

## HILL DEVERILL – DRAFT TEXT

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The ancient parish of Hill Deverill included the detached tithing of Baycliffe which lay 5.5 km. west of Hill Deverill village.<sup>1</sup> In 1884 Baycliffe (c. 200 a.)<sup>2</sup> was absorbed into Horningsham parish, and in 1934 Hill Deverill itself (1,548 a.)<sup>3</sup> was absorbed into Longbridge Deverill parish.<sup>4</sup> The village of Hill Deverill straddles the River Wylye 5 km. south of Warminster. The parish was rarely more than 1 km. wide and extended from east to west across the upper Wylye, or Deverill, valley up onto the high chalk downs on each side. Apart from Baycliffe farm and Rye Hill farm in the west of the former parish, all medieval and later settlement has been in the river valley, where the manor house, former church, mill and village earthworks sit alongside cottages, watercress beds and some 20th-century housing. The parish may have acquired the name Hulle, or Hill, Deverill from its prominent western landmark, Bidcombe Hill.<sup>5</sup>

### Boundaries

Hill Deverill shared its entire southern boundary with Brixton Deverill, most of its northern boundary with Longbridge Deverill, shorter sections with Sutton Veny and Horningsham, and its western boundary with Maiden Bradley.<sup>6</sup> Baycliffe was separated from Horningsham to the north and from Maiden Bradley to the south and east mainly by lanes, hedgerows, and by what was probably an ancient line

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<sup>1</sup> This article was written in 2009–10. Maps used include OS Maps 1", sheet 297 (rev. edn, 1893); 6", Wilts. LVII–LVIII (1889); 1:10000, 83–84 (1983); 1:25000, Explorer, 143 (2004); *Andrews' and Drury's Map 1773*, pl. 4; Hoare, *Modern Wilts.*, Heytesbury hundred (1824), 8–34.

<sup>2</sup> WSA, TA/Hill Deverill.

<sup>3</sup> OS Map, 6", Wilts. LVII–LVIII (1889).

<sup>4</sup> *VCH Wilts. IV*, 346.

<sup>5</sup> WAM, XXVIII (1894–5), 236.

<sup>6</sup> *VCH Wilts. IV*, 346.

curving north of Brimsdown Hill. South east of the Wylde, Hill Deverill's sinuous boundaries ran up to high downland marked by natural features.<sup>7</sup> They converged with the boundaries of seven other parishes at Potley Oak, where a ditch described as old in 1227 defined the limit of the parish's pasture.<sup>8</sup> West of the Wylde the boundary followed mainly lanes, woodland banks and field boundaries. The ragged appearance of the northern boundary with Longbridge Deverill as it crossed the Wylde floodplain apparently preserved pre-existing patterns of ownership, following the outline of crofts or enclosed meadows of the two communities and headlands of the open field east of Hill Deverill Manor.<sup>9</sup>

## Landscape

The geology of the parish is typical of the Upper Wylde valley.<sup>10</sup> Upper Chalk predominates, mantled by a small area of clay-with-flints near its south-eastern point. Here the height of the downland attains 231 m., falling away north-westward in a landscape of rounded hills and coombs down to the Wylde valley. The river flows north into Longbridge Deverill at the lowest point of the parish, 116m. Westward the land rises gently across Lower Chalk deposits, beneath the towering spur of Bidcombe Hill, 284m. Upper Greensand extends along the northern boundary with Longbridge Deverill from Rye Hill Farm eastwards to the river valley underlying the village of Hill Deverill, and the lands of Baycliffe although Lower Chalk outcrops along its southern edge.

## Communications

A Roman road underlies a cart track down Brimsdown Hill in places, perhaps part of the route from Poole Harbour to Bath via Cold Kitchen Hill.<sup>11</sup> Hill Deverill village

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<sup>7</sup> OS Map, 6" Wilts. LVII (1889).

<sup>8</sup> TNA: PRO, CP 25/1/250/5 f. 14; Fry (ed.), *Feet of Fines 1195–1272*, p. 16.

<sup>9</sup> WSA, 1332/H1; *ibid.* TA/ Hill Deverill; OS Map, 6" Wilts. LVII (1889).

<sup>10</sup> This para. is based on Geol. Surv. Map 1", solid and drift, sheet 297 (1972).

<sup>11</sup> Wilts. Archaeology Service, SMR ST84SW302; *Hatcher Review*, 3:30 (1990), 480–7.

lies on no major road, but two important medieval or earlier routes pass close by.<sup>12</sup> The road from Warminster to Shaftesbury, turnpiked in 1765 and disturnpiked in 1870, a National Primary Route designated A350, crosses the parish on Pertwood Down.<sup>13</sup> The parish boundary north of Rye Hill farm followed an ancient route across Salisbury Plain into Somerset through Heytesbury and Maiden Bradley, which runs through Baycliffe; it was turnpiked in 1792–3 and disturnpiked in 1872.<sup>14</sup> A road from Brixton Deverill to Warminster also crossed the parish to the east of Broom Close;<sup>15</sup> and a downland track crossed Lords Hill in 1752 on its way from Kingston Deverill to Salisbury.<sup>16</sup> That section of the present valley road which crosses the parish, from a point north of the parish church to Brixton Deverill, was built by public subscription 1847–55. It replaced a causewayed track further east bordering the eastern edge of the churchyard, which had fallen out of use by 1808.<sup>17</sup> The valley road continued north to Longbridge Deverill on its present line from at least 1752.<sup>18</sup> Minor tracks and droveways linked the valley settlements to their arable fields and downland, including Lawrence’s Lane, which connected Hill Deverill Manor to Bidcombe, and provided access to Brixton Deverill across higher ground.<sup>19</sup>

### Early Settlement

There was Neolithic and Early Bronze Age settlement on Little Down in the south-east of the parish,<sup>20</sup> near an extensive prehistoric field system.<sup>21</sup> Gunschurch, a prominent landmark close to the Shaftesbury road, is an unusually large Bronze Age

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<sup>12</sup> WAM, XXVIII (1894–5), 249.

<sup>13</sup> VCH Wilts. IV, 267–8.

<sup>14</sup> VCH Wilts. IV, 263, 271.

<sup>15</sup> Above, Brixton Deverill: communications.

<sup>16</sup> WSA, 1332/H1.

<sup>17</sup> Above, Brixton Deverill: communications.

<sup>18</sup> WSA, 1332/H1.

<sup>19</sup> WAM, XXVIII (1894–5), 249.

<sup>20</sup> WAM, LXXXVIII (1995), 37–42.

<sup>21</sup> Wilts. Archaeology Service, SMR ST83NE644, ST83NE639, ST83NE657, ST83NE684–85.

bell barrow;<sup>22</sup> four other barrows on these downs survive only as ploughed ring ditches and soilmarks.<sup>23</sup> West of the river a possible Bronze Age barrow cemetery, surviving as ploughed ring ditches, lies below Brims Down.<sup>24</sup> Roman building material and pottery was said by Colt Hoare to come from the medieval earthworks near the parish church, suggesting a Romano-British settlement underlay the later village.<sup>25</sup>

## Population

In 1086 Hill Deverill had a large population: a total of five families of serfs farmed the demesne land of the three principal manors, and there were also one family of villeins, five families of bordars, and 34 families of cosce; at Baycliffe there were a further ten families of bordars, making 55 households altogether.<sup>26</sup> Twenty-four households were wealthy enough to be taxed in 1332,<sup>27</sup> and 63 adults paid poll tax in 1377.<sup>28</sup> In 1603 there were *c.* 50 households living in Hill Deverill.<sup>29</sup> In 1801, the population of Hill Deverill was 146, gradually declining to 118 in 1841, rising to a peak of 149 in 1861, and numbering 136 in 1881. In 1884 Baycliffe (population 18 in 1891), was transferred to Horningsham parish. The population of Hill Deverill was 111 in 1891, which subsequently decreased to 74 in 1931. In 1934 the remainder of Hill Deverill parish was transferred to Longbridge Deverill.<sup>30</sup>

## Settlement

<sup>22</sup> *VCH Wilts. I(1)*, 210; *WAM*, L (1942–4), 293–4.

<sup>23</sup> Wilts. Archaeology Service, SMR ST83NE624, ST83NE628, ST83NE643, ST83NE688.

<sup>24</sup> Wilts. Archaeology Service SMR ST83NE656, ST83NE671–9

<sup>25</sup> Hoare, *Ancient Wilts.*, I, 49; *VCH, Wilts. I(1)*, 83; *WAM*, XXVIII (1894–5), 238.

<sup>26</sup> *VCH Wilts. II*, 136, 140, 155, 162, 167.

<sup>27</sup> Crowley (ed.), *Tax List 1332*, pp. 71–2.

<sup>28</sup> *VCH Wilts. V*, 308.

<sup>29</sup> A. Dyer and D. Palliser (eds.), *Diocesan Pop. Returns for 1563 and 1603* (Recs. of Econ. and Soc. Hist., NS 31, 2005), 479. See also WSA, D 5/28/3.

<sup>30</sup> *VCH Wilts. IV*, 346.

Several areas of medieval settlement grew up on different manors, all lying along the river valley apart from Baycliffe and Rye Hill. Village earthworks lie to the south and west of the church:<sup>31</sup> traces of ridge and furrow of a former open field extended to the churchyard and were overlain during the Middle Ages by dwellings within crofts arranged along a hollow way, part of Lawrence's Lane running from the river crossing near Hill Deverill Manor north-westwards up the hillside. Further crofts were built along the open field strips to the south and accessed from the hollow way. Subsequently a manor house with adjoining closes or garden features was constructed north of the hollow way. Perhaps as a consequence of inclosure *c.* 1600,<sup>32</sup> the settlement here was completely abandoned.<sup>33</sup> There are traces of abandoned medieval settlement near the present Hill Deverill Manor. Earlier stew ponds and watercourses serving a mill are still discernible, although obscured by a moated garden and other Tudor or later ornamental landscaping south of the house, and by the creation of water meadows and then watercress beds to the north.<sup>34</sup>

By the 18th century settlement was concentrated some 400 m. north of the parish church, as now, at the northern edge of the parish, spilling into Longbridge Deverill. Centred on the mill this area, known in 1752 as the Marsh,<sup>35</sup> was bordered by the mill race and river on the east and the valley road on the west. The settlement has no discernible pattern and may simply be the result of informal post-medieval colonization of common waste. A second area of informal settlement extended along the former valley road south of the church to Brixton Deverill, but had disappeared by 1817.<sup>36</sup> Cottages stood in the meadows here at Hobath, a name derived from the Biblical Rehobath, a place built away from a main settlement.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> C.R. Lewis, 'Hill Deverill Deserted Medieval Settlement' (RCHME survey, 1989) (copy in WSHC, Wilts. Archaeology Service, SMR, ST84SE454).

<sup>32</sup> *VCH Wilts, IV*, 46; below: *Econ. Hist.*

<sup>33</sup> *Andrews' and Drury's Map 1773*, pl. 4

<sup>34</sup> Lewis, 'Hill Deverill Deserted Medieval Settlement'.

<sup>35</sup> WSA, 1332/H1.

<sup>36</sup> OS Map, 1", XIV (1817).

<sup>37</sup> WAM, XXVIII (1894–5), 250; XXXIII (1903–4), 127; Genesis 24:22.

Baycliffe was a separate hamlet in 1086 with ten families of bordars living there.<sup>38</sup> It was later abandoned and in 1824 there were only two houses, a mansion belonging to Lord George Thynne, which had been partly dismantled and the stone reused to build the farm house on Maiden Bradley road, the other house in Baycliffe.<sup>39</sup>

### Built Character

The majority of the buildings in Hill Deverill are vernacular in character. They date from the later 18th century onwards and are characterised by construction in coursed rubblestone with brick quoins and flat gauged brick arches with keystones. The roof coverings are of thatch, some of which have been replaced by tile. Internal timberwork is in elm or later softwood. The uniform construction of many buildings suggests a wholesale upgrading of tenants' accommodation around the same date, probably Edward Adolphus Seymour (later Saint Maur), 11th duke of Somerset (d. 1855), who bought the manor in 1796.<sup>40</sup> These include two rows of late 18th-century cottages, nos 1–6 The Cottages, two-cell dwellings with a half-hipped forward-facing gable at either end, built re-using some old materials internally and altered when rear service ranges were added in the 20th century, and nos 9–12 Hill Deverill. No 6 is said to have been the miller's house.<sup>41</sup> Storeymead Cottage, no 18, is of the same construction, extended in the 20th century using old materials. Before 1926, three pairs of semi-detached houses were built on the west side of the road to Brixton Deverill opposite the church,<sup>42</sup> and a fourth pair was built by Warminster and Westbury Rural District Council in 1937.<sup>43</sup> Further north on the same side of the road

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<sup>38</sup> *VCH Wilts II*, 137.

<sup>39</sup> WSA, 861/12, and map 332/H5; Hoare, *Mod. Wilts*. Heytesbury, 32.

<sup>40</sup> See below, manors.

<sup>41</sup> WSA, G 12/760/297, 317.

<sup>42</sup> OS Map, 6", LVII NE (1926).

<sup>43</sup> WSA, G 12/760/205.

stands Stonewold, a fine example of a 20th-century detached bungalow built by John Hurd in 1960,<sup>44</sup> one of the few modern homes.

Only three buildings are listed and these are atypical. The first is Hill Deverill Manor, previously known as Manor Farm;<sup>45</sup> it is of pre-1500 construction built of random and dressed rubble under slate roofs with high-quality details of *c.* 1700. The second, Chantry Cottage, dating from *c.* 1500,<sup>46</sup> has a porch of flint and stone chequerwork, a characteristic feature of earlier buildings along the Wylde valley and the southern margins of Salisbury plain, but the only example in Hill Deverill. It is also of rubblestone with dressed stone quoins, an earlier feature than the use of brick quoins. An unlisted example of this type of early construction is Buckle Cottage, No 15, which is said to contain timber framing. The third listed building, the 18th-century barn adjoining Manor House, with a rubble and dressed stone buttressed plinth and weatherboarded upper walls is the only noted example of this construction.<sup>47</sup> Now converted to a dwelling is the former parish church of 1843 by Chapman and Sons in dressed limestone under a Welsh slate roof.

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<sup>44</sup> Longbridge Deverill Social History Group, *Longbridge Deverill Parish Memories* (2008), 110; inf. from Mr J. Hurd, 2009.

<sup>45</sup> DOE, 'Bldgs List', Hill Deverill, 124; Pevsner, *Wilts.* (2nd edn), 270.

<sup>46</sup> DOE, 'Bldgs List', Hill Deverill, 126; Pevsner, *Wilts.* (2nd edn), 270.

<sup>47</sup> DOE, 'Bldgs List', Hill Deverill, 125; Pevsner, *Wilts.* (2nd edn), 270.