

YCCCART

The future of the past

DIALECT WORDS FROM NORTH SOMERSET

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Place and Feature Names in Somerset Dialect, Occasionally Used in YCCCART Reports

This article is dedicated to the memory of my father, Des Russett (1930-2014), who inspired in me not only a deep and abiding love of the countryside, but also a continuous curiosity about the world and the universe.

Abstract

The point has been (well) made that occasional West Country dialect terms find their way into YCCCART reports (it can sometimes be difficult to entirely remove oneself from one's roots!). This glossary will try to convey some of the meanings. Many of the words are still in common use, and like most Old English terms (and the occasional Old Cornish ones), they have nuances of meaning that are probably unappreciated outside of agricultural circles. Many of the terms also give rise to place-names. Some plant names are included, but I have shied away from the complex (and potentially dangerous) field of fungi.

These terms occur infrequently and in context, and thus this article will almost certainly be updated from time to time.

SE = Standard English

Obs = obsolete

Acknowledgements

This report has been assembled with the (unwitting) knowledge of many farmers in the Northmarsh (a substantial proportion of whom I seem to have been at school with!) and beyond. Particular help was also given by current and former staff of the Somerset Record Office, Dr Michael Costen, the late Mr Keith Gardner, the late Mr Brian Olsen and others too numerous to name, but to whom I am eternally grateful for my personal context in West Country society.


Introduction


YCCCART is one of a number of Community Archaeology teams across North Somerset, supported by the North Somerset Development Management Team.

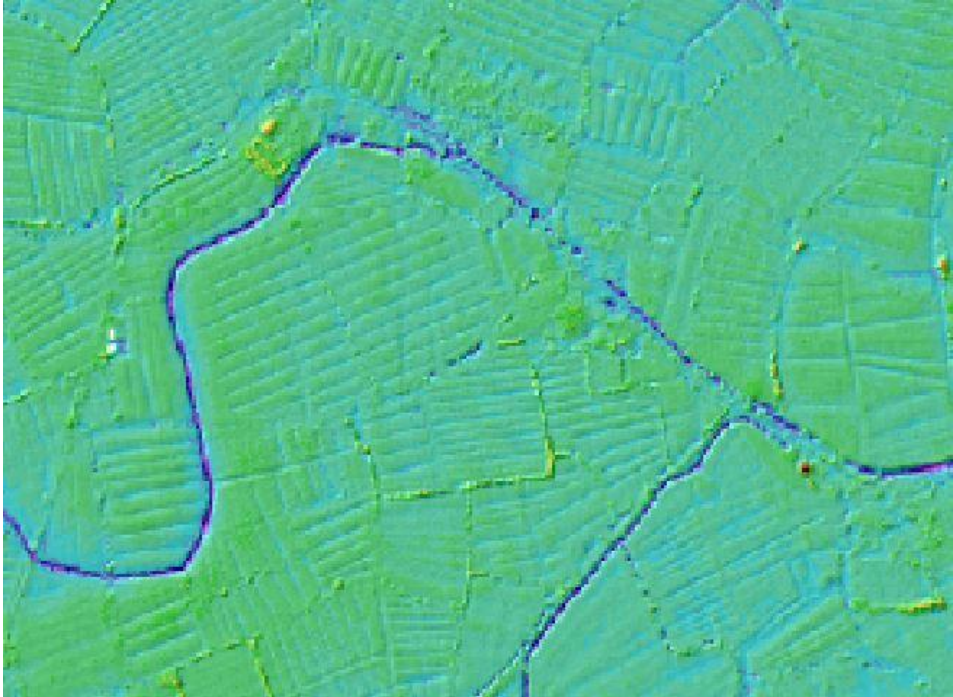
The objective of this team project is to undertake archaeological fieldwork to enable a better understanding and management of the heritage of the area while recording the activities and locations of the research carried out.


THE TERMS

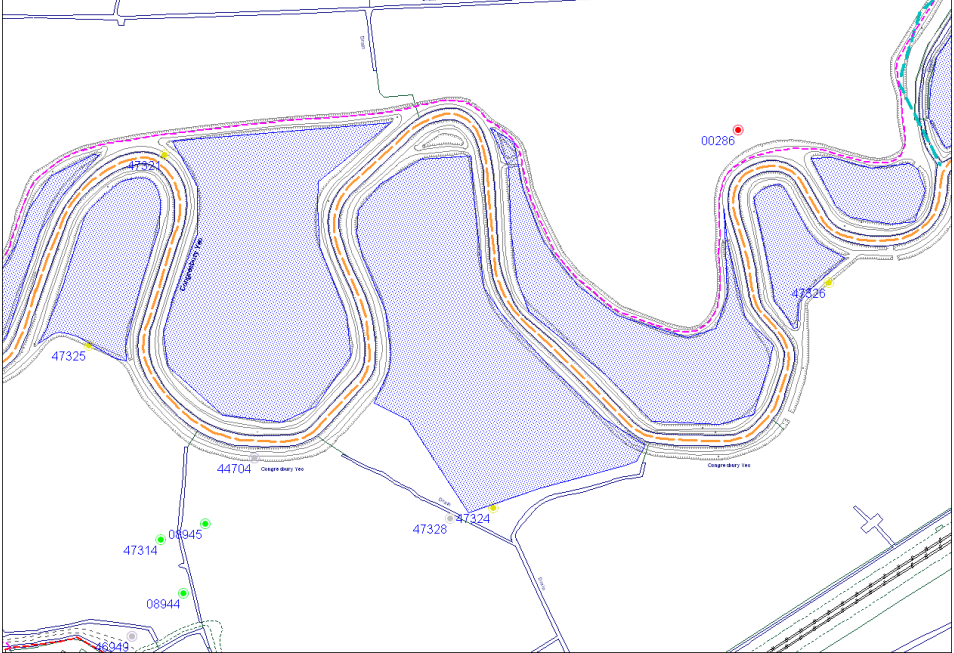
Drainage and Water

Bend	The flat area between two grypes.
Blind (of a river)	A river that does not itself flow directly into the sea, but into a second larger river.
Bow	<p>Hump-backed stone bridge over water-course, usually a <i>rhyne</i> or <i>river</i>.</p>  <p><i>Bow at Congresbury Yeo</i></p>
Clyce	An opening in a <i>yere</i> (dam) at the mouth of a river, with a flap on the outside, forming a non-return valve, allowing river water to escape at low tide, but keeping sea water out at high tide.

Decoy pool	<p>Artificial pond for the breeding and gathering of waterfowl, particularly ducks, as a food supply. Usually supplied with water by a <i>leat</i>. Often pronounced 'quaiple'.</p>  <p><i>Decoy at Kenn Moor, mapped 1780</i></p>
Dew Pond	A pond for animals to drink, fed by runoff (not dew).
Ditch	A small watercourse forming the edge of a field. Often man-made, but sometimes following the course of natural pre-existing water ways. Receives water from <i>grypes</i> , and passes it into <i>rhynes</i> .
Drinking Pool	An artificial slope, cut in the side of a watercourse, often reinforced with dumped stone, to allow animals (especially cattle) to access water in <i>ditches</i> , <i>rhynes</i> or <i>rivers</i> to drink.

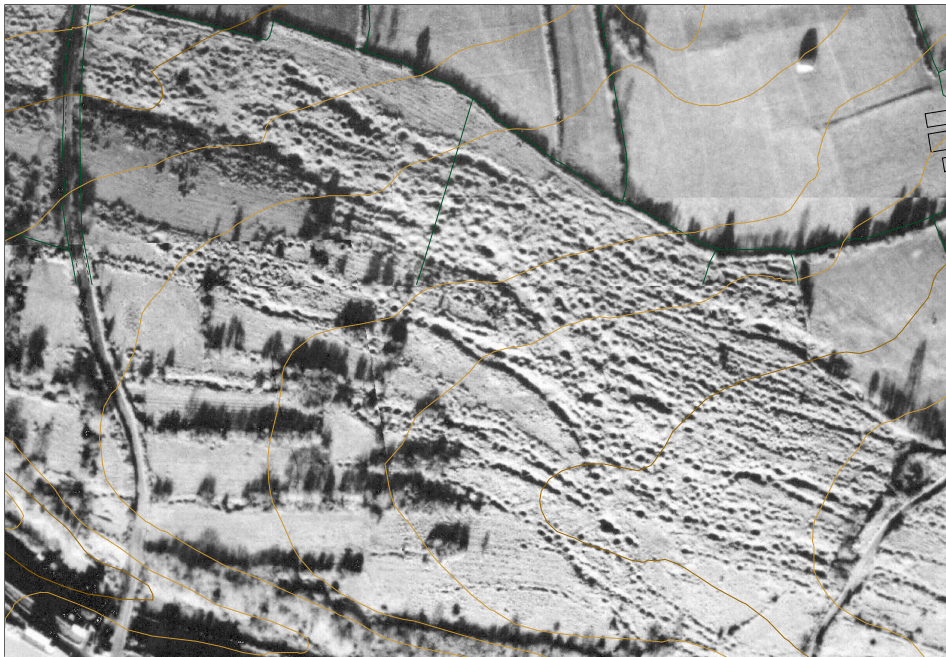
Drove	Track, usually not public, to access fields. In the <i>Northmarsh</i> , often with a large ditch on either side, and sometimes not surfaced. Often deeply rutted and impassable in winter. (Note: term also used on higher ground, when hedges or walls mark the sides).
Float	To let water into a water meadow, to warm up the ground for early grass.
Gout	A stone tunnel conveying water between two ditches under a road or gateway. (SE culvert).
Grype	<p>A narrow linear hollow (sometimes with drainage pipes inserted below it) to drain a field. Grypes usually occur in parallel groups, often with same orientation as one side of the field. See <i>Bend</i></p>  <p><i>Lidar image of grypes, Kingston Seymour (dark blue line is a palaeochannel – natural watercourse)</i></p>
Ham	Word of complex origins, but today usually meaning 'land in the bend of a river'.
Hatch	Artificial device blocking a waterway to maintain (or lower) the level of water upstream. Often provided with a turnscrew method to raise and lower it.
Hill	When used in the Northmarsh, meaning 'a piece of land higher than the surrounding' (even if only 20cm or so higher).
Keech	To cut and remove vegetation from a watercourse.
Lake	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A slow, sluggish stream. 2. Palaeochannel.
Leat (sometimes load / lode)	Small artificial watercourse feeding water to a watermill from above a <i>weir</i> to provide a head of water for powering the waterwheel(s). Lodes tend to be longer than leats, and may supply other structures (such as <i>decoy pools</i>).



Mere	<p>An expanse of shallow water, often seasonal in nature.</p>  <p><i>The mere on Congresbury Moor, 1739 (north at bottom)</i></p>
Moor	<p>A low-lying area of land, frequently water-logged, and drained by huge numbers of ditches. Usually clay or peat. Usually named after the parish in which it occurs (see above). (NB The meaning <i>'upland bleak area of rocky and often acidic land, mainly used for common grazing'</i> does not occur in North Somerset).</p>
New cut	<p>An artificial (and usually straight) watercourse.</p>
(The) Northmarsh	<p>The traditional name for all <i>moors</i> and land under (say) 10m above sea level, characterised by clay and peat geologies and wet fences to fields.</p>
One-holer (Similarly two-holer, even three-holer)	<p>Toilet with rectangular seat with one circular hole.</p>
Pill	<p>Palaeochannel.</p>
Plim	<p>To swell due to absorption of water.</p>
Pound	<p>To render a ground surface uneven by the traffic of animals (usually cattle) in wet weather.</p>
Race	<p>Small artificial waterway taking used water from a watermill back to a larger watercourse, usually the one from which the water was extracted by the <i>leat</i> and <i>weir</i>.</p>
Rhyne	<p>Watercourse, often, but not always, man-made. Receives water from <i>ditches</i>, and releases it into <i>rivers</i>.</p>
Rush mound (obs)	<p>A traditional site for burning rushes dug from <i>grypes</i> during the winter, resulting in a mound of red burned clay.</p>
Sand tots	<p>Sand dunes.</p>
Sleech	<p>Soft wet mud, into which objects (including people!) can sink.</p>
Slub	<p>Solid mud that will bear weight.</p>

Splott	An extremely wet patch of ground.
Trow	Trough.
Turf	Peat blocks cut and dried for domestic fuel.
Wall	A large bank of clay, usually built up by digging material out of a ditch on either side, intended to separate areas of moor so each can be drained separately.
Warth	<p>A raised area beside a river or the sea, where the level of the land has been built up to above that behind it, by the deposition of silt by former incursions of the sea.</p>  <p><i>Warths (blue stipple) in the vicinity of Wemberham Roman villa, Congresbury Yeo</i></p>
Weepy ground	Ground made naturally wet by small springs or seeps.
Weir	Structure blocking a waterway to raise the level of the water behind it, to feed water into a <i>leat</i> (SE <i>Dam</i>).
Yere / Ear	A physical blockage at the end of a river where it flows into the sea, intended to prevent the ingress of salt water. Usually contains a <i>clyce</i> or large <i>hatch</i> (SE <i>Sluice</i>).
Yeo	Large (mostly) natural water course, often embanked against floods or incursions of sea water in North Somerset. Receives water from rhynes, passes it to the sea (SE <i>River</i>).
	The water leaving fields by way of drainage runs from <i>grypes</i> , into <i>ditches</i> , into <i>rhynes</i> , into <i>rivers (yeos)</i> , into the sea.

Stones and Structures

Batch	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A steep road or track. 2. A mound.
Beam bridge	A wooden bridge.

Bolt holes	Small holes at the base of a stone wall where rabbits can be chased through and netted on the far side.
Bury	Artificial structure for breeding rabbits, created as a long mound with a ditch all around (SE <i>pillow mound</i>).
Castle	An earthwork enclosure, often an iron age hill fort.
Clamp	Structure for storing human or animal foodstuffs (e.g. silage or carrots).
Daddicky	Wood so soft and wet it is not worth picking up for firewood.
Drangway	Track or lane between two tall walls or houses.
Drashel	Threshold.
Forestall	The space in front of cattle stalls in a cowhouse (winter cattle quarters) where storage of hay etc can be made, for easy distribution to the cattle.
Furches	(Site of) gallows.
Galleybeggar	Scarecrow.
Groof house	A shelter (often temporary) used by miners, usually in the lead mining industry.
Ground	An enclosed field.
Gruffy ground	Land pock-marked with former mining activity.  <p><i>Former gruffy ground at Shipham 1946 (calamine mining)</i></p>
Hatch	A small gate, possibly for foot traffic only (similar to SE <i>wicket</i>).
Hole	Track or road where the hedges on either side have closed together over the top.
Laying	To manage a hedge by partially cutting through some uprights, and laying them down to regrow.

Milking bail	<p>A portable structure for milking cattle in the field.</p>  <p><i>A milking bail formerly at Venus Street, Congresbury</i></p>
Mumble stone	<p>A stone that has not been shaped in any way (SE <i>An unworked stone</i>).</p>  <p><i>Mumble stones at Henley Quarry, Yatton</i></p>
Parrock	<p>A small enclosed area of land (SE <i>paddock</i>).</p>
Pleachers	<p>The shrubs that are managed in hedge laying by cutting them partially through and laying them down.</p>
Poking hole	<p>The hole at the base of a limekiln from which the finished lime emerges.</p>


Shard	A hole in a wall or hedge, usually resulting from lack of maintenance.
Sheep creep	A hole in a stone wall which controls movement of sheep between fields, easily blocked with a stone.
Shoot	A triangular structure of two walls, the large end pointing to common grazing and the smaller leading into an adjacent lane, for stock control.
Skilling	Single-storey agricultural building, largely open fronted, and with roof sloping down from back to front.
Sleight	Large area of open upland grazing, usually for sheep.
Tor	Large area of exposed rock sticking up out of the ground.
Tump	A mound (any size).
Twitchen	A lane or alley with a pronounced bend.


Prepositions and Movement


Can 'ee mind?	Do you remember?
Down after	Follow a linear structure (SE <i>along</i>).
Hark at ee!	Listen to him (usually implying lying).
He	Reference drawing attention to an object.
How be on?	How are you?
Thic	That.
T'other	The other.
To...to...	Equivalent of SE 'to.. at..' Ex: 'Follow on to the bottom to Bigbury' (SE <i>Follow on to the bottom at Bigbury</i>).
Under (X)	Close to X and at a lower level.
Ver'nigh	Very much.

The Natural World

Bag	A cow's udder.
Bawling	When an animal (usually a cow) puts extra effort into vocalisation.
Beast	Generic term for large livestock, but most commonly used of cattle.
Boss calf	A calf that has been left with its mother to wean naturally.
Branchers	Young rooks who are not yet flying, shot for meat.
Bread and cheese	(Edible) hawthorn buds.
Brockholes (obs.)	A badger's home.

Bulling	<p>The state of a cow when it's in season.</p>  <p><i>William the bull and his ladies</i></p>
Burr	A natural expansion in the growth of a tree stem, often used for turning into <i>treen</i> vessels.
Burrow	A rabbit's home.
Cammock	SE <i>Rest harrow</i> (<i>Ononis repens</i>).
Cheeses	Edible mallow seeds.
Cleachy	Food that is so fat that it feels like it is lining your mouth.
Cloam	Made of (coarse) pottery.
Dap	Cow muck.
Den (or earth)	A fox's home.
Dickered	Covered in (as in fruit, for example).
Draw	To disembowel a bird (chicken, goose, turkey etc.) to prepare for cooking.
Dray	A squirrel's home.
(in a) Dwam	Mentally confused.
Emmet butts	SE <i>Anthills</i> .
Emmets	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ants 2. Tourists
Farrowing	(Of a pig) giving birth.
Foust	Mouldiness.
Fowls	Chickens.
Got the fly	Said of cattle when they run around with their tails in the air.

Granfers	Woodlice.
Grockles	Tourists.
Haulm	The (dried) remains of the above-ground growth of root crops (e.g. potatoes).
Holt	An otter's home.
Jack-be-the hedge	SE <i>Garlic mustard</i> (<i>Alliaria petiolata</i>).
Lewer	An infection resulting in inflammation between the claws of a cows feet.
Man	(usually with a descriptor) standing stone.
Mould	Soil
Old man	The oldest tree in an orchard (or sometimes, a spectacularly old oak or yew tree).
Paunch	To disembowel a rabbit or hare.
Poll / Polly	A cow that naturally does not possess horns.
(in his) Power	In the prime of life.
Quat	The shape made in the grass where a hare has rested (SE <i>form</i>).
Screws	Rheumatism (or arthritis).
Snake stones	<p>Fossil ammonites.</p>  <p>Typical 'snake stone'</p>
Shit flies	Small brown flies that live on cow pats (<i>Scathophaga stercoraria</i>).
Shrammed	Shakingly cold.
Shroud / shrud	To remove the side branches from a tree without felling it.
Smeech	The blue haze in kitchens from overheated fat or oil.
Spinney	A hawthorn thicket.
Spires	SE <i>Agrimony</i> (<i>Agrimonia eupatoria</i>).
Springing	When a cow is about to imminently give birth.

Tom Thumbs / <i>Egg and bacon</i>	Birds foot trefoil.  <i>Birds foot trefoil. Photo courtesy of Fredrik Lähmn</i>
Treen	Made of wood.
Truckles	Sheep muck.
Tupping	A ram 'serving' a ewe.
Wantitumps	Mole hills.
Whitpot	A creamy stew.
Withy	A willow tree (<i>Salix sp.</i>).
Wopse	Wasp.

Invented Words that are Not Real

Ridge and vurrow	A term that was foisted on Dean Steve Rippon when working in Gwent. This is a bogus term (at least, it is in North Somerset).
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Others

Daps	Plimsolls.
Grib	Public dump, usually unofficial.
Tranklements	A collection of small (usually unrelated) objects.