhistory.com/Devon/Burlescombe/FarmersHotel.shtml>, accessed 21.09.17)

Some alterations and repairs to the linhay have been carried out by the present owner, including replacing the roof cladding and infilling the front with timber studwork and weatherboarding in the mid 1970s (site owner, pers comm). The building is currently used for storage.

Description

The building is orientated NW - SE, its former open front facing NE. It appears to have been built as a five-bay linhay with an additional enclosed bay at its NW end. This bay has subsequently been slightly reduced in length and the NW gable end rebuilt in concrete blockwork. The external NW corner has brick quoins and the blockwork is rendered and painted. The rear wall, which backs onto Post Office Lane, and the SE gable are of local rubble stone (siltstone and sandstone). Three stone buttresses have been built against the SE end of the rear wall, on the road side. On the NE side are four tapering circular stone columns which define the open bays. This side of the building faced onto a small yard which was entered through a gateway at its S end. There were formerly outbuildings on the NE side of the yard, of which some low stone walls remain which have been incorporated in a modern lightweight lean-to extension which partially covers the NE side. The external ground surface in front of bays 2 to 5 has been levelled with concrete, with a ramp and step up between bays 1 and 2 (see plan). The ground formerly sloped down to the SE, falling about 0.9m from NW to SE.

Bay 1, which is in use as a log store, has a plain concrete floor. The inner faces of the gable end and rear walls are lime-washed. The gable wall steps in at eaves level, the upper part being of thinner stonework, into which the roof purlins and ridge are built. There is an inserted brick wall between bays 1 and 2, which rises to the ridge. The upper part is built off the top of the tie beam, with a central column of brick headers which rise from the tie beam to the underside of the collar projecting on the NW side.

The former open fronts of the five bays of the linhay have been infilled with horizontal weatherboarding on timber studs. Bays 1, 2 and 4 have ledged, braced and planked doors and bay 3 has a window. The weatherboarding extends above tie beam level across the front of all the open bays. All of the internal stone walls and the columns are lime-washed. There was formerly an internal wall separating bays 4 and 5, its position having left marks in the lime-wash, and it is understood that bay 5 was formerly floored at or above tie beam level, to form a small loft.

The floor throughout bays 2 to 5 is of mass concrete, with a plain section extending about 1.3m off the rear wall. From this area to the front of building the floor is of mass concrete which has been scored to give the appearance of square tiles. There is a drain in the floor towards the front of the building, which falls with the slope and turns at right angles in bay 2, to empty into an external gully (see plan). There is some evidence visible on the floor that suggests the building was formerly divided into stalls.

The gable wall between bay 5 and the enclosed end bay (6) is of rubble stone, with a blocked opening under a timber lintel. A modern window has been inserted in part of this opening, the remainder being filled with masonry. On the west side is a former doorway which was 1.2m wide. A timber lintel over the doorway is visible in bay 6, as is a horizontal beam which spans between the roof purlins (see photograph). This may be the remains of a former half hip, in which case the ridge of the roof over bays 1 to 5 would appear formerly to have been higher than over the closed NW end.

The enclosed end bay has been truncated at its NW end, the present gable end wall and return which forms the NE corner having been rebuilt in concrete block. The roof timbers and cladding project externally beyond the external face of the wall. Internally, the walls are painted and there is a modern door and frame on the NE side and a modern window in the SW wall, facing the road. The floor is paved with grey limestone slabs.

The tie beams and surviving roof structure over bays 1 to 5 appear to be original, or at least 19th century. The tie beams are roughly squared softwood timbers which span from the rear wall, where their ends are built in, to sit on the tops of the stone columns. They fall slightly from front to rear. The tie beam between bays 4 and 5 has been removed and the sawn end which survives at the front shows it to have been of fast-grown softwood (see photograph). Sitting on top of the front end of each tie beam is a short vertical timber post, standing about 65cm high, on which the foot of the front roof principal bears. The foot is bird's-mouth jointed and halved into the top of the post and held in place with an iron spike. The tie beams, posts and inside of the cladding and studs above the openings are whitewashed.

All of the roof structure is of softwood which has been sparingly converted, basically small logs and half logs which have been roughly squared. There is a central purlin on both slopes which runs across the backs of the principals. Each length of purlin spans two bays, the sections being joined with plain scarfs end to end over the backs of principals. There are plain collars spiked to the NW faces of the principals. The front principals lap over rear ones on the NW side at the apex, where they are halved into each other and held with a wooden peg. The ends pass each other to form a V, in which the ridge purlin, a square timber set diamond-wise, is located. There are also lower purlins which run just above the wall head at the back and at eaves level along the front, which is now boarded over. The roof slopes are clad with corrugated metal sheets, which were renewed by the present owner in the 1970s.

Discussion and dating

There is no clear structural evidence for a floor being carried above the tie beams, to form a loft or tallet for storing fodder, a distinctive feature of Devonshire linhays. The existing survey drawings (which are undated) show that there was formerly a floor at this level in bay 5. It is therefore possible that a floor could have been laid over the beams, with low access for pitching in hay on the NE (open-fronted) side. The circular tapering stone columns which define the bays on the open front are a distinctive feature of this building and give it considerable character and interest.

Some buildings are shown at this location on the Ordnance Survey drawing of 1802, but the scale and clarity are not good enough to determine if the linhay is one of them. It appears on the tithe map, however, so dating its construction to before 1840. At that time the building formed part of a small complex which included a hotel, later described also as a public house, which appears to have supplied provisions to the locality, perhaps including the quarry workers and lime burners. The building may originally have been built as a conventional linhay, with a small yard allowing cattle to wander in and out, with fodder storage above, and perhaps subsequently served as a stable or store, both of which would have been required by the hotel/public house.

Acknowledgements

I am grateful to the site owner for arranging access to the building and for background information and to Sue Watts for her help with the site survey and useful discussion.

Martin Watts
November 2017

References

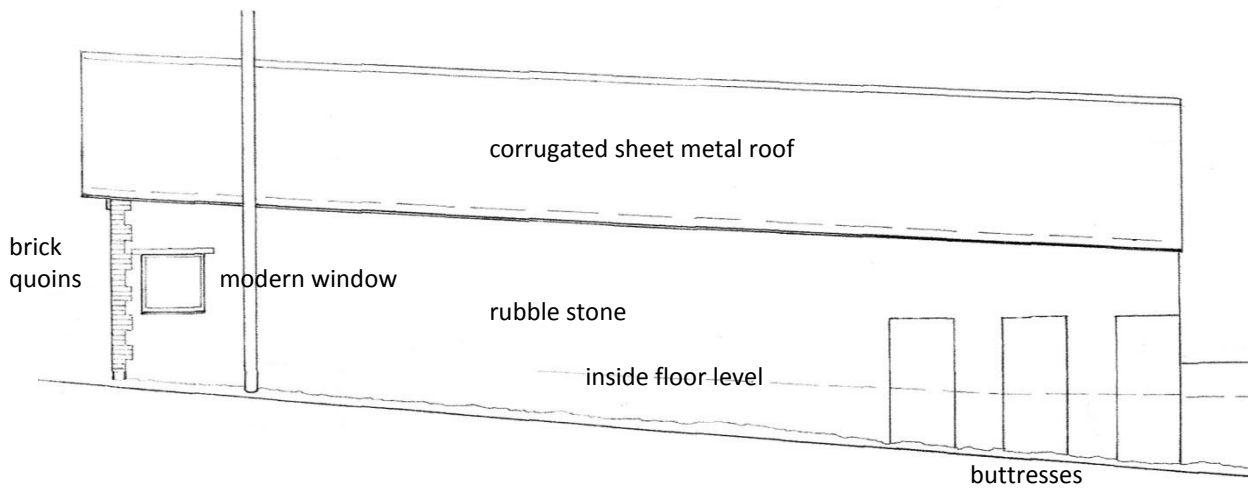
BGS: British Geological Survey
(www.bgs.ac.uk/discoveringGeology/geologyOfBritain/viewer.html accessed 21.09.17)

Fenn, R W D. 2005: *The History of Westleigh Quarry, Devonshire*
(www.aggregate.com/pagefiles/22/aboutus-history-westleigh-quarry.pdf accessed 21.09.2017)

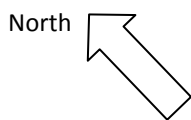
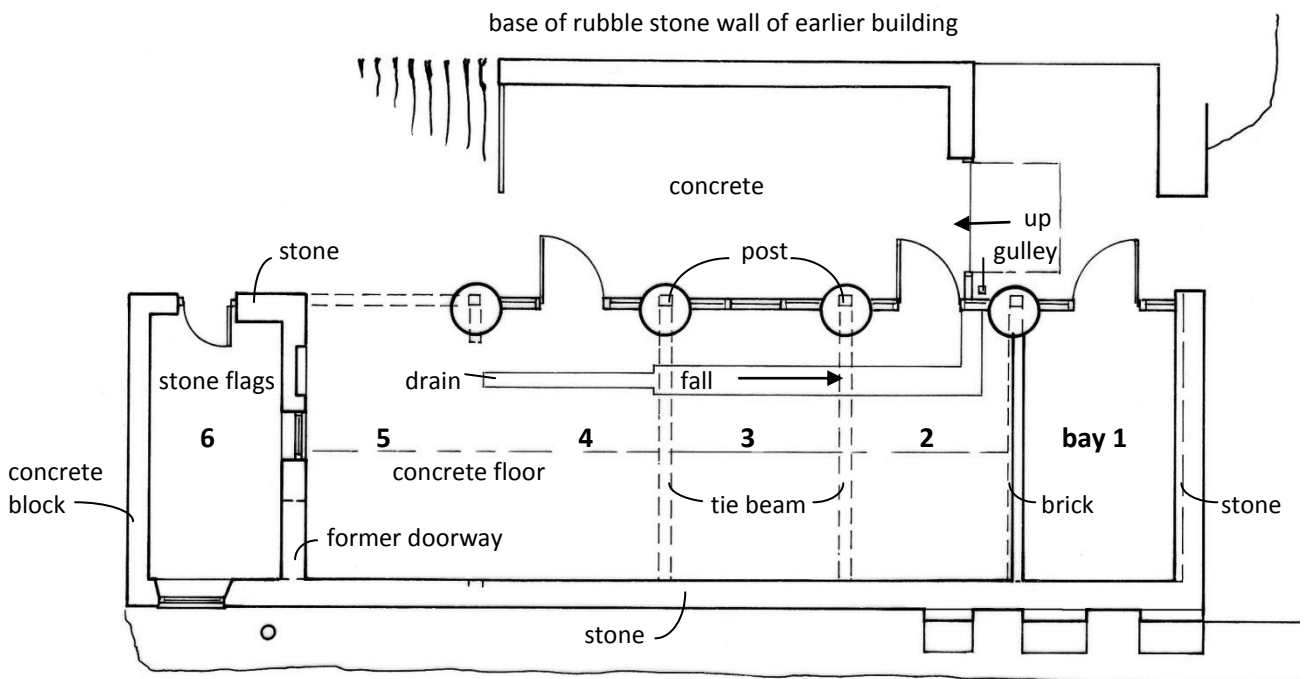
White, W. 1850: *History, Gazetteer and Directory of Devonshire* (reprinted 1968)

Disclaimer

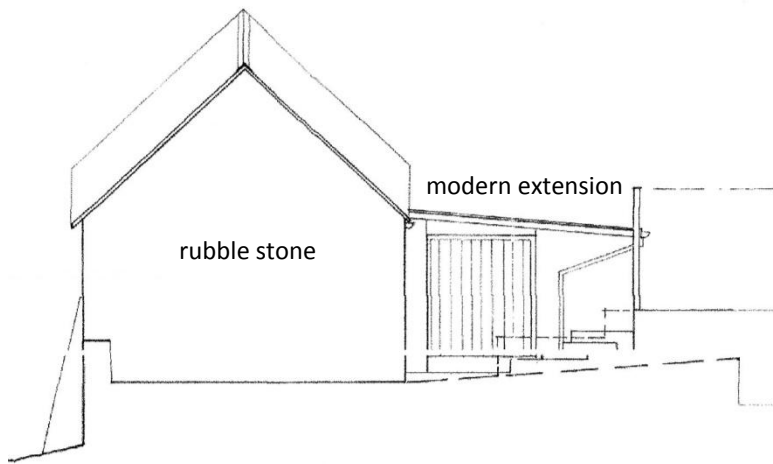
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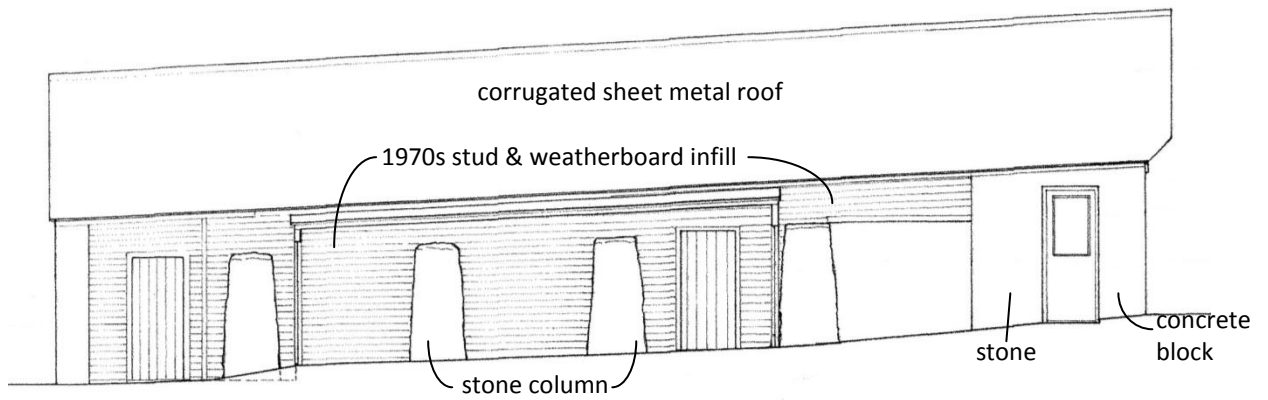
South-west elevation, to Post Office Lane



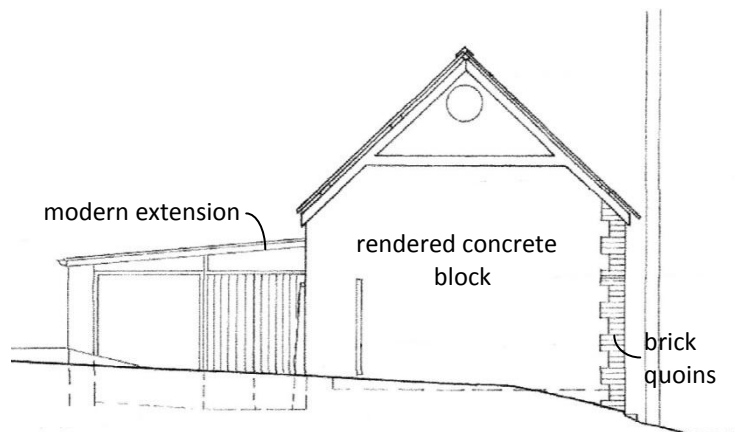
Plan



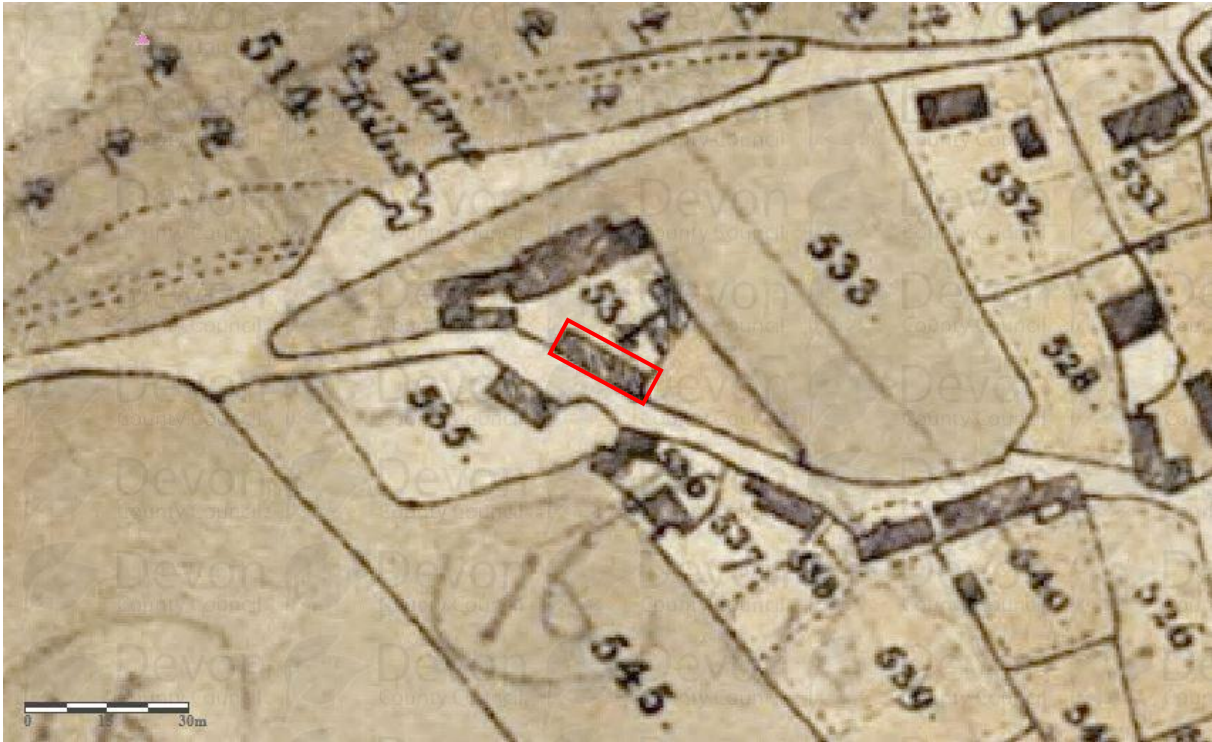
South-east elevation



North-east elevation



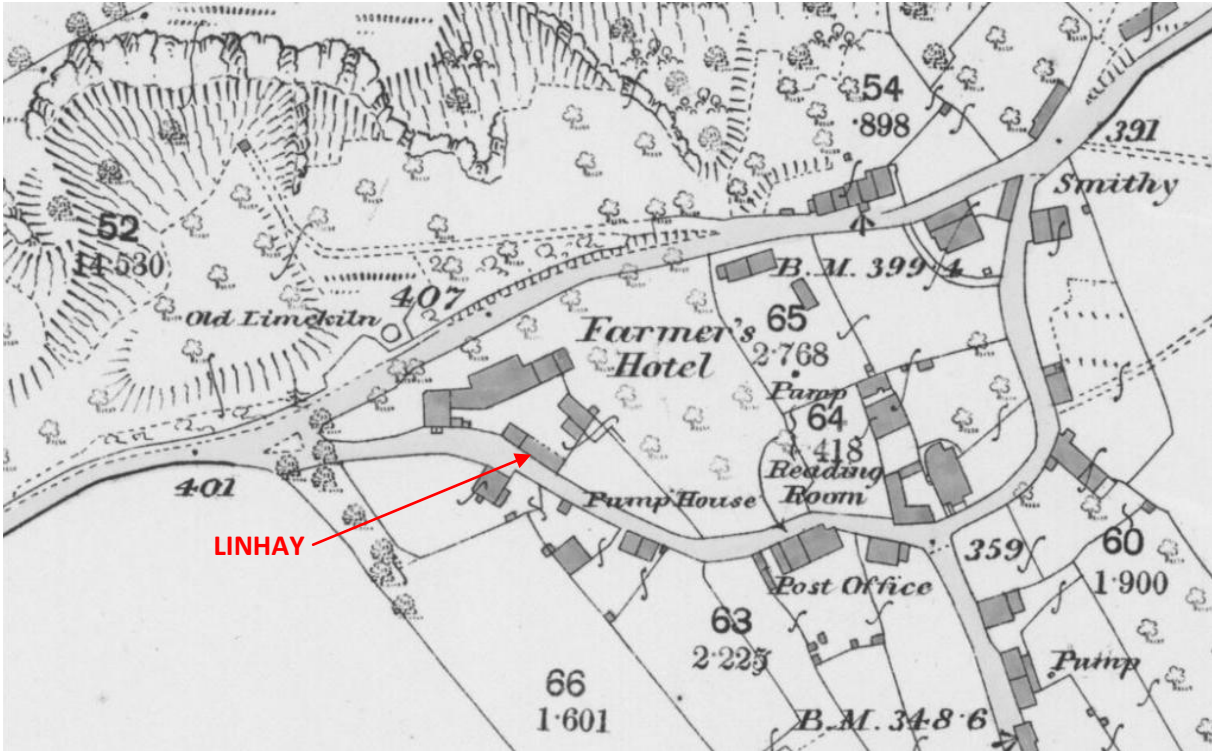
North-west elevation



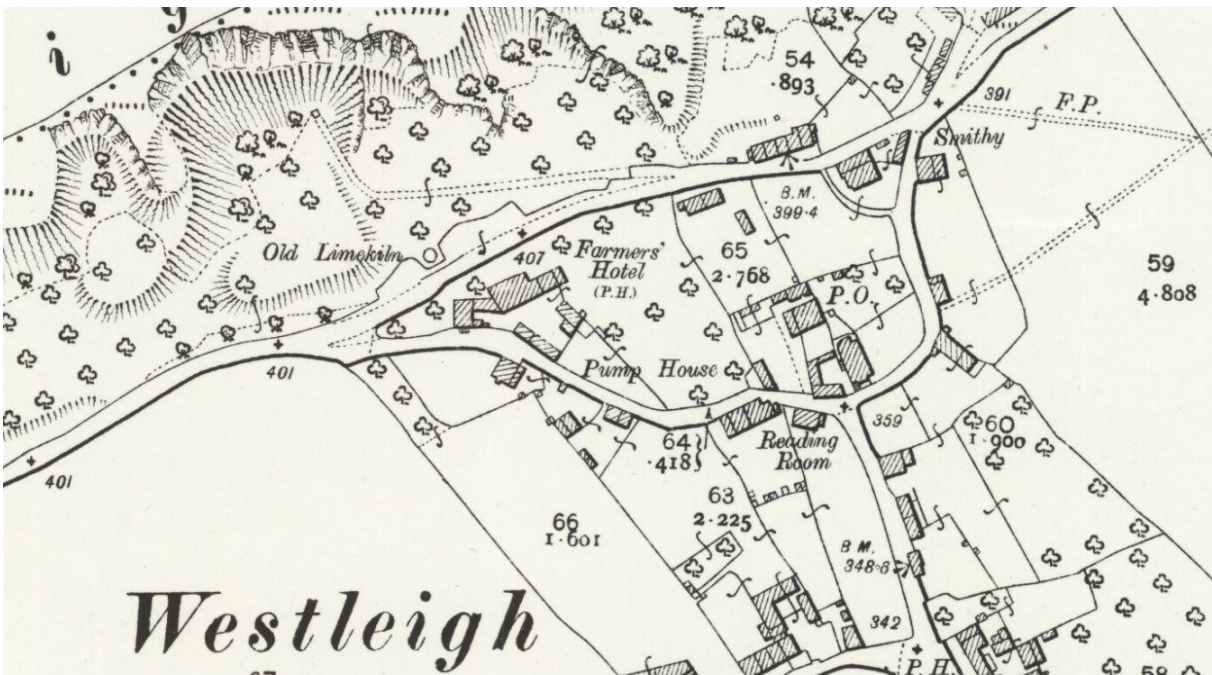
1. Extract from the Burlescombe tithe map, 1840 (Devon County Council)

<u>Gwynns</u>												
<i>Sansome John</i>	533 Gwynns Orchard	Orchard	3	10								
	534 Hotel Garden & Barton Garden	Garden	1	30								
	535 Barn and Barton			37								
	547 Horse Croft	Meadow	4	1	10							
	571 Blacklands	Arable	2		39							
	577 Long Downs	Arable	0	2	1							
	582 Liff Sands	Arable	3	2	23							
	674 Pearse Aorush	Arable	3		20							
<u>Wares</u>												
	575 Long Close	Arable	3	1	36							
	686 Pearse Aorush	Pasture	3	1	9							
<u>Part of Bannonsleigh</u>												
	578 Ford Close	Pasture	2	2								
	612 Marsh Land	Arable	4	2	25							
	665 Marsh Land	Arable	4	3	30							
			42		39	4	2	3	7	11	5	>AA3.

2. Extract from Burlescombe tithe apportionment, page 9. The property is listed under *Gwynns* and was then owned by Henry Dunsford Esq. (Devon County Council)



3. Ordnance Survey 1:2500, surveyed 1888, published 1889



4. Ordnance Survey 1:2500, surveyed 1903, published 1904



Former linhay from the north-west, showing the rebuilt NW gable end



SW elevation looking up Post Office Lane; the buttresses are just visible on the right



SE gable end, with modern extension to right and the former Farmer's Hotel in the background



The enclosed and partly rebuilt NW end. 1m scale



The open front of bay 5, showing one of the stone columns. 1m scale



Interior of bay 5, looking E



Concrete floor with tile effect and drain in bay 5. 0.5m scale



Interior, looking SE from bay 5



Inserted brick wall between bays 1 and 2, from NW



Former openings in stone wall between bays 5 and 6. 0.5m scale



NE end of tie beam with post supporting foot of principal on head of column



Roof truss between bays 4 and 5, from NW, with stone wall to bay 6 beyond



Foot of roof principal jointed to post
(Note that the round object is a nail head, not a peg!)



Apex of principals, from NW, showing cross over, peg and ridge support



Timber between purlins at wall head between bays 5 and 6



Wall between bays 5 and 6 with blocked doorway to right of 1m scale



Limestone floor slabs in bay 6. 0.5m scale



Cut end of softwood tie beam showing growth rings (25cm wide x 18cm deep)