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Postmedieval settlement development and change at Charterhouse
on Mendip: 1 The settlement at the Millgreene Gate

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The settlement in 1842

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Abstract

The fluctuations of settlement at Charterhouse are marked and profound. The number of ruined cottages, or those surviving as earthworks, seems out of proportion to the size of the current population, and as the work of Steve Tofts has shown, there are almost certainly other undocumented structures of post-medieval date waiting to be found.

Although it seems nowhere explicitly stated (and therefore should perhaps be more strongly challenged), it has always been implicitly accepted that the rise and fall of population and settlement in the Charterhouse area is due to fluctuations in the fortunes of the former lead mining industry, with 'boom' times, such as the medieval and mid-19th century corresponding to periods when larger populations resulted in the building of new cottages, or rebuilding of old ones, along with perhaps an increase in multiple tenancies. Allied to this would almost certainly have been an upturn in the fortunes of the farming industry necessary to feed the new inhabitants.

One settlement that rose and fell in the post-medieval period is that based around what was, in the 18th century, called the Millgreene Gate, situated somewhere on the road from Cheddarford to Tynings Farm, and probably at ST48295629, where there is a constriction in the hedge lines at either side of the road.

Acknowledgements

Thanks for permission to carry out field investigations to the then owners, the Grassland Trust. Thanks are also due to the ever helpful staff of the Somerset Heritage Centre, where most of the records here quoted are stored.

Introduction

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

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

References beginning SRO refer to documents in the Somerset Record Office, Taunton (now the Somerset Heritage Centre).

Location



Fig 1: Location

The site of the settlement lies on either side of the Shipham to Charterhouse road, around 1200m E of Tynings Farm, Cheddar. It is in the parish of Cheddar, in the county of Somerset. This road is known to have been in use in the medieval period, when it is described in the Mendip Forest Perambulation of 1219 as the '*magnum iter*' (great road) (see below): it may also have lain on the Roman road from Charterhouse to the west, and it has even been suggested that CHERT583, a stone kerb visible within the settlement, represents the physical remains of that road, though this needs further investigation.

The site lies on a slight south-facing slope, between 240 and 280m AOD, with a minor unnamed stream running away from the settlement towards the south-east in a small but deeply cut valley. Today, this stream is a winterbourne, but it may have carried more water before extraction from the Mendip aquifers began in earnest in the late 19th century.

Geology and Land Use

The site lies almost entirely on the Limestone Shales of the Carboniferous limestone (which can be seen in the bed of the stream below the road),

except for the slightly later upper houses which are on the Portishead Beds of the underlying Old Red Sandstone.

Current land use is permanent pasture, although the evidence is clear from the air photographs that the site underwent a drastic clearance episode in the mid-late 1970s, when virtually all trace of most of the structures was removed.

The sites are all in private ownership: the surviving structure of CHERT237 can be seen by the roadside at ST47945640, next to the drive leading to Piney Sleight: please remember this too is in private ownership.

Historical and archaeological context



Fig 2: The area in 1761 (SRO DD/STL 2)



Fig 3: The area in 1842 (SRO DD/STL 3)

The air photos



Fig 4:1946 (RAF 3G/TUD/UK 5279 19 January 1946)



Fig 5: 1971 (Hunting Surveys HSL UK 71-220 Run 49-1895)

These sites are numbered sequentially as accessed to the CHERT SMR – see that document for a concordance with the site numbers from the Somerset County Historic Environment Record. For discussion of the archaeology of these sites, see below.



Fig 6: From *Charterhouse Environs Research Team Sites and Monuments Record 2008*

The first building in the area was almost certainly CHERT 235, which from documentary evidence given below, dates from before 1589. The enclosure in which it lay is obviously an addition to the corner of the great 'Chestercroft' enclosure, which is presumably, therefore, medieval in origin. The site seems to have been known early on as 'Stafford's Tenement', and was possessed of common rights, and these two seem to point to a medieval origin for this holding.

The tenement also held the '*..wester part of Churcrosse..*', tying this site down effectively, and later descriptions of the tenement make this more clear. The 1660 survey includes '*...Staffords tenement and 16 acres...*' (SRO DD/GB 46), and the 1699 survey (SRO DD/BR/py 17) is even clearer:

'...all that messuage and Tenement within the said Millgreene gate commonly called Staffords Tenement And all those three grounds thereunto belonging bordering and adjoining upon and to the West part of Churgrasse...(and).. Churchgrasse or Church Grasse (16a)...'

Intriguingly, the 1699 survey adds the following

'...And of all and singular other the lands grounds and appurtenances to the said Tenement called Stafford Tenement belonging or appertaining or with the same usually occupied or enjoyed sometimes then before in the tenure of one Lawrence Stafford and aforementioned containing by estimacon one hundred acres and of all the houses thereupon erected...'

What are we to make of this? The 1660 survey does not mention this extra hundred acres and houses anywhere: has it always included these lands, but simply not mentioned them in any earlier documents? The mention of 'all the houses' implies at least three houses on these lands: if they are to be equated with the buildings in this discussion paper, why do the buildings not seem to feature on the 1761 map? It must be said that such buildings do not appear elsewhere on that map either, and so for the present, this reference must remain a mystery.

This first building lay alongside the road, itself known in the perambulations of the Forest of Mendip as '*magnum iter quod vocatur Hole Weie*' ('the great route known as Hollow Way') in 1219 (Gough 1927: 100). The route may even have been along the line of the Roman road between Charterhouse and Uphill, although this cannot be confirmed as yet. The site is described as '*..within the Millgreene Gate..*', and it seems quite likely that this is the gate on the road at the end of the Chestercroft enclosure, as depicted on the 1761 map at around ST48265631, where even today, there is a kink in the roadside hedge line on both sides of the road.

The tenement was presumably sited here to take advantage of the road, and of the stream that runs past the site off Blackdown (although this seems less than reliable today, it still floods the road in winter, as it did in the winter of 2002-3).

The next clear evidence for the spread of occupation at this site seems to come from the 1761 map (SRO DD/STL 2). This clearly shows CHERT 235, but also seems to show an otherwise unrecorded structure across the road, CHERT 545. This occurs nowhere else (unless it is one of the houses mentioned in the 1699 document above as lying on the lands of Stafford's tenement), and there seems little evidence for it on the ground.

Neither do any of the other recorded buildings on this map appear at the site: the alterations made in pencil by about 1809 on the map indicate the existence of the building at CHERT 236, although the sketchy drawing of the associated enclosure perhaps indicates the map is diagrammatic, rather than literal.

By 1842, all the buildings recorded at the site have come into existence. CHERT 235 is, intriguingly, crossed out on this map, perhaps indicating that it went out of use during the lifetime of the map, and certainly before 1885,

when it does not appear on the OS 1:2500 plan of that year (OS 1885), although a small sub-enclosure is shown in the northern corner of the tiny triangular field at this site, perhaps indicating the existence of a ruin. It is probably significant, as well, that the 1851 census records a cottage as 'uninhabited' at this point, presumably the final stages of the life of the tenement occupied at least three hundred years before. .

CHERT 233 and CHERT 234 appear on that map as 3-unit buildings, if the map is to be interpreted literally, and the upper building also appears to have an outshot at the front, perhaps a porch over the front door. All the enclosures associated with the buildings are also in place, possibly dating from the early 19th century, as some attempt has been made to add them to the 1761 map.

CHERT 233 does not seem to alter its plan by 1885: CHERT 234 acquires a small outshot at its rear eastern end, probably a rear porch or toilet.

CHERT 236 and 237 do not clearly appear on maps until the 1842 plan of Charterhouse (SRO DD/STL 3).

The site was very effectively cleared of all traces of buildings and internal hedges sometime after the air photographs of 1971, but before 1979, when VR began photographing the Charterhouse area. Only the shell of CHERT237 remains by the roadside to mark the life of this little unnamed settlement.

The individual sites

Note: The red rooms are the dwellings, the grey the outbuildings. A dwelling is described as '3-unit' when the total of grey (outbuilding) and red (dwelling) rooms is 3.

CHERT 233



Fig 7: (CHERT 233 in 1842 – SRO DD/STL 3)

A three-unit cottage in the tenure of G. Thatcher is depicted at this NGR on the 1842 map of Charterhouse (*above*) (1). This does not seem to be depicted on the 1761 plan (2), although it has been roughly pencilled in on the 1809 amended version (3). It does not survive today, having been cleared in the twentieth century, and finds from the rubbish dump of the dwelling at ST4817556456 were only 19th and early 20th century material (4). Although this house appears on the 2nd edition OS plan of c. 1903, it seems to be a ruin (judging by its shadow) in 1946 (5). There are no earthworks or any other trace of a building at the site today, which is an open field (6). Position of the building is indicated by loose stones in the soil of this field (7)

A later hand has pencilled in 'G.Thatcher' for CHERT 233 on the 1842 map. The household is described in the 1851 census: George, the householder, described himself as a mason, and was 52: no wife is named, but his daughter, Sarah Ann, 20, is described as a 'dressmaker', the son, Thomas, 15, is also an agricultural labourer, while curiously, this rural family had a visitor on the night of the census, one Naphthalan Dove, 18, from Draycott. By 1861, George (now apparently 60) and his 24-year old son, Thomas are alone in the house, both still labourers. By 1871, George 'widower' and 'labourer' is alone in the house.

- 1 Map SRO DD/STL 3 (1842)
- 2 Map SRO DD/STL 2 (1761)
- 3 Map SRO DD/STL 1 (1761 as amended c1809)

4 Pers comm Vince Russett 02.2002
5 AP 3G/TUD/UK 5279 (14 Jan 1946)
6 Site visit Vince Russett 16.02.2002
7 Site visit CHERT 18.03.2003

CHERT 234



Fig 8: (CHERT234 in 1842 – SRO DD/STL 3)

A three-unit cottage at this site, occupied by I Thatcher, was depicted on the 1842 map of Charterhouse (*above*) (1). In 1761, this plot was referred to as a 'garden under Blackdown', occupied by one Peter Thatcher, so the building may date to the early C19 (2). It does not survive today, although depicted as a building on the OS 2nd edition map of c 1900 (3), and had already been cleared by 1947, although an earthwork of the building appears to survive at that date (4)

There are no earthworks or any other trace of a building at the site today, which is an open field (5)

A few large fragments of post-medieval floor tiles were found at this site: the site is marked by a gap in the hedge bank on the north side of the road, which must have formerly served as a gate (6)

This site is labelled on the 1842 map as 'I. Thatcher': this is the same as Peter Thatcher's 'Garden under Blackdown' on the 1761 map, perhaps giving some clue as to the date of origin of the cottage. The 1851 census describes the household: Isaac, 43 is an agricultural labourer: his wife is Harriet, 48. They have two daughters, Charlott, 12, and Hannah Maria, 7, 'scholar' – it is noticeable that Charlott appears to have already finished her schooling. There are also two sons, Benjamin, 9, also scholar, and George, 5, possibly not yet at school. By 1861, Harriett had only aged 5 years, claiming to be 53 (!), but seems to have been alone in the house with her 19 year old son, Benjamin, who has now become a labourer himself.

- 1 Map SRO DD/STL 3 (1842)
- 2 Map SRO DD/STL 1 (1761 as amended c1809)
- 3 Pers comm Vince Russett 02.2002
- 4 AP 3G/TUD/UK 5279 (14 Jan 1946)
- 5 Site visit Vince Russett 16.02.2002
- 6 Site visit CHERT 18.03.2003

CHERT 235



Fig 9: (CHERT235 in 1842 – SRO DD/STL 3)

A cottage was depicted in a small triangular garden at this site on the 1842 plan of Charterhouse (1). It does not seem to appear on the 1761 map (2), although there is a suspicious mark at the site, and a 'Late...s House' labelled with an n does not seem to be on the map: it does not survive today. This cottage had disappeared before the 1900 2nd edition OS plan, and significantly, it is crossed through on the 1842 map (3). The cottage is not depicted on the OS 1:2500 plan of 1885 (4)

There are no earthworks or any other trace of a building at the site today, which is a open field (5)

It is probable that this was the site of 'Stafford's tenement', which stood 'within the Millgreene gate', and is first recorded as having been in the tenancy of one Thomas Teye in 1589 (6)

Pace (5), there is the faint (unsurveyable) remains of a platform at this site, although it is nowhere more than about 10cm deep (7)

Closer inspection of the 1761 and 1842 maps shows that both portray a small square structure at the eastern end of the curtilage, around ST48305630. This is not crossed through on the 1842 map, but neither does it appear on that of 1885 (1) (2) (4).

The 1589 deed assigns common rights to this site, so it may have medieval origins (8)

What further can be gleaned from the historic records is discussed above.

- 1 Map SRO DD/STL 3 (1842)
- 2 Map SRO DD/STL 1 (1761 as amended c1809)
- 3 Pers comm Vince Russett 02.2002
- 4 Map OS 1st edition Somerset XVIII.10 (1885)
- 5 Site visit Vince Russett 16.02.2002
- 6 Mention 'Staffords tenement' Vince Russett in CHERT archive
- 7 Site visit CHERT 18.03.2003
- 8 Mention SRO DD/GB 87/1

CHERT 236



Fig 10: (CHERT236 in 1842 – SRO DD/STL 3)

A cottage is depicted at this site on the 1842 map of Charterhouse (*above*) (1), and has been added as a pencil annotation to the 1761 map (2). A vague earthwork platform survives at the site today, with a thin scatter of C19 and C20 pottery (3). It appears to have been extant as late as the 1946 air photographs (4)

There is only a faint platform no more than 0.1m high at the site today (5)

The first detailed drawing of CHERT 236 is also on this plan: it seems to be a five-unit in-line structure, possibly functioning as a pair of cottages at that time. By 1885, it had not changed in layout, although some simplification of the fields attached to it had gone ahead. The left hand end of the cottage has an attribution pencilled in, although this is incredibly difficult to read: it could be 'Allard', or possibly 'Atwood': the 1851 census is not clear, either: the household was William A., the father, 50, and an agricultural labourer, his wife, Elizabeth, also 50; one James Broom, son-in-law, 30, also an agricultural labourer; and two more visitors, Jesse Clark from Blagdon, 30 and a labourer,

and, perhaps surprisingly, the 8 year old Samuel Tailor from Churchill. The other half of the building seems to have been empty at the time of the census.

The Allard / Attwoods are still there in 1861: William seems to have aged 20 years, since he is now 70!, but is still an agricultural labourer, and his wife is now 62: James Broom is now described as a lodger, and gives his occupation as miner, although unlike the others, he seems to have only aged the appropriate 10 years since the last census. By 1871, William has recovered some ground, since he is now 77, but still a labourer, even at this age, and Elizabeth now believes she is 67. James Broom is now a son-in-law again, and a labourer, 47 years old.

The other half of the building is now (1861) occupied by a second James Broom, presumably a relation of the one next door, although at 51 years of age, he cannot be his father. He is also an agricultural labourer, and his wife is Hannah, 50. The rest of their household are their son Thomas, 23, and a shoemaker, and two younger sons, Arthur, 11 and Edwin, 8, both scholars. By 1871, Hannah was the sole inhabitant of the cottage, 59 and a widow.

- 1 Map SRO DD/STL 3 (1842)
- 2 Map SRO DD/STL 1 (1761 as amended c 1809)
- 3 Pers comm Vince Russett 02.2002
- 4 AP 3G/TUD/UK 5279 (14 Jan 1946)
- 5 Site visit Vince Russett 16.02.2002

CHERT 237



Fig 11: (CHERT237 in 1842 – SRO DD/STL 3)

A rectangular coursed rubble structure stands at the junction of the road with the track that leads to Charterhouse farm. The structure has internal plaster to the walls (7), and the remains of the splay of a south-facing window (1).

The dwelling is depicted on the 1842 map of Charterhouse (2), and its site lies within a curious bulge in the northern edge of the field on the 1761 plan, although no building seems to be recorded there (3). The building was depicted on the OS 1885 map (4)

The timber and galvanised iron roof of the structure has collapsed, and the ruined portion of the building is heavily overgrown. A smaller second stone building lies against the road about 10m west from the first, but is nowhere more than about 1m high (5) (6)

The building had an (intact) galvanised roof over a patched up building about 2m high in 1981 (8)

In the low vegetation of March 2003, it was possible to see that the lower portions of the door jamb, central to the south aspect of the building, survive. The small enclosure on the eastern side of the track to Piney Sleight has surviving gooseberries, and a clear earthwork bank at its eastern end, and was presumably a garden for this site. (9)

CHERT 237, beside the road, is not clearly shown on the 1761 plan, although as recorded above there is a peculiar bulge in the line of the field boundary about that point, so possibly there was some structure already on the site by that date. This was smaller than the other buildings in this area: in 1842, it seems to have consisted of one room and a smaller external room attached to the western end of that room. The evidence from the remaining structure is that it is almost certainly of early C19 date: a central door is flanked by one (and possibly a second symmetrically placed) window in the south-facing wall. There is a brick-lined stack at the eastern end of the building, and it is unlikely to have been more than one storey high, perhaps one and a half at a push. The 1842 map marks 'Saint' on this site in a later hand, and indeed, the 1851 census describes the household as consisting of Henry Saint, agricultural labourer, 54, his wife Hannah, 59, and their son, John, 34 years of age, and also a labourer. Hannah came from Stanton Drew originally. Ten years later, Henry Saint, 70, 'woodsman' is the only inhabitant of the house.

Local evidence, however (10) indicates that a family were living in this house up to the time of World War Two, presumably the reason why, for example, there are still patches of intact plaster on the interior walls.

- 1 Pers comm Vince Russett 02.2002
- 2 Map SRO DD/STL 3 (1842)
- 3 Map SRO DD/STL 1 (1761 as amended c1809)
- 4 Map OS 1st edition Somerset XVIII.10 (1885)
- 5 Site visit Vince Russett 16.02.2002
- 6 Slide VR2207 (03.1981)
- 7 Slide VR2209 (03.1981)

- 8 Slide VR2208 (03.1981)
- 9 Site visit Vince Russett 21 March 2003
- 10 Pers comm, Mary Smith, 2006

CHERT 540

A large grass grown mound stands in the corner of this field, about 3m high and up to 10m across. Large stones protrude from its base on the uphill side. Its nature is at present unclear (1)

- 1 Site visit CHERT 18 March 2003

CHERT 544

A short, deep hollow-way leaves the road and runs W for about 20m, to where it is ended by a low bank about 0.5m high. The nature of this site is not clear (1). The site is clear on the early air photographs, before woody growth spread over the small fields to the south of the road (2)

- 1 Site visit Vince Russett 21 March 2003
- 2 AP 3G/TUD/UK 5279 (14 Jan 1946)

CHERT 545

The 1761 map shows a rectangular structure at this NGR, possibly a building (1). The field slopes very steeply N - S down to a stream (2)

- 1 Map SRO DD/STL 2 (1761)
- 2 Site visit Vince Russett 21 March 2003

CHERT 572

A rectangular building is depicted at this site in 1885 (1). There does not appear to be any trace of structures or earthworks at the site in 1946 or 1991, and nothing is visible on the ground today (2). It seems likely to have been a barn or similar ephemeral structure.

- 1 Map OS 1st edition Somerset XVIII.10 (1885)
- 2 Site visit Vince Russett 21 March 2003

CHERT 583

A rough, straight line of stones at this site appears to be the kerb of a road or track of unknown date (1). The suggestion has been made that this may be part of the Roman road from Charterhouse to points west, but it may equally be simply a local track leading to CHERT 233.

1 Site visit Vince Russett 21 March 2003

CHERT 674



(CHERT674 in 1842 – SRO DD/STL 3)

Two buildings, apparently a dwelling and an outbuilding to its west, appear on the map of 1842 (1), although on the map they have both been subsequently scored through, as has the field boundary to the west, implying, perhaps, that the field and house site became part of the plot surrounding CHERT233 at some time subsequent to the 1842 map. They certainly do not appear on the 1885 OS plan (2).

On the 1761 map, as altered in c1809, an L-shaped building is depicted on the plan, probably as an addition to the original map (3). The detail, however, seems to show that the building was constructed on the west side of the hedgeline, which was removed for its construction. This apparently conflicting evidence cannot currently be resolved: perhaps the most likely explanation is that the initial construction is the building depicted in 1842 as an outbuilding, and the dwelling shown in 1842 was short-lived, perhaps lasting only a generation or less.

1 Map SRO DD/STL 3 (1842)

2 Map OS 1st edition Somerset XVIII.10 (1885)

3 Map SRO DD/STL 1 (1761 as amended c1809)

Author: Vince Russett October 2010 (v2 February 2019)

References

Gough, J. W. 1928	Witham Carthusians on Mendip <i>Proceedings of the Somerset Archaeological and Natural History Society</i> 74: 87
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