

YELLOWMEAD FARM

WILLSWORTHY, PETER TAVY

an archaeological and historical survey

by Tom Greeves MA, PhD



2008

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List of Abbreviations

HER – Historic Environment Record

LTA – Land Tax Assessments

MoD – Ministry of Defence

NMR – National Monuments Record

OD – Ordnance Datum

OS – Ordnance Survey

PWDRO – Plymouth & West Devon Record Office

RCHME – Royal Commission on the Historical Monuments of England

WCSL – Westcountry Studies Library, Exeter

Summary

Surviving historical data for the occupation of Yellowmead Farm dates from 1672 until 1904. Members of the following families

seem to have certainly been resident there at some time (in chronological order) – Maddaford, Williams, Knight, Tregilgas, Doidge, Collyhole, Rundle, Palmer, Bickle, Brendon, Rice, Reddicliffe, Littlejohns, Friend and Lendon. The farm, sometimes known as Hollowmead, was always small, with no more than about 16 acres of land attached.

A field survey of the farm site reveals mostly indistinct archaeological features, with much robbing of stone from the site. However, with the help of maps, the location of structures and other features can be identified.

230 years of human story can now be attached to this farm which previously had been almost totally neglected in Dartmoor studies. A particularly good range of documentary sources survives in the Plymouth & West Devon Record Office.

1. Introduction

This report is the third 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, Reddaford, Standon, Yellowmead) on the MoD freehold estate of Willsworthy, within the Dartmoor Training Area. The Doe Tor and Reddaford reports were completed in 2007 (Greeves 2007a; 2007b).

Yellowmead Farm, the subject of the present report, is located within

Willsworthy Hamlets, an ancient subdivision of the parish of Peter Tavy, on the west side of Dartmoor, and on the west side of the Willsworthy Brook (Fig.1). Its national grid reference is SX 53038248, and it lies at the north-western edge of Peter Tavy parish, only some 70m from the boundary with the parish

of Mary Tavy. Its height above sea level is approximately 950 ft/290m OD, and its western field hedges adjoin the moorland commons of Black Down. As the crow flies it is over three miles from Peter Tavy village, a little under three miles from Mary Tavy, and two miles from Lydford. It is a relatively sheltered site, especially from winds from the west or north.

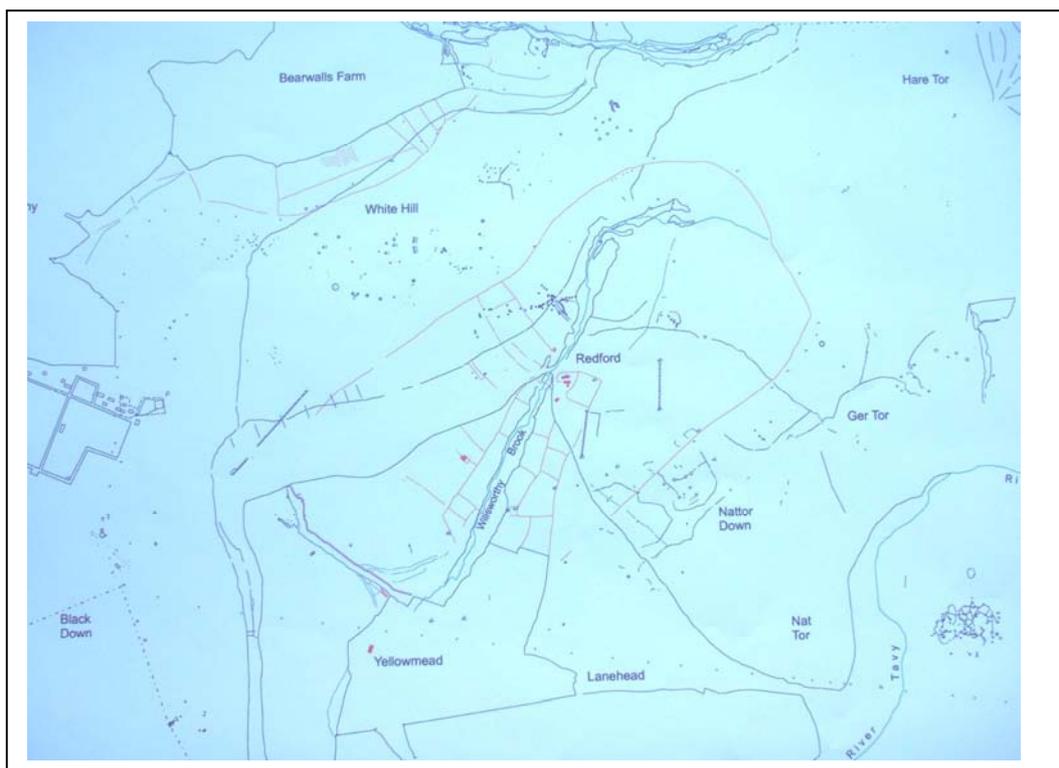


Figure 1 – Location map (Yellowmead bottom left) (detail from Probert, 1998, fig.20)

The farm was abandoned by the last tenant, George Lendon, in 1904 and was formally purchased by the War Office in November 1908, as part of the process of acquiring the freehold for its new live firing range at Willsworthy. Since then the farm site has been razed and is now in a very reduced but more or less stable archaeological state, though not without interest, as will be seen. Considerable robbing of stone from the building foundations has taken place.

This report is the result of approximately one month's work undertaken during the first quarter of 2008. Besides a measured plane-table survey of the field remains, research has been undertaken for historical data in the Devon Record Office (Exeter), the Plymouth & West Devon Record Office (Plymouth), the Cornwall Record Office (Truro) and in libraries in Exeter, Plymouth and Tavistock. Descendants of the Friend family who were at Yellowmead in 1891 have also been traced.

2. Previous study

2.1. Historical

Yellowmead has virtually no record in published Dartmoor literature. In 1901 William Crossing mentioned the farm briefly in connection with the 'Lich Path', a medieval and later route which linked the farms of central Dartmoor with Lydford. He noted a local tradition which 'states that an avenue of trees formerly extended from Yellowmead Farm to Watervale [SX

518837], which are situated one on each side of the Down, and as such would point directly to Lydford, there is little doubt that the Lich Path...is here intended' (Crossing, 1901, 27). In his *Guide to Dartmoor*, published in 1909, Crossing suggested that the farm lay directly on the route of the Lich Path (Crossing, 1909, 55). Eric Hemery states that 'In 1780 James Cleave occupied and paid Land Tax for Yellowmead Farm' (Hemery, 1983, 990) but no evidence to support this has been found, and no link between the Cleave family and Yellowmead confirmed, so the present author believes Hemery to be mistaken.

2.2. Archaeological

The farm has fared little better from the point of view of archaeological study, and does not appear on the Dartmoor National Park Authority Historic Environment Record (HER). However, the site was noted by Eric Hemery, c. 1980, who recorded that 'A pile of rubble indicates the razed farmhouse, and a few granite pillars the remains of outbuildings.' He also noted 'the channel of the old Yellowmead pot-water leat' (Hemery, 1983, 990). A brief archaeological record was made on 2 September 1998 by M. J. Fletcher of RCHME who noted 'Yellowmead Farm, a small abandoned farmstead lies on a grassy hillslope at 287m above OD. The dwelling has been demolished, an amorphous pile of rubble some 7.6m by 6.0m and 1.2m high lies adjacent to the site. Two stances and a rectangular plot with drystone walling 1.2m high form earthworks to the west' (NMR Monument Report 1159628). The previous month Simon Probert, also of RCHME, noted and surveyed three abandoned leat channels on open moorland outside the Yellowmead enclosures and suggested they supplied water to the farm (NMR Monument Report 1147635; Probert, 1998, Fig. 20).

In his survey of the archaeology of the Willsworthy Training Area, Probert briefly suggested a probable post-medieval [i.e. AD 1540-1900] origin for the farm, based on the form of the fields and their boundaries (Probert, 1998, 11-12). He visited the site on 23 February 2001 and described it as 'The demolished remains of a small farmstead. Two rectangular stone piles and a small enclosure are all that remains of the farmhouse and ancillary buildings.' (Probert, 2001, site 1159628).

3. History

3.1. Old Mead or Yellowmead?

The prefix 'yellow' in Dartmoor placenames can sometimes be derived from the word 'old' (e.g. Yellowmead, Sheepstor – see Gover et al 1931-2, 240), implying a very ancient settlement site recorded as being old when 'English' settlers moved into 'British' territory. Tantalisingly, a reference to 'Old Meade' is recorded within The Manor of Willsworthy in 1644 (Fig.2) when John Maddaford was the tenant paying 10d rent (DRO/158M/M42).

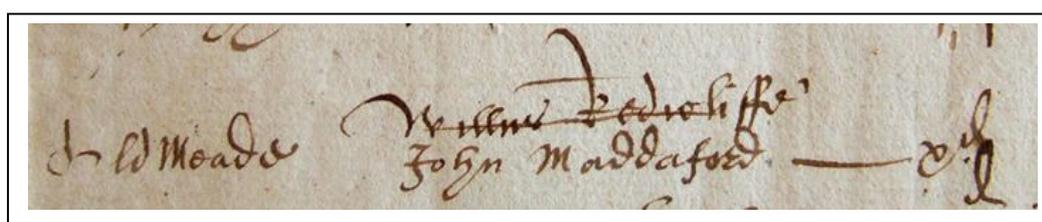


Figure 2 - 'Old Meade', Manor Of Willsworthy 1644 (DRO/158M/M42)

It would be tempting to identify this with Yellowmead but nineteenth century records clearly indicate that Old Mead is a separate holding within the manor, and the tithe apportionment and map of 1839 /40 identifies its

location as a group of fields east of Baggator Farm, on the north side of the Baggator Brook (SX 552808).

3.2. The Seventeenth Century

The earliest reference yet found for Yellowmead dates to 30 December 1672 when Walter Maddaford paid a 2d rate for 'Yeallow Meadowe', for repairs to the church of Peter Tavy (Tavistock Library/Peter Tavy Village File – the original document has not been traced).

Rather surprisingly, Yellowmead was at this period part of the Manor of Longford (a settlement in Whitchurch parish), and remained so well into the nineteenth century. Fortunately, a good run of documents relating to this manor survive in the Plymouth & West Devon Record Office, and provide much of the history of the farm.

At some time before June 1687 'Yellowmeade' was leased to Stephen **Williams** the elder, husbandman, of Peter Tavy by John Moore of Moore, Esq. (PWDRO/407/519). This John Moore had died by 24 June 1687 and a new lease of that date was granted by John Moore of Upcott, Cheriton Fitzpaine, Esq., to Nicholas **Knight** of Peter Tavy, who was variously described as a husbandman and yeoman, in return for £7 (PWDRO/407/519 and 593). The premises were described as follows:

'All that one Tenement with thappertenaunces commonly called or knowne by the name of Yellowmeade, Together with the Sheere [=share] of the peice of a meadowe scituate lying and being in the Southerparte of a meadowe called Buddle meadowe within thaforsaide parish of Peter Tavey with the Common of Pasture Turves and Heath belonging to the Saide Tenement in and upon Blackdowne and Dunridge Common...now in the tenure or occupacion of the Said Nicholas Knight' (PWDRO/407/519).

This tells us that there was a dwelling on the site and that it had common rights attached to it. 'Dunridge Common' has not been identified but is assumed to be a part of what is now known generally as Black Down. Neither has 'Buddle Meadow' been certainly identified, but a group of fields less than a mile due south of Yellowmead is still known to this day as 'Buddley Meadows' (inf. David Palmer of Higher Creason). They are located at approx. SX 529813 in the vicinity of the abandoned farm called Budlake, Budla, or Budhill just within Peter Tavy parish and part of Willsworthy Hamlets.

The term of Nicholas Knight's lease was 99 years, determinable on the lives of his wife Jane and their son William. The annual rent for the premises was 8 shillings per annum. Attendance at the court of the Manor of Longford was required, and repairs were to be made by the tenant.

From a survey of the Manor of Longford dated 1691 we learn that Nicholas Knight was then aged 36, Jane Knight was aged 30 and William Knight aged 18. The value of the premises was said to be £2.10s (PWDRO/407/711). On 2 September 1691 John Moore of Upcott, with Thomas Melhuish of Northam, gentleman, and Thomas Lamplugh of Kensington, Middlesex, clerk, sold the Manor of Longford to Jasper Radcliffe of Franklin, St Thomas for £2,600, which included 'Yealameade', also spelt 'Yellomead' (PWDRO/407/543).

3.3. The Eighteenth Century

The Knights had left Yellowmead by June 1708, when the premises were occupied by Edward **Tregilgas**, a cooper of Peter Tavy, with his wife Anne and their daughter also called Anne. Edward Tregilgas [sic] and Ann[sic] Pheasant had been married in Peter Tavy church in June 1700 (Meyrick, n.d.). Edward Tregilgas was an assignee of Nicholas Knight (PWDRO/407/519 endorsement). His is

a distinctively Cornish surname and it is tempting to suggest that he may have been part of the inward migration of Cornish families to the Mary Tavy area in the early eighteenth century, probably attracted by mining prospects, as documented by M.G. Dickinson (Dickinson, 1980).

On 20 June 1708 Edward Tregilgas was leased 'Hollomaid', plus the portion of Buddle Meadow and the common rights, on the same terms as Nicholas Knight – for 99 years, determinable on the lives of his wife and daughter, at an annual rent of 8s, after payment of £8 (PWDRO/407/593), but appears to have surrendered the premises back to Jasper Radcliffe on 30 June 1708 (PWDRO/407/519 endorsement). This may have been a legal nicety as from 1717 until 1727 we find Edward Tregilgas regularly paying rent to the Manor of Longford (8s per annum or 4s per half-year at Ladyday or Michaelmas) for 'Yeala Mead' / 'Yealamead' / 'Yeallow Mead' (PWDRO/407/712-713) (Fig.3).

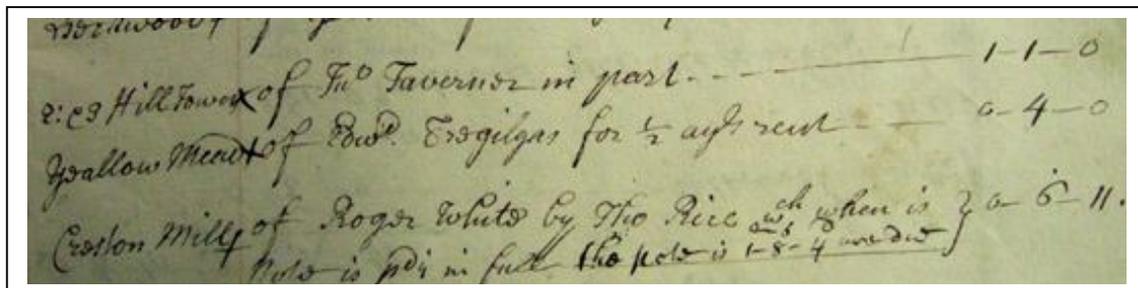


Figure 3 – payment by Edward Tregilgas of half-year rental for Yellowmead ,

June 1723 (PWDRO/407/713)

It appears that Edward Tregilgas died in 1728 as his payments of rent come to an end and are resumed by one Walter **Doidge**, a yeoman of Lydford, who is an assignee of Tregilgas and who is newly leased 'Hollowmead' by Walter Radcliffe of Franklin, St Thomas, on 26 November 1728. The premises etc are the same as those leased to Tregilgas. Doidge claims that Edward and Ann

Tregilgas and their daughter Ann are all deceased but is required to present their deaths at the next manor court (PWDRO/407/600). For the first time in the lease, mines, quarries and trees are reserved to Walter Radcliffe. This may reflect a new impetus in mining at this time.

Walter Doidge's occupation of Yellowmead (sometimes called 'Yellow Meadow') lasted until at least Michaelmas 1752, as he regularly paid rent to the Manor of Longford (PWDRO/407/713). On 12 January 1747/8 he was newly leased the premises ('Hollowmead') by Walter Radcliffe of Warleigh on payment of £11 10s 6d. Doidge was then described as a yeoman of Peter Tavy, aged about sixty-six. The other two of the three lives of the 99 year lease were Jacob Collyhole, yeoman of Chagford aged about thirty-five, and his daughter Mary Collyhole, aged about ten. Doidge signed the lease with 'The Mark of Walter Doidge' (PWDRO/407/602).

A mid to late eighteenth century rental for the Manor of Longford records the premises ('Yellowmead als Hollowmead') as consisting of about seven fields, with a 'right of cutting Heath + Turf on Black down etc.' (PWDRO/2320/1). A Henry Lamphey is recorded as paying a conventional rent of £5 for the tenement of Yellowmead at about this time (PWDRO/407/743).

On 5 July 1773 Walter Radcliffe of Warleigh, Esq., leased 'Hollow Mead' to Mr Richard **Rundle** of Milton Abbot, Gent., for 21 years from 25 March 1773 at £5 rent. The premises were said to have been 'late in the possession of Jacob **Collyhole** but now of his widow'. On every acre tilled there was a requirement to spread 'Fifty Double Winchester Bushells of Good Lime Seventy Sacks of Sea Sand or Three Hundred Seams of Stable or Stall Dung' and 'three Crops of Corn or Grain and no more' were to be taken. Clover or other grass seeds were to be mown 'but once after such Dressing' (PWDRO/407/607).

In 1780 John **Palmer** was listed as the occupier of Yellowmead, with a Land Tax assessment of 6s 1d (DRO/LTA/Peter Tavy). From 1782-1787 a Mr Robert **Bickle** (also spelt Bickel) is recorded as occupier (idem). From 1788-1791 John **Brendon** (also spelt Brinnon) was the occupier of Yellowmead (PWDRO/407/725), but in 1792 Thomas **Hueitt** (?) was noted as occupier (DRO/LTA/Peter Tavy), in which year John Brendon paid the £5 annual rent to the Manor of Longford (PWDRO/407/725). So it is difficult sometimes to be sure who is actually occupying the property, perhaps as a sub-tenant. However, John Brendon is once again listed as occupier for 1793-4 (PWDRO/407/725). From 1795-6 Walter Radcliffe (spelt Redcliff) is listed as both proprietor and occupier (DRO/LTA/Peter Tavy) which may mean that there was nobody actually living on the farm for those two years.

Things become clearer on 7 November 1796 when Walter Radcliffe of Warleigh leased the farm to Thomas **Rice** of Wilsworthy Hamlet, Peter Tavy, yeoman for 21 years at an annual rent of £5. The premises were 'some time since in the Possession of Jacob Collyhole afterwards of Richard Rundle late of John Brendon and now of the said Thomas Rice', and still contained the share of the piece of the south part of Buddle Meadow! The clause of 1773 concerning manuring etc was repeated, and mines, quarries and trees were still reserved to Walter Radcliffe (PWDRO/407/614).

3.4. The Nineteenth Century

From 1797-1819 the Land Tax Assessments record Walter Radcliffe (spelt Redcliffe) as proprietor and Thomas Rice as occupier, of Yellowmead (DRO/LTA/Peter Tavy), but the Manor of Longford rentals record either Thomas Rice or John Rice paying the £5 annual rent (PWDRO/407/712). The picture is further complicated by the parish registers of Peter Tavy recording the baptism of

Elizabeth, daughter of Peter (a miner) and Susannah **Red(d)icliff(e)** of Yellowmead on 28 February 1818 (DRO/Peter Tavy Parish Registers). Land Tax records show Peter Redcliff (also spelt Riddicliff) junior as occupier of Yellowmead, and there can be no doubt about Peter and Susannah's residence at Yellowmead. In fact, the Reddicliffe family remain linked with Yellowmead until almost the end of the nineteenth century.

A daughter of Peter and Susannah, Frances Reddicliffe of Yellowmead, aged 4, was buried at Mary Tavy on 22 May 1821, but only twelve days later, on 3 June 1821 they had a son Francis baptised at the same church. Peter Reddicliffe's occupation had by now changed to 'farmer' (DRO/Mary Tavy Parish Registers). On 20 July 1823, another son, Samuel, was baptised at Mary Tavy. Peter was once again described as a miner (*idem*).

It seems possible that two families were living at Yellowmead in the early 1820s as on 9 May 1824 Maria **Littlejohns**, daughter of Richard and An [sic] 'of Yellowmead in Wilsery Hamlet of Peter-Tavy' was baptised at Lydford (DRO/Lydford baptisms). But it was Peter Reddicliffe who paid church and poor rates for Yellowmead in the late 1820s (PWDRO/479/28 and 407/29). On 10 March 1829 the Revd Walter Radcliffe leased him Yellowmead for 21 years (PWDRO/407/541).

On the tithe apportionment of 1839 Peter Redicliffe is listed as occupier. For the first time a detailed map of the farm was made, with a complete listing of the fields and their acreages (Fig. 6). Yellowmead was a very small farm, having a total of only 16 acres and 3 perches of land, covering only 14 fields and plots (excluding the Houses & Courtlage and Garden). The whole holding has a distinctive lobe-like shape. Several of the fields are recorded as 'arable'.

Name & Description of Lands & Premises:

872 Plot in Great Marsh	Arable	0a	2r	20p
873 Great Marsh	Pasture	3	1	23
874 Marsh	Pasture	1	2	24
875 Little Brake	Arable	0	3	4
876 Middle North Park	Arable	1	0	8
877 Middle North Park	Arable	0	3	8
878 Home North Park	Arable	0	2	0
879 Garden	Garden	0	0	18
879a Marsh	Pasture	1	1	0
880 Plot	Arable	0	0	17
881 Houses & Courtlage	Homestead	0	0	6
882 Moory Meadow	Pasture	1	2	12
884 Long Marsh	Pasture	1	1	35
885 Little Field	Arable	0	2	18
886 Back Side	Arable	0	3	12
887 Outer Field	Arable	<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>38</u>
	<u>Total:</u>	16	0	3

Payable to the Rector £0 16s 9 ¾ d [DRO Peter Tavy Tithe Apportionment 1839]

The mention of 'Houses' in the plural may indicate that there were two dwellings on site. However, the tithe map shows only one small building coloured red (which indicates living accommodation).

In 1840 Peter Reddicliffe paid the Highway rate of 1s 1 ½ d for Yellowmead. The annual value of the property is given as £4. 10s which contrasts sharply with £27 for 'Riddaford', £38 for Standon

and £15 for Bearwalls (PWDRO/479/31). In 1844 Mr P. Reddicliffe paid the Church Rate of 1s 6d for Yellowmead (PWDRO/479/30).

However, three years earlier, in June 1841, at the time of the first detailed Census Return, a young Reddicliffe couple were living at Yellowmead – James Reddicliffe, a lead miner, aged 28, and his wife Elizabeth aged 25. Both had been born in Devon. They were still there ten years later in 1851, at the time of the next census. James was 'Farming 10 Acres' and had been born in Mary Tavy, while Elizabeth had been born in Peter Tavy. In the house with them was a visitor, Jane Rice, who was an unmarried niece aged 15, born in Mary Tavy. At the next Census, in April 1861, James and Betsy Reddicliffe, both now aged in their 40s, were occupying the one inhabited house. James was said to be farming 12 acres.

By 1854 ownership had passed from the Radcliffe family to the Buller family. The gross estimated rental was £6 5s. A Poor Rate of 2s 7 ½ d had been collected from James Reddicliffe (DRO/1427A-4/PO1). In 1864 and 1868 the same situation applied, with James Reddicliffe listed as occupier and Buller as owner (DRO/1427A-4/PO2-PO3).

Curiously, no record of Yellowmead appears in the Census Returns for April 1871 and April 1881 which may indicate a period of abandonment, though this seems unlikely.

James Reddicliffe reappears on 25 March 1882 when he was leased Yellowmead for 14 years from this date, by John Francis Buller of Morval, at an annual rent of £14 (Buller sale catalogue 1891, in possn Miss Ivy Friend). Reddicliffe's name appears as the occupier up to 1885 (DRO/Electoral Registers).

James Reddicliffe **Friend** appears as the occupier from 1886 – 1893 (DRO/ER; Kelly's Directory 1889). His middle name was his mother's maiden name (inf. Mrs Mabel Palmer) so it is very possible that he was the nephew of James Reddicliffe. He and his young family are recorded in the Census of April 1891. He himself was

aged 35, having been born in Mary Tavy – at Horndon (possibly the Black Lion Inn) on 15 February 1856 (inf Norman Friend 20.2.2008). His wife Elizabeth (née Phillips), aged 32 had been born in Bridestowe. Their eldest child was Elizabeth aged 5, born in Peter Tavy, presumably at the farm, and they had an infant son, Sydney James Friend, aged 9 months, also born at Yellowmead. It is worth reflecting that this was only a few weeks after the Great Blizzard of 9 March 1891, and conditions on the farm are hard to imagine.

James Reddicliffe Friend (Fig. 4) was a local Methodist preacher for 66 years (inf. Miss Ivy Friend).

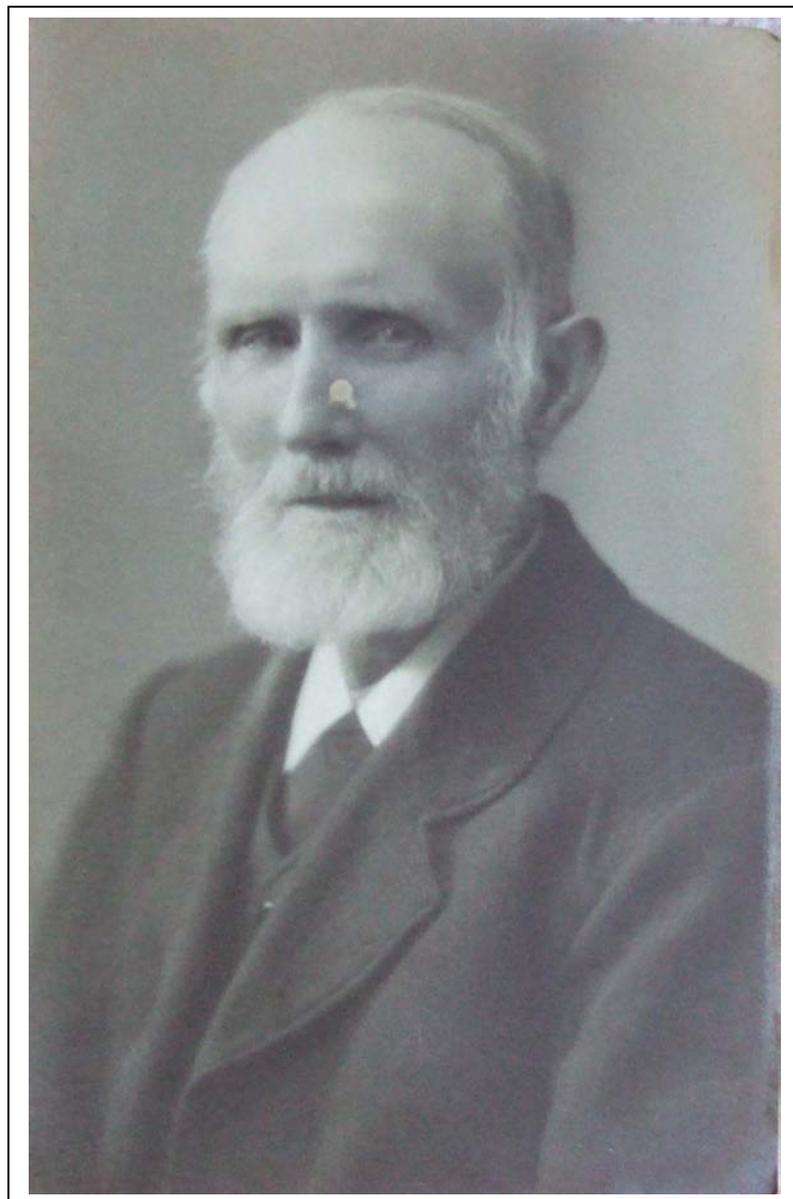


Figure 4 – James Reddicliffe Friend (1856-1941)(photo in possn Miss Ivy Friend)

Besides being a farmer he had worked as a miner for a time, probably at Wheal Friendship, but also in Cumberland and South Africa (inf. Norman Friend 20.8.2007). He died in 1941 and is buried with his wife in the cemetery of Zoar Chapel, Horndon (Fig. 5).



Figure 5 – Zoar Methodist Chapel, Horndon (photo: Tom Greeves)

In August 1891 Yellowmead was Lot 97 in a major sale of Buller properties, and details of fields, their acreages and state of cultivation were given, with an accompanying map (Fig. 8):

Area 16a. 2r. 5p.

1090 Farm-house, Piggery, cart-shed and Garden 28	-----	0. 0.
1040 Plot in Great Marsh 30	Pasture	0. 0.
1085 Great Marsh 26	Pasture	5. 0.
1086 Marsh 28	Pasture	1. 2.
1087 Little Brake + Middle North Park 11	Pasture	1. 3.
1088 Middle North Park + Home North Park	Pasture	1. 1. 18
1089 Marsh 29	Pasture	1. 1.
1091 Back Side 3	Pasture	1. 0.
1092 Little Field 20	Pasture	0. 2.
1093 Moory Meadow 34	Pasture	1. 2.
1107 Outer Field <u>18</u>	Pasture	<u>1. 1.</u>
	Total	16. 2.
5		

(Sale Catalogue, August 1891, Buller Estate – in possn Miss Ivy Friend)

All fields were under pasture. Mention of the piggery and cart-shed help give a picture of the farmstead.

Yellowmead was purchased by Arthur Palmer for £335 (+ Timber £4) = £339, the representatives of the late James Reddicliffe being the tenants (CRO /BU 859; War Office Copy Conveyance 24.11.1908, supplied by Nigel Sharpe of DE)

The Friend family moved to Horndon from Yellowmead in 1896 (inf. Norman Friend, 20.8.2007). The farm is not listed in the Electoral Registers for 1900-1901 so it may have been unoccupied then.

3.5 The Twentieth Century and Abandonment

The last known tenants of Yellowmead were George Lendon and his wife Mary A. Lendon . They occupied a four-roomed house in April 1901 when George was aged 57 and his wife 56. He had been born in Wellington, Somerset, and his wife in Cullompton (Census Return). George Lendon paid a Poor Rate of 6s 7 ³/₄ d in 1901 on land valued at £7 10s and buildings at £3 10s (DRO/1427A-4/PO5).

In May 1901 reports of the proposed purchase by the War Office of Yellowmead and the other Willsworthy farms appeared in the local press (WCSL/Lydford Parish File/AS6/newspaper cutting 'Military on Dartmoor'). George Lendon appears in the Electoral Registers for 1902-1904 under Yellowmead (land and tenement) (DRO/ER).

George Lendon (also spelt Lindon), described as a 'workman', left Yellowmead on Ladyday (25 March) 1904 and the property then became vacant. A survey at the time recorded a cottage and buildings, with land totalling about 17 acres [there was a minor error in the calculations and the figure should have been 16 acres]. The holding was valued at £20, with a rent of £25. The ground was all under pasture (PWDRO/1023/15/Field Book, Body & Son, Surveyors, Plymouth, p.57).

The War Department purchased Yellowmead from Arthur Palmer of Walkhampton on 24 November 1908 for £850 (*Willsworthy Training Area Integrated Land Management Plan*, MoD, 1999, Map 3; War Office Copy Conveyance 24.11.08, supplied by Nigel Sharpe of DE).

The buildings seem thereafter to have fallen rapidly into decay, helped by robbery of stone and other materials.

The land is now (2008) farmed by David Palmer of Higher Creason.

4. Field Evidence



Figure 6 – detail from the Tithe Map of Peter Tavy Parish 1840, showing the distinctive shape of the Yellowmead holding, plus the site of the dwelling (in red) (DRO)

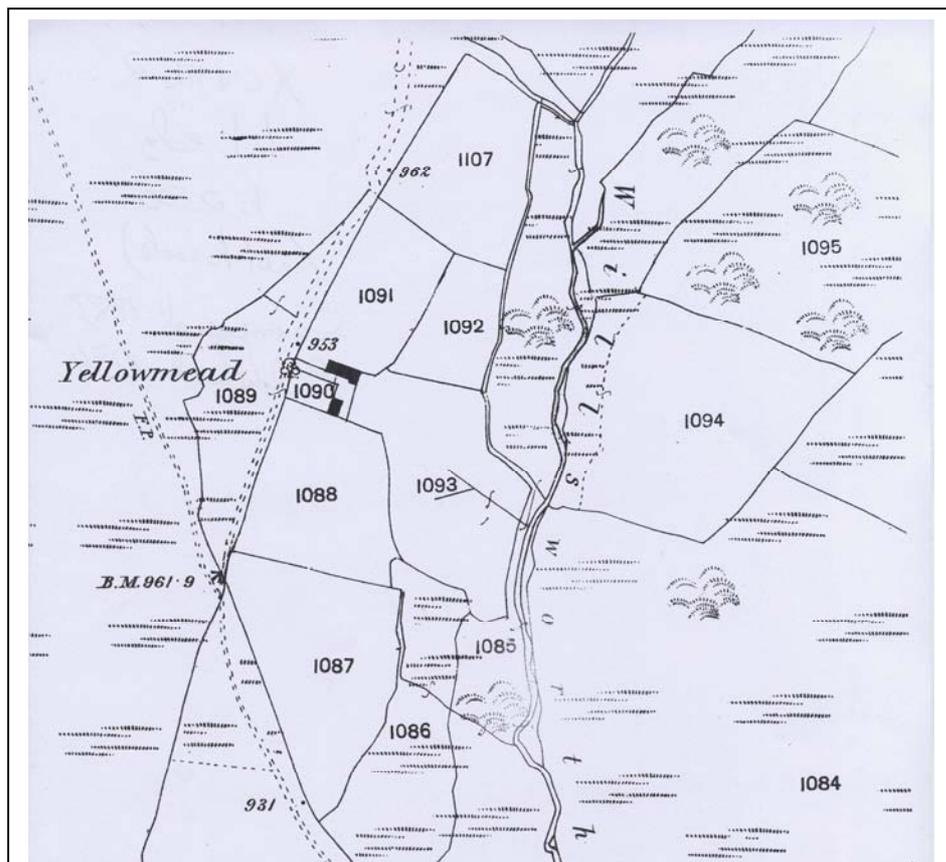


Figure 7 – detail from OS 1st edn 1:2500 sheet XCVIII.2, 1884
(surveyed 1883) (not to scale)

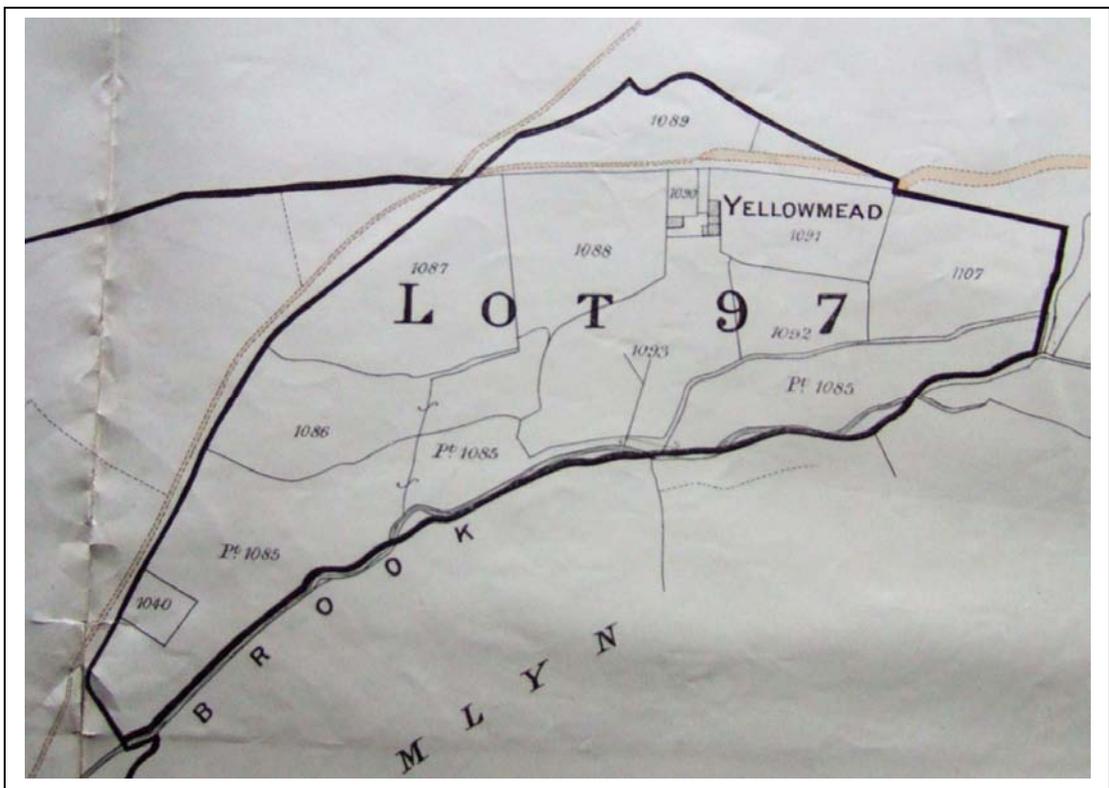


Figure 8 – plan of Yellowmead Farm 1891 (Buller sale catalogue, in possn Miss Ivy Friend)

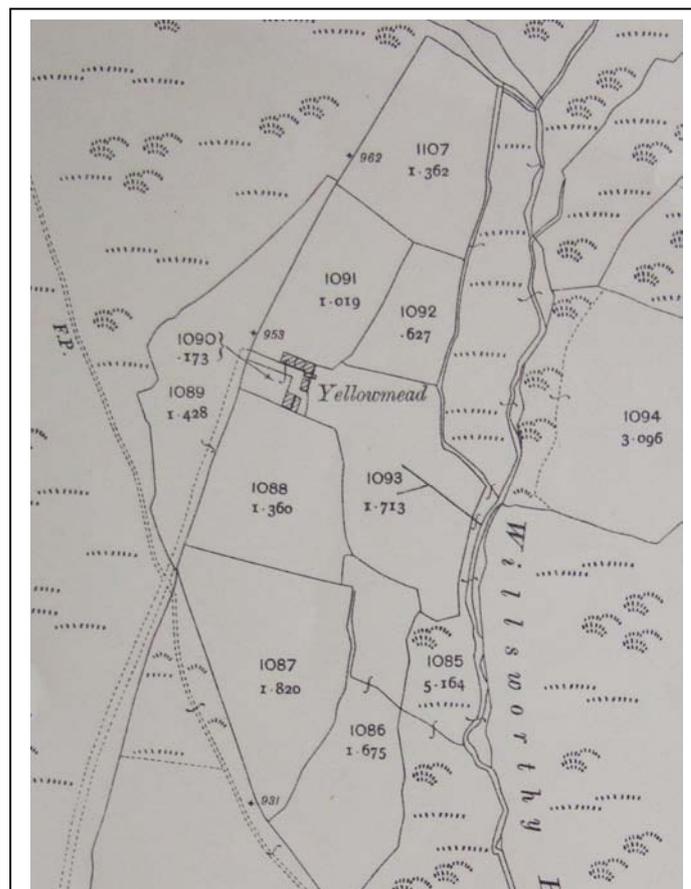


Figure 9 – detail of OS 2nd edn 1:2500 sheet XCVIII.2, 1906
(revised 1904) (not to scale)

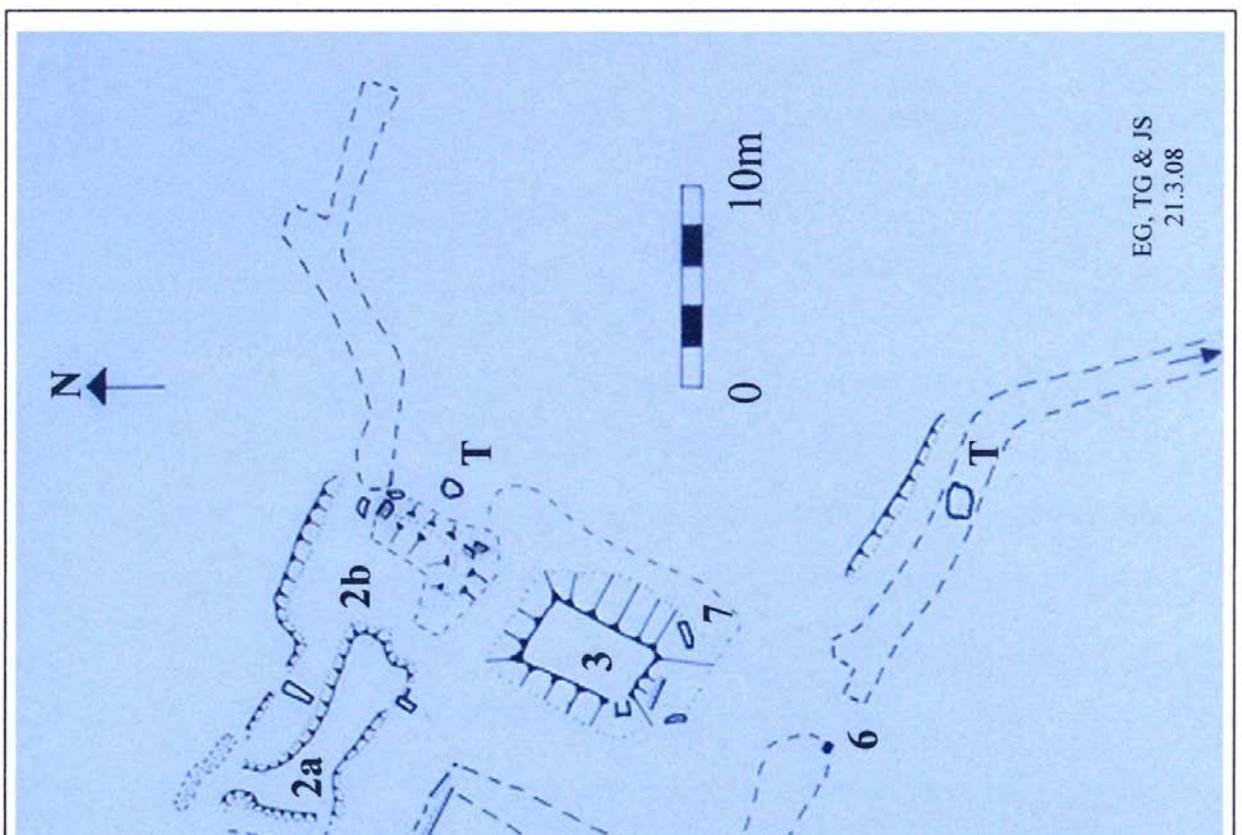


Figure 10 – Plan of Yellowmead Farm site, 21 March 2008 (T = Tree)



Figure 11 – site of dwelling etc from NW (photo: Tom Greeves)



Figure 12- the 'lane' into Yellowmead from W. Scale 1m
(photo: Tom Greeves)

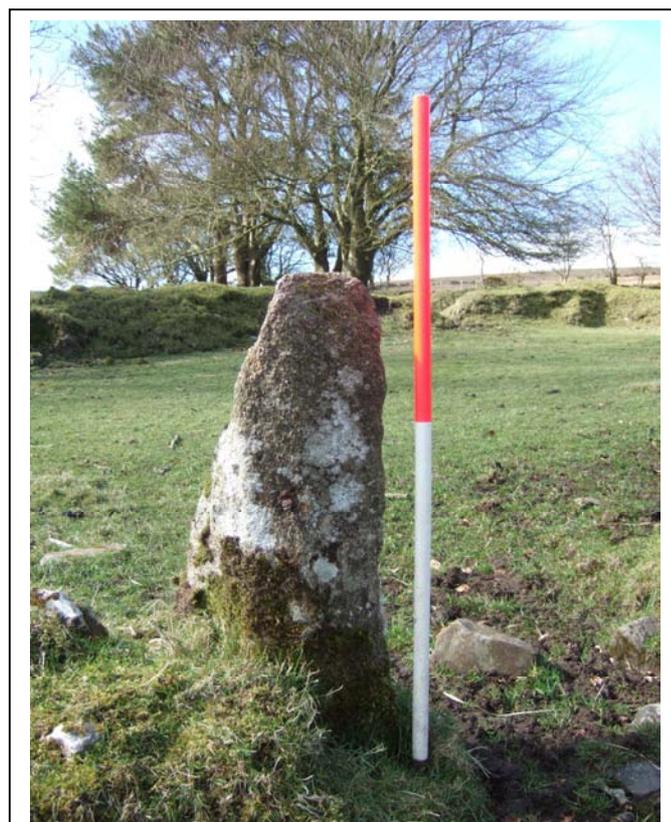


Figure 13 – chamfered gatepost. Scale 1m (photo: Tom Greeves)



Figure 14 – gateposts on N side of 'garden'. Scale 1m (photo: Tom Greeves)



Figure 15 – site of barn (?) from SW. Concrete slab visible on left (photo: Tom Greeves)



Figure 16 – platform/site of hayshed from NE. Scale 1m (photo: Tom Greeves)



*Figure 17 – gatepost cut by ‘feather and tare’ technique.
Scale 1m (photo: Tom Greeves)*

When visiting the site of the farm today, the most conspicuous feature is a neat rectangular plot (4 on Fig.10) internally approx 21m x 12m and bordered by hedgebanks mostly about 1m in height but reaching 1.5m at the lower end. This was the garden plot and its banks are partly faced with stone. On the NE side of the enclosure is a neat ‘lane’ or ‘drangway’, aligned approximately NW-SE and mostly about 3m wide. It gives access from the NW to the farm complex itself.

Very little survives of the buildings themselves. Most conspicuous is a stony mound (3 on Fig.10) approx. 10m x 8m and c. 0.8m max. height. There is a concrete slab at its W top corner and a short length (c. 2m) of surviving walling at its SW end. This is thought to have been a barn, but curiously does not agree precisely with the position of a building shown on the OS maps of 1883 and 1904, and the Buller map of 1891 (Figs 7-9).

Of the dwelling (shown on the tithe map of 1840 in red – Fig 6) only a low irregular stony mound survives. This is 2a on Fig. 10. Other buildings were attached to the SE side of the dwelling and remains survive best at the SE end (2b on Fig.10) where stony debris is still up to 0.7m in height, plus two or three walling stones still apparently in situ. What is apparent is that facing stones have been robbed from the outside of the SE and SW walls. Mr David Palmer of Higher Creason confirmed

that stone from the site had been taken for repairing walls elsewhere.

The tithe map, 1st edn OS map and Buller map all indicate a small outshot extending southwestwards from this eastern end of the main building complex, but this is barely traceable. The 2nd edn OS map curiously shows a building tucked into the corner defined by hedgebanks outside the SE corner of the garden plot, but no trace of this is visible. There is also said to have been a 'trap shed' somewhere between 2b and 3 on Fig.10 (inf. D. Palmer).

At the NW end of the complex is a slightly raised platform with two sawn-off telegraph poles incorporated into its outside edge, plus the site of a third. This has maximum dimensions of 6m x 4m and is 0.3-0.4m in height. David Palmer's father told him this was the site of a hayshed, but it is not marked on any of the known maps and may postdate abandonment of the farm.

A few surviving gateposts are of some interest. Two (marked as 5 on Fig. 10) are on the N side of the garden. The westernmost has a maximum height of 1.15m, with remains of iron hangings on its N side. The easternmost has a maximum height of 0.90m and has a chamfered edge on its NE side. This chamfer is about 0.10m wide and suggests that the stone might be a fragment of dressed building stone, perhaps of the sixteenth or seventeenth century. There is an iron plug set in the chamfer.

A third gatepost (6 on Fig.10) shows that it was drilled by the 'feather and tare' technique, postdating c. 1800 (Fig. 17). A fourth gatepost (7 on Fig. 10) is lying on the edge of the mound associated with building 3 and has four drilled holes on its upturned face, one of them plugged with lead.

The tithe map (Fig.6) indicates a track leading south-eastwards from the farm complex. A trace of this still survives, defined by the scarp shown close to the hedgebank SE of building 3.

During field survey a complete glass bottle (Fig. 18) was found in a hedgebank of the garden. It was made by Eyre & Co. of Launceston and could be broadly contemporary with the very last phase of the farm in the early twentieth century.

5. Discussion

Although at first glance Yellowmead Farm looks rather unpromising for either archaeological or historical investigation, close scrutiny demonstrates a fascinating human story and a settlement site which is by no means devoid of interest. Thanks to an extensive range of documentation, mostly in the Plymouth & West Devon Record Office and relating to the Manor of Longford, the story of the farm can be taken back to the seventeenth century and recovered in some detail until 1904. The lack of earlier documentation and relative paucity of surface remains means that it is not yet possible to prove the farm's existence in earlier centuries. However, it must be remembered that the Lych Way (or path), which was in existence before 1260, passed very close by the farmstead if not through it, and so a medieval origin for the farm cannot be entirely ruled out. Likewise, the chamfered gatepost (Fig. 13) could be from a building of sixteenth or seventeenth century date on the site.

But it is clear that the value of the farm was much less than, for example, Reddaford, Standon or Bearwalls. It had only about 16 acres attached to it, though it also enjoyed common rights. So it may always have been a smallholding.

No photograph or other image of the farm has come to light, nor have family recollections provided much detailed information, but more data may yet appear through some source. Further

research on the family names associated with Yellowmead will undoubtedly fill out the story further. Yellowmead Farm now takes its rightful place as an essential component of the story of Willsworthy Hamlets.

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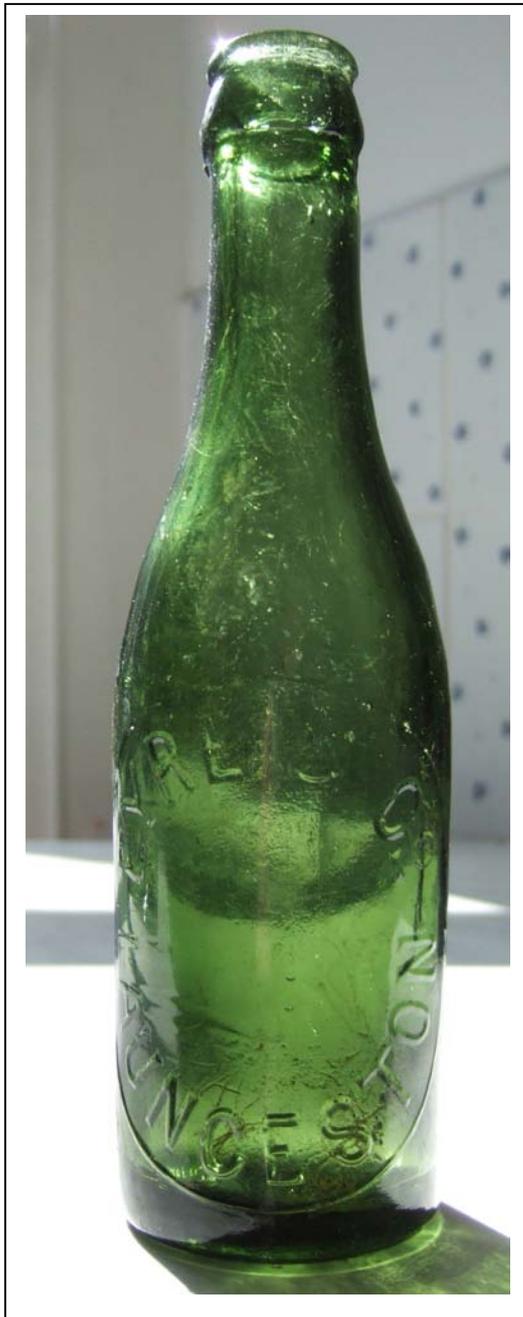
Condition Baseline Survey (English Heritage)

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*Figure 18 – bottle manufactured by Eyre & Co.
Launceston, c. 1900, found in hedgebank of 'garden',
Yellowmead (photo: Tom Greeves)*
