CAN WE DATE MENDIP'S STONE WALLS ?

A pilot study undertaken by members of CHERT
(The Charterhouse Environs Research Team)

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A pilot study in the Charterhouse area

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Summary
This pilot study was undertaken by members of CHERT (Charterhouse Environs Research Team) from September 2007 to March 2008 to establish whether it was possible to identify different styles of stone walls through the historical period. A combination of fieldwork, drawing and documentary research was used to try to establish a wall typology that could be tested in the field and used in other parts of the Mendip Hills AONB.

Introduction
In 2006 the Mendip Hills AONB launched their *Lifelines* survey of the stone walls on Mendip, supported by a grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund. The aim of the *Lifelines* project was to undertake a management audit of the state of the walls, including their construction, landscape context and colonisation by plants. The project had no historical dimension, other than the noting of features (undated) that might have been created at different periods, such as gate posts and sheep creeps.
In the summer of 2007 the AONB and the Heritage Lottery Fund agreed to support CHERT to undertake this pilot study to establish whether there were different styles of construction of Mendip stone walls and whether any differences were typical of different historical periods.

Research Aims
The pilot study had two aims:-

1. to establish whether there were different styles of construction
2. to establish whether individual styles were characteristic of specific historical periods.

It was recognised from the outset that any differences in style identified might also derive from other factors such as the underlying geology that was providing the stones for construction, or the differences in tenure between the monastic lords of Witham Friary and the lay lords of Blagdon and Cheddar parishes.

Study area
The area chosen for the pilot study was based on the area within which CHERT investigations have been taking place for some years, where the landowners have been particularly cooperative and the landscape is to some extent familiar and understood. The area is shown in Fig. 1. The core of the area was the former Charterhouse estate of Witham Friary. This was extended to the north-east to include part of Blagdon parish. In this area there are Parliamentary Enclosure boundary walls to contrast with the earlier enclosures within Charterhouse. The study area also covered a wide range of solid geology from the Portishead Beds of the Old Red Sandstone through the Carboniferous Limestone of the Lower Limestone Shales, Black Rock Limestone and Burrington Oolite (see Fig.2).

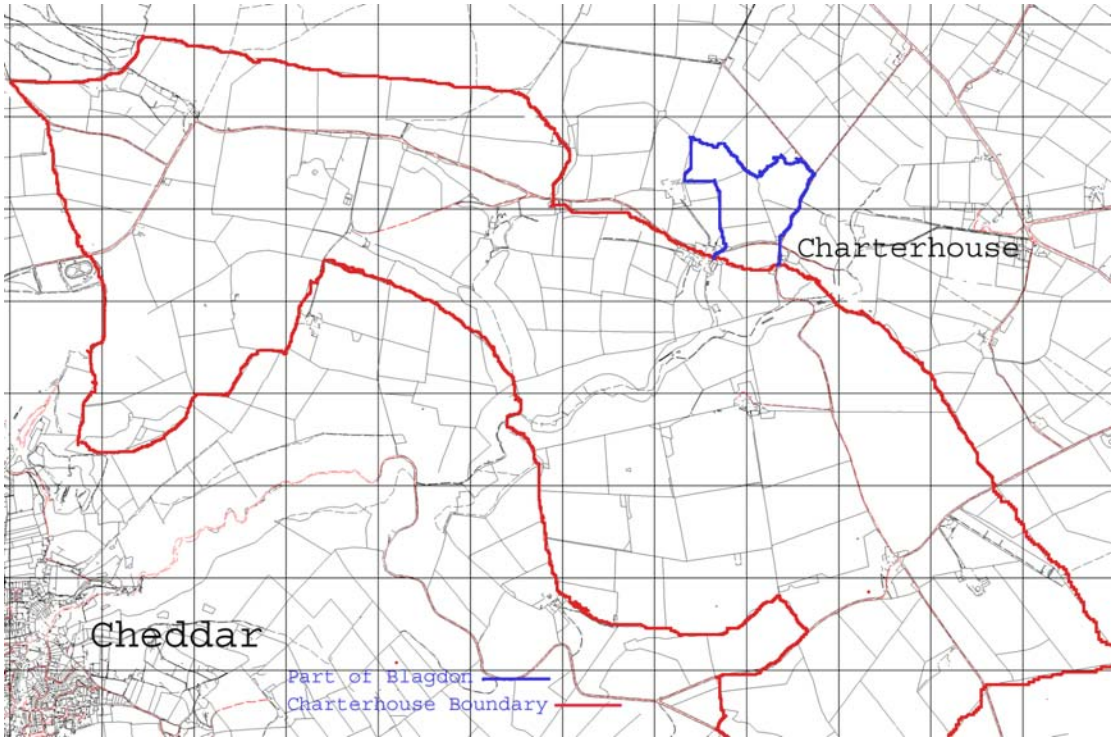

Fig. 1 Pilot study area

Land use

The current land use within the study area is exclusively pasture, although there is evidence of earlier arable, mining and quarrying. The frequently encountered field name *sleight* confirms an earlier use for sheep grazing and *warren* for rabbit farming.

Soils

The study area is underlain by a variety of soils forming on the sandstone and limestones.
The Maesbury series occur on the Old Red Sandstone forming an acid brown earth. South of this series, bordering the road from Charterhouse to Tynings Farm is the Ellick series, another acid brown earth. The gleyed brown earth of the Tynings series is found around Tynings Farm and Lower Farm with an area of surface water gley soils at Charterhouse Farm known as the Thrupe series.To the south are further series of brown earths – the Lulsgate series and the Mendip Complex (Findlay 1965).

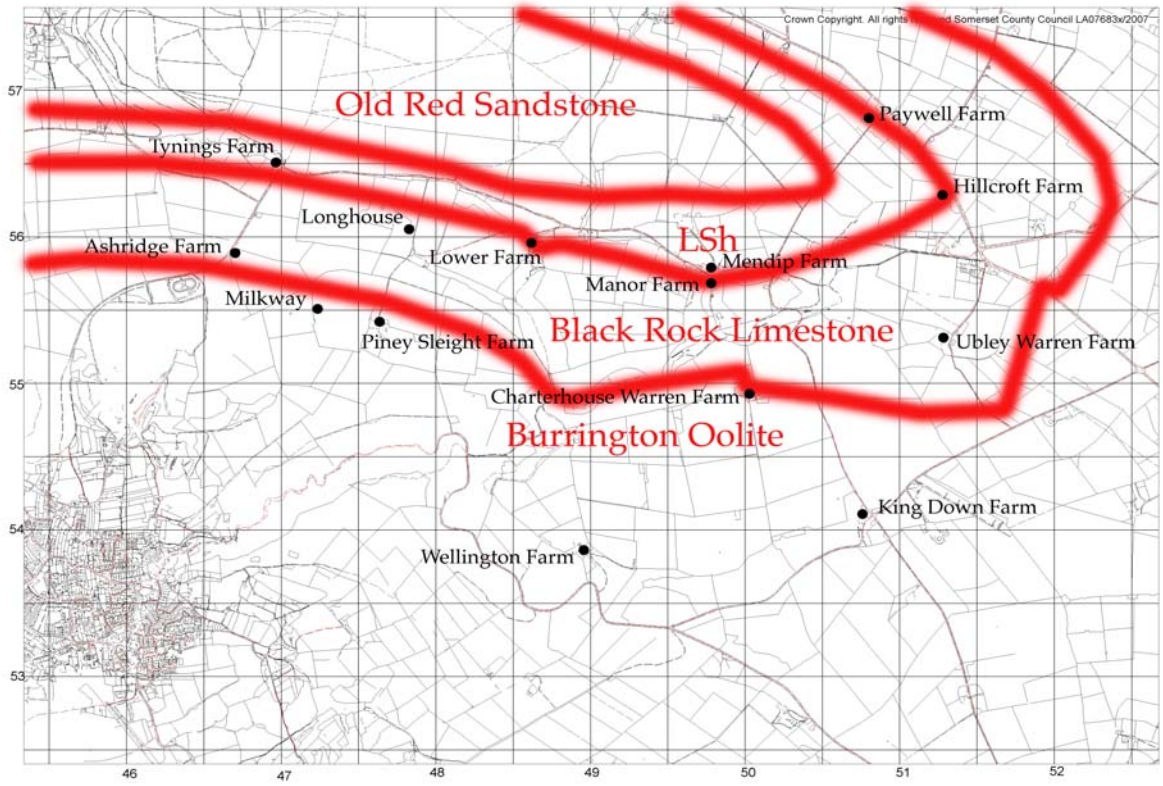

Fig. 2 Geology of the study area

The Landscape Context

The Manor of Charterhouse lies on the Mendip plateau south of Black Down at a height of about 250m. The geomorphology of the area is to a large extent controlled by the underlying limestone, resulting in an absence of surface drainage (Athill 1976, Findlay 1965). Springs rise in several places and notably occur close to Lower and Manor Farms. Both these farms lie at the heads of valleys which have been cut into the plateau by streams at an earlier date. The Manor is crossed from north-east to south-west by Velvet Bottom, a significant valley modified by centuries of lead working.

Previous work

Relatively little research has been conducted on the dating of stone walls. The first study of consequence was Richard Hodges' work first published in 1991 *'Wall – to - Wall History. The Story of Roystone Grange'* (Hodges 1991) with a new and updated edition *'Roystone Grange. 6000 Years of a Peakland Landscape'* (Hodges 2006). Hodges identified a wall typology of five different styles – prehistoric, Romano-British, medieval, post-medieval enclosure and Parliamentary Enclosure – within an area of the Peak District.

Fifteen years later the Yorkshire Archaeological Society published the results of ten years fieldwork in Upper Wharfedale by the Hebden History Group led by archaeologists David Joy and Heather Beaumont (Beaumont 2006). They were able to identify and describe five boundary types of construction, each representing a definable phase in the process of enclosure. From the earliest to the latest these were boulder walls (surrounding the medieval open or common fields), external boundary walls (enclosing stinted pasture in the late16th century), irregular walls (pre-dominating c1690-1770), Parliamentary Enclosure walls (post-1857 Act) and regular walls (1857-1910).

The North Devon Archaeological Society has conducted a boundary survey within their Parracombe Project (Newsletter Issue 7 Spring 2004). The volumes of hedgebanks were calculated and analysed to determine a classification. Smaller volumes were found on boundaries of more recently enclosed land, with larger volumes associated with older boundaries closer to the farmsteads. This technique applied to the walls surveyed at Charterhouse was inconclusive.

Methods and techniques

It was agreed by CHERT members that the drawing of sections of wall faces and the measurement of their profiles should proceed simultaneously with documentary research and fieldwork. Therefore two teams of CHERT members were formed; one to do research on maps and documents led by Colin Budge; the other to do the practical survey work in the field led by Pip Osborne. Colin Budge also acted as liaison between the two groups but was not involved in the surveying. Work began in September 2007. As background research progressed it became possible to send drawing teams to carefully targeted walls to ensure that a full range of walls built on field boundaries of differing dates were included.

Field survey, drawing and observation

The object of the survey exercise was to record as many walls as possible within the study area. Teams of surveyors were directed to sites following identification of walls by the research group. The surveyors were given no prior knowledge as to the possible age of the wall. This it was hoped would achieve totally unbiased recording. After initial training sessions had been given to all potential surveyors, six numbered teams were formed, each with a leader. This leader remained the same throughout the survey period whilst other members were free to move between the teams. The leader was responsible for liaising with Pip Osborne, who organised the practical surveying and for submitting the drawings and supporting record sheets. The record sheet is illustrated in Fig.3.

A method was devised for the recording of a one metre length of wall using archaeological conventions. In addition the profile or section through the wall was recorded. A 60cm. by 120cm. steel drawing frame with a 20cm. by 20cm. grid, painted white, was supplied to each team, along with other equipment necessary for levelling and producing a profile. The frames of this size were relatively easy to transport.

Drawings were made onto all-weather Permatrace at a scale of 1:20. Only those stones which formed the outer surface of the wall were recorded. A 3-dimensional effect was not deemed desirable. By this method it was hoped to record stone shape, size and where in evidence, the coursing structure, in the most uniform way across the teams. By placing the frame against the wall, the surveyor simply drew the outline of each stone within each of the 20cm. squares of the grid. Drawing commenced at the bottom left corner, the frame being moved once to achieve a full metre width drawing. No walls proved taller than the height of the frame. In addition to the drawing, each metre elevation and a general view of the wall in the landscape was photographed with a National Grid Reference taken with GPS.

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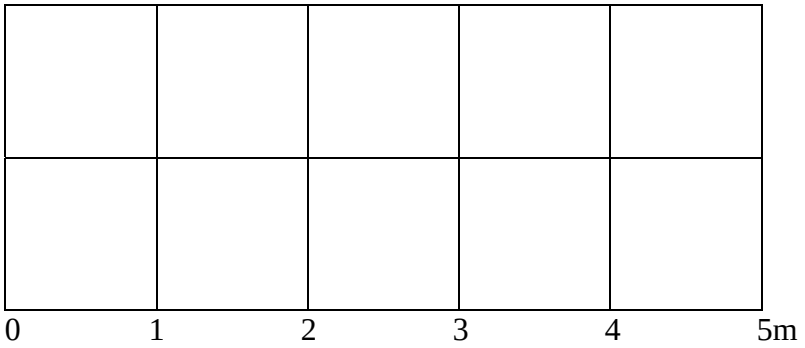
Parish: Charterhouse/Cheddar /Blagdon	**Field no.** C	**Grid. ref. of wall drawing** ST	**Location of wall (N,S,E,W)**
Date :	**Surveyors :**		
Underlying geology from sheet 280	Old Red Sandstone (PoB), Lower Limestone Shale (LSh), Black Rock Limestone (BRL), Burrington Oolite (BO), Cheddar Limestone (CdL), Cheddar Oolite (CO), Dolomitic Conglomerate (DCg), Calcite Mudstone (c-m), Hotwells Limestone (HL)		
Description of stones : shape, colour, texture, geology			
Design & construction : dry or mortared, broad or narrow foundations, arrangement of stones in the body, and on top of wall, faced or rough			
Context of wall: Is the wall standing on a bank? Does it have a ditch on both sides? Is it a retaining wall with the ground level significantly different on either side? Is there a hedge or hedges? Are there obvious foundation stones visible beyond the footings of the wall? Please add a measured sketch section through wall, banks etc.	Please add a measured sketch section below 		
Are there any other interesting features in your length of wall?			
Are there any attached stone buildings?			
Any other comments			

Fig. 3 Record Sheet

Fig. 3 Drawing frame

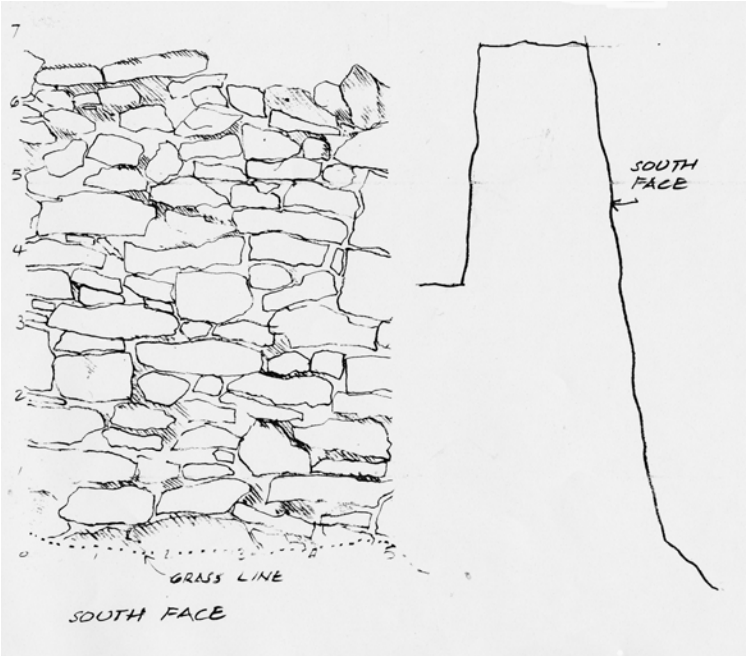


Fig. 4 Wall drawing with profile

Evaluation of Field survey

A total of 37 wall sections were drawn. The short time scale of the project and occasional poor weather conditions reduced the total. Some sites required a considerable walk to access them.

A uniform accuracy of wall drawing was achieved and this enabled a comparison of the sections to be made and a typology to be considered. Observational skills were focused and useful comments on the sites reported to the research team. After a hesitant start the principles of the exercise were fully understood and awareness of wall construction enhanced.

The recording of these wall sections has proved a valuable exercise in its own right. A body of evidence has been accumulated on a variety of walls in the area of Charterhouse recording 'in situ' the archaeology of Mendip walls at a time when they are in disrepair or in the process of being rebuilt.

Historical Research

The research team studied the available documentary and cartographic material to try and establish the dates of the field boundaries in the area. A map regression was undertaken but only a few maps dating from 1761 to 1886 were found to be useful. These are listed on page 21. Documentary references to the existence, construction or rebuilding of stone walls were also few. The relevant sources are also listed on page 21**.**

The earliest boundaries in the area are most likely to be parish boundaries. The boundary of the parish of Cheddar, which abuts the southern boundary of the manor of Charterhouse probably dates from the 9thor10thcenturies. A perambulation of 1298 provides evidence of its route. Part of the boundary between Cheddar and Burrington was clearly adjusted in the 18thcentury but apart from that stretch it was assumed that it has remained largely unchanged.

The next most ancient boundary is probably that of the estate of Charterhouse itself, which was granted to Witham Friary in 1181/82 by Henry II. The bounds have been described by J.W.Gough (PSANHS vol. 74 1928). Further elucidation of these bounds drawing upon additional documents appearing since 1928 has been carried out by V.Russett with the support of CHERT enabling detailed identification of the bounds in the field. It is not known whether this endowment had a discrete identity before the 12thcentury or whether it was created at the time of the endowment. There are references to 'Cheddarford' earlier in the 12thcentury (PSANHS vol.74 1928 p89). For much of its length on its southern side the Witham estate boundary coincides with the parish boundary of Cheddar. No reference is made to any wall in these boundary descriptions but it is possible that a wall may have been built along parts of its length.

Establishing a broad dating framework between the 12thcentury and the earliest mapping of other boundaries had to be approached in a different way. The technique used was suggested by Heather Beaumont (pers.comm.) and was the basis of most of their successful work within the township of Hebden (*Beaumont 2006*). The method was to analyse the junctions of boundaries, firstly on a map then in the field. The underlying assumption made is that at a T-junction of boundaries the stem of the T is

unlikely to be older than the cross-bar, and in many cases it is likely to be younger. Following boundaries up the stems of the Ts will usually lead to a much longer and continuous boundary that is often defining the first and earliest enclosed areas (Fig.5). It has been assumed that these boundaries are likely to have appeared in the late-medieval period of the 13th to 16th centuries. For example, the monks of Witham were granted permission in 1293/4 'to enclose what they will within their own boundaries' at Charterhouse (Patent Roll 22 Edward I). However the record of a dispute in 1261 between the Carthusians and the Bishop of Bath & Wells,and others, only refers to 'dykes and fences' and not walls (PSANHS vol.74 1928 p 89-90).

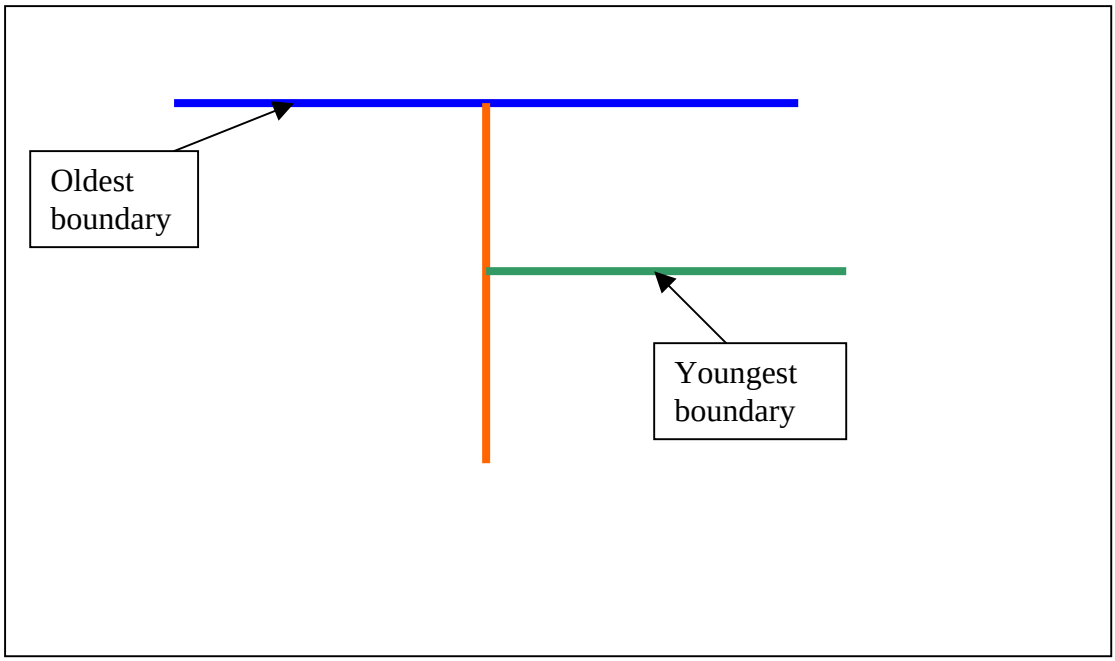


Fig. 5 T method

Further subdivision creating smaller fields for the better management of stock would have continued in the post-medieval period. The earliest maps of the late 18th century show these boundaries, but seldom indicate the nature of the boundary at that time i.e. stone wall, bank, ditch or hedge.
The Parliamentary Enclosure map of Blagdon (1787) shows the new boundaries of late 18th and 19th centuries. Further new field divisions are shown on the Tithe map of Blagdon (1837) and the First Edition Ordnance Survey maps.
Recent walls were identified by local knowledge and their very evident fresh construction.
This research indicates the earliest date that it is possible for a stone wall to have been built along a particular boundary. It is, of course, possible that any wall now standing could have been built at a later time, with the boundary having previously been clearly defined by a ditch, bank or fence, or a combination of these. It is also possible

that any original wall may have been partially or completely rebuilt at a later date. Documentary evidence although sparse does survive for work on the walls in the late 17th century. The Gore accounts books for 1675-1686 provide some evidence for wall construction and repair (DD/GB 114):

> *'1676 Pd Nicholas Maine in part for makeinge dry wall 10/-*
> …
> *1677 Pd Will Mayne for makeinge 30 perch mortar wall £1/10/0*
> …
> *1678 Pd ffor mekeing 42 rope new wall @20d rope between ffresh and Oxe lease £3/10/0…'*

In a few cases it has been possible to identify some of these sites on a map of Manor Farm (Fig.6); though the previous reservations about rebuilding and repair make the confirmation of a present day wall as dating from this period problematic.

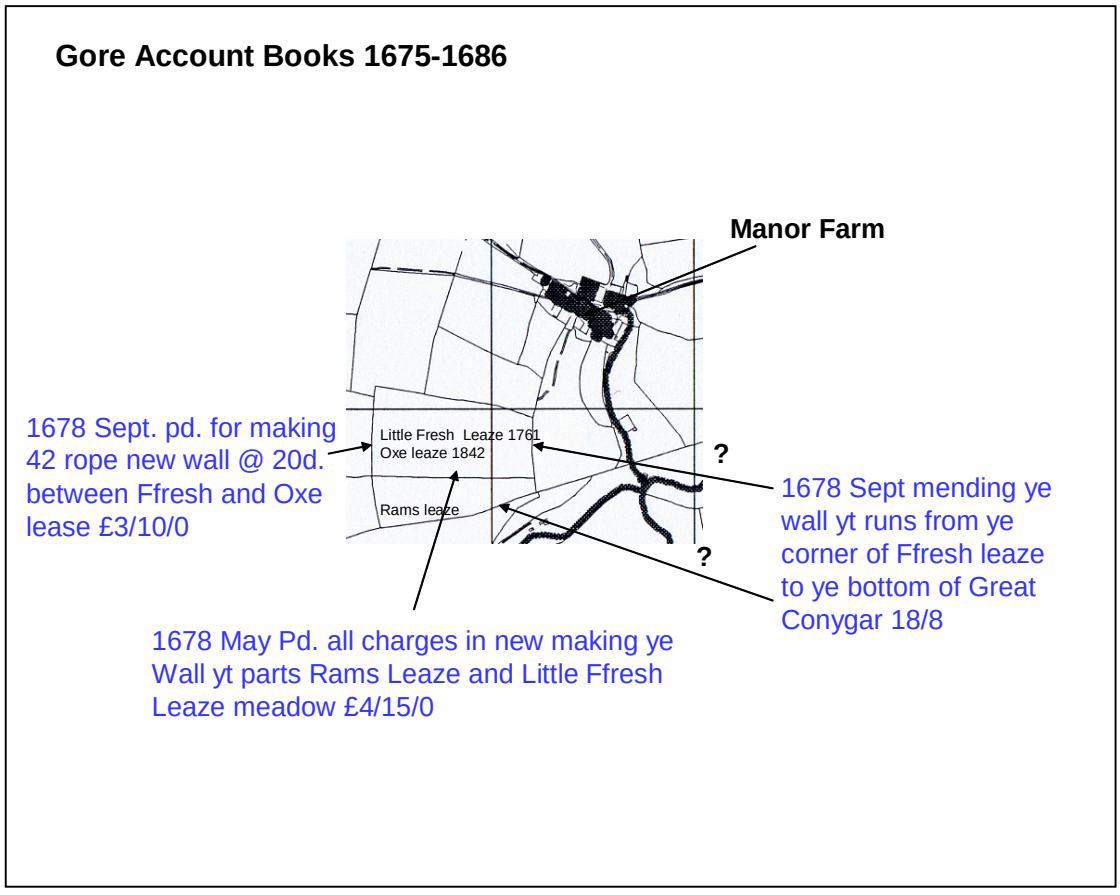


Fig. 6 Wall construction sites – Manor Farm 1678

Further examples of the need to maintain and build walls can be seen in the covenants of indentures (DD/BR/lch/1):

Thomas Wills, by indenture 21 December 1669. Sir Thomas Gore to John Wills.

One messuage late in the tenure of Thomas Warren, with 60a of meadow on Charterhouse Down.

99 years. Lives: John Wills, Sibell (wife), William (son). Rent £6/13/4 and covenant to repair the walls and bounds.

Thomas Lutterell by indenture 26 June 1 Jas II. Dame Phillippa Gore to Thomas Lutterell.

14a land late in the tenure of Valentine Nowell

99 years. Lives: Thomas Lutterell, Francis and Jane (daughters). Rent? And covenants to build a house and divide the premises with a stone wall.

Analysis of the drawings of the walls

The style of a wall is defined by a number of features:

- the width of the wall at its base and top
- battering – i.e. sloping sides and the degree of slope
- height
- coursing
- dry or mortar
- coping stones/ finish to the top
- size of building stones
- straight/sinuous
- incorporation of large immovable stones
- associated features- bank, ditch, hedge

Many of these features can be measured but some are a matter of judgement.

Each of the wall drawings was judged against these parameters by three independent groups within the research team. These analyses were then compared and the majority description adopted for the next stage of the analysis. Contextual information, such as, the existence of any bank or ditch, and whether the line of the wall was surveyor-straight or curving, was omitted at this stage.

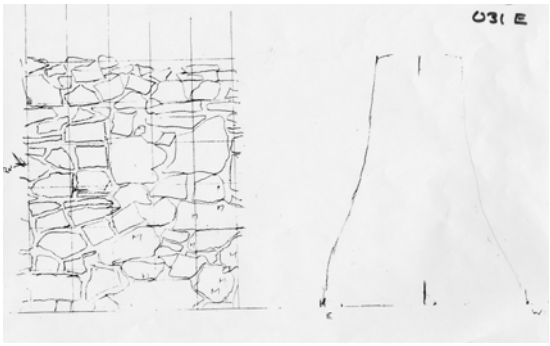
Each wall drawing was then ascribed to a dating period based upon analysis of documents and maps (see pages 18 and 19). The percentage of walls falling into each of the five dating periods is shown in Fig.7.

Boundary dating period	Percentage of walls
Medieval boundaries	**36%**
Late medieval first farm boundaries	**25%**
Post-medieval field divisions	**28%**
Parliamentary enclosures	**8%**
Modern 20th.century	**3%**

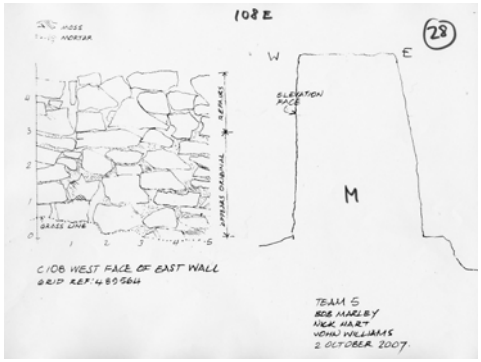
Fig. 7 Percentage record of walls by boundary period

Interpretation of drawings
The drawings show a wide variety of style and the style can vary within walls on boundaries of the same broad period.

Medieval boundaries
It was expected that the walls on the boundary of the Manor of Charterhouse and the parish boundaries would have a number of similarities. The selected drawings shown in Fig.8 were made on the medieval Carthusian boundary and show some similarities but insufficient to state conclusively the style of wall building from this period. They show a use of larger stones than in those used in later walls. But it should be noted that the determination of size of stone is subjective and is not the result of rigorous measurement. There is also some evidence of battering and half battering with an angle of about 85°. Evidence of mortaring was present in only a quarter of these walls. Coursing is not consistent throughout the walls drawn on boundaries of this date. When present, rounded stones may indicate clearance of weathered stones from the grazing areas.

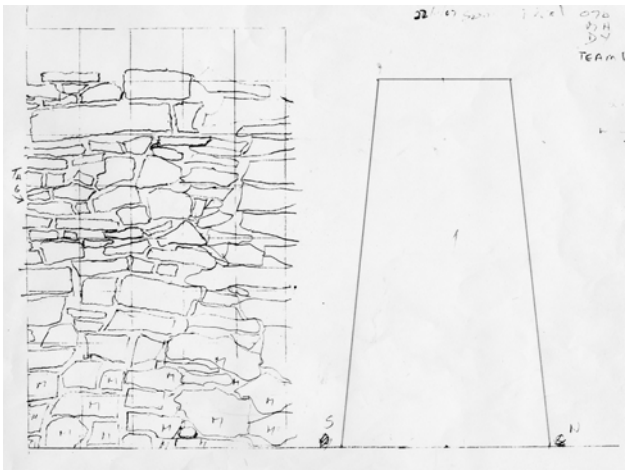


Wall drawing no 2



Wall drawing no 28

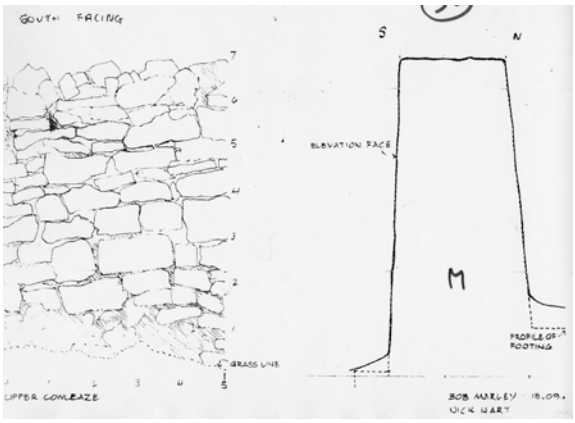
Wall drawing no 25



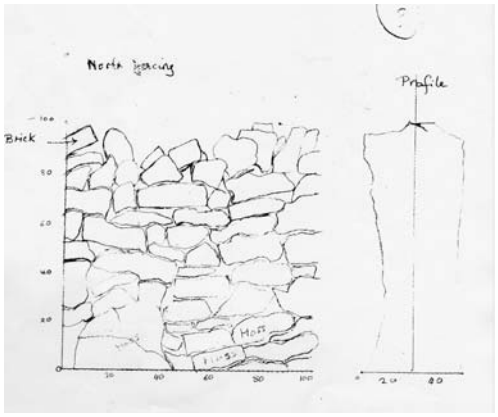
Wall drawing no 1

Fig. 8 Drawings of walls on the medieval boundary of the Manor of Charterhouse

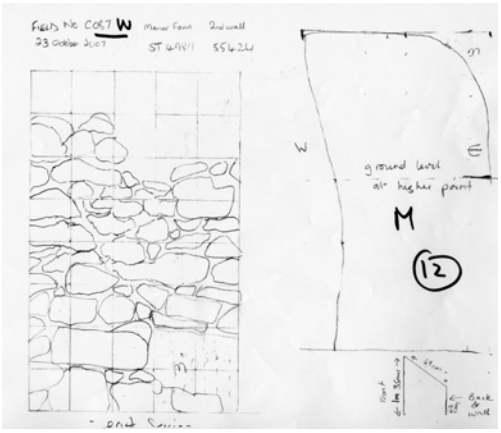
Late medieval – first farm boundaries, 15th – 16th centuries
A group of these walls are shown in Fig. 9 below.



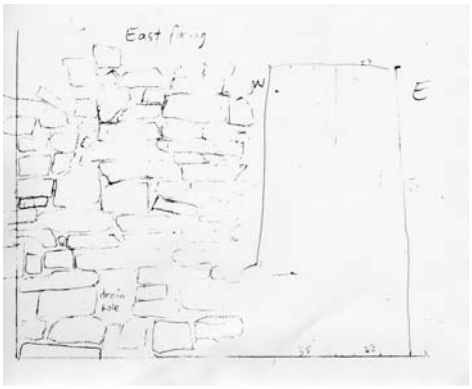
Wall drawing no 30



Wall drawing no 7



Wall drawing no 12



Wall drawing no 22

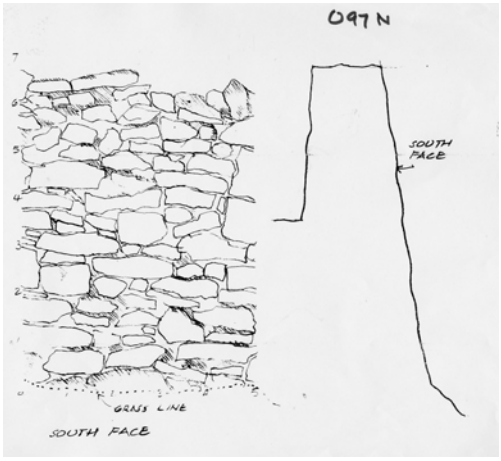
Fig. 9 Drawings of walls on late medieval, first farm boundaries of the 16th century.

This selection of walls is on the boundaries which delimited the late medieval enclosure of farm holdings evolving out of the sheepsleight of the manor of Charterhouse. It is difficult to date these boundaries exactly. The walls continue to

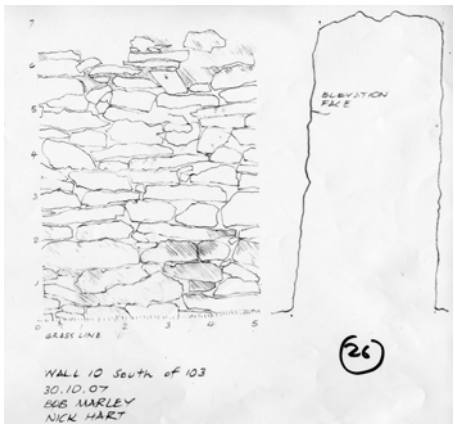
show the use of some larger stones. There is less evidence of battering but increased evidence of mortaring.

Post – medieval

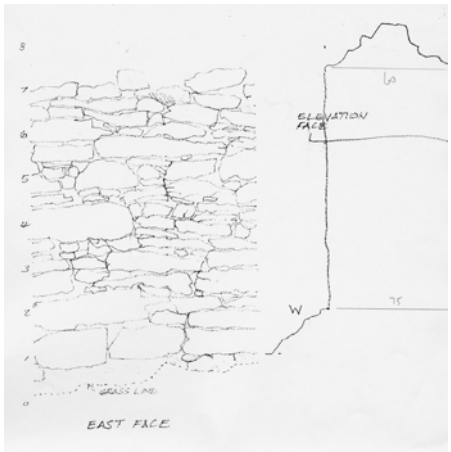
These walls (Fig. 10) are found on the smaller field divisions that evolved within the boundaries of Manor Farm and the other holdings within the manor of Charterhouse. The walls illustrated are taken from the survey of walls made across Manor Farm. Battering was present in nearly all the walls surveyed and there was also strong evidence of coursing. Larger stones were still being used but there was very little mortaring. The three walls shown had an average height of 140cms., considerably higher than the average across the Manor.



Wall drawing no 24



Wall drawing no 26

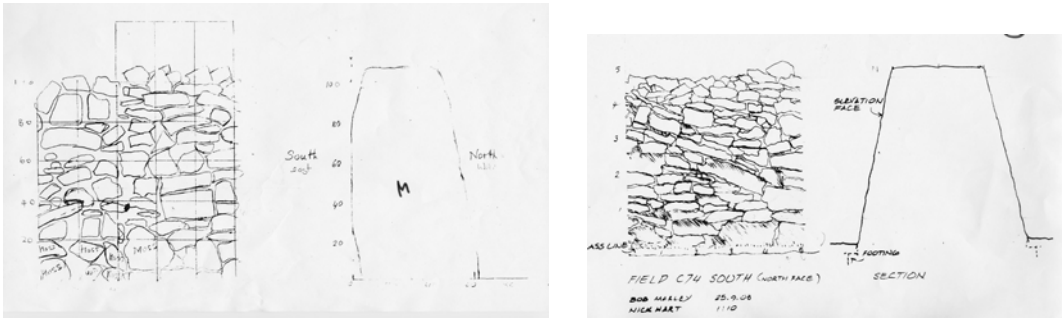


Wall drawing no 27

Fig. 10 Drawings of walls on the post – medieval boundaries of Manor farm.

Parliamentary Enclosure

Few walls were drawn and surveyed from this period of enclosure as the Manor of Charterhouse lies outside the areas that were enclosed at the end of the 18th century and the beginning of the 19th century. The study did include a brief survey of walls north of the Manor into the parish of Blagdon that was enclosed after the Enclosure award of 1787. Two of these are illustrated below in Fig.11.



Wall drawing no 6 **Wall drawing no 29**

Fig. 11 Drawings of walls on the Parliamentary Enclosure boundaries

The drawings above show that the enclosure walls have a variety of stone size with evidence of battering and mortaring. But the sample is too small to make firm conclusions.

Geology and the Walls

The trend of the underlying geology is largely west to east. On the northern edge of the area Old Red Sandstone outcrops. To the south lies a band of Limestone Shales. On its lower slopes are two farms – Tynings farm and Mendip Farm. The next band to the south has been the main area of settlement over a long period and consists of the well draining Black Rock Limestone. The farms built upon it include Ashridge, Long House, Lower, Manor, Ubley Warren, Hillcroft and Paywell. South of this is a band of Burrington Oolite with Milkway, Piney Sleight and Templedown Farms. These four rock types found in the study area are shown in Fig.2 The percentage of walls falling into each of the geological zones is as follows:

Old Red Sandstone	11%
Limestone Shales	17%
Black Rock Limestone	53%
Burrington Oolite	19%

Only one factor appeared to be significant from the observations and drawings of the walls and that was that all the seven walls lying on the Burrington Oolite contained stones that were judged to be 'large'. There were 'large' stones incorporated into the walls over each of the different geologies, generally in about 50-60% of the walls.

None of the geologies fracture in parallel-sided shapes making coursing in the construction relatively more difficult. Coursing was only found in about 42% of the walls.
There was a tendency for the walls built on the Burrington Oolite to have base widths towards the higher end (60-90 cm) but it unlikely that this is statistically significant.
Mortaring had no apparent link to the geology of the rocks in the wall.
The overall conclusion has to be that all the rocks produce individual stones of similar and irregular structure leading to no particular style of construction.

Conclusions

It will be clear from the interpretations above that a wall typology of building styles based on broadly drawn historical periods has not emerged for the manor of Charterhouse although there has been a rigorous application of map and documentary research linked to careful recording and measurement of a wide selection of walls across the manor. A number of observations, however, can be made. There is no evidence of boulder walls as described on Roystone grange in Derbyshire and large stones because of their presence throughout the historical period are not a good indicator of age. Unless further evidence is forthcoming it remains doubtful that early walls can be identified with certainty at Charterhouse. The presence of mortar in all periods and its frequent appearance in the lower parts of walls would suggest that it has been used in all periods to patch up bulges and lower courses to allow the upper courses to be rebuilt. Cross - sections were most useful in showing the degree of battering and large bases were certainly a significant feature of walls on the earliest boundaries. The widespread use of coursing on walls on the 17thand 18thcentury boundaries would suggest that this was an innovation at this time. It is possible that it indicates a standard of wall building required by the landowner. The Gores, who owned the manor from the second half of the 17thcentury, may have, like many of their contemporaries insisted on significant improvements from their tenant farmers. It could be argued that the selection of the part of the wall to be drawn and measured may have built in a bias into the results. But the later stages of research and boundary walking were designed to ensure that the chosen sites were representative of the boundaries. The sample drawn was limited by time available and the weather, but the archive established provides a unique collection of visual material, that is both historical and archaeological in content. It certainly captures one of the unique features of Mendip.

Recommendations

Many questions remain unanswered about the boundaries of this area of Mendip and it is expected that CHERT will continue to investigate aspects of the history and archaeology of the land holdings within the manor in the years ahead.
The *Lifelines* database will provide a range of data on the walls across a much larger area and ideas should be tested on this data.
Future surveys should be extended to include a greater number of Parliamentary walls and, if possible, linked to a study of other aspects of the Parliamentary enclosure period.
Finally, the question of whether a modern wall should be built in a contemporary style or repeat a 'historical' type should receive wide consideration.

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WALL Analysis Sheet

GROUP A = medieval parish boundaries

CHERT WALL no.	070 N	Bleak House	019 SE	018 S	043 N	002 NW
	1	**3**	**5**	**10**	**16**	**36**
Base width cm	80	80	70	80	70	50
Battered (v. straight)	B			B		
Height	140	110	105	120	120	115
Coursed	C					C
Mortared		M	M			M
Large stones		L	L	L	L	
Retaining						R
Bank/foundation			B	B		
					Group not clear	

GROUP B = medieval Charterhouse boundary

CHERT WALL no.	031 E	031 E	043 S	108 E	043a E	043 E	044 W
	2	**25**	**31**	**28**	**33**	**34**	**35**
Base width cm	100	85	60	75	90	80	80
Battered (v. straight)	B	B	B	B	B	B	
Height	120	170	120	110	120	105	160
Coursed					C	C	
Mortared				M	M	M	M
Large stones		L	L		L	L	L
Retaining		R	R				
Bank/foundation				B			

GROUP C = late-medieval first farm boundaries 15/16C

CHERT WALL no.	087 W	084 S	099 S	087 W	084 N	075 E	074 W	075 N	070 S	102 E
	4	**7**	**11**	**12**	**20**	**22**	**23**	**30**	**37**	**17**
Base width cm	60	40	75	70	55	65	80	65	50	80
Battered (v. straight)							B	B	B	B
Height	140	100	110	150	90	130	120	140	70	145
Coursed	C					C		C		C
Mortared	M		M	M	M			M	M	
Large stones	L	L		L			L	L		
Retaining			R	R		R				
Bank/foundation										

GROUP D = post-medieval smaller field divisions 17/18C

CHERT WALL no.	089 S	097 W	084 W	102 E	095 N	097 N	102 N	088 W	019 W	011 SE
	8	**9**	**13**	**18**	**19**	**24**	**26**	**27**	**14**	**21**
Base width cm	100	75	70	80	65	45	65	75	90	65
Battered (v. straight)	B	B	B	B	B	B		B	B	B
Height	120	120	110	120	120	150	140	130	95	120
Coursed		C	C	C	C	C	C	C		
Mortared			M							
Large stones		L	L	L	L		L	L	L	
Retaining						R				R
Bank/foundation								B		

GROUP E = Parliamentary Enclosures post 1787

CHERT WALL no.	074 NW	084 N	074 S
	6	**15**	**29**
Base width cm	60	70	100
Battered (v. straight)	B	B	B
Height	110	100	100
Coursed		C	C
Mortared	M		
Large stones		L	L
Retaining		R	
Bank/foundation			

GROUP F = modern 20C

	031 N
	32
Base width cm	50
Battered (v. straight)	
Height	100
Coursed	
Mortared	
Large stones	L
Retaining	
Bank/foundation	

Chronology

The following broad framework has been followed throughout this report:

Early medieval	410 – 1066
Late Medieval	1066 – 1550
Post Medieval	1550 – 1750
Enclosure period	1750 – 1850
Post Enclosure	1850 – 1950
Modern	1950 -

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Date of field surveys: September to December 2007

Report written and compiled by Colin Budge, Barry Lane, Pip Osborne and Jill Polak

March 2008

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Original sources

The sources used in this study are in the Somerset Record Office in a number of deposits. These include those of the Gore family (DD/GB) who were lords of the manor from the mid-17th century to the mid-18th century. The Enclosure and Tithe awards with the associated maps of the adjoining parishes are also useful.

All the sources listed below are to be found in the Somerset Record Office

DD/STL 1	Survey of the Charterhouse manor, estate of Wellbore Ellis, surveyed in 1761, revised in 1809 – maps and table of references.
DD/STL 3	Map - 1842 Manor of Charterhouse, property of Viscount Clifden
DD/STL 4	Map - c1800 Charterhouse Warren
Q/RDE 132	Plan of Blagdon New Enclosures 1787
DD/GB	Gore papers
DD/BR/lch 1	Leases

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