

REDDAFORD FARM

WILLSWORTHY, PETER TAVY

**an archaeological and historical survey
by Tom Greeves, MA, PhD**



2007

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SX 53788 83379 (photo: T. Greeves) Scale: 1m

List of Abbreviations

- DRO – Devon Record Office, Exeter
 HER – Historic Environment Record
 LTA – Land Tax Assessments
 MoD – Ministry of Defence
 NMR – National Monuments Record
 OS – Ordnance Survey
 PWDRO – Plymouth & West Devon Record Office, Plymouth
 TNA – The National Archives, Kew
 WCSL – Westcountry Studies Library, Exeter

Summary

This study of Reddafford Farm, Peter Tavy combines new field survey with original historical research. An account of previous work is given. The farm is shown to have a long recorded history, with the first definite mention of a dwelling on the site in 1334 and even earlier documentation of the placename in 1242. Owners and occupiers are traced through the centuries, until abandonment in 1907/8. The Palmer family were the last to occupy the farm. Oral recollection, and photographic and artistic sources, have been used to recreate the final period. A new survey of the field remains of the farm site has been made, and a description is given.

1. Introduction

This report is the second to be commissioned by Landmarc on behalf of the Ministry of Defence, as part of a project to investigate the archaeology and history of five abandoned farms (Bearwalls, Doe Tor, Reddafford, Standon, Yellowmead) on the MoD freehold estate of Willsworthy, within the Dartmoor Training Area. The first farm to be studied, Doe Tor, had a report completed in 2007 (Greeves, 2007).

Reddafford Farm, the subject of the present report, was purchased by the War Office in 1905 in order to create a live firing range at Willsworthy. The farm was abandoned by the last occupants (members of the Palmer family) in 1907/8 and by the end of the Second World War, or very soon after, had been totally destroyed and razed. For the past half century or so the site of the farm has been in a stable archaeological state, with grass and moss covering the foundations of buildings and the hedges of associated enclosures.

This report is the result of approximately one month's work undertaken during the last quarter of 2007. This comprised a survey of the field remains of the farm complex, plus search for historical data, mostly from record offices in Plymouth and Exeter. What has been revealed is a remarkable suite of material from the 13th century to the 20th century.

Although the farm was abandoned exactly one hundred years ago, some of the children and grandchildren of those who were the last to live there have been traced. Their memories of what their parents and grandparents told them about the farm are, not surprisingly, somewhat limited, but have been incorporated into the report as an important link to the last moments of the human story of one of Dartmoor's most venerable settlement sites.

The farm is located within Willsworthy Hamlets, an ancient subdivision of the parish of Peter Tavy on the west side of Dartmoor (Fig.1). The farm is at a height of 1100 ft (335m) above sea level, on the south-east side of a stream now known as the Willsworthy Brook. Its national grid reference is SX 53728335. It takes its name from a ford (Redford/Reddafford, probably meaning 'the reedy ford') over the stream immediately west of the farm. William Crossing, in his *Guide to Dartmoor*, first published in 1909, noted 'the farm of Redford – locally Ruddiver' (Crossing, 1912, 157).

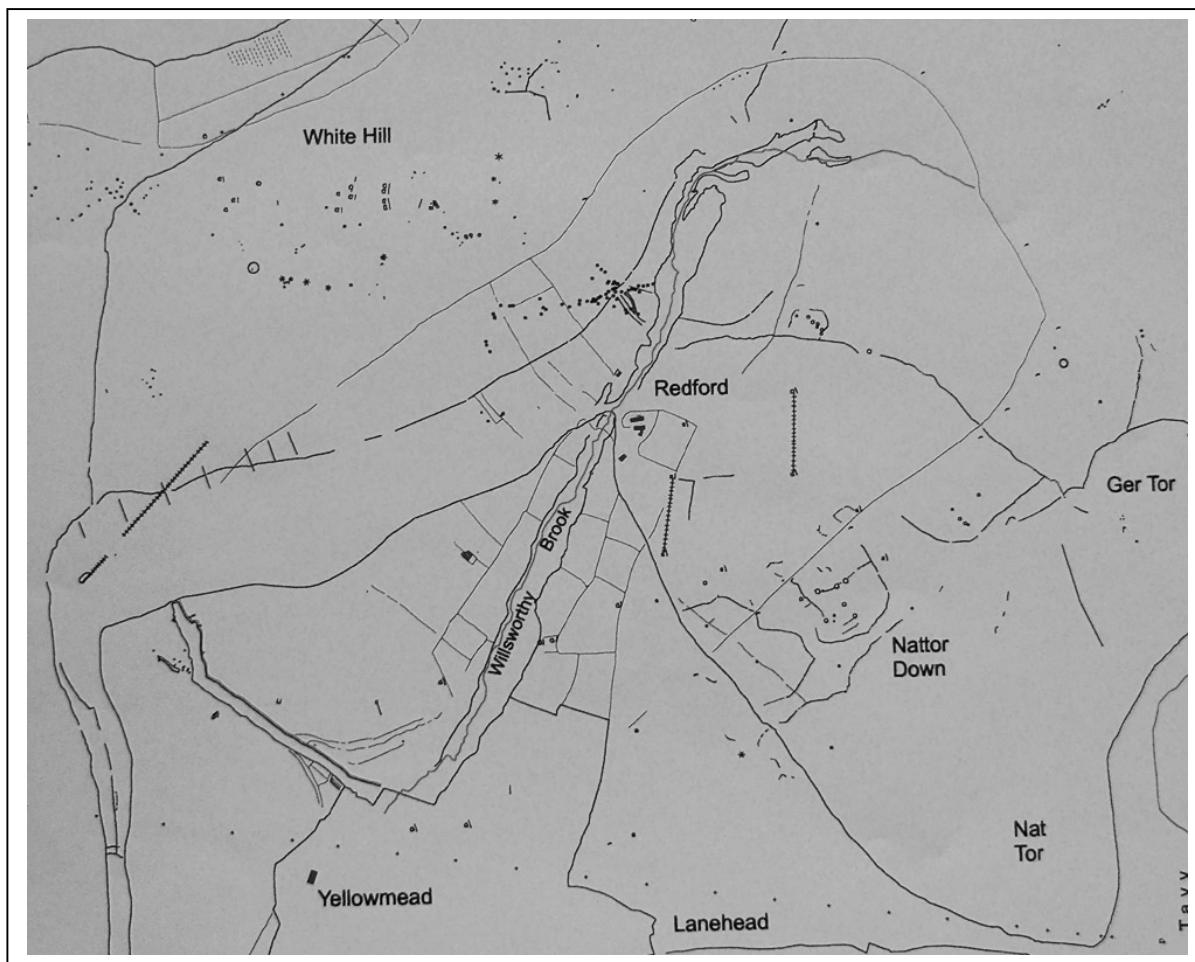


Fig. 1 - Location map –from Probert (1998, fig. 20)

2. Previous study

2.1. Literary

‘Redever’ farm was known to the writer and antiquarian, the Revd Sabine Baring-Gould of Lew Trenchard, in the second half of the 19th century. In a collection of short stories about Dartmoor, titled *Dartmoor Idylls* and published in 1896, he recalled a visit to the farm in about 1870 and remembered ‘giving a coin to one of the wild shock-headed children that ran about in the kitchen. The child looked at the piece of money, turned it round, and rushed to her mother to ask what it was. It was the first coin of the realm she had ever seen’ (Baring-Gould, 1896, 125).

Baring-Gould’s fictional story is titled ‘Little Dixie’ which is the name given to Dionysia, the daughter of Bartholomew Gloyne the farmer at Reddaford. Oliver Whiddon of Doe Tor passes by the farm to and from his work at a silver-lead mine at Mary Tavy and the ford is accurately described as the place where the stream ‘spread itself over the path or track to the farm, and was too shallow to be provided with stepping-stones and too insignificant to be bridged’ (Baring-Gould, 1896, 127-8).

‘Ruddyford Farm’ plays a more significant role in the novel *The Whirlwind*, by Eden Phillpotts, published in 1907. Phillpotts appears to have accurately described the scene: ‘...at valley bottom, a mile under the barrows of White Hill, folded in peace,

with its crofts and arable land about it, lay a homestead. Rounded clumps of beech and sycamore concealed the dwelling; the farm itself stood at the apex of a triangle, whose base widened out into fertile regions southerly. Meadows, very verdant after hay harvest, extended here, and about the invisible house stood ricks, outbuildings, that glimmered cold as water under corrugated iron roofs, and a glaucous patch of garden green, where flourished half an acre of cabbage. One field had geese upon it; in another two horses grazed. A leat drawn from Tavy wound into the domains of the farm, and a second rivulet fell out of the Moor beside it. Cows were being driven into the yard...(Phillpotts, 1907, 2). Of special interest is that this first edition of the novel contains two high quality photographs of the farm (Figs 13 and 14).

2.2. Historical

Until the present survey the history of the farm had received minimal attention. The medieval placename ‘Redeford’ (1342) was published some seventy-five years ago (Gover et al, 1931-2, 233), and a photograph of the farm c. 1900 was published for its historic interest in an archaeological field guide more than twenty years ago (Greeves, 1986). Two photographs of the ruined site, taken in 1920 and 1931 respectively, were published in 2001 (Butler et al, 2001, 120-121).

2.3 Archaeological

The archaeological significance of the farm site has been recognised since the mid-1960s. The location was included in a list of deserted settlement sites on Dartmoor published in an academically influential paper by Catherine Linehan in 1966. The site was said to include remains of four buildings all showing ‘late development’(Linehan, 1966, 114-5, Fig. 47, Table II opp. p.124).

The first known survey of the site was carried out by R. G. Haynes on 29 April 1968 (see Fig.20). He wrote, ‘A ruined farm abandoned probably less than a hundred years. Remembered 40-50 years ago with walls standing 10-12 feet high. Today little remains but indistinct foundations of dwelling house and extensive outbuildings. It has probably been robbed of all useful stonework and only rubble remains. Mortared and slated...’ (Haynes, 1968, 110). On 9 September 1979 the site was professionally surveyed by Norman Quinnell at a scale of 1:1000 (Fig.21).

Comments on the field remains were made by Eric Hemery in his book *High Dartmoor – Land and People*, published in 1983. He suggested that some of the boundary walls ‘display medieval work’ and that the farmhouse ‘was built on the site of a medieval longhouse’. He recorded, ‘The farmhouse occupied a level site on a shelf above the left bank of the brook, and signs are that its medieval forerunner measured thirty feet by fifteen...Adjacent to the farmhouse is a rectangular platform, thirty feet by ten, and at its north end a circular depression in the ground, twenty-three feet in diameter and having a central hollow. This could have been a corn-grinding mill...the platform was almost certainly a windstrew...’ He also noted a stile and sheep creep, neither of which is now visible (Hemery, 1983, 986-7).

In 1998 the whole of the MoD Willsworthy training area was surveyed by the Royal Commission on the Historical Monuments of England. The surveyor, Simon Probert, produced a series of maps, and placed Redford, Doetor and ‘probably’ Yellowmead farms within the ‘post-medieval’ period (1540-1900) stating that ‘There is no physical evidence of medieval settlement’ and that the farm sites and fields are ‘typical of the post-medieval period possessing large regular fields often bounded by walls rather than turf and stone banks. They are also marked by the provision of separate domestic and livestock accommodation rather than the two functions sharing the same roof.’ He argued that their position ‘on the very edge of cultivable land’ was

supporting evidence of their late date and that ‘their creation, though obviously well-organised, [was] a product of optimism rather than sound agricultural practice.’ In short, ‘Evidence of medieval settlement is... absent from Willsworthy’ and the ‘regular enclosures of Yellowmead, Redford and Doetor Farms are typical of the 18th century expansion of farming on Dartmoor’ (Probert, 1998, 2, 11-12). As will be demonstrated, this opinion needs radical reappraisal.

The boundary hedges of the farm were recorded in an appendix to an archaeological condition survey in 2000-2001 (Probert, 2000-2001, Appendix 5) and a new condition survey of all archaeological sites within the Willsworthy MOD freehold was undertaken in 2007 (Probert, 2007).

The farm site was surveyed by plane table at 1:200 as part of the present survey between Sept-Nov 2007 (Fig.22).

3. History

3.1. The medieval period (1066 to 1500)

Reddafford falls within a distinct group of settlements within Peter Tavy parish, known as Willsworthy Hamlets. Throughout much of recorded history this cluster of farms seems to have formed the manor of Willsworthy though it is possible that the extent of the manor and the ‘hamlets’ may have changed through time. Willsworthy itself is recorded in Domesday (1086) (Gover et al, 1931-2, 232).

The first recorded mention of Reddafford as a placename is in 1242. On the 30 June of that year, at Tavistock, Roger of Durehill, son of Philip of Durehill, granted Robert Pomeray, son of Richard Pomeray, all his land in the manor of Willsworthy (‘Wyvelesworthy’), with bounds which began and ended at ‘the Redeforde’(translated from the Latin):

‘Beginning at the Redeforde and then along the length of the Waynfordecumbe as far as postlade forde and thence as far as the fennie forde and then along the length of the ditch of Walter Cule as far as Barinnesturfreck and thence as far as the drierpitte on the top of Middelhill and thence along the length of the nither Waynwaye as far as the Wyterewe and thence as far as the stream of Way[n]forde combe and then along the side of the stream to the Redeforde.’

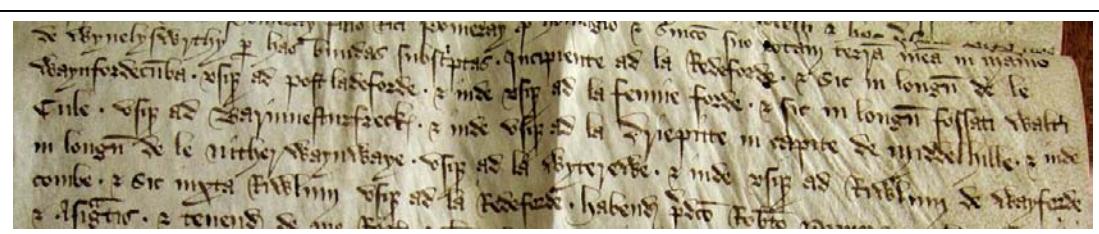


Fig. 2 - description of ‘Redeforde’ bounds in 1242 (PWDRO/372/1/13/12)

Also granted were ‘ways paths waters meadows feedings and pastures in hills and valleys wet and dry and common pasture for all manner of animals and beasts over all his land in the manor of Wyvelesworthy, and turves peat furze fern and rushes throughout all his waste’. Witnesses were John Pucher, Jordan of Cudelipe, Robert Coffin, Walter Cule and Roger Hervy (PWDRO/372/1/13/12) (Fig.2).

This grant does not mention a dwelling house but the specific bounds and rights imply that one existed or was soon to be built. Apart from the ford itself, the bounds have not yet been identified, but are fascinating for their detail. The ‘Wyterewe’ is a ‘white reave’ i.e. probably a prehistoric land boundary. The mention of wains is

specially interesting as it implies well-used routes for wheeled vehicles carrying substantial goods (a wain is usually a four-wheeled cart). Reddaford lay on what could have been a significant route to and from Lydford, the medieval ‘capital’ of Dartmoor. The assumption must be that the Waynfordecombe was the 13th century name for at least part of what is now known as the Willsworthy Brook.

The first specific mention of a house (Fig. 3) at Reddaford is contained in a grant (DRO/158M/T548) (Fig. 4) made on Sunday 10 July 1334 at Reddaford itself (Fig. 5), whereby John Trenchard, lord of Lewtrenchard, leased Nicholas Iperarn and Issabella his wife, fourteen acres of land of the ‘redaforda with a house and yard’ (*cum domo et orto*) lying on the south part of the ‘redafordlake as the bounds are processed in circuit’.

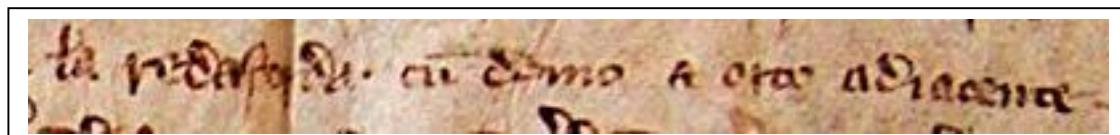


Fig. 3 - detail from deed of 1334 recording a house and yard ('cum domo et orto') at the 'redeforda' (DRO/158M/T548)

Redafordlake is to be identified with modern Willsworthy Brook. Annual rent was 2s 4d, and attendance at the court of Willsworthy ('Wevelysworthy') every three weeks was required, besides other services. On the decease of Nicholas and Issabella the property was to pass to their son William and then to his son. Named witnesses are William of Gnattor (modern Nattor), John Martyn, John Page, Walter Bronn and Robert Oliver (DRO/158M/T548). Of special interest is the mention of beating of bounds ('processed in circuit') which may be those mentioned in 1242 (above).

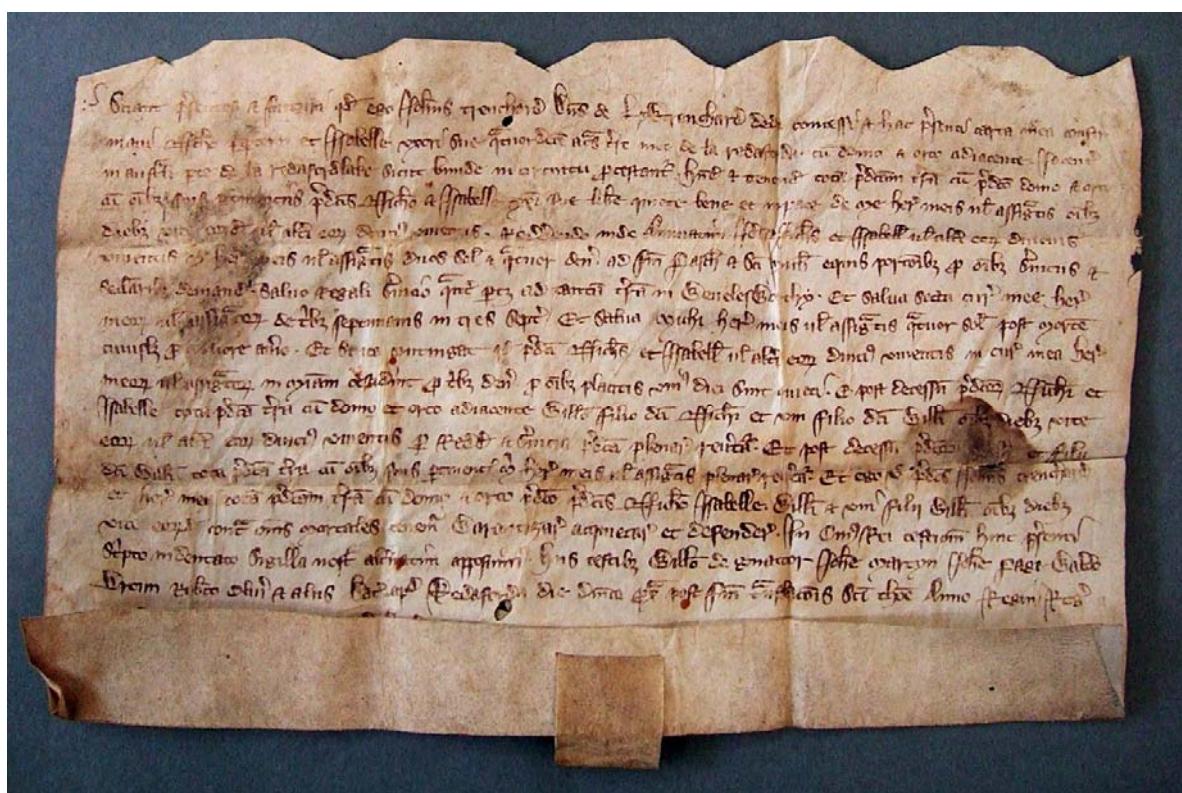


Fig. 4 - deed of 1334 (DRO/158M/T548)

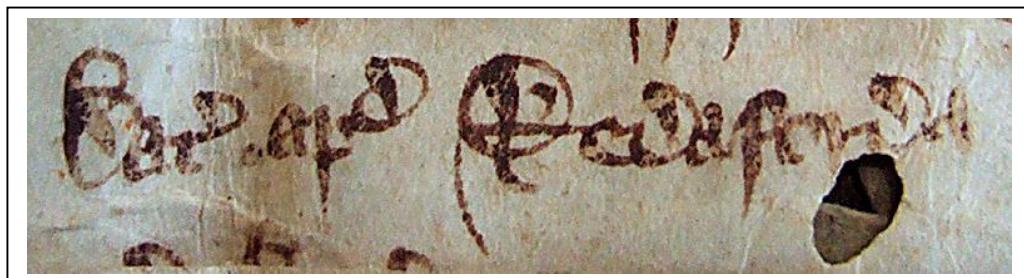
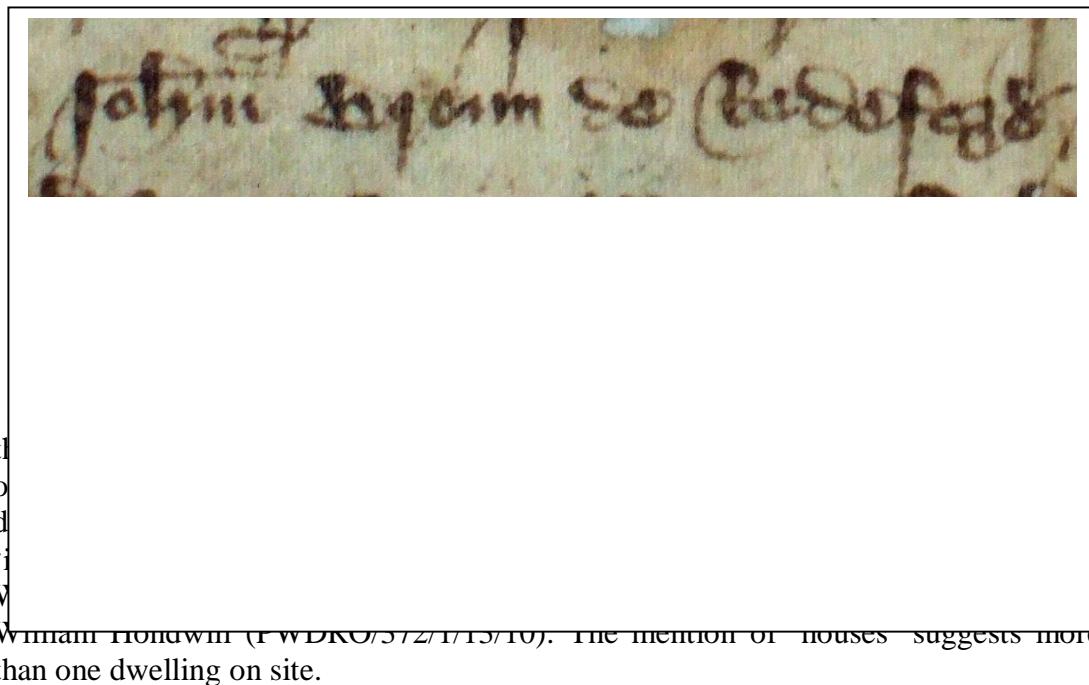
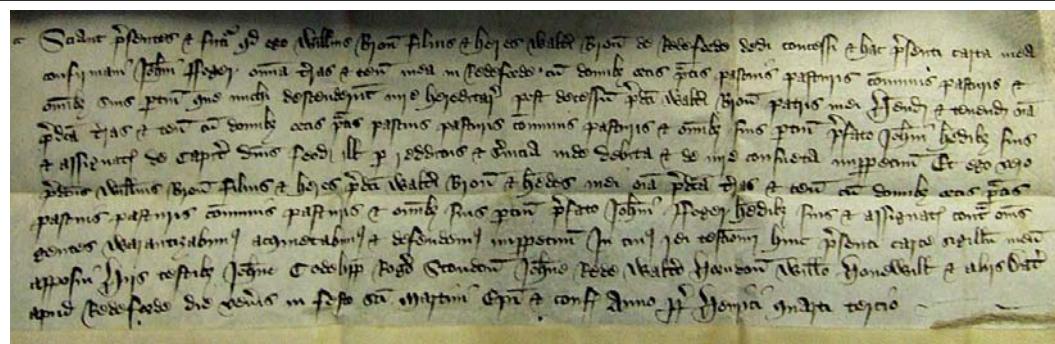


Fig. 5 - detail of deed of 1334 'Given at Redaforda' (Datum apud Redaforda) (DRO/158M/T548)

Eight years later, on Thursday 13 June 1342, John Trenchard, lord of Willsworthy ('Wevelesworth') granted all the land of 'Redeford', which he himself held by grant from Adam Forester of the 'Doune', to Walter Bronn, son of John Bronn of Redeford (Fig. 6), with common pasture for all beasts over all the land of Willsworthy (except corn and meadows), plus turf, peat, furze, rushes and ferns sufficient to his own use. Suit was required at the lord's court at Willsworthy and also at his mill there. Witnesses included John Bronn of Redeford (presumably the father of Walter Bronn and resident there), Robert Stendon, Walter at Wille, John Martyn and Walter Bucket. An interesting succession of title was also set out – on the death of Walter Bronn, the property was to pass to William Bronn the son of John Bronn. On the death of William it was to pass to John Bronn son of Drogo Bronn. And on the death of the last-named John Bronn without heir, the land was to revert to John Trenchard (DRO/410Z/T10).





At Sydenham on 29 March 1428 the grant of 1242 (see above) was confirmed by John Wyse, esquire, lord of the manor of Willsworthy ('Wyvelysworthy'). Witnesses were the vicar of Marystow (Sir Robert Franke), John Standon of Leye and John Hornedon (PWDRO/372/1/9/8). This implies that the unit of land and its bounds were still recognised.

A reference in 1451-2 to the enclosure of one acre of ground 'at Rudford next to Churlbroke to build one blouynghouse' (i.e. a tin smelting mill) is probably to be identified with another location, somewhere within the Forest of Dartmoor (TNA/SC6/829/9, *in litt.* H. Fox Oct 1994), but there is a chance that it relates to Reddaford, not least because there is a possible location for a structure on the right bank of the Willsworthy Brook just above the ford at Reddaford, at SX 53688340, but no conclusive field evidence has yet come to light.

3.2.The Early Modern Period (1500 to 1750)

Otherwise there is a hiatus in the records for the next one hundred years, until 1528 when the Taverner family first receive mention. They were to be associated with, and probably occupied, Reddaford for the next two centuries.

A 40-year lease of Reddaford was granted on 8 August 1528 to Mawtilda Taverner, widow, and her son John. This lease also included Lanehead, a farm lying 1 km due south of Reddaford. The two farms seem frequently to have been linked together (PWDRO/372/1/9/8).

The early 16th century witnessed a peak in the Devon tin industry and this John Taverner may be identified with the John Taverner who presented 465 lb of tin metal at Tavistock in September 1550 (TNA/E101/273/17). If correct, his tin may have come from the Willsworthy Brook which contains significant evidence of tinworking.

On 30 September 1555 John Taverner and his wife Joan, together with their son John, were leased a messuage, land and tenements 'in Radforde' within the parish of Peter Tavy, together with Lanehead, for a term of 80 years. This was the property formerly leased to Mawtilda and John (her son) – see above. The lessors were Lewis Mowryng, gentleman, John Rediclyffe and William Harry (PWDRO/372/1/9/8).

On 30 October 1586 'Reddaford als Reddavorde and Lanehedd', now or formerly in the tenure of John Taverner the elder, were granted for 20 marks (£13 6s 8d) to Stephen Taverner of Peter Tavy, who was described as a 'grome'. The grantors were Peter Harrys alias Mychell of Rattery, yeoman, and his son William Harrys alias Mychell, also a yeoman of Rattery. The following year, on 30 April 1587, the Harryses, with their respective wives Anastacia and Johanna, in return for a payment of £40, granted in perpetuity to John Stondon and Stephen Taverner one-third of various premises in Mary Tavy and Peter Tavy, including 'Reddavord alias Reddaford

and Lanehed', with common pasture in 'Blackdowne, Natterdowne and Willesworthy' (PWDRO/372/1/9/3; DRO/1292M/Deeds of Title/ Petertavy/1 & 2).

A John Taverner presented 328 lb of tin metal at Tavistock in September 1595 (TNA/E101/279/9).

Identifying the precise succession of ownership, or part-ownership, and occupation of Reddraford is specially difficult, if not impossible, throughout much of the 16th and 17th centuries, but it seems likely that the farm was continuously occupied by tenants.

The Redeclyff(e) family appear with an interest in Reddraford in 1598. On 10 February that year more than a dozen premises in the parishes of Mary Tavy, Peter Tavy and Tavistock, including 'Radford', were granted by William Redeclyff, yeoman of Mary Tavy, to his nephew John Redeclyff, the eldest son of Thomas and Mary Redeclyffe of Mary Tavy. These had previously been granted to Thomas Reddecliff, John Williams and Constantin Hollacke (PWDRO/372/1/9/7).

The Taverners seem to have still been occupying Reddraford in the first half of the 17th century. Their lease of 1555 (see above) was brought to an end on 4 February 1625 (PWDRO/372/1/9/8, endorsement). But in 1644, at the time of the Civil War, two properties at 'Reddraford' paid rent to the manor of Willsworthy ('Wivelsworthy'). The first was in the tenure of John Taverner and he and Antony Mooring paid 23d for it. The second was in the tenure of Stephen Williams, but the 12d rent for it was paid by John Taverner who held it by grant of William Redicliffe (DRO/158M/M42). This is the first conclusive evidence of two occupied dwellings on the site (Fig. 8).

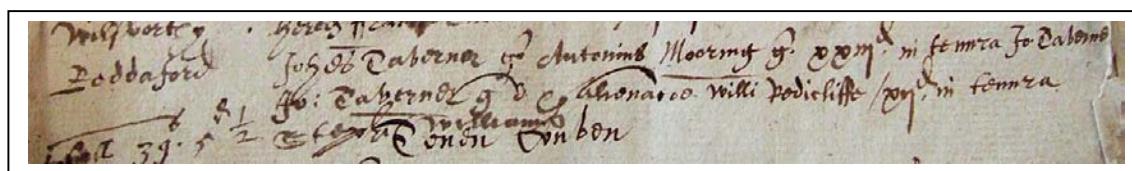


Fig. 8 – detail of tenants at Reddraford in 1644 (DRO/158M/M42)

In the second half of the 17th century the Arundell and Glanvill families of Whitchurch, and the Greenewood family of Bradstone had an interest in Reddraford. The Whitchurch connection is explained by the fact that Johan Arundell and Elizabeth Glanvill were the daughters of Anthony Mooreinge, whose family had had an interest since at least 1555. At some time before 1658 Charles Arundell Esq. and Johan Arundell had leased 'Reddraford als Reddavorde' and various other premises in Peter Tavy to Stephen Cundy. On 27 May 1658 the premises were granted to Edward Greenewood, gent., of Bradstone, to whom all rents were now payable, in return for payment of £42. In February 1659 the premises were listed as all messuages etc 'in Reddraford als Reddavord Lanehead Hill als Hiltown Brownesmore Fugers Wood Tormeadowe Holehey Fugers Petre in Broadmeadowe and [common pasture in] Warpworthye Natterdowne als Gnatterdowne Blackdowne and Dartmore als Dartamore' (DRO/1292M/Deeds of Title/Petertavy 3 & 4; PWDRO/372/1/9/11).

In the 1660s a new family name of Crossman starts a link with Reddraford that was to last more than one hundred years. On 10 March 1665 Edward Hoblyn, a gentleman of Bodmin and John Bere, a gentleman of St Ervan (between Padstow and Newquay) granted William Crossman, yeoman of Peter Tavy, 'All that their Sixth parte of all and Singular theire Landes messuages and tenements In the village of Reddraford or scituate in Reddraford in the parish of Petertavy...lately in the tenure of Stephen

Cundy of Petertavy...yeoman'. This sixth part is likely to have arisen out of some division of the property among daughters (DRO/1292M/Deeds of Title/Petertavy/5).

The Taverner family still had the major interest in the farm, and may well have been living there. On 30 December 1672 John Taverner paid 10d for 'Reddaford' for 'Reparation of the Church of Peter Tavy', with William Crosman paying 2d for his one-sixth part of Reddaford (Tavistock Library/Peter Tavy Village File). In other words, John Taverner held five-sixths.

John Taverner married Joan Hern at Peter Tavy on 4 July 1681 and their son John was baptised at Peter Tavy on 2 February 1683 (DRO/Peter Tavy Parish Registers). Early in 1686 William and Margery Crosman, who were living in St Cleer (north of Liskeard, Cornwall), granted their one-sixth part in 'Raddaford alias Raddavord in Peterstavy' to Elizabeth Taverner of Lifton, spinster (or 'singlewoman'). Besides a messuage (i.e. dwelling house and curtilage) there were 30 acres of land, 10 acres of meadow, 40 acres of pasture, 30 acres of furze and heath and 20 acres of moor plus common pasture in 'Blackdowne, Natterdowne and Willesworthy'. (PWDRO/372/9/4/9A+B).

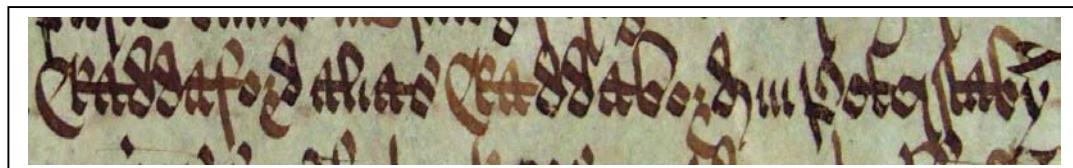


Fig. 9 – detail of deed of 1686 (PWDRO/372/9/4/9A)

In March 1689 John Taverner paid 3s 4d to Edward Greenewood for church rate 'for his tenement of Reddaforde', plus a poor rate of 1s and another 1s for 'Chimny money' (PWDRO/372/1/11/2).

A detailed lease for seven years was granted by Elizabeth Taverner on 25 March 1710 to James Edwards of Milton Abbot, yeoman, of 'All that one Tenement lyeing and being in Reddiford within the Hamblett of Wilsery'. An interesting exclusion from the grant was 'All that ould Walls and Ground which lyeth on the west of the highwaye leadeinge from the village of Reddaford unto possett Cross.' The highway and cross have not yet been identified, but it is tempting to suggest that the old field systems on the west side of the Willsworthy Brook are meant by this reference (see Fig.29). Under the terms of the lease James Edwards was to 'bring into bestowe And cast abroad Fifty Bushells of ould Measure of well Burnt Lime into Every Acre of land that hee or they shall Till upon the said Granted Premises.' He was also limited to three crops of corn after such dressing, was not allowed to till the meadows before hay had been mowed and cut, and was required to spread dung on the meadows. His rent was to be £13 in the first year, and £14 thereafter (DRO/1292M/Drafts,Abstracts etc/Petertavy/1).

By 1724 Richard Couch of Lifton, gentleman, had acquired Reddaford and on 1 October of that year granted them to Richard Gill, a yeoman of Lew Trenchard for £155 (DRO/1292M/Drafts,Abstracts etc/Petertavy 2).

3.3. Mid-18th to Mid-19th Century

No information has yet been found relating to Reddaford for some 55 years spanning the middle of the eighteenth century. But from 1780 land tax assessments

record owners and occupiers. William Crossman was occupying a house there in 1780, when the proprietor was George Warren (also spelt Worron, Worrинг and Werren). Together they paid £2 2s 8d for ‘Riddaford’. The sum remained the same until 1819 (DRO/LTA/Peter Tavy).

On 13 March 1782 George Warren set out the yearly rent for pasture and tillage for ‘all that Estate called Riddaford in the parish of Peter Tavy, with all its rights upon Dartmoor, Nattardown and Blackdown’. As in the lease of 1710 (see above) the tenants were to bring in fifty bushels of well-burnt lime for every acre of ground they intended to till. The named persons were Arthur Cole, Thomas Richards and Robert Bickel (DRO/1292M/Estate 3)

Between 1783 and 1787 Robert Bickle was recorded as the occupier. From 1788-1792 and in 1800 John Gill was both proprietor and occupier of ‘Reddaford’. He remained the proprietor until 1819 but the occupiers changed. From 1795-7 Thomas Kelly and Edward Rundle were in occupation, from 1798-9 it was Benjamin Axford and from 1801-1812 and 1814-1819 it was John Joachim (DRO/LTA/Peter Tavy).

The substantial leat, known as the Reddaford Leat, which passes immediately below the farm, supplied waterwheels at Wheal Jewell and Wheal Friendship mines. It is marked on the first known survey of the area which was carried out in 1803-4 by Ordnance Surveyors, at a scale of two inches to the mile. No record of the construction of the leat has yet been found but it is likely to be of late 18th century date, and must have made a considerable impact on the farm. ‘Redford’ is named on the OS survey, with a hint of two buildings shown. The field enclosures are shown, though somewhat crudely (WCSL/OS Preliminary Drawings/Two Inch Drawing no.26/WEST).

This was a period of considerable mining activity in the area, and it is not surprising to find that, on 15 May 1808, a lease was drawn up by John Gill of Beardon granting the famous engineer John Taylor Esq. of Holwell House, Whitchurch ‘on behalf of the adventurers in a certain mine called Wheal Friendship in Mary Tavy parish’ a licence to mine and search for minerals ‘throughout...all that messuage or tenement called or known by the name of Reddaford containing about ninety acres of enclosed ground together with the commons thereto belonging’ (DRO/1292M/Mining Deeds No.7).

Despite a relative wealth of information, we cannot be confident that we have all the names of those actually living at Reddaford for much of its history before the mid-19th century. A case in point is shown by the poignant tale of the Rymont family who do not appear in the land tax records. Nicholas Rymont, a labourer, and his wife Margery were living at Reddaford when their son Charles was baptised at Peter Tavy on 22 August 1814. But only eleven days later Margery Rymont of Reddaford, Willsworthy Hamlet, was buried at Peter Tavy, aged 47. It is possible that she was the child’s grandmother but perhaps most likely she was its mother, dying of complications from the birth. Three weeks later, on 23 September 1814 the infant Charles, aged 6 weeks, was buried at Peter Tavy (DRO/Peter Tavy parish registers). It is hard to imagine the scenes at the farm itself over that period of time.

A new proprietor appeared in 1820 – Calmady Hamlyn Esq. This family was to remain owners of Reddaford until the sale to the War Office in 1905 (see below). On 24 June 1824 Calmady Pollexfen Hamlyn, with William Gill and Henry Melhuish Ford, granted leats and watercourses etc at Reddaford to John Buller, a landowner and mining entrepreneur (Defence Estates, Exeter, copy deed of 24.11.1905). Apart from the year 1828 when no occupier is given for Reddaford in the land tax records, John Kennard is given as the occupier from 1820 – 1832. The tax by this time had been reduced to £1 2s 8d (DRO/LTA/Peter Tavy). John Kennard also paid a Poor Rate of 12s in 1825 (PWDRO/479/28).

William Tucker, a yeoman, and Mary his wife were living at 'Reddiford' when their child William was baptised at Lydford on 26 August 1832. This is the first recorded link for the farm with Lydford, two miles distant to the north-west as the crow flies, but it must have been commonplace, as Peter Tavy, in which parish the farm lay, was four miles distant to the south. On 25 October 1835 Thomas, the son of labourer Thomas Berry and his wife Mary, of 'Riddaford' was baptised at Lydford (DRO/Lydford Baptisms).

The first detailed record of the farm and its fields was made in 1839, on the tithe map for Peter Tavy (Fig.10), with its apportionment of 1840 (DRO). The occupier was given as John Kennard. The area of land was 104 acres 3 roods and 4 perches, with a tithe of £5 1s 3½ d payable to the rector.

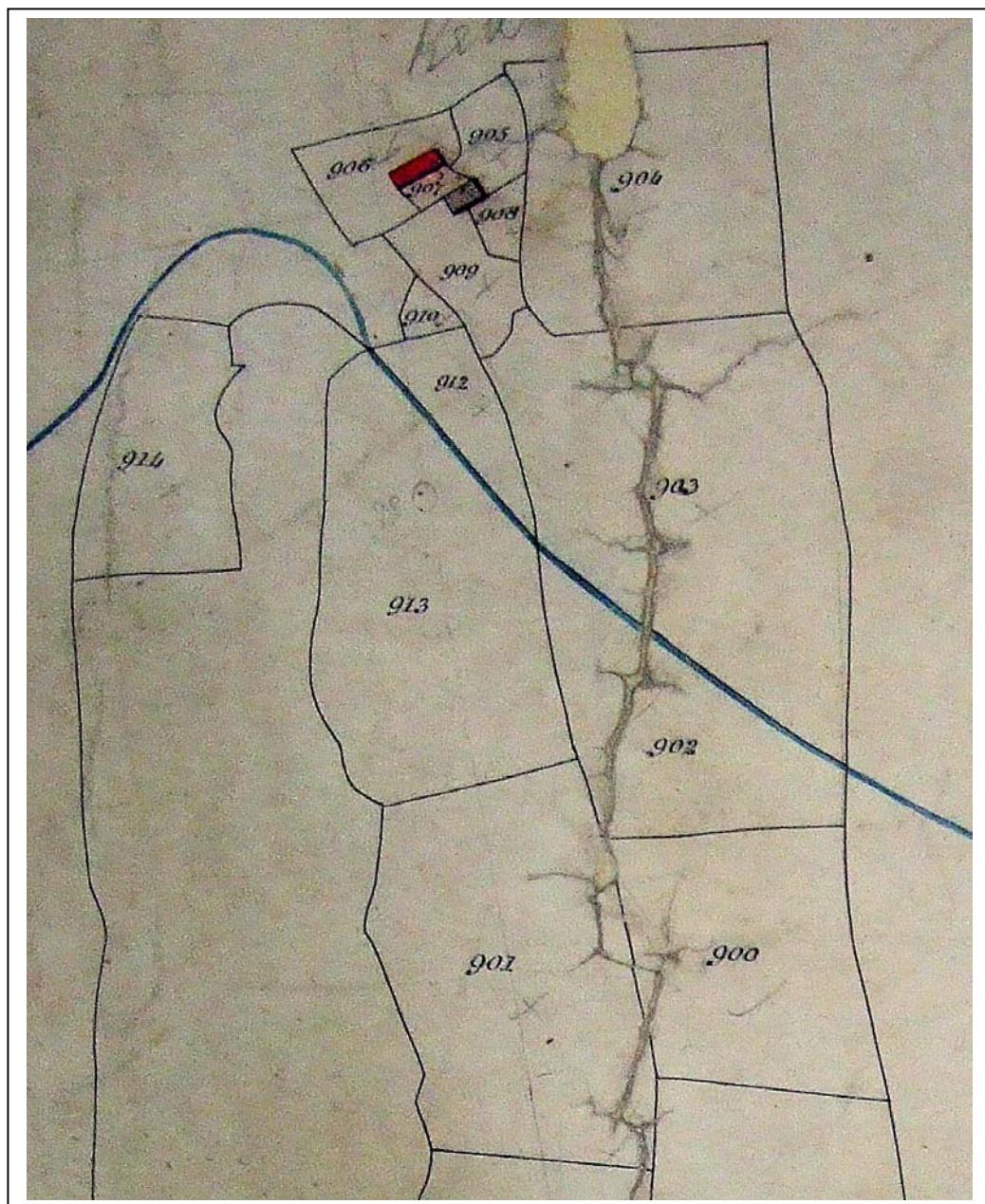


Fig. 10 – detail from Tithe Map of 1839 (DRO)

Only two buildings are shown, one of which is coloured red, indicating a dwelling. The plots (905 and 906) immediately east and west of the house are both described as 'Plantation' – the trees within them, presumably planted as windbreaks and as a

source of fuel, survived until the demise of the farm in the early 20th century. Plot 910 is described as ‘Garden’. Plot 908 on the south-east side of the grey-coloured building, which was probably a barn, is described as ‘Mowhay’, i.e. a rick enclosure. Apart from 22 acres of marsh (Plots 896 and 897) all other fields are recorded as arable.

John Kennard paid a Highway Rate and a Church Rate for Reddaford throughout the 1840s and up until about 1850. The property had an annual value of £27 (PWDRO/479/29-31).

With the start of itemised census records in 1841 the detailed occupancy of the farm is revealed for the first time. In June 1841 one inhabited building was listed in which John Pengelly, agricultural labourer, aged 30, lived with his wife Elizabeth, aged 25, and their three young boys – William (aged 6), James (4) and John (2). All the family had been born in Devon.

By the time of the census of March 1851 the Pengellys had moved and Reddaford was occupied by farm labourer George Howard, aged 30 and Mary his wife aged 32. George had been born in ‘Cherriton’, Devon, and Mary in Bridestowe.

From 1851-1854 William Cole and Mr Hutchings (also spelt Hutchens) were recorded as occupiers of Reddaford, each holding half (32 acres) of the property, and paying various rates. Hamlyn was the owner (PWDRO/479/31; DRO/1427A – 4/PO1/Peter Tavy Poor Rate Books). In about 1855 a George Walters paid the Highway Rate for ‘Riddeford’ in Willsworthy Hamlet (PWDRO/479/31).

3.4 The Palmers to 1907/8

For at least the last fifty-six years of Reddaford’s existence the Palmer family was in residence. They appear first in the census return for April 1861 but could already have been there for several years. One house was inhabited in 1861, occupied by the young couple William Palmer, aged 28, farmer of 60 acres, and his wife Patience aged 26. William had been born in Lamerton and Patience in Beaworthy. Their eldest son was William H. Palmer aged 4, born in Stoke Climsland, Cornwall. They had a daughter Maria aged 2, born in Tavistock and an infant boy John, aged 1, born in Peter Tavy.

In 1864 William Palmer and William Rice were each said to occupy a house and land at Reddaford, each having 52 acres 2 roods and 2 perches. In 1868 they are also recorded as the occupiers of a newtake of 314 acres 3 roods and 20 perches. (DRO/1427A-4/PO1 - PO3/Peter Tavy Poor Rate Books). At the time of the census of April 1871 two houses were inhabited. One was occupied by William and Patience Palmer and their eight children. Those born since 1861 were Sarah (9), Patience (8), Arthur (5), Thomas George (3) and Sofia (1), all born in Peter Tavy, presumably at Reddaford. The other house was occupied by William Rice, a widower, aged 62, whose occupation was ‘local Wesleyan preacher’, born in Peter Tavy. His unmarried daughter Elizabeth, aged 27, and unmarried son, John, aged 24, lived with him. Both children were born in Peter Tavy.

In 1874 Palmer of ‘Reddiford’ paid 11s, and in 1876 12s, in subscription to Hillbridge School which had only recently been established two miles south of the farm (DRO/791C add/EFM1 Peter Tavy School Minutes; Stanbrook, 1991, 9). Bereavement struck the family when Patience Palmer died aged 41 on 16 November 1877. She is buried in Peter Tavy churchyard (Brown, n.d., 9).

The census of April 1881 recorded William Palmer, widower, living on the farm with six of his children - William, Maria J., Arthur, Thomas, Sophia and Mary A. Until 1888 William Palmer is listed on the electoral register for ‘Redeford’ (DRO), but from 1889-1896 and 1898-1908 Henry Palmer is listed, with his abode being

Reddafford. It seems likely that the latter is actually William Henry Palmer, the eldest son of William Palmer.

By the time of the census of April 1891 it is William H. Palmer, farmer, who is head of the household, aged 34, with Eliza his wife, aged 32, born in Stoke Climsland. They have five daughters – Ellen (9), Eliza (8), Mabel (6), Mary A. (3) and Patience (2).

In December 1894 William Henry Palmer of Reddafford seconded the election of his near neighbours Harry Reep of Nattor and William Harvie of Will as parish councillors, and his own name was submitted to the County Council to be a manager of the Council School to be opened at Hillbridge (PWDRO/1005/1 Peter Tavy Parish Council Minute Book).

The final census record for Reddafford was taken in April 1901. William and Eliza Palmer had nine children living with them (Mabel, aged about 16, was absent). Five more children had been born, presumably all at Reddafford, since 1891 – Albert H. (9), Charley (6), Bessie (6), Harry (4) and Emily (1). Daisy, the youngest, was still to be born (in about 1902).

Life was soon to change. On 30 April 1901 an inquiry was held at the Manor Hotel, Lydford ‘to receive objections from owners and occupiers of land...proposed to be purchased by the War-office for a rifle range and camp for soldiers during the summer months’. The ground included Reddafford Farm, ‘occupied by Mr W. H .Palmer, containing 426 acres’ (including the newtake). Owners, tenants and commoners all objected, out of ‘fear that their interests will be adversely affected, though they hardly know to what extent’ (WCSL/Lydford Parish File/newspaper cuttings 1 May 1901/A56-7).

The War Office eventually purchased the land from the Calmady Hamlyn estate on 22 November 1905. It included ‘The hereditaments parts of a certain farm lands and hereditaments known as Reddafford otherwise Reddavord and Lanehead situate in the Tything of Willesworthy Hamlet within the Parish of Peter Tavy...containing four hundred and twenty-six acres or thereabouts...now in the occupation of William Henry Palmer as tenant thereof...’(Defence Estates, Exeter, copy deeds supplied).

Body & Sons of Plymouth surveyed the farm in 1906 and recorded that 20 out of the 26 cattle kept could be tied up, that there were 20 breeding ewes, 42 ewe lambs and that wether lambs were sold every year. The fields were a mixture of arable, pasture, marsh and swamp. Rent was £62 [?£63] 10s (PWDRO/1023/15/Body & Sons Field Book).

A contract dated 25 June 1907 between the Committee of Willsworthy Commoners and His Majesty’s Principal Secretary of State for War noted that 31 acres 2 roods of land were affected at ‘Redford Farm’(DRO/1292M/Inclosure 4).

The Palmer family (Fig.11) moved from Reddafford to Fullamoor, Whitchurch in 1907, though the eldest son, Albert, and his sister Mary remained at Reddafford for another nine months ‘to work out an agreement’ (oral inf. Mrs Eileen Doidge 29. 12. 2007). With their departure, in 1907 or 1908, the farm was abandoned, after some 666 years of historical record.



Fig. 11 –the Palmer family at Fullamoor c.1908
L. to R. back row standing: *Patience, Bessie, Albert, Harry, Mabel, Charlie, Mary*
Centre row sitting L to R: *Eliza, William Henry, Eliza, Ellen*
Front row sitting L to R: *Daisy, Emily*)
(original in possn. Mrs Alice Willcocks)

3.5. Memories of the Farm



Fig. 12 –Reddaford Farm c. 1900 from SW (approx) (original in possn. Mrs Rosemary Hill)

John Hamlyn (born in 1883) worked for the Coakers at Runnage, Postbridge, and would search for stray bullocks who should have been grazing the Forest of Dartmoor in the summer. He called at Reddaford many times around 1900 (Figs 12-14 and cover), and knew Ellen Palmer, who would prepare a frying pan and slice up potatoes for him – a usual greeting on Dartmoor farms. He once had to collect some bullocks from Coryton Down and the next day drove them to Reddaford where he picked up another stray secured in a field the previous day. The enlarged herd was then driven via Dinger to East Okement Farm where Mrs Endacott put on a frying pan of potatoes (oral inf. J. Hamlyn 2.9.1983).

Although it is now one hundred years since the Palmer family left the farm, their children and grandchildren are still living in west Devon.

It is recalled that some of the Palmer children went to Lydford school, walking via Skitt Lane. Their mother (Eliza) would keep them back if the weather was bad, but a ‘kid-catcher’ would arrive at the farm the next day, wanting an explanation for their absence. Albert Palmer is said to have played truant in the Beardon area, on the way to Lydford. Some of the children went to Hillbridge School (including Eliza, who was thought to be delicate, and Emily, Mabel and Bessie) – they used to drive cows to a field near Hillbridge on the way to school and back at the end of the day. The farm dog used to meet them on the way back. One hot day they put their coats on the dog which ran into a stream and soaked the coats! On another occasion a farmer saw Bessie riding a pony astride, on the way back from school, and insisted that she

should ride sidesaddle. It is thought that Ellen was sent to her grandparents in Stoke Climsland for her schooling.

The farmhouse had to be cleaned from top to bottom on Saturdays. Sunday was considered a day of rest. The younger children were required to go to Sunday School at Zoar (over 2 miles distant to the SSW). When older, attendance at Peter Tavy church (4 miles distant) on Sunday was mandatory.

Eliza Palmer's maiden name was Geek and she came from Crockett farm, Stoke Climsland. Her husband William Henry ('Harry') had gingery hair and 'a tight short beard'. Apparently, when dipping sheep on the farm, he would become covered in the liquid and it was not possible to see 'where the sheep ended and the beard and man started'!

Geese and goslings were kept on the farm – they used to like to go roaming for 'urts (whortleberries) and would wander up the River Tavy and come back with purple beaks. Peat was cut on the moor and brought back to a shed on the farm when dried – a bullock was kept in one end of the same shed and one day a large swelling appeared on the beast. The cause was a bite from an adder curled up among the peat brought off the moor.

Corn was grown in the fields, which were remarkably stone-free. Larger rocks had been dragged out with horses and used for building the newtake wall. Hundreds of sheep were taken in for summer grazing from mid-July to September, especially from Collacombe Barton, Lamerton, which was a large farm of 400-500 acres owned by Major Jack. Albert and Mary collected and returned sheep from Ford Farm, Milton Abbot where the farmer was a Richard Dawe. He gave them 'a big sixpence', i.e. half-a-crown (2s 6d) when they brought the sheep back. A farmer, possibly called Penny, in Stoke Climsland also supplied sheep which were collected by Albert and Mary. William Henry Palmer was a moorman and he would look after sheep as far away as the Chagford area.

At the time of the Great Blizzard of March 1891 snow drifted up to the bedroom windows. Ellen, the oldest child, aged then about nine, had to be pushed through a small loft window in order to get into the barn to feed the cattle inside.

Every Friday there would be a journey to Tavistock Market to sell cream and eggs etc. Cream would be kept cool in a 'well' at the back of the farmhouse. Sheep were walked to Tavistock for sale at market.

Soldiers sometimes camped in the meadows at Reddaford and would buy milk from the farm.

The Palmers took in visitors from London in the summer, and would meet them and their luggage at Lydford station with a pony and trap. One of these was probably the artist C. Edmond Brock who painted the delightful scene of the farm on 14 October 1901 (cover). A cycling club from Plymouth used to visit regularly for teas.

The photographs (Figs 12-14) show a fine Dartmoor farmstead, with sturdy porch, all well maintained, and sheltered by mature beech trees. In Fig. 13 a child is visible in the yard, with a fowl beside her. A grinding stone (for sharpening tools) is set on a bank. In Fig. 12 a cart is visible in the farmyard.



Fig. 13 - Reddaford Farm from SE (approx) c. 1900
(frontispiece to *The Whirlwind* by Eden Phillpotts, published by Chapman & Hall, London, 1907)



Fig. 14 – Reddaford Farm from the S (approx) c. 1900
(facing p. 214 in *The Whirlwind* by Eden Phillpotts, published by Chapman & Hall, London, 1907)

3.6 After abandonment

Within twelve years or so of abandonment the farm was a roofless shell, as recorded in a photograph by Sydney Taylor (Fig. 15). It remained in a similar state until the 1930s (Fig. 16) and even until the outbreak of the Second World War, but by the end of the war or very soon afterwards, was reduced more or less to the condition in which it is found today. Howitzer guns are thought to have shelled it (oral inf. Cyril Friend). Much stone must also have been removed from the site. At some time (probably when the firing range was first established) target railways with operating bunkers were laid out across the farmland and in the immediate vicinity of the farm.



Fig. 15 - the ruins of Reddaford Farm from White Hill 1920 (Photo: S. Taylor)



Fig. 16 – the ruins of Reddaford Farm 1931 from SW (approx)(Photo: S. Taylor)

During the Second World War the fields at Reddafford were ploughed by Cyril Friend, using a tractor. Potatoes and corn were grown on them as part of the war effort, for Mr Fone of Standon. Cyril Friend's grandmother was Patience, one of the Palmer children born at Reddafford. She offered to give him a shilling for every rock he found in the fields, but there were none, having all been cleared long ago for building the newtake walls (oral inf. Cyril Friend).

Occasional visits were made by some of the family to the ruined site, as illustrated in Fig. 17 which shows two of the Reddafford 'children' beside the fireplace slab on a picnic excursion in about 1959.



Fig.17 – Eliza Sleeman (L) and Ellen Warne (R) (both née Palmer) at Reddafford fireplace c. 1959 (original in possn Mrs Mary Alford)

The fields are still grazed with animals – belonging to the Palmer family of Higher Creason Farm, Mary Tavy, who claim no direct relationship with the last Palmers of Reddafford.

4. The field evidence

4.1. The Farm (Fig. 22)

The farm and its associated structures are sited on relatively level ground in an area on the N side of a track leading to a ford over the Willsworthy Brook which lies immediately north-west of the farm. The main grouping of farm buildings extends over an area roughly 60m N-S and 50m E-W. The hedges of the farm enclosures contain much stone, especially facing stone, but are largely shrouded in grass and moss. The layout of buildings on the tithe map of 1839 looks somewhat simplified, but it does at least confirm the existence of a dwelling house (Building 1 on Fig. 22) and a presumed barn (Building 2 on Fig. 22).

The first edition Ordnance Survey 1:2500 map (Fig. 18) shows more detail, surveyed in 1882-3. The same two buildings are prominent but projections on the S side of Building 1 indicate a porch and other structures, which are visible on photographs (Figs 12-14). An ‘outshot’ at the back (N side) of Building 1 is also visible on the map and traces of this are still visible on the ground. Two buildings shown on the 1st edition OS map have left no surface field remains today – their sites are marked as Buildings 4 and 5 on Fig. 22. Neither building is shown on the 2nd edition OS map (Fig. 19). The presumed barn (Building 2) has an extension at the E end of its N side.

On the south side of the barn a small building is shown, which is to be identified with Building 6 on Fig. 22 and also the small building shown in the foreground (right) of the painting of 1901 (cover).

Neither of the OS maps give any indication of the circular feature (A on Fig. 22), which may be the site of a roundhouse, nor the raised level platform (B on Fig. 22). They also do not show the structure lying immediately to the south of, and outside, the farm enclosures (Building 3 on Fig. 22).

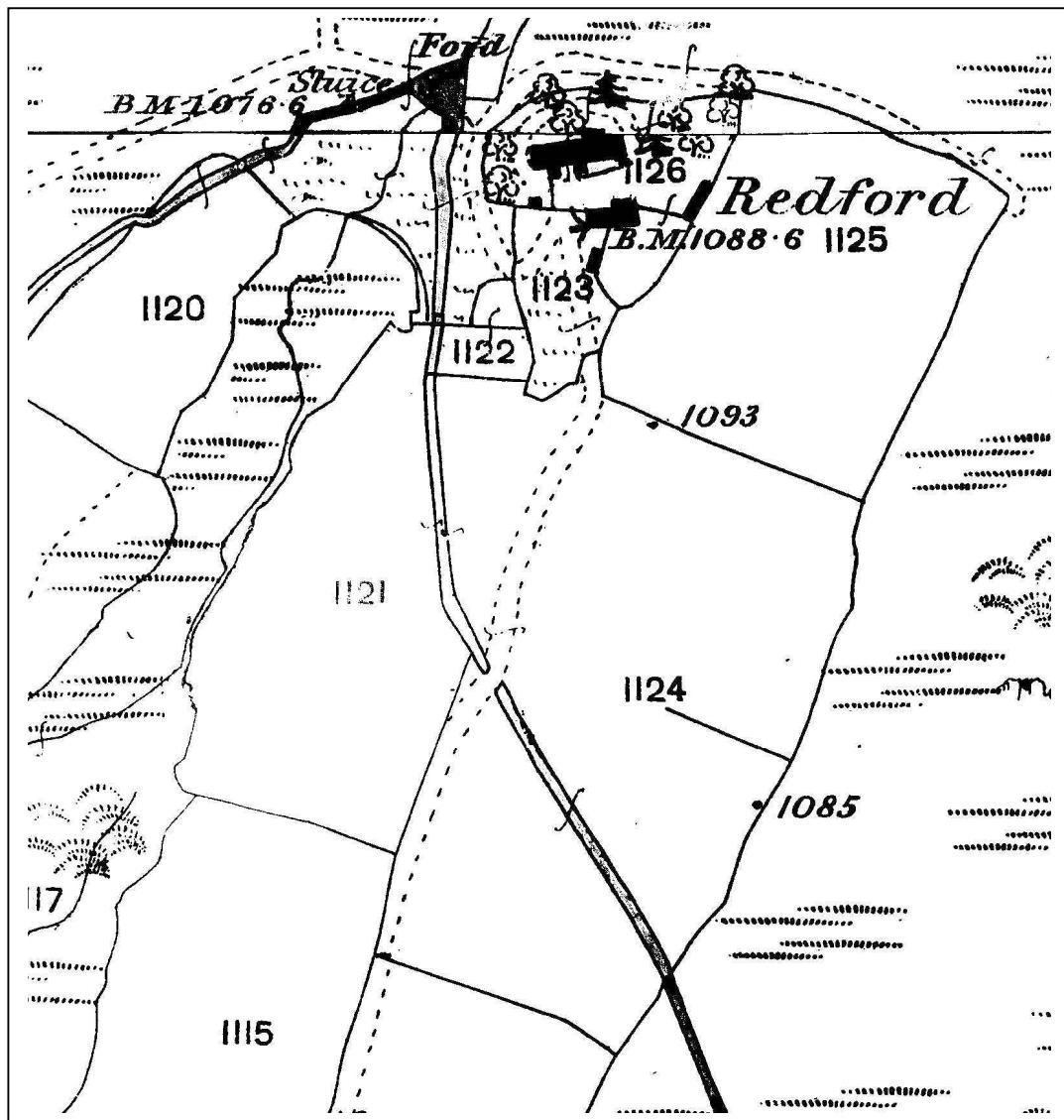
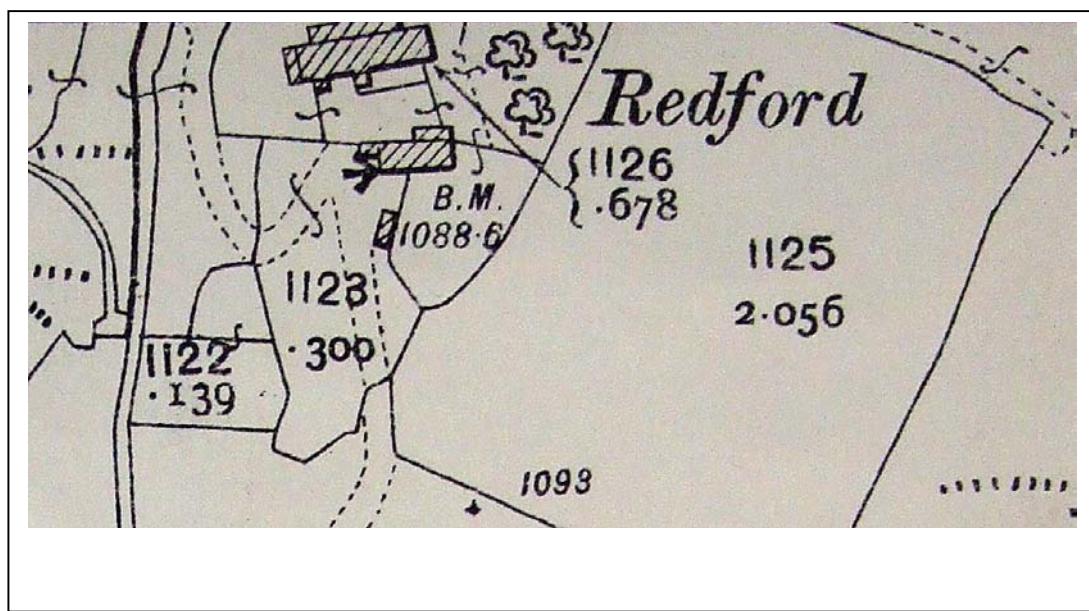


Fig. 18 – OS 1:2500 Ist edn Sheets XCVIII.2 1884 (surveyed 1882-3) and LXXXVIII.4 1884 (surveyed 1883) (not to scale)



R. G. Haynes's plan of 1968 (Fig. 20) shows most of the key archaeological features, apart from the circular feature (A on Fig. 22) and Building 3. He also noted a trough immediately west of Building 2. This is no longer visible, but an unvegetated impression on the surface of the ground in this position suggests that a large stone has recently been removed.

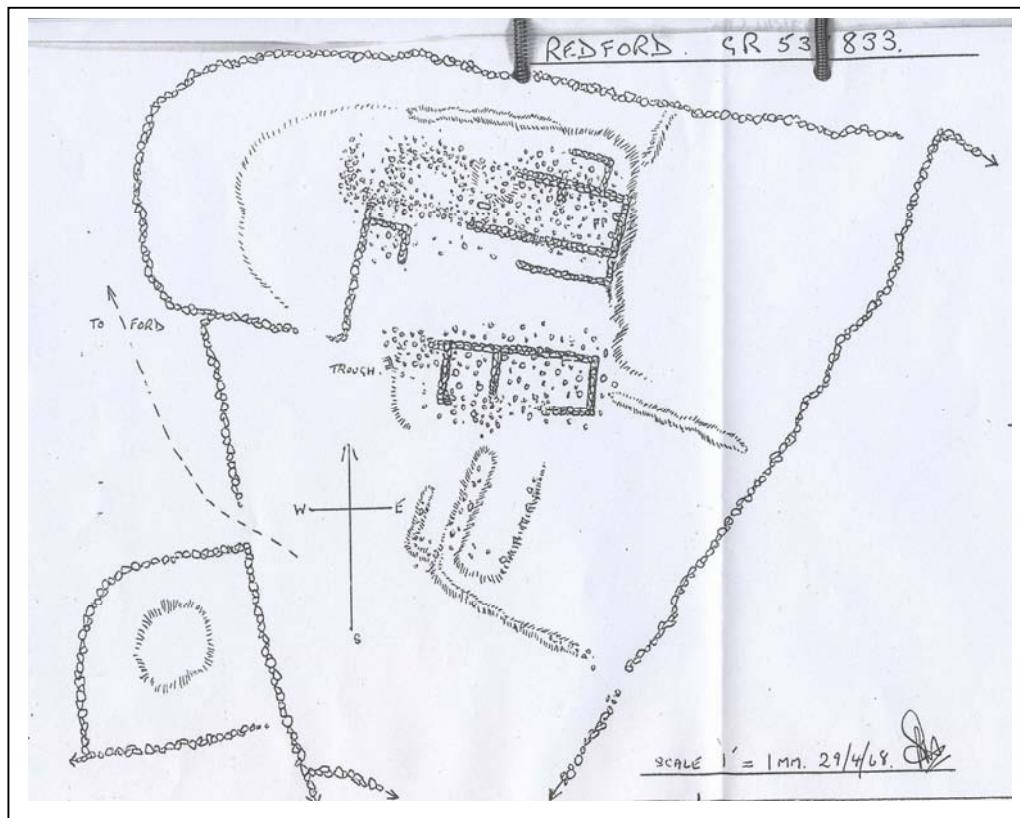
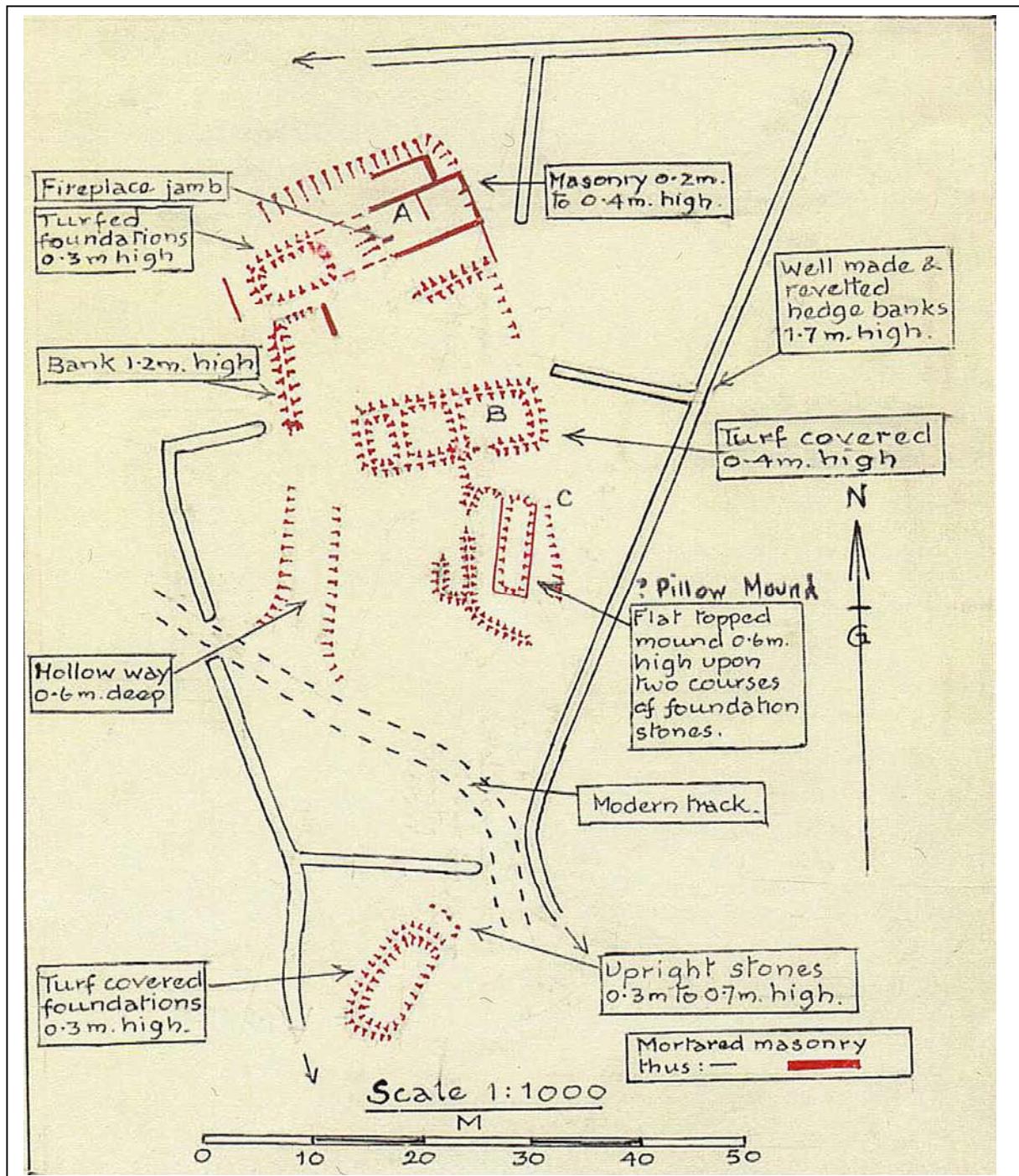


Fig. 20 – plan of Reddaford by R. G. Haynes 1968 (not to scale)
(copy supplied by County HER)

Norman Quinnell's thorough survey of 1979 (Fig. 21) summarises most of the field evidence, though he too missed the possible roundhouse (A on Fig. 22) and misinterpreted the platform (C on his plan) as a possible pillow mound, (i.e. an artificial rabbit bury). He was, however, the first to note Building 3, outside the main farm enclosure.



*Fig. 21- plan of Reddaford by N. V. Quinnell 1979 (not to scale)
(copy supplied by NMR)*

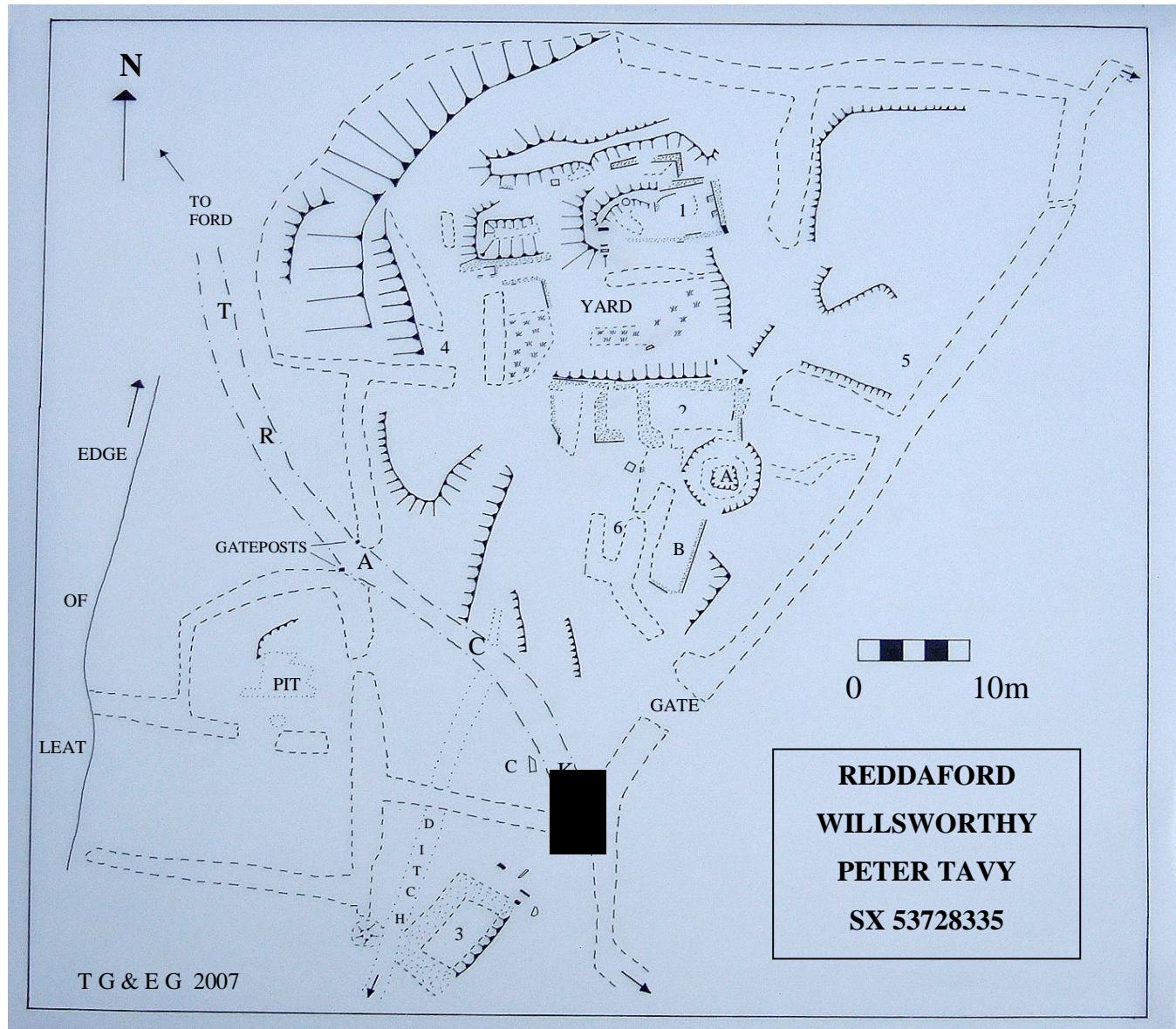


Fig. 22 - plan of Reddaford Farm 2007 by Tom & Elisabeth Greeves

Key: 1 – Building 1

2 – Building 2

3 – Building 3

4 – site of building shown on OS 1st edn 1:2500

5 - site of building shown on OS 1st edn 1:2500

6 – building (visible in painting of 1901- cover)

A - site of possible roundhouse

B – site of possible threshing platform/windstrew

C – wedgecut stone

Of the features shown on Fig. 22, Building 1 has a total internal length of approximately 21m and a maximum internal width of 4.8m (Fig. 23). Its larger, upslope eastern portion is approximately 12m x 4.8m internally. At its west end is a

single vertical slab of granite which once formed the south side of a fireplace (Figs 17 and 26). The slab stands 0.9m in height and is 0.8m long, with a maximum thickness of 0.25m. The W end of the slab is damaged but its eastern end is rounded and dressed with two vertical fluting grooves. These would have been visible from the interior of the room when looking at the fireplace. In appearance this slab could be of almost any date from the 16th to the 18th century, but perhaps a 17th century date is most likely and is a small remnant of what was probably once a very fine fireplace. The chimney stacks visible in the photographs of the farmhouse (Figs 12-14) also suggest a 17th century date. A recess for a second fireplace is visible at the east end of Building 1. The outshot on the N side of the building has internal measurements of approximately 6m x 2m.

The scale and orientation of Building 1, aligned downslope with clear evidence of domestic use at the upper end, is characteristic of medieval farmhouses of the Dartmoor region, and it is not unreasonable to suppose that Building 1 is on the footprint of a medieval structure which probably had a shippon (for cattle) at its lower end.



Fig. 23 - Building 1 from E, 1995, showing fireplace slab (photo: T. Greeves)

Building 2 (Fig. 24), on the south side of the farmyard, lies parallel to Building 1. While it was clearly used as a barn in the last years of the farm, its size and orientation suggest that it might be on the footprint of a medieval dwelling house, though there is no conclusive evidence to prove this. Its eastern compartment has internal measurements of approximately 7.6 x 3.9m. To the west is another compartment which measures 4m x 2.8m internally. There is another element of the structure at its west end, but this may have been the lean-to visible in the photographs (Figs 12 and 14 and in the painting of 1901 (cover).

Building 6 is visible on the painting of 1901 (cover).

Building 3 which lies outside the farm enclosure looks ancient, with very low stony walls. It has external dimensions of approximately 11m x 6m, and could be of medieval origin but is of unknown function. A curious grouping of set stones just beyond its NE end suggests some functional link.



Fig. 24 - Building 2 from E, 2007 (photo: E. Greeves) Scale: 2m

Feature A (Fig. 25) was first noticed by Hemery (1983, 986-7) who interpreted it as a possible 'corn-grinding mill'. By this he may have meant a roundhouse which provided the energy (from a horse walking round and turning gearing) to power threshing machinery. The feature has a maximum diameter of 6.5 - 7m. Its location on the south side of the barn (Building 2) within a plot called Mowhay (= rick enclosure) in 1839/40, and against the level raised platform (B) all supports this interpretation. The platform, faced with stone on its E and S sides, has a level surface approximately 8m x 3.5m. As Hemery suggested, this may well be a 'windstrew', i.e. an open air threshing/winnowing platform. The best known example of a windstrew on Dartmoor is that at Longstone in the parish of Sheepstor, which has a substantial raised stone-built platform. Another probable example can be seen at Stanlake Farm, Walkhampton at SX 57027102.

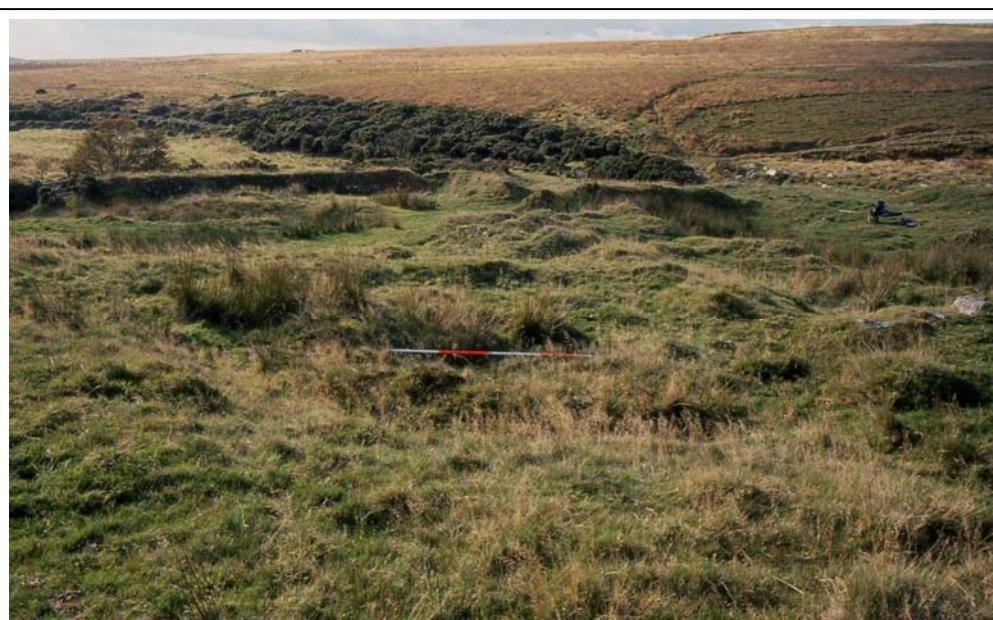


Fig. 25 – site of possible roundhouse from E, 2007 (photo: E. Greeves). Scale 2m.



Fig. 26 – Slab on S side of fireplace, Building 1, showing dressed fluting, December 2007 (photo: T. Greeves). Scale: 1m.

A particular feature of interest at Reddaford is a stone (Fig. 27) which has been split with iron wedges by means of a technique predating c. 1800. It is marked as C on Fig. 22 and lies on the south side of the track. It may once have been used as a gatepost as there are drilled holes (one plugged with iron) on one visible face. Four distinct, but shallow, discrete wedgecuts are visible along its top edge. A fifth is poorly defined. The cuts have top edges of 10-13 cm and bottom rather rounded edges of approximately 8cm. Their ‘vertical’ depth is 4-5 cm.

The small enclosure on the west side of the track and now containing a pit within it (possibly of military origin) was described as a ‘Garden’ on the tithe apportionment of 1839/40.



Fig. 27 – E side of wedgecut stone (C on Fig.22), December 2007 (photo: T. Greeves) Scale: 1m



Fig. 28 – channel for open stream from farmyard from S (see cover picture), December 2007 (photo: T. Greeves) Scale: 1m.

4.2 The wider context

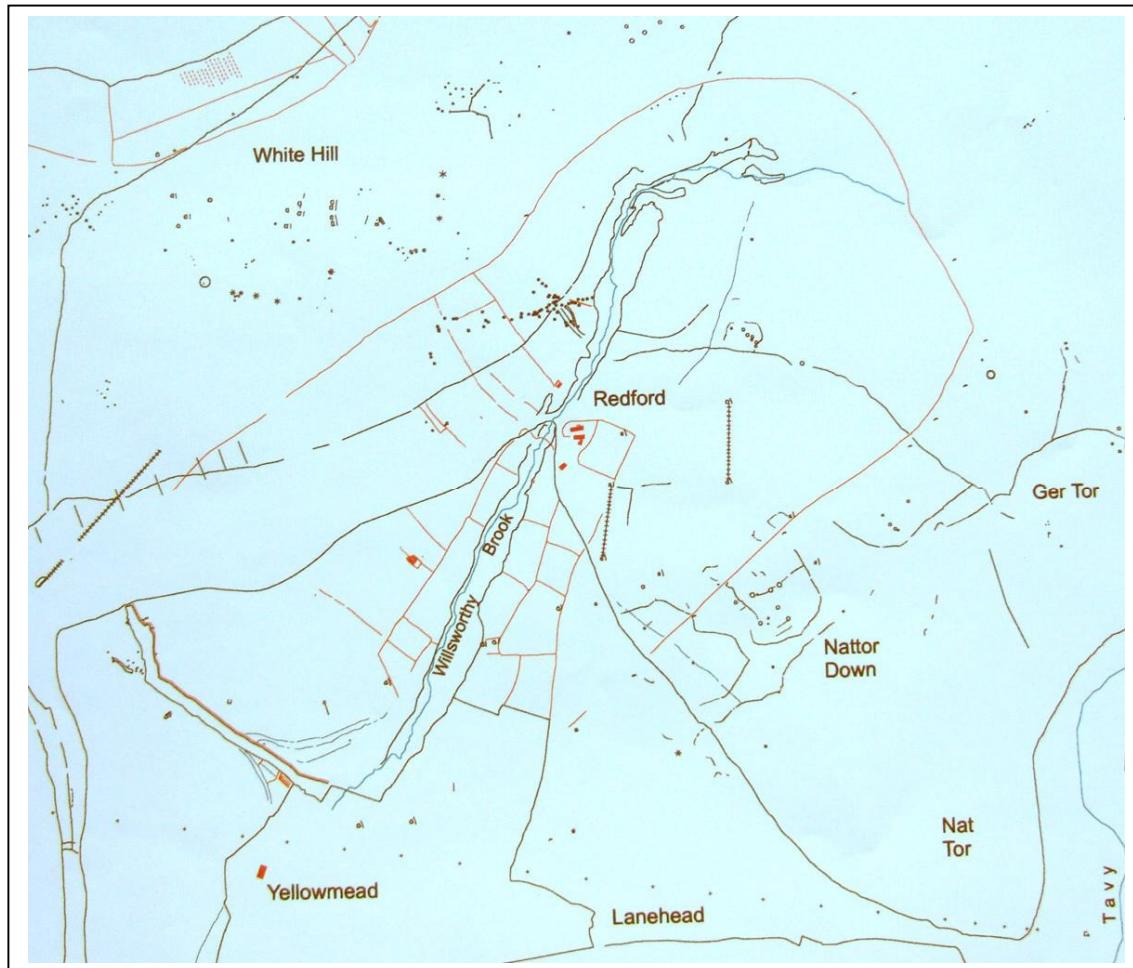


Fig. 29 – detail of survey by S. Probert, 1998 (fig. 20), showing newtake boundary in red, leats etc.

Probert's general survey of Willsworthy contains much useful information. Fig. 29 shows in particular the original extent of the large ovoid newtake attached to the farm – its boundary is shown in red, and straddles both the east and west sides of the Willsworthy Brook. No documentary evidence has come to light to suggest an origin of this newtake, but the fact that Reddafford Farm sits centrally within it, and that field boundaries associated with a medieval settlement (SX 53358310) on White Hill seem to respect it, suggest it may well have a medieval origin. It may even relate in some way to the bounds described in 1242 (see above).

Probert also shows the course of a leat (NMR no. 1159731) leading southwards from the Willsworthy Brook to the northern edge of the Reddafford Farm enclosures. He suggests (2007) that this might have been a potwater leat for the farm, which seems plausible. However, the leat is not shown on the 1st or 2nd edition OS maps and so, if once used as a supply of drinking water, must have gone out of use by then. He also shows a length of leat (NMR no. 1159732) ESE of the farm, outside its enclosures, and running above, but roughly parallel with, the Reddafford Leat from the R. Tavy. It is possible that this is a continuation of the suggested 'potwater' leat. If so, it may have run through the fields of Reddafford and then continued on to an unknown

destination. A likely entry point for it through the northern hedge of Reddaford Farm is shown in Fig. 30 at SX 53788 83379.



Fig. 30 – possible blocked gutter through hedge for leat, from N, SX 53788 83379, 22.12.2007(photo: T. Greeves) Scale: 1m.

However, it is clear that an open stream did run southwards from the yard at Reddaford and continued beyond the farm enclosure – evidence for this is provided by the painting of 1901(cover) and also field evidence of a shallow gutter and ditch (Fig. 28). The ditch cuts the south-west corner of Building 3.

In its later years the nearest dwellings to Reddaford were at Lanehead and Yellowmead farms, each about 1 km distant. But about 400m south-west of Reddaford are the foundations of two medieval buildings, on the west side of the Willsworthy brook, at SX 53358310 (Devon HER nos. 11808 and 51481-2; NMR no. 440736). One is of longhouse type and the other is an ancillary building. Associated with them is a yard enclosure and vestigial remains of a field system, which respects the newtake boundary. No documentary evidence has yet come to light to suggest a name for this settlement or to give an indication of when it was occupied, but it may

have been abandoned by the 14th century, perhaps even before Reddraford was established.

A single building, possibly the site of a dwelling, is located just across the Willsworthy Brook from Reddraford, at SX 53678344 (Devon HER no. 11810; NMR no. 440767). Its most likely date is perhaps 16th or 17th century, and it may relate to nearby tinworking, but it could be of medieval origin. Another rectangular building, of unknown date, has been identified further south at SX 53188280, also on the west side of the Willsworthy Brook (Devon HER no. 28093).

A structure possibly associated with tinworking, or perhaps the construction of the Reddraford Leat, is located on the left bank of the Willsworthy Brook, a short distance downstream from the farm, at SX 53617 83264. Internally it measures 4m x 3.5m. An 18th century date is possible.

These and other features demonstrate that at times throughout its long history Reddraford was not such an isolated farmstead as it now appears.

5. Conclusion

Reddraford Farm has proved to be of exceptional interest due to the extent of surviving documentation, as well as photographic and other records. Its known history as a farmstead can be confidently taken back to 1334 and possibly as far back as 1242 when the placename ‘Redeforde’ is mentioned as a boundary point.

Since Catherine Linehan’s seminal paper was published in 1966, which stated that the site showed ‘late development’ (Linehan, 1966), there has been an assumption among archaeologists that the settlement is of post-medieval (i.e. post-1500) date. But the placename evidence of 1342 (Gover et al, 1931-2) should not have been missed, and the form of the settlement itself should have carried more weight as having likely medieval origins. The present study is able to significantly increase our understanding of the site. The paradox is that Reddraford Farm, now one of the best documented farms on western Dartmoor, with good surviving field evidence, is not legally protected as a Scheduled Ancient Monument, while nearby features are.

It is to be hoped that this report will enable Reddraford to be properly recognised as a site of remarkable human context, stretching back to at least the 13th century. Of special interest is the remarkable web of connections to families and places in much of west Devon and beyond, and also Cornwall.

The evidence set out here is by no means the end of the tale – future work will identify new sources of information and will provide further details of the story. Further research on the families connected with Reddraford will establish kinship and other links. Detailed fieldwork on the newtake may yet prove a medieval origin for it. For the time being, we can perhaps be content that a visit to Reddraford will never be quite the same again.

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