

DEWDON MANOR

Introduction.

This revises and expands my previous notes (of 3rd & 10th Dec. 2006) by drawing on significantly more information, particularly that in Mrs. C. D. Lineham's published work in the Transactions of the Devonshire Association.

Dave Dingley Jan. 2007.

References.

Lyson brothers (*writing in the early 1800s*): "Deandon, in Widecombe parish, gave its name to an ancient family, from whom it passed by female heirs to the Malets in the reign of H.III. Sir John Malet K.B. sold it about 1600. In 1748 Rawline Mallock, Esq. purchased the royalty of Dutton – no doubt corrupted from Deandon – Malet, and Dunsdon, in this parish, which royalty is now the property of Rev. Roger Mallock of Cockington." *A good early summary!*

[M] : Mallock *Cockington before the restoration*. Late 19th C.

[L] : Lineham *TDA 94 "A forgotten manor in Widecombe-in-the-Moor"*. 1962.

[L2] : Lineham in *TDA 95*.

[P] : Postan *Medieval economy and society*.

[N] : A. Malet. 1885: *Notes for "Sir John Malet/Sibylla de Ct Cleere"*, extracted from Bob's Mallett's website (*See Appendix I below for a translation & App. II for a commentary*).

[T] : *Testa de Nevil, AD 1244* (ex Reichel's "Hundred of Haytor" in *TDA 40*).

[F] : *Feudal Aids, AD 1284-86*.

[H] : Hoskins *Old Devon*.

DB = Domesday Book.

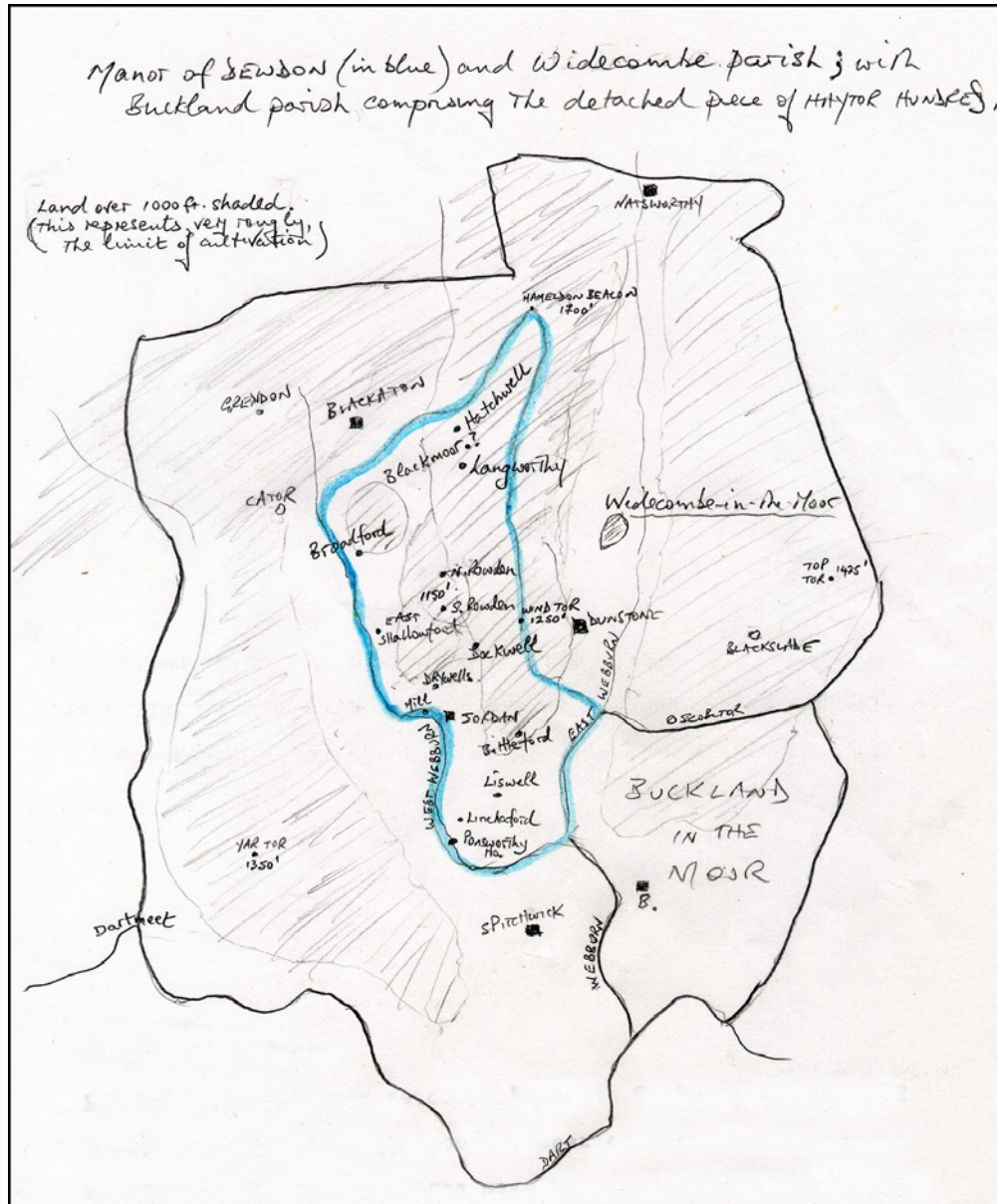
Extent and origin.

Domesday makes it clear that a 1-virgate holding existed as a sub-manor of Cockington, stuck right away from the parent manor upon the fringe of the Moor. My previous notes outlined how this small piece of colonisation may have been as a result of pioneer peasants working under encouragement from their lord due to an increasing hunger for land. Furthermore, throughout history, the practice of transhumance has been used by farmers just beyond the Moor's fringe: Mallock, who was himself a farmer with two farms, one of which was on the Moor, refers to the advantages of such a practice [M]. Sheep farming was highly profitable in late- and post-medieval times, and the Moor yielded ample (if rough) summer grazing. Widecombe parish, with Buckland, formed an appendage of Haytor hundred that was separated from the bulk nearer the coast, and this moorland satellite may have developed as a deliberate ploy to provide Haytor hundred manors with extra pastoral access for the summer months.

Historic assessments of acreage must be treated with care. The hide of Domesday Book has traditionally been regarded as amounting to 120 acres – or, more pertinently, 120 *arable* acres. On this basis the virgate represented 30 acres, though 19th & early 20th C researchers tended to allot larger values (Lineham has 1 virgate = 64 acres [L]). Experts now tend to see the virgate as equivalent to 25 – 30 arable acres [P]. But the hidage values in DB cannot be trusted to give a real indication of late-11th C arable extents. By 1066 a manor's hidage was no more than a rateable value, and one which had become devalued over a long time (as often happens to RVs). On the other hand, medieval references to hides & virgates may well have reflected a better alignment to real-life acreages. An additional problem, exemplified by the AD1288 "extent" of John Malett [N], is how we should relate quoted medieval acreages to modern ones. Even allowing that the medieval acre was equivalent to the modern measure (which it probably

wasn't, exactly) I know from my own experiences using tithe survey data that landowners were often wildly out in their assessments of acreages. So it's difficult to know whether the quoted 96 (arable) acres of John Malett's estate is a totally reliable figure: as it stands, it would have represented c.8% of the manor¹ as being under the plough, even though by this time we would have expected it to have been rather more. A quick glance at the modern map indicates, very roughly, that two-thirds of the manor's lands have been cleared of vegetation, rocks, etc., and enclosed (either for arable, or managed grazing, or some of both), and the post-medieval situation was probably quite similar: relatively little extensive land clearance seems to have taken place on the Moor in modern times.

The extent of Dewdon manor is reckoned to have been a little over 1200 acres [L + footnote 1]. It occupied the eastern side of the valley of the West Webburn river (see my sketch map below),



¹ Note that in [L] the manorial extent in medieval times is taken to be exactly that of the 1843 tithe survey, and the manorial tenements exactly those of 17th & 18th C lists, and also of 1843. This is a reasonable approximation, and an inevitable one, given the absence of any earlier data, but an approximation it still is.

its width extending from the river to the Moor ridge $\frac{3}{4}$ mile away, and its length running from Liswell Meet (confluence of the West & East Webburns) to Hambledon Beacon some $2\frac{1}{2}$ miles to the north. It's quite a large manor, even though around one-third was always rough grazing on the waste, over 1000 feet up.

Lords of the manor.

In 1086 the tenant-in-chief² was William de Falaise. Dewdon isn't mentioned in "Book of Fees" [T] of the mid-13th C, though the $\frac{1}{4}$ knight's fee of Widecombe³ is recorded, apparently being an amalgamation of Dunston and Blackeslac (*Blackslade*). In around 1285 [F] all the manors are recorded (incl. Widecombe, Spichwik etc), though Dewdon is merely assumed in the entry for Cockington (*Roger de Cockington holds Cockington of William Martin for one Knight's Fee, William holding of the King*).

We know [N] that Dewdon became a Mallet holding when Sir Baldwyn Mallet married an heiress of Sir Hamelyn de Deandon in 1272; the controlling barony was held of the St. Amando family at that time. Although the Mallets may have lost the holding at some stage in the 14th C [L], they were generally in possession, and indeed weren't entirely absentee landlords: they visited on occasions, even obtaining ecclesiastical permission to celebrate mass at Deandon in their oratory⁴ [L]. The manor was sold in 1602 [L; plus many other sources] by John Mallet of Enmore to a number of local landowners and farmers. Thus it appears to have been an Enmore Mallet holding for perhaps three centuries.

Jordan, as the manor's name, is seen for the first time in the records in 1545 [L].

Throughout, Dewdon was attached to the manor of Cockington. Much 18th C court baron material for Dewdon is preserved in the old Cockington court records: the last court of Dotten Mallet was held in 1803 [L] when Roger Mallock was lord. After that manorial authority faded away, as modern local administration took over from the court baron and the court leet, though interestingly the 19th C Widecombe parish rate books still preserved the name "Dudon Quarter", i.e. that section of the parish that the manor had comprised [L].

Component parts.

The tenements existing in the 17th & 18th centuries [L] are listed below, from the north: Hatchwell; Langworth; Broadaford; East Shallowford; Rowden; Dockwell; Drywells; Jordan (i.e. Dewdon); Bittleford; Liswell; Linchaford; Ponsworthy House. Most of these exist still as hill farms. The tenement of Blackmoor seems to have survived until the late 16th C and there are certainly a few other abandoned sites that would have formed part of the manor.

² That is, the holder (usually a baron) directly under the king.

³ Widecombe isn't mentioned in DB; it's a later (12th C?) manor that assumed importance as the village became a centre of population locally.

⁴ Usually part of a house set up and licensed as a place of worship – a common enough practice in isolated houses in rural Devon.

The site of Hotholes or Hutholes had been identified [L2] as South Rowden *before* the 1962 excavations started, so I think it strange that the National Park Authority's information board at the site identifies Hutholes as Dewdon (and infers it's the site of the manor house too). This ID perplexed me from the start of my interest in Dewdon, since the settlement uncovered seemed so obviously that of pioneer peasants farming – at over 1000 feet – at the edge of the waste. It seemed that the lord's demesne (home-farm), where any manor house would be sited, must surely be at some more favourable agricultural site.

The demesne farm and the villain farms.

Every medieval manor originally had a demesne, or home-farm. This was the part of the manor set aside for the lord's own support. Under the feudal system the villeins (farmers/peasants) worked on the lord's demesne as & when required, in return for which service⁵ the lord allotted them each a portion of land to support themselves & their families (perhaps around 10+ arable acres, though it would have varied widely). Such villeins were unfree, and could not move away without their lord's permission. Many manors also had a lesser number of free tenants who held of the lord under socage (by rent, with few or no feudal services entailed). Another form of holding was by knight service, the requirement to bear arms for the king (on behalf of the lord), though by the 13th C this had been commuted to just another form of rent.

Lineham has no doubt that the Dewdon demesne farm was situated at Jordan, a judgement with which I easily concur. This farmstead is 250 feet lower down, in the Webburn valley, than Hutholes (S. Rowden), on the side of the river. This assessment was helped by her access to a more detailed version of [N] than I had recourse to, one in which the extent of the abbot's demesne is given (*see appendix I & II for the translation of the document, plus its interpretation*). The demesne is recorded as being of 1½ (arable) ferlings⁶, making it nominally around 10 acres. It was held under knight service, rendering a pair of white gloves(!) yearly to the abbot. It included a messuage⁷ and a water mill, the whole lot amounting to 37/6 in rent, which was getting on for the sum of the rentals of the manor, so it was obviously valuable property.

Jordan as a name is first discovered in the records in 1545 (as "Gordon"); the deeds of the present mill, dating from 1603, have it as "Jordan"; and in the late 18th C both names were used: "Dewdon Mills, otherwise Jordan Mills" [L]. The manor house is close by, though considerably altered structurally. [*See Appendix III for more details of the existing dwelling*]

Neighbouring manors.

Domesday Book tells us that Dewdon was a sub-manor under Cockington manor's jurisdiction, part of the barony of Dartington (which was controlled by the Martin family in the 12th & 13th Cs). The archives of 1284 [F] confirm this, recording that Roger de Cockington held it of William Martin as 1 Knight's Fee: Dewdon itself isn't mentioned in the early medieval surveys. Cockington archives of the 18th C have a considerable amount of material relating to both manors [L].

⁵ These feudal services were in effect the villeins' rentals: over the course of time they gradually became commuted to money rents.

⁶ A ferling was a quarter of a virgate.

⁷ Dwelling + outbuildings (presumably the manor house).

Dewdon manor was adjacent to others in the large parish of Widecombe-in-the-Moor, namely: Widecombe Town; Natsworthy (in the north, an old, and tiny Domesday manor); Blagdon (presumably Blackaton, to the north & west of Dewdon); Dunstone (another tiny Domesday manor); Scobitor (a very tiny estate mentioned in DB); and Spitchwick, in the south (yet another Domesday manor, though much larger than the others).

Manorial economy.

In the 16th C Dewdon Mills comprised a tucking mill and a grist mill [L], indicating a mixed economy that was both self-sufficient for food and was taking advantage of the lucrative woollen trade at that time [H]. In Domesday times, however, the economy would have basically been of subsistence type, plus perhaps a little excess for sale at local markets. A peasant household then was reckoned to require around ½-virgate (12-15 acres) to live on [P], thus the manor's component farms would possibly have each had this acreage under plough at the Conquest, increasing somewhat through the 12th and 13th centuries. The illustrations of Hutholes⁸ are, as mentioned above, the remains of one of these peasant farms (ID'd as S.Rowden in [L]). In fact, "Rowden" translates from the Saxon as *rough hill*, probably giving a very good idea as how the Saxon pioneers viewed the terrain.

A mixed economy of basic arable activity supporting communities with sheep flocks grazing the extensive moorlands would have been the norm in the medieval and post-medieval periods. Later times saw a gradual retreat from the Moor, with a decline in the number of viable farms, a process that still continues.

Bob raised the interesting question of mineral exploitation in the past, and there's a short account by H. French on geology and mining at Dewdon at the end of [L]. It notes that old stream-tin workings occur in the valley west of Jordan for a mile or so; these may have been as a result of the authorisation to dig, given by Chagford stannary court, in 1759. However, whether tin was mined in Mallet times isn't known, though it seems that tin working began on the Moor in the 12th C, if not before [H].

The name.

Never, as an amateur place-name enthusiast, have I seen such a collection of different spellings for a simple 2-element name. Lineham lists 2 dozen different forms of "Dewdon", and I can supply a half-dozen more. Many of these are doubtless the results of spelling inconsistencies in earlier ages, though some do suggest a basic difference in pronunciation (e.g. Dewdon/Jordan and Doton/Dotton), presumably the result of either a "hard" *d* or a palatised one (as in our word *dew*)⁹. And Deandon would have articulated as spelt, even though it must surely have originated as a consequence of a misspelling (*dean-* for *deau-*).

⁸ Those that I showed in Dec 2006.

⁹ Devonians are in the habit of avoiding a palatised "d" and "b", the latter heard most noticeably in the pronunciation of the seaside resort of Bude ("bood").

APPENDIX I

My translation¹⁰ of the IPM of John Malet of Deandon, A.D. 1288.

John Malet has held 96 acres of land, 14 acres meadow, a certain amount of waste, rent 14/6 from free tenants and 37/6 annual rent from villeins, in Deandon, of the heir of Almaric de St.

Amando, by soccage, returning to the said heir 15/- for all [feudal] services¹¹.

The same has held of John of Grendon 5/- annual rental in Grendon by soccage, returning in respect of this 18/- for all services.

The same has held of Michael de Spitchwick a 2/- annual rental from one free tenant in Cator, and 19/- annual rentals from the villeins in Cator and [West] Shallowford, held of the said Michael by military service (*though the liability value of this Knight's Fee¹² isn't recorded*).

The same has held certain lands & tenements in Deandon of the abbot of Buckfastleigh by military service (*liability value unrecorded*).

Baldwin is the son and heir of the said John Malet, and is 4 years old.

[Dated the]16th year [of the reign of] Edward I.

Additional.

Mrs Lineham's article coincidentally contains a translation of a very similar IPM, one in which there is extra detail that fills in the gaps in the above document.

Thus it most usefully shows that the "certain lands" held of the abbot were in fact 1½ ferlings¹³ in demesne, with villeins renting at 39/6 (including a water mill), and that the Knight's service render was a pair of white gloves annually. Such a rental for a small area of land shows that it was the best land (as would be expected of demesne) and of course contained, in addition to a manor house, a valuable mill, the use of which by the manor's villeins & peasants was probably compulsory (and thus a lucrative source of income for the Malets).

The translation also specifies the Knight's service commutation payable to Michael de Spitchwick as 7/2. [The nominal scutage ("tax") for one K.F was £1 for most of the early Middle Ages. Either Michael d.S. held a fraction of a fee (very common), or he hadn't leased his entire fee to Malet.]

Although Mrs Lineham didn't pursue the matter of original land ownership, the fact that the abbey in 1288 still held the Dewdon demesne – or at least some of it: I suspect part had been already sold off, since the quoted amount seems a little too small for an original demesne – strongly suggests that it would originally have held the whole manor. We know rather little about ownership¹⁴ from post-Conquest times until the de Deandon lords of the 13th C, a gap of some 200 years; possibly the abbot obtained the manor from the king or the Martin family (*refer to footnote 14 below*), then sold the bulk to local farmers, though retaining the valuable mill plus the land around it.

¹⁰ This is my translation of the Latin found on Bob's website under *Notes for Sir John Malet/Sibylla de St Cleere*.

¹¹ i.e. these services had been commuted.

¹² Almost certainly a partial K.F.

¹³ A ferling was a ¼ virgate.

¹⁴ See "Lords of the manor" above.

APPENDIX II

My commentary on the information got from DB and Lineham.

What DB calls manors in Devon covers estates of vastly differing sizes and values. They range, for example, from Winkleigh, worth £40, paying tax for 5½ hides, and inhabited by 50 villeins, with 40 ploughs (which probably represented 40 separate farms), to what were effectively single-farmstead estates like Scobitor in Widecombe, worth only a few shillings, and of less than one virgate taxable rate. Slightly larger holdings like Blackslade in Widecombe, with 3 inhabitants, 1 plough and worth 3/-, together with Dunstone and Natsworthy in the same parish, were probably typical of small holdings on the fringe of the Moor. DB doesn't tell us much about Dewdon, though it would have been similar to its neighbours, all tiny estates on marginal land – it wasn't surprising that many were swallowed up by larger manors by 1086.

It is most important to realise that DB gives no reliable measure of the acreage of estates¹⁵ – the hidage is quite unreliable, being by that time merely a rateable value (though a hide had probably represented 120 arable acres originally). So the “extent” of 1288 (App. I) is the first indication we have of the size of the manor of Dewdon. We see that it had 96 acres of land – these would have referred to arable acres – and 14 acres of meadow (more valuable than arable), plus an unspecified amount of waste (i.e. the open moor). It seems likely that there were some dozen farmsteads within the manor, each averaging around 100 acres in total size (possibly containing a dozen or two acres of arable), including a few acres of meadow for the more fortunate farmers. The meadow acres would have lain beside the river, between Ponsworthy and Broadford, and these 2 holdings, with Dewdon and E. Shallowford, would have benefited the most. All the tenements of course would have had access to a large extent of upland rough grazing for sheep, much of that probably held in common (and with Cockington farmers too in the summer). John Malet's IPM shows that he also held tenements at W. Shallowford, Cator & Grendon just over the western border of his manor.

My sketch map gives a rough idea of which farms were settled first: these would have been those bordering the streams, with the meadow lands, and the best shelter. Thus Dewdon, Dunstone, Widecombe, Buckland & Spitchwick, all in the river valleys, would have been colonised first in Saxon times. The outlying farms, those on higher ground, would have been colonised later (though some will have been pre-Conquest in origin), and abandoned first – Rowden (Hutholes), Clackslade and Blackmoor fall into this category: they're on the highest land. The map also allows a guess that Spitchwick was the largest and most prosperous manor in the Haytor sub-hundred, lying as it did in a large area of lower land beside the Webburn. And this was indeed so. It had a taxable value of 1 hide, land for 8 ploughs (quite a lot), with 17 farmers, and was worth £3 in 1086 (6-times the value of Dewdon).

The boundaries of Dewdon manor are of interest. For one-half of its perimeter the boundary follows dominant streams in the area on the SE, S, W & NW, and for the other half it follows the ridge of high ground to the east very accurately. It can thus be seen that Dewdon effectively occupies “half” of a valley, allowing its farmers access to riverside meadows & arable, plus a share of moorland grazing. In fact, the local north-south valleys in the neighbourhood generally provided the local manors with such “half-and-half” land. Thus Widecombe & Dunstone share the E. Webburn valley with Blackslade, while the other half of Dewdon's valley (of the W. Webburn) was occupied by Spitchwick (which in addition shared the Webburn valley proper

¹⁵ See “Extent & Origin”.

with Buckland to the east). However, the land well to the west of Dewdon lay quite unsettled in Saxon times, its elevation being too extreme, and its river valleys being too deep & narrow, to be worth colonising: indeed, most of it wasn't farmed in later times either. A map of Domesday Dartmoor indicates quite clearly that Dewdon was about the most remote manor in the whole of the Forest of Dartmoor.

APPENDIX III

Listing details (from English Heritage).

Grade II

1st listed 1955

SX 77 NW 2/77

Photographed 2001



WIDECOMBE-IN- THE-MOOR Jordan Manor

Farmhouse, believed to be a former Longhouse. Early C17, with later additions. Granite rubble. Thatched roof, hipped at left-hand end. Small rendered chimneystack on centre of ridge and another on right-hand gable.

Present plan has cross-passage (with blocked door at rear end); one long room (formerly 2 rooms) to right and another long room (believed to have been the shippon) to left. Added rear wing to right. 2 storeys. 7-window front. C19 wood casement windows with glazing- bars. Upper-storey windows have chamfered and stopped wood lintels; the 2 right- hand ground-storey windows have C19 segmental arches of red brick. Single-storeyed stone entrance-porch with thatched pent-roof and segmental-arched stone lintel; stone seat inside and 7-panelled C19 door, the 3 lowest panels flush. To right of porch a small rectangular stair turret, probably a later addition. To right of stair turret a 1769 datestone. To left of porch a granite dog-kennel with iron hinges and catch for a door; kennel has a flat slab of stone for a roof, supported by a similar slab on the left and 2 stone uprights on the right.

Interior: hall fireplace, backing on to through-passage, has chamfered wood lintel. Upper-floor beam next to it is double ovolo-moulded and has scrollstops with bar. 2 other beams beyond it are chamfered with scroll-stops. No structural evidence of a former partition. C18 or early C19 roof-timbers.

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Finally, it's worth mentioning that the area around Jordan is highly picturesque, with many rights of way, including a footpath from the manor house along the stream to the mill, and also access to the Hutholes site up on the Moor.