

**YCCART 2021/Y13**

**The Inclosure of Kenn Moor, Somerset 1810-1815: Part 3: The allotments**

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

*General Editor: Vince Russett*



A rare painting of a pre-Inclosure landscape: Cheddar Moor and Hill pre-1801

<b>Page</b>	<b>Contents</b>
3	Abstract Acknowledgements Introduction
4	Site location Land use and geology
5	Historical & archaeological context
8	Survey objectives Methodology
6	Results
13	Recommendations References

## **Abstract**

*Mapping the allotments of land in the newly Inclosed Kenn Moor has ramifications well beyond the 1815 event. Many allotments were made because their grantees possessed Old Auster tenements, and the subsequent mapping of these has been helpful in defining areas of higher than usual archaeological potential. While the analysis is not yet complete, the results do call into question the Domesday description of Kenn manor.*

## **Acknowledgements**

Thanks to the ever-helpful and willing staff of the Somerset Heritage Centre, who conserve and make available, historic Somerset documents to the public.

## **Introduction**

Yatton, Congresbury, Claverham and Cleeve Archaeological Research Team (YCCART) is one of a number of Community Archaeology teams across northern Somerset, formerly supported by the North Somerset Council Development Management Team.

Our objective is to undertake archaeological fieldwork and documentary studies to enable a better understanding and management of the heritage of the area while recording and publishing the activities and locations of the research carried out.

*'The law locks up the man or woman  
Who steals the goose from off the Common  
But lets the greater villain loose  
Who steals the Common from the goose'*

*- Anon, 17th century*

## Site location



*Fig 1: Location*

Kenn Moor, a formerly open Common, is centred on ST433684, some 2.5km SE of Clevedon, and 3.5km SW of Nailsea, in the parishes of Yatton and Kenn, in North Somerset. It consists of 4.3 km<sup>2</sup> of land, largely flat and supporting fields and roads of geometrical pattern.

### **Land use and geology**

Before Inclosure, the land would have been mainly pastoral in nature (although a decoy pool was imposed on its northern edge in 1635 - report to follow); some minor uses would have been peat-digging, gathering of firewood, and so on.

Today, the land-use is almost entirely pastoral, although some small peripheral areas are sometimes ploughed.

The majority of the Moor is of deep peat deposits, although a small area (roughly defined by Kenn Moor Road) lies under the post-Roman alluvium. The site can be seen from adjacent public highways, and by public footpath alongside the Kenn River.

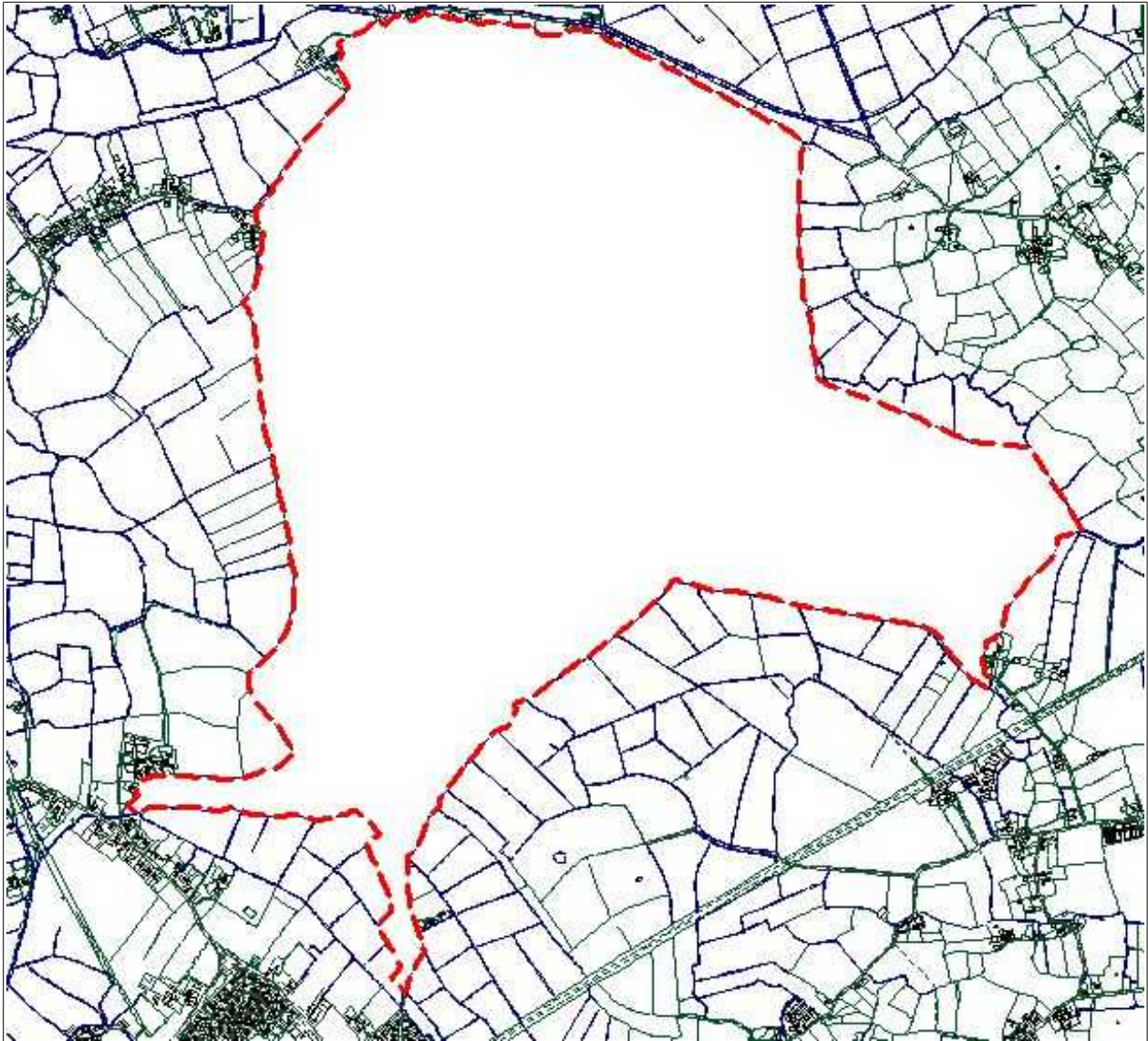
## **Historical & archaeological context**

This will be discussed in a forthcoming report.

The report was written in Libre Office 5 Writer.

Photographs were taken by members of YCCCART, and remain the copyright of YCCCART.

## Results



*Fig 2: Outline of pre-1815 Kenn Moor*

Clearly, this does not mean that there were no internal features in Kenn Moor before 1815: if nothing else, Windmill Hill and the Kenn Decoy Pool were already in place.

Windmill Hill (or Batch) was a pre-existing feature, excluded from the allotting, and remaining as a circular feature in the new field 51. The name has been interpreted as evidence for the previous existence of a windmill in the field, but its (very) slight elevation above the surrounding area (it is an outcrop of Mercia Mudstone in an area of alluvium, and is no more than 50cm higher than the surroundings) leads me to believe this is a typically Somerset sarcastic field name.

Similarly, the Kenn Decoy Pool, off Nailsea Wall, was already in existence, being constructed (despite local opposition) by Earl Poulett in 1635. Both can be seen on the 1799 Yatton map, and the map recording the Inclosure.



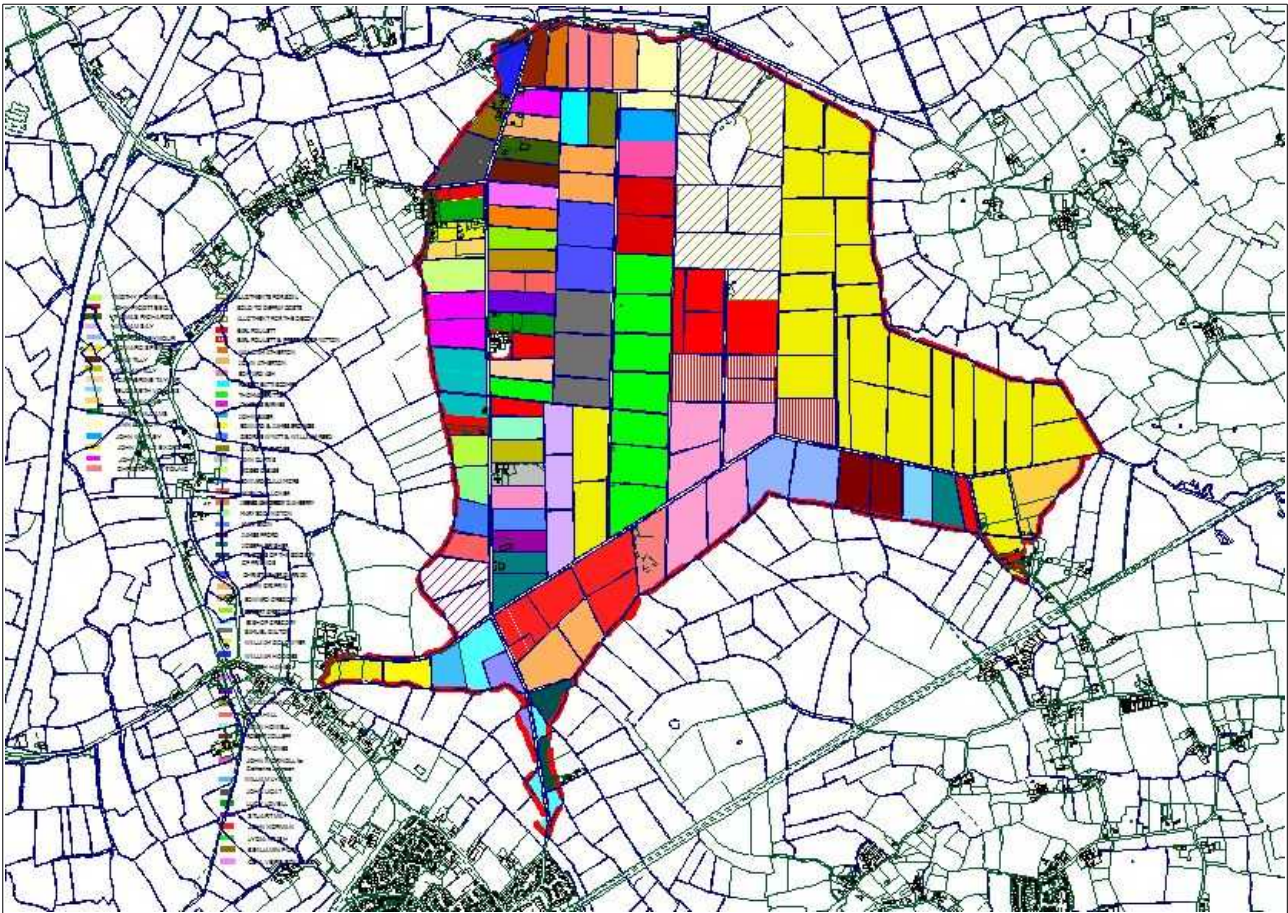
Fig 3: Windmill Batch (or Hill) off Kenn Moor Road (from 1810-15 Inclosure Map)

Note that Windmill Batch has not been taken into field 51: it remained in place until the construction of Manor Farm in (probably) 1824: despite Historic England's dating the Farm as C17, it is not shown on maps of 1780, 1799, 1809, 1811, 1815 or 1821, first appearing on the Yatton Tithe Map of 1840.



Fig 4: Kenn Decoy Pool (off Nailsea Wall) (from 1810-15 Inclosure Map)

As can be seen from the Kenn Moor and Cleeve Hill Inclosure Award (YCCART2021/Y11), there was a lengthy procedure, including 9 public meetings at the Prince of Orange pub in Yatton, to process claims of Common Rights (and sometimes to challenge them).



*Fig 5: Allotments awarded by the Inclosure Award (see Figs 6a and b below)*

On the whole, the allocations are very much as expected. Local lords (such as Earl Poulett and Edward Spencer) were allocated large contiguous areas (clearly the reason they 'sponsored' the Inclosure Act in Parliament, and after all, they did own by far the largest number of Old Austers).

Earl Poulett was also awarded a large block of land around the Decoy Pool (hatched above) to compensate for the effect of Inclosure on the Decoy (presumably, the number of waterfowl would drop dramatically in the aftermath), and the Decoy went out of use remarkably quickly: although it was mapped on the 1840 Tithe Map of Kenn and the 1885 OS 1st edition 1:2500 plans, the pipes were clearly no longer in use.

It is also noticeable that the smaller allocations were made largely in the slightly raised area in the west of Kenn Moor, large parts of which were in arable cultivation at the time of the 1840 Tithe Map: you are inclined to wonder if this was a charitable move by Commissioner Joseph Wollen, leaving the deeper, wetter Moor to those who could afford large drainage measures.



	TIMOTHY POWELL		ALLOTMENTS FOR SOIL
	JOHN PIGOTT ESQ.		SOLD TO DEFRAY COSTS
	THOMAS RICHARDS		ALLOTMENT FOR THE DECOY
	WILLIAM SAY		EARL POULETT
	GEORGE SEYMOUR		EARL POULETT & PREBEND OF YATTON
	EDWARD SPENCER		WILLIAM ATHERTON
	JANE TILLY		JOHN ATHERTON
	WILLIAM TILLY		EDWARD ASH
	CATHERINE TAYLOR		ROBERT BATTISCOMBE
	ELIZABETH VOWLES		THOMAS BRITTON
	JOAN WARNE		CHARLES BARNES
	MARY WILLIAMS		JOHN BAKER
	ANN WILMOTT		EDWARD & JAMES BROAKES
	JOHN WHITLEY		GEORGE WYATT & WILLIAM REED
	JOHN WALLS EXORS		SILVESTER BISDEE
	JOHN YOUNG		ANN CURTIS
	CHRISTOPHER YOUNG		MOSES CREASE
			EDWARD CULLIMORE
			MARY CHALLONER
			REVD. ANDREW DANBERRY
			MARY EDDINGTON
			MARY EXON
			JAMES FFORD
			JOSEPH FFISHER
			TRUSTEES OF THE SOCIETY OF FRIENDS

Fig 6a: Allottees under 1810-15 award

The allocations were also confined only to Old Austers in Kenn and Yatton villages, and Commoners from Wrington were largely awarded land elsewhere on Cleeve Hill and Broadfield Down, as stated in the text of the Inclosure Award itself.

The Inclosure Act of 1810 proved, for some as yet unknown reason, unsatisfactory, leading to a second in 1815, described as 'in and by an Act of Parliament made and passed in the forty first year of the Reign of his present Majesty King George the Third intitled 'An Act for consolidating in one Act certain provisions usually inserted in Acts of Inclosure and for facilitating the mode of proving the several facts usually required on the passing of such Acts'.

Fortunately for the landscape historian, this seems to have led to an 1811 map of Kenn, clarifying all the landowners having Rights of Common, and critically, showing where they lived at that date, so identifying the site of the Old Austers generating those rights.

TRUSTEES OF THE SOCIETY OF FRIENDS
CHRISTOPHER GARRICK
JOHN GRIFFIN
EDWARD GREGORY
ROBERT GREGORY
BISHOP GREGORY
SAMUEL GALTON
WILLIAM GOLDWYER
WILLIAM HODGES
JOSEPH HAYNES
WILLIAM HARRIS
MARY HILL
WILLIAM HILL
PETER HILL
JOAN HOWELL
ROBERT JOLLEFF
THOMAS JONES
JOHN WORNOLL for Catherine Johnson
WILLIAM LYONS
JOHN LIGAT
LUCY LOVELL
STUART MAY
JOHN NORMAN
LYDIA NAISH
BENJAMIN POOL
GEN. VERE POULETT

Fig 6b: Second list of allottees under the 1810-15 Award

The process of allocation depended on the claimants to Common Rights having written proof of such.

While the origins of Common Rights are still obscure, vitally, they were not attached to individuals, but to the properties they lived in, so moving from an Old Auster to a property that was not, would automatically debar your common rights.

If you could not prove your Rights of Common, then you were out of luck: no allotment would be made, and any use of the Common you had previously made would be denied.

Such unfortunates would have little choice but to move to nearby towns in search of employment in the burgeoning factories of the Industrial Revolution - the two processes are inextricably bound together (see YCCART2021/Y14).

The personal and social implications of this must have been overwhelming. The 'Improvers', like Billingsley, were sourly dismissive of Commons and Common Rights:

*'The possession of a cow or two, with a hog, and a few geese, naturally exalts the peasant, in his own conception, above his brethren in the same rank of society. It inspires some degree of confidence in a property, inadequate to his support.'*

*In sauntering after his cattle, he acquires a habit of indolence. Quarter, half, and occasionally whole days are imperceptibly lost. Day-labour becomes disgusting; the aversion increases by indulgence; and at length the sale of a half-fed calf, or hog, furnishes the means of adding intemperance to idleness'.*

The social inequality between the wealthy landowners able to petition Parliament, and those at the 'bottom of the pile' reduced to day labouring in new factories (or even emigrating in search of a better life) is today hardly imaginable.

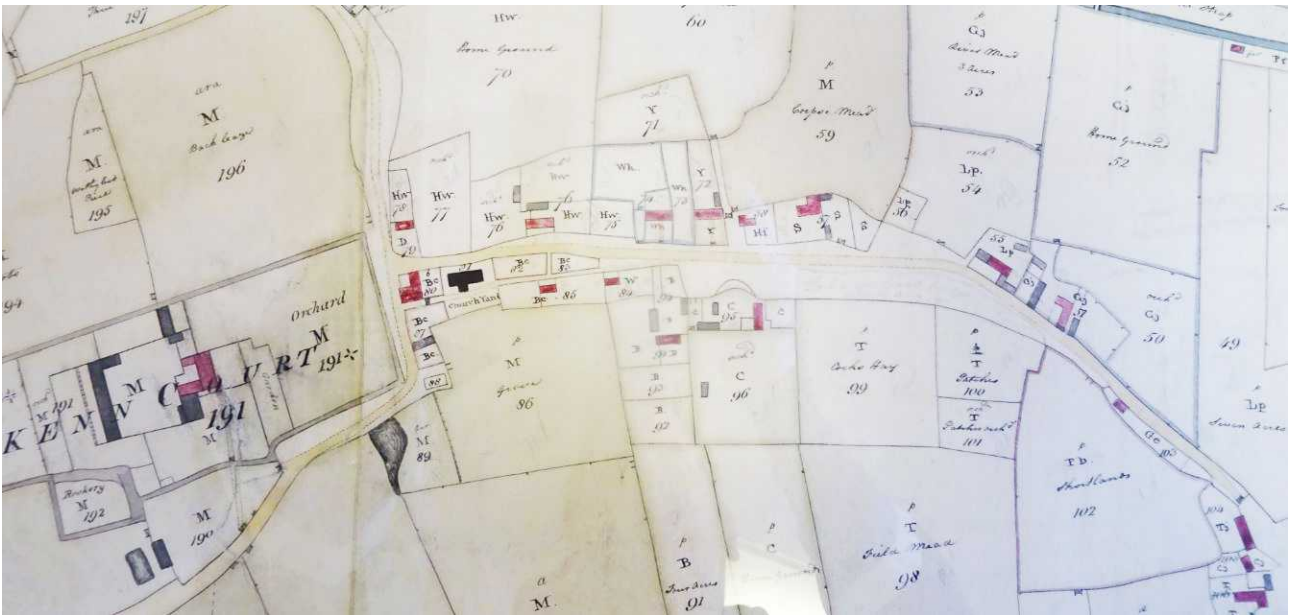


Fig 7: Section of 1811 map showing Kenn village and Court

This map, then allows us to generate a map of all the Old Austers in 1811 Kenn.



Fig 8: Old Austers in Kenn Village 1811

As Barry Lane pointed out, Old Austers seem to have been established some time before the Norman Conquest. and the existence of 9 in the village alone contrasts sharply with the Domesday description of Kenn (see below).

Further Old Austers exist in other parts of the parish.

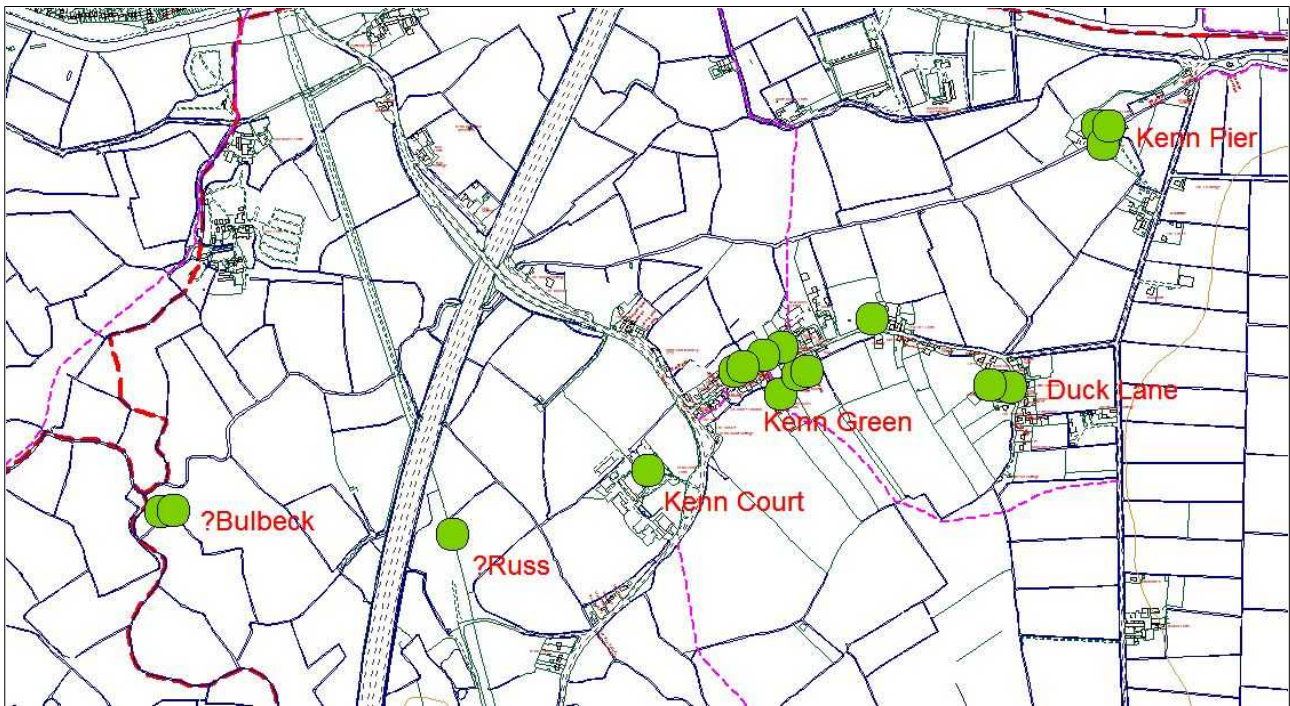


Fig 9: All Old Austers/tenements with Common Rights, from 1811 map

In all, 17 Old Austers are recorded in this source.

Now, see the Domesday entry in 1086 for 'Chen':

*'Households 1 slave, Annual value 5 shillings'*

Clearly there is a discrepancy here. If Old Austers do pre-date the Norman Conquest, as there is every reason to believe they do, then an entry listing one household of a slave in Domesday cannot be right (or at least, not complete).

I can only think of two possible explanations for this discrepancy.

1. 'Chen' in the Domesday Book, has been consistently misidentified in the past, or more likely
2. The clear disdain of the compilers of Domesday for commons and moors ('there are moors worth nothing') has completely misled us about the past of Kenn.

Domesday was not written for the benefit of future historians and landscape archaeologists, but is a fiscal document, designed to show what taxes and monies might be wrung out of the hapless English by the Norman aristocracy.

We should be moving beyond slavish belief in its infallibility, and using techniques of landscape archaeology and history to probe its usefulness.

## **Recommendations for further work**

Yet to be reported are Y12: The Kenn Moor and Cleeve Hill Inclosure Award map and Y14: Inclosure of Commons and Open spaces: methods and implications.

## **References**

To follow in Y14.

## **Authors**

Vince Russett

Date

2021-12-23