

**YCCART 2016/Y5  
North Somerset HER 2016-014**

**The TW stones of Cleeve and Congresbury: recording and historical study**

**YATTON, CONGRESBURY, CLAVERHAM AND CLEEVE ARCHAEOLOGICAL  
RESEARCH TEAM (YCCART)**

*General Editor: Vince Russett*



*How are the mighty fallen: Stone 18 in 2005 before collapse*

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## **Abstract**

*A number of small carved and apparently early 19<sup>th</sup> century boundary stones were found by YCCCART in King's Wood, Cleeve and Congresbury, over several years beginning in 2005. Analysis of the position of these stones and their physical characteristics, along with the historic documentation for the area, has led to the conclusion that these were the private boundary stones in King's Wood of the vicar of Yatton, Thomas Wickham, in the third decade of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.*

## **Acknowledgements**

YCCCART are most grateful to the owners of Kings Wood, Theresa and Sean Kingston, and Mr David Ridley of Goblin Coombe Farm, Cleeve, for access to, and information about, these stones, to Brian Bradbury for drawing attention to these mysterious stones, and to the late Mary Campbell for her hard work in digitising the 1821 survey of Yatton.

## **Introduction**

Yatton, Congresbury, Claverham and Cleeve Archaeological Research Team (YCCCART) is one of a number of community archaeology teams across northern Somerset, originally supported by the North Somerset Council Development Management Team.

The objective of the teams is to carry out archaeological fieldwork, for the purpose of recording, and better understanding and management, of the heritage of northern Somerset.

The fieldwork for this report has been carried out with repeated visits by members of YCCCART since 2005.

## Site locations (Cleeve and Congresbury)

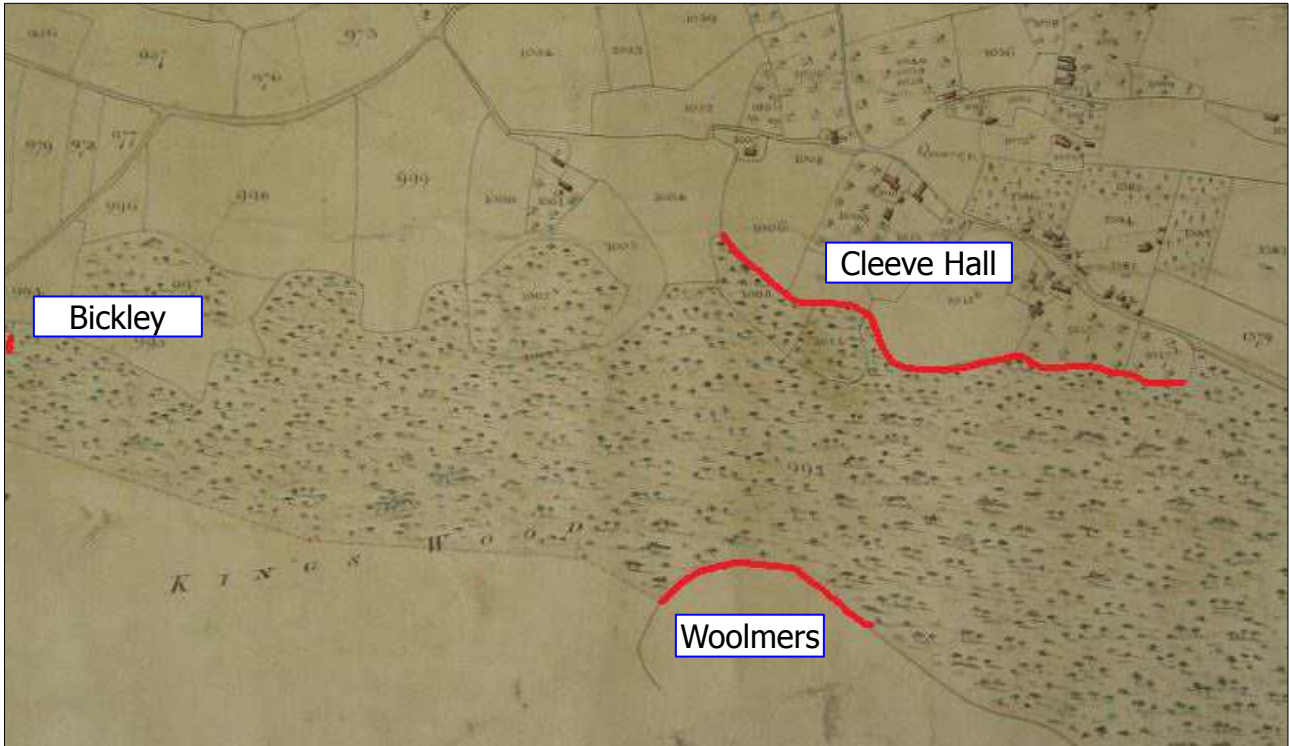


Fig 1: 1821 plan of Kings Wood, Yatton (later Cleeve) showing locations of groups of TW stones. Cleeve School (now the Goblin Coombe Environment centre) is close to the top middle right: the current A370 runs down across the upper left hand corner



Fig 2: 1840 Tithe Map of Congresbury showing Woolmers West group of 3 TW stones in Congresbury. The buildings at the right of this map are those of Woolmers (kennels).

## **Land use and Geology**

The whole of King's Wood, in Yatton and Congresbury, lies on the Carboniferous Limestone of Broadfield Down. This Limestone is highly mineralised, with large veins of iron, utilised from the Roman period, and supporting an active iron mining industry in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

The limestone was also valued for its hardstone, and small quarries can be found around the edges of Kings Wood: they are responsible for some of the features, such as inclined planes, visible in the woods today.

This is private woodland. Some of the stones, however, are visible from public and permissive Rights of Way. Please remember this, and obey all warning signs: there are open mine workings in the woods, and the woods are used for shooting at irregular intervals. As they are also a SSSI, please be careful if visiting not to disturb or damage wildlife.

## Historical and archaeological context

The marking of boundaries by erecting stones is an ancient practice, and as the vicar of Yatton (and Prebendary of Salisbury), Thomas Wickham would have been well aware of the biblical phrase (from Deuteronomy 27:7)

*'Cursed be he that removeth his neighbour's landmark. And all the people shall say, Amen'* (King James Bible text)

or possibly Proverbs 22:28: *'Do not move the ancient boundary Which your fathers have set'*.

Congresbury parish, immediately adjacent, has a remarkable set of carved boundary stones of around the year 1800, erected by the manorial landowners at the time, Queen Elizabeth's Hospital, Bristol.

Thomas Wickham was the Rector of Yatton from 1809 until his death in 1829 (Gentleman's Magazine), but significantly, in the 1821 survey of Yatton, he was the owner of King's Wood in Yatton (no. 991 on the accompanying map). Although no evidence is currently available, it is assumed he was also occupier of a considerable area of Kings Wood in Congresbury, owned for centuries by Queen Elizabeth's Hospital (see below).

There was, in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, a considerable iron mining industry in King's Wood. An iron mine agent, Richard Trevithick, was living in Yatton at the time of the census in 1851.

In the 1854 sale details (of the Smyth-Pigott lands in Yatton), Lot 2, King's Wood, gives particulars of the ironstone found there.

*'..believed to comprise very large resources. A portion of King's Wood has been worked for seven years and 30-40 tons a day mined during the last two years. The ironstone contains a very large and excessive percentage of Iron, found in various depths and great abundance and in some places it quite crops out from the surface. It is conveyed to Yatton station and by Bristol & Exeter Railway to Bristol, whence it is shipped to Cardiff and Newport...an almost inexhaustible yield of ironstone easily obtained'*. (Barraclough 1990: 80)

Even allowing for Sale Catalogue hyperbole, this makes Kings Wood sound like a desirable area of land. It may have been the arrival of the Bristol and Exeter at Yatton in 1841 that made this a profitable enterprise. The harvest of 1847 'failed' (Cran 1983:183), and it is a moot point whether the beginning of mining in Kings Wood during this year was related to this.

The physical evidence of this industry on the ground in Kings Wood is striking, with shaft mines, and the collapsed remains of long near-surface tunnels throughout the woodland. Unfortunately, this will mean that it is difficult to track down traces of the Roman industry, which we know from recent work in Congresbury and Yatton (Cobthorn Way and Arnold's Way) certainly existed (North Somerset HER: 2016).

The King's Wood iron mines were still being worked in 1875, when Mr. Joseph Burley Smith had an office in Yatton. The Vestry met in order to consider levying a rate on the mine. (Barraclough 1990: 90). However, by the time of the 1st edition OS plan in 1885, there is no evidence that any industry ever occurred in these woods.

It therefore was probably very clear in the 1820s that a valuable mineral resource was to be found under Kings Wood, and this may explain the rather extraordinary lengths to which Thomas Wickham went to proclaim his ownership of the wood, especially against the holdings of other significant landowners in the area.

Why Thomas Wickham (or more likely, his agent: Wickham was a pluralist, with other livings - North Newington and West Knoyle, in Wiltshire) (<http://db.theclergydatabase.org.uk/jsp/persons/DisplayCcePerson.jsp?PersonID=40838>) chose these particular boundaries to mark in such detail, is not clear. The marking of the line against Woolmers is particularly difficult to understand, since it was already marked by a thousand year old parish boundary, and a relatively new (Congresbury) boundary stone.

The line against the fields around Cleeve Hall seems to only march with the possessions of Rev Thomas Shrapnel Biddulph (Cleeve Hall), curate of Congresbury before 1823, and Rector of Brockley after 1823, until his resignation in 1834: (<http://db.theclergydatabase.org.uk/jsp/persons/DisplayCcePerson.jsp?PersonID=33040>) and two small areas of the wood were separately owned and recorded as 'coppice' on the 1821 map. These were walled around, and the remains of one TW stone (No. 14) are still embedded in of one of these walls (see below). However, stones 10 – 13 ignore these coppices, and lie against the modern wood edge. Presumably events some time between the map and survey of 1821, and the death of Thomas Wickham and the acquisition of the woods by the Smyth-Pigott family around 1829 date the origins of these stones, a date range which would not disagree with the detail of their decoration.

## The Stones

Most of the stones (25 are currently known) are still standing in the four areas where they were recorded, largely in 2005 and 2016, by YCCCART.

Of the five whose complete length is visible (due to being supine or prone), the length varies between 920mm and 1030mm, with a high SD of 32. The total length of a stone was thus probably not that important.

The stones are all carved from the Pennant Sandstone. Only the upper section of the stone is worked, to a flat back and face with a rounded top, horizontal milling all down the face of the worked section, and horizontal milling down each side and over the top as well (see photographs). The length of the section worked is remarkably similar in all cases, and it looks from field evidence as if c450mm of this (about 18 inches) was intended to show above ground. The mean width (of the worked section) is 317mm (SD 13.9), which means the stones are probably intended to be 12 inches wide. Thickness is 98-120mm (mean 107mm, SD 6.5), meaning they are probably intended to be 4 inches thick.



*Fig 3: A typical TW stone: face, side view and back of stone 16 at Cleeve Hall*

## The Woolmers group

This group of nine TW stones stand on the historic parish boundary of Congresbury and Yatton (today Congresbury and Cleeve). The first of the TW stones stands immediately adjacent to Congresbury Boundary stone 15, accompanied by one supine and one leaning TW stone: the others form an arc along the boundary 260m long. These appear to be the only TW stones in this area.

The Ordnance Survey have confused matters by recording both Congresbury boundary stones and TW stones as generic boundary stones (. BS), presumably not realising that the TW stones have a different origin and purpose.



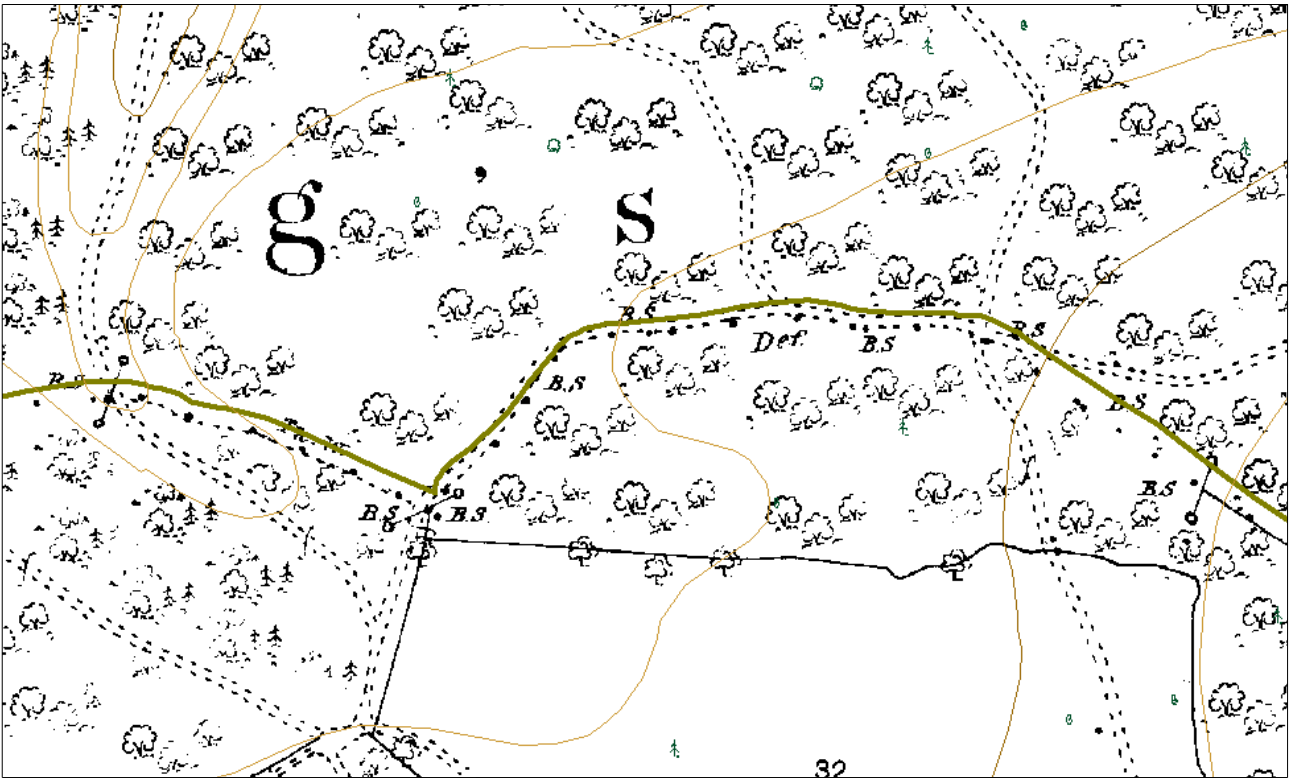


Fig 4: The boundary stones at Woolmers, Kings Wood (1885): the two at the left are Congresbury Boundary stones 14 and 15: the others are TW stones

It is, of course, pure coincidence that the stones also mark the parish boundary. Thomas Wickham's stones mark the edge of Kings Wood owned by him, against Woolmer's, owned by Queen Elizabeths Hospital, Bristol, Lords of the Manor of Congresbury.

Congresbury Boundary Stone 15 is accompanied by no less than three TW stones.



Fig 5: Stones 1, 2 and 3 at Woolmers, 2005

One (standing by Boundary Stone 15 in the background) is probably in its original position: the second (seen leaning in the upper right corner of the photograph) may be. Either way, the second cannot be very deeply buried in the ground (quite a lot of its unworked lower section can be seen) and it must be at real risk of falling.

The third, in the foreground, is already supine on the ground, and may have

been moved to this position at some point. When recorded in 2005, stones 4 – 9, all at Woolmers, were standing, mostly (apart from a little shaling of the face of stone 9) in good condition.

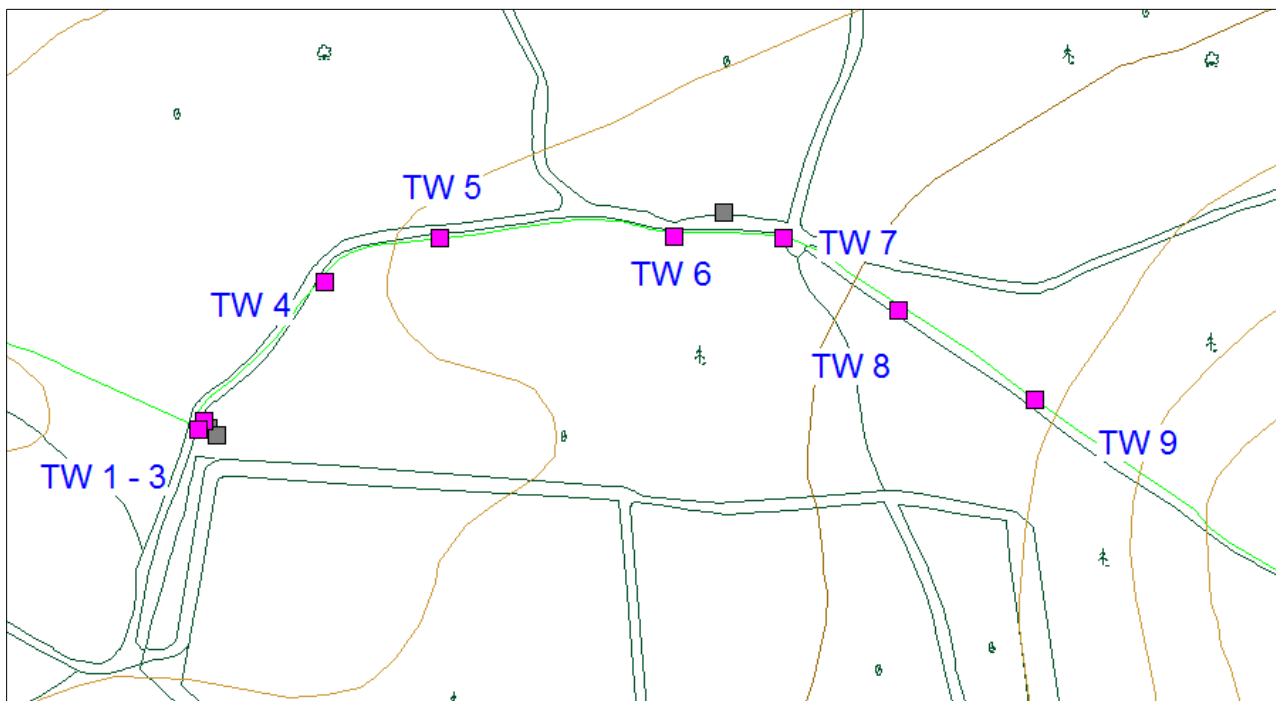


Fig 6: TW stones at Woolmers, 2005. Details of individual stones are in Appendix 1.



Fig 7: Stone 8 at Woolmers showing preserved details of carving

The well-preserved stone 8 shows the original milling face decoration of the stone.

Pennant Sandstone, as well as being subject to shaling in layers, is quite variable in its resistance to weathering. This stone (left) also shows the irregularities that make it clear it was hand-tooled: (the bottom serif of the T, and the lower points of the W aren't on the same line, for example).

Some of the stones in this group leaned in 2005, and two had quite significant lengths of the rough surface below the worked area visible. Some of the stones may have been moved during alterations to the adjacent tracks, recorded at least twice in the last 50 years.



*Fig 8: Stone 9 at Woolmers showing typical shaling damage*

The face of Stone 9 is also quite revealing.

The shaling of the surface has removed the lowest part of the W, but the edge of it has largely followed the straight lines of the carved T, probably after stress fractures caused during the carving.

As with most of the weathered stones, however, it is clear from the suite of lichen growth on the old surface and the new that this shaling probably happened many years ago.

Most of these stones were checked in June 2016, and apart from two that could not be reached because of very heavy undergrowth (8 and 9), and another (4), which has fallen and is now prone, they are mostly in the same condition, if more overgrown in the summer.

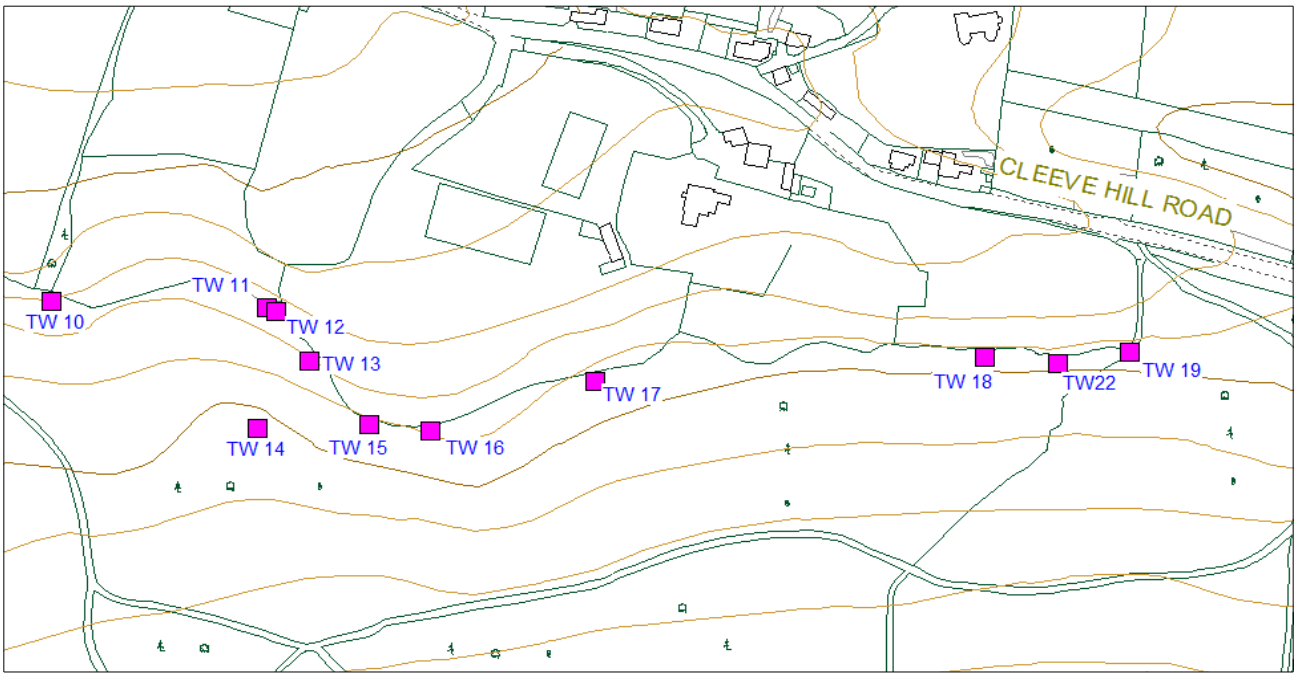
## **The Cleeve Hall Group**

Unlike the Woolmers Group, none of these stones appear to be marked as Boundary Stones on OS plans.

A group of 11 stones, both standing and supine, they generally stand a couple of metres inside the current edge of the wood, again, all facing inwards. The discovery of these stones by YCCART was a long process, the last found stone (no. 22) being noted as late as June 2016, and there may well be more in the area.

Unlike the Woolmers Group, there are no large tracks or roads accessing the sites, and these large stones (given Pennant Sandstone's density of  $2416\text{kg/m}^3$ ) are heavy: (<http://www.forestpennant.com/pennant-specification>) their weight is about 80kg - 176lb, about 1½ hundredweight) and were manhandled through the woods to be erected.

The complete coverage by some of these stones by thick moss makes them quite difficult to find, especially in the full shade of summer.



*Fig 9: TW stones at Cleeve Hall. It is difficult not to see obsessive overtones in such planning*

This set comprise at least 11 stones in 500m of boundary (albeit with what appears to be a significant gap between stones 17 and 18), with an average gap of about 43m; it cannot be coincidence that this is almost exactly the average distance between the stones at Woolmers, as well.



*Fig 10: Stones 11 (supine) and 12 (standing) are close together: Stone 11, lying on the roots of a tree, has clearly been moved at some time*



*Fig 11: Stone 13 (centre right) lying among rocks close to the woodland edge*



*Fig 12 & 13: Stone 18 standing in 2005 (left), supine by 2016 (above)*

Some stones, like 18, shown left, appear to be only buried at a shallow depth in the ground and probably moved. This photograph (left) shows a great length of unworked stone, presumably initially buried, showing in 2005: by 2016, this had led to the stones collapse.

A number of stones in this group share a

characteristic with some in the Woolmers Group: a damage, sometimes a nick in the top centre of the inscription face (stones 1, 4, 7, 10, 16, 19 and 20 at least), or even the apparent removal of an arc of material from the top of that face (stone 22 is a good example, but also 17). This type of damage on so many of the stones seems more than coincidence - are these damages the result of the stones being struck, rather than just weathering? And if so, why and when?

### **The Bickley Group**

These two stones standing together close to Bickley complete the survey of the TW stones in Cleeve (but see below).



*Fig 14: Stones 20 and 21 at Bickley*

These two stones were at first thought to have been moved, but from the 1821 map and survey, it can be seen that they stand on the corner of a plot held by one Lydia Nash under Thomas Biddulph. Again, both face away from the outside into the wood, and these two facts mean that at least one of them is in the original position: would he really have put up two right next to each other? It is also noticeable that immediately behind the stones begins an area of quarrying, some recorded by YCCCART in the past.

## The Woolmers West Group

These three stones were found at the end of June 2016. They are marked on the OS plan of 1885 as 'Stones'.

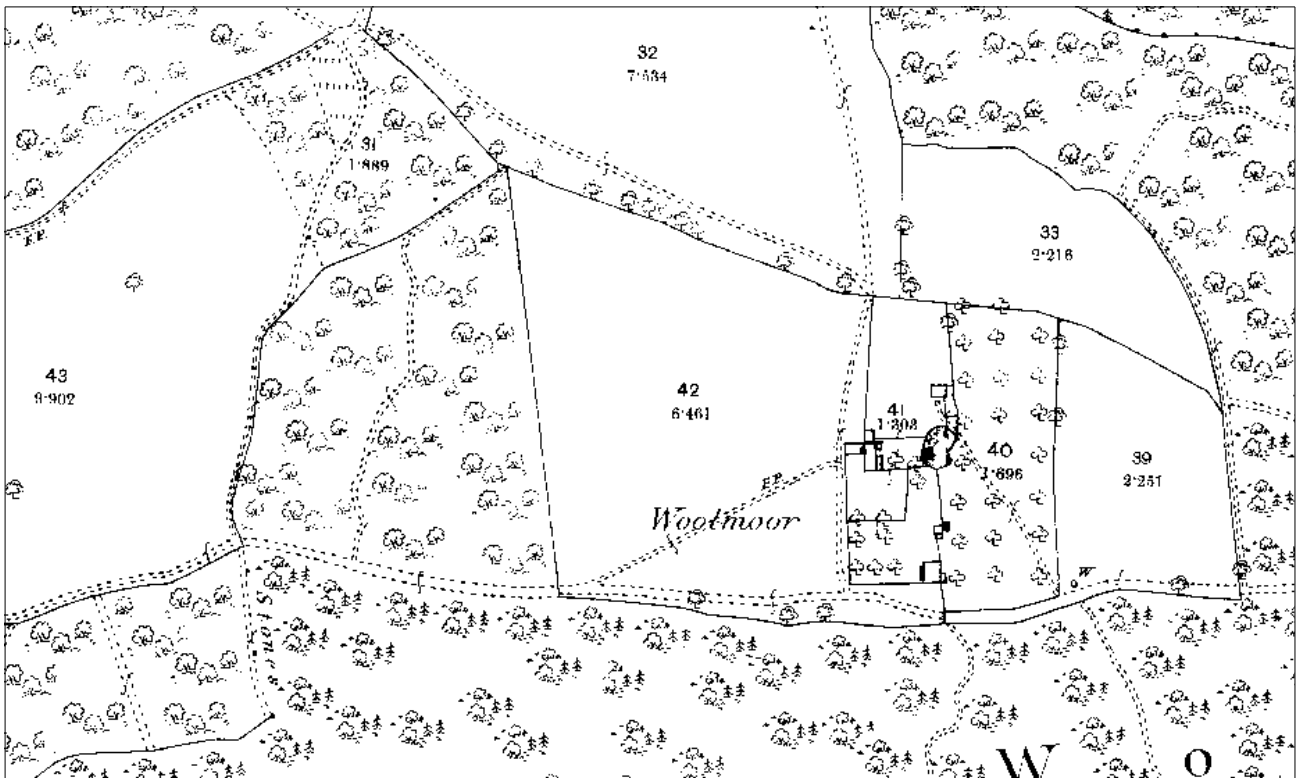


Fig 15: Three stones at the western edge of Woolmers ('Stones' near lower left-hand edge) OS (1885)

The OS plan (above) shows a track accompanying the three 'Stones', but in reality, this is a very steep rocky hillside ascending from the lower near-plateau around Woolmers to the heights of the area around The Ball, and no track is visible on the ground.

The line of three stones (TW23 – 25) are all in good condition.

Unfortunately, documentary evidence for the ownership of the land in this area is not currently available, but judging by the other groups of stones, the inscriptions (facing inwards) indicate that the land they mark is to their west. A wall at the top of the set of stones marks a further edge, and this area is clearly shown on the Congresbury Tithe Map and Apportionment as the edge of land parcel 1747, simply 'Kings Wood' in the apportionment. In 1840, the land belonged to Queen Elizabeth's Hospital, and was in the tenure of George Burdge. This anomaly requires further documentary examination. At that time, the land on the other side of the wall had the same owner and occupier, and because of an apparent error on the Tithe Map numeration, it is not clear if this was called Ball Wood at the time.



*Fig 16: Stone 23 at the foot of the slope: photograph brightened post capture*

Stone 23 has a feature not seen elsewhere: a rounded end 77mm slot in its upper shoulder. This slot appears to also have a rounded base.

Its purpose is unclear. In its original position, it would have been unsuitable as a mortise for a fitting such as a wooden railing (and it seems inconceivable that such would be needed here).

A second possibility is that this was a sharpening aperture for some narrow bladed tool. The stone is quite close to a main track past Woolmers, and so would be easily accessible.

*Fig 17: The slot in the shoulder of Stone 23*

The middle stone (24) has some minor spalling to the T on its inscription, but is otherwise in good condition.

The stone at the top of the slope (25) shows one of the unexpected properties of these stones: its inscription face is close to the end of a large but heavily tumbled stone wall at the top of the slope down to Woolmers.







*Fig 18: Stone 25 at the end of the tumbled stone wall at the top of the slope down to Woolmers: note the inscription faces into the wall*

## Conservation issues

Pennant Sandstone, while easy to carve, is also weathered easily, although these stones all seem in reasonable to excellent condition. Any spalling from the face of the stones seems to be ancient. Some (especially some of the Woolmers stones) are very close to a vehicle track, and could be vulnerable to damage when timber is being extracted. These might benefit from an annual clearance so they are clearly visible from the road.

Otherwise, plant growth does not seem to be harming these stones, although ivy (which will not help in cases of incipient shaling of the stones) should be suppressed. Physical disturbance by roots could become a problem (one stone was almost certainly knocked over by root growth between 2005 and 2016) to be monitored.

There is thick moss growth on some of the stones (one stone cleaned of moss in 2005 was completely covered again by 2016), and most advice (e.g. <http://conservation.historic-scotland.gov.uk/bio-growth-masonry-inform.pdf>) is that moss growth is relatively harmless.

There seems little evidence of past or present vandalism on the stones, although the curious number of stones with damage spreading from the centre of the top of the face is noteworthy, perhaps as evidence of such activity in the past.

Clearly, any future conservation management of the stones will need to acknowledge and reflect that they are standing in a SSSI.

## References

Barraclough, M. 1990	<i>The History of Yatton</i> , Yatton Local History Society, Yatton
Campbell, M. 2010	<i>The parish survey of Cleeve</i> (8 x CD-ROMs in YCCCART archive)
Cran, A. 1983	<i>The Story of Congresbury</i> (Bristol)

## Archive

All photographs and written texts, along with hand-written notes, in YCCCART archive, under \Maps\Perambulations\T W Stones. Each surface of all stones, location photographs (in 2016) and detail photographs where necessary were acquired.

## Further work

There are gaps and uncertainties in this work which call for further examination of the wood and documentation. Initial work had been confined to the Cleeve section of the wood, but the finding of three stones in the Congresbury area near Woolmers is an unexpected complication. Since summer growth makes any practical further work extremely difficult and unreliable this year, this seems an appropriate time to publish work up to the present (02 July 2016).

Further work should be:

Physical examination of the rest of the boundaries of Thomas Wickham's area of Kings Wood to find any previously unrecorded stones  
Examination of the Congresbury documents to attempt elucidation of the ownerships and tenancies of the Kings Wood area in the 1820s, and explain the presence and location of the three stones in the Woolmers West group

Despite fairly intense search, the subject of ownership stones and boundary stones in ancient woodland does not seem to have been pursued before, and further effort should be made to clarify this aspect of the potential documentary evidence.

## Author

**Vince Russett July 2016.** Thanks to John Wilcox, Ferdi, Graham Bohannon, Dave Long and Anne Dimmock for companionable and forbearing help on the forays after these stones.

## Appendix 1

### TW stones details

Stone	NGR ST	Group	Notes	Height (mm)	Width (mm)	Depth (mm)
Number in 2016			Supine=face up Prone=face down Fatty=stone with substantial amount of unworked lower section visible	Above ground level. When supine, total length (worked length)	At inscription height	At inscription height
1	4567964852	Woolmers	Stood against BS15	590	300	115
2	4567964852	Woolmers	Leaning, face upwards fatty	660	325	100
3	4567964852	Woolmers	Supine	920	310	125 [?]
4	4571064888	Woolmers	Fatty, leaning to its left	570	300	100
			Now prone	971		
5	4574264902	Woolmers		590	320	120
6	4580364903	Woolmers	Fatty, tiny spall at top left has removed part of W	690	300	110
7	4583264900	Woolmers	Details different poss older or more weathered	570	330	110
8	4586464882	Woolmers	Very good condition, 'type' of the stones	530	330	100
9	4589864857	Woolmers	Most of face spalled off, only trace of T left	600	320	110
10	4576665193	Cleeve Hall		595	325	110
11	4585665193	Cleeve Hall	Supine	1030 (480)	335	110
12	4586165191	Cleeve Hall	Very close to 11 (3-4m)	450	310	110
13	4587565169	Cleeve Hall	Supine. Decided not to disturb moss when photographing	960	320	100
14	4585365139	Cleeve Hall	At KW2 enclosure			
15	4589865140	Cleeve Hall	Clutched to tree by ivy	393	320	117
16	4592465138	Cleeve Hall	Notch at top centre of face	403	292	107
17	4599365159	Cleeve Hall	To west of pylon line	477	294	102

18	4615665168	Cleeve Hall	A fatty (2005). No more: now supine (2016)	978 (458)	333	108
19	4621965170	Cleeve Hall	Chip from top centre of face	452	328	98
20	4488565054	Bickley	Two stones, erect, touching at right angles	433	315	141
21		Bickley		473	330	115
22	4618865165	Cleeve Hall	Between 18 and 19. Band of shaling all around top face of stone	434	332	98
23	4560364535	Woolmers West	'Slot' in upper shoulder, leaning to north	533	310	102
24	4560764499	Woolmers West	Slight shaling of T in inscription	624	323	103
25	4561564469	Woolmers West	Facing in to end of wall	575	305	100