

THE A 3052 – A ROAD THROUGH TIME

by John Torrance, Spring 2008

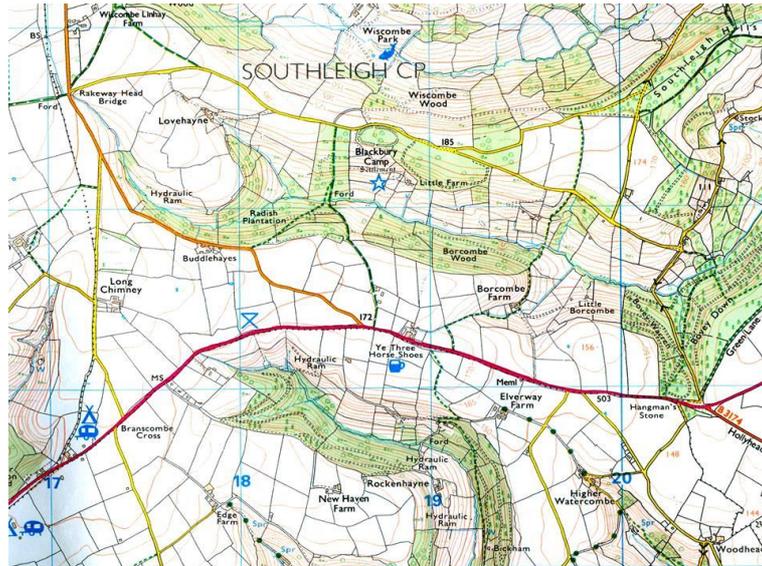
Drawings by Cory Lyons



My subject tonight is the A 3052 north of Branscombe.



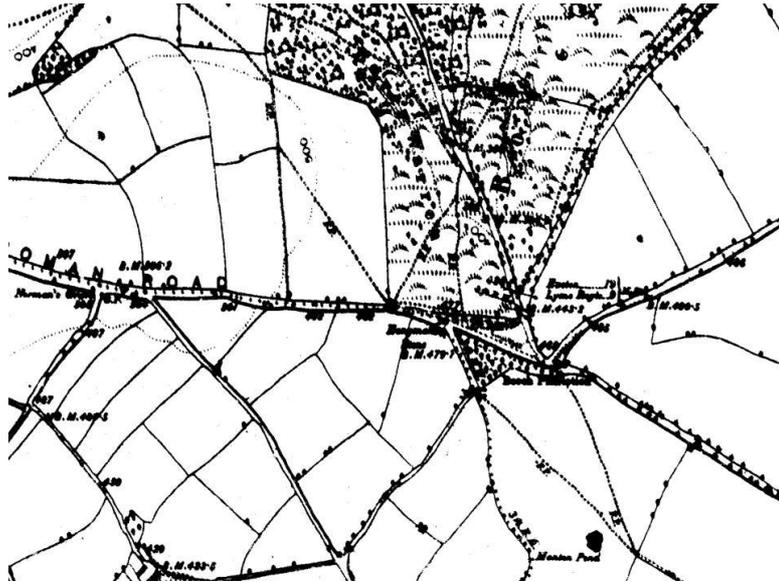
Just an ordinary stretch of road, from the Hangman's Stone (east) to Kingsdown Tail (west).



But even an apparently ordinary stretch of road, followed back through time, may tell a fascinating story.

The map shows it's not quite ordinary. It's a ridgeway, like many roads in East Devon, running on a stretch of the high level clay plateau between deep, wooded, marshy valleys. Likewise the road which leads off northwards to Ottery and Honiton, the B 3174. These ridgeways have been trackways for thousands of years: the A 3052 is only the latest version of a stretch of south-coast highway which for most of its existence was a wide straggling ribbon of ruts and hoofprints.

Let's start a journey back in time with an event within living memory. The 1890 OS map shows a sharp bend where the Beer road joins A 3052 just east of the Hangman's Stone.



The bend was smoothed out about 1960, leaving an enclosure where the Council stores grit. At the back, where the bend was, is an oak tree with a big slab of bark missing.



In May 1944 a truckload of American soldiers, somewhat the worse for drink, smashed into the tree, and a jeep with more GIs smashed into the truck.

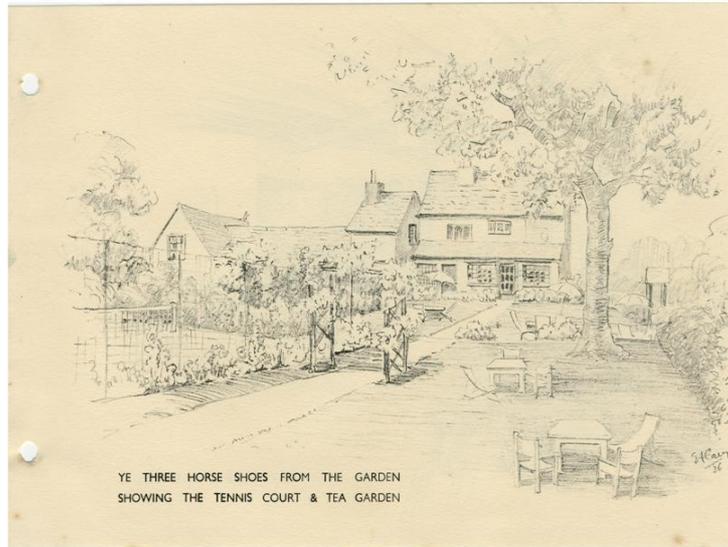
David Seward of Northleigh, arriving next day for an army cadet exercise, saw the mangled vehicles and a lot of blood. No one was killed; indeed, because of their injuries some were saved from the D-day landings the next month, June 1944, which may have saved their lives.



The 3 Horseshoes is the central landmark on this stretch of road, and until water-mains were laid after 1900 the only building along it, except for a smithy nearby.



Its heyday was in the 1930s when this brochure for hotel holidays (belonging to Lyn Cattlin) was published:



Ye Three Horse Shoes.

THIS old-world Hotel stands in its own grounds of 50 acres, amid beautiful surroundings, in a fine healthy position (600 feet above sea level) with glorious views of the sea and surrounding country, and is situated on the main Exeter—Lyme Regis road (South Coast Route) within thirty minutes walk of the Sea at Branscombe, where excellent Boating, Fishing and Bathing can be enjoyed. The situation will be found an ideal spot from which to explore South-East Devon.

The Hotel is fitted with Electric Light, 2 Bathrooms (H. & C.), Constant Hot Water Supply and Modern Sanitation.

FREE HOUSE. FULLY LICENSED. LOCK-UP GARAGES.

LETTING BEDROOMS—7 DOUBLE, 6 SINGLE. (6 Fitted with H. & C. Water).

REAL HOME COMFORTS AND GENEROUS COUNTRY FARE.
VISITORS WELCOMED ALL THE YEAR ROUND.
OPEN TO NON-RESIDENTS.

LUNCHEONS.	TEAS.	DINNERS.	CAR PARK.
LARGE GARDEN.	RECREATION ROOM.	PARTIES CATERED FOR.	TENNIS COURT.

Parish Church at Branscombe. | Golf at Seaton,
Roman Catholic Church at Seaton. | Sidmouth and Honiton.
Hunting with the Axe Vale and East Devon Foxhounds.
Good "Bus Services pass the Hotel.

A.A. and R.A.C. appointed.
Member of the Hotels and Restaurants Association.

The landlord, Mr Heathcoat-Payne, was a follower of Oswald Mosley, who is said to have stayed there to meet the local Fascist organiser, Rafe Temple-Cotton of Branscombe. The Blackshirts once held a public meeting there but made few if any converts.

Going eastwards, you pass this roadside memorial: has anyone read it?



Here he is:

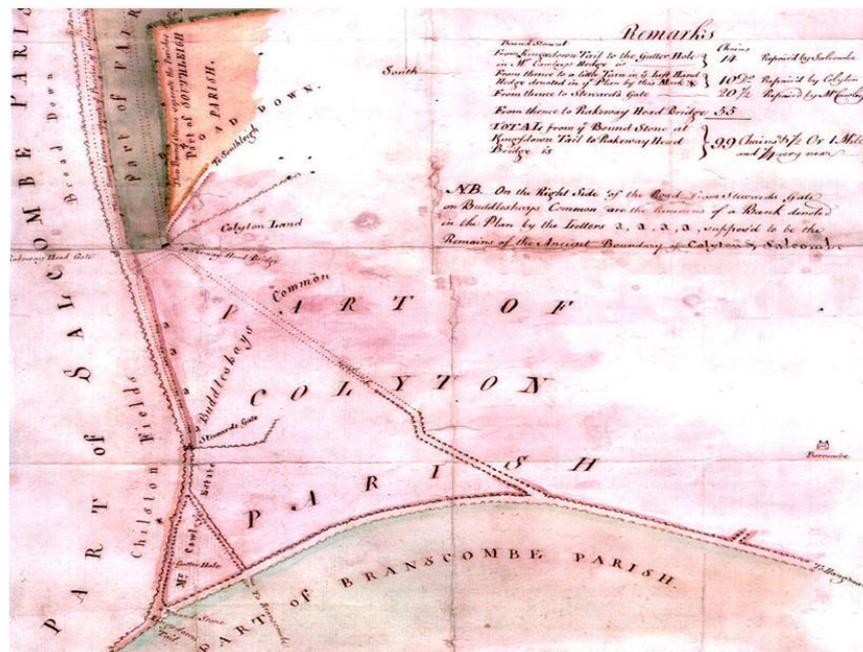


REPLACEMENT OF ALL THE PLAQUES
WAS NECESSARY IN 1981 DUE TO
THE THEFT OF THE ORIGINALS.

A case of *Napoli* syndrome.

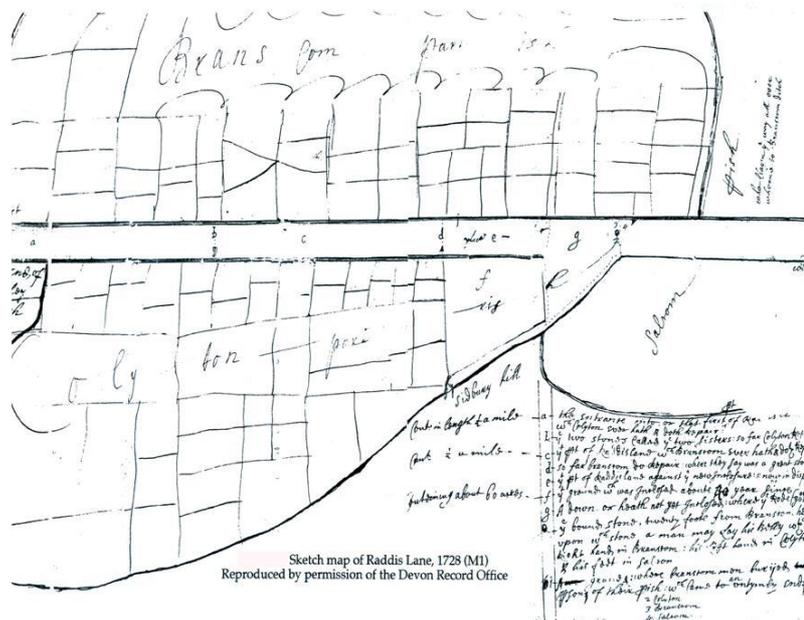
The 3 Horseshoes was built c. 1830, as a coaching inn, supplying horses and refreshment, after the roads from Lyme Regis to Sidmouth, and from Ottery and Honiton, had become turnpikes – that is, toll roads, built and maintained by a Turnpike Trust in Lyme Regis. The Tunpike Trust was set up 70 years earlier after a

petition to Parliament in 1757, saying that East Devon highways were 'IN A RUINOUS CONDITION, NARROW IN MANY PLACES, AND VERY STEEP AND UNEVEN, AND, BY REASON OF THE WATERS IN THE WINTER SEASON, UNPASSABLE AT DIVERS PLACES, AND VERY DANGEROUS TO TRAVELLERS, AND CANNOT BE EFFECTUALLY REPAIRED, WIDENED, AND KEPT IN GOOD REPAIR, BY THE PRESENT METHODS PRESCRIBED BY LAW'. It asked for a 'BILL FOR EFFECTUALLY REPAIRING, WIDENING, LEVELLING, AND KEEPING IN GOOD REPAIR, AND MAKING THE SAID ROADS PASSABLE AT ALL TIMES AND SEASONS'.



This map from the 1770s or 1790s shows the new turnpike road from Honiton joining the Lyme Regis turnpike where the B 3174 joins the A 3152 now, near the site of the 3 Horseshoes. It also shows the 'old road to Honiton' from Branscombe Cross. Turnpikes became general in the 1700s and early 1800s – they ushered in the great age of coach travel: stage coaches and mail coaches competed for record times to and from London. So why was the 3 Horseshoes only built 70 years after turnpike? Probably lack of a water supply. The hydraulic ram was invented by the French balloonist Montgolfier in 1796, but it was only in 1822 that James Easton, a Taunton man, started to make them commercially in England. The 3 Horseshoes drew water by this means from the stream behind.

Before turnpikes, public highways were maintained by the parishes they passed through. The parishes weren't keen on this, so roads became notoriously bad. Also, since highways like this were often very old, older than parishes, they often formed parish boundaries, and the parishes each side had to share the repairing. Hence there were disputes. In Devon Record Office are the minutes of a meeting between parishes to settle one such dispute about this stretch of road, in 1728. Here is a sketch map drawn for the occasion.

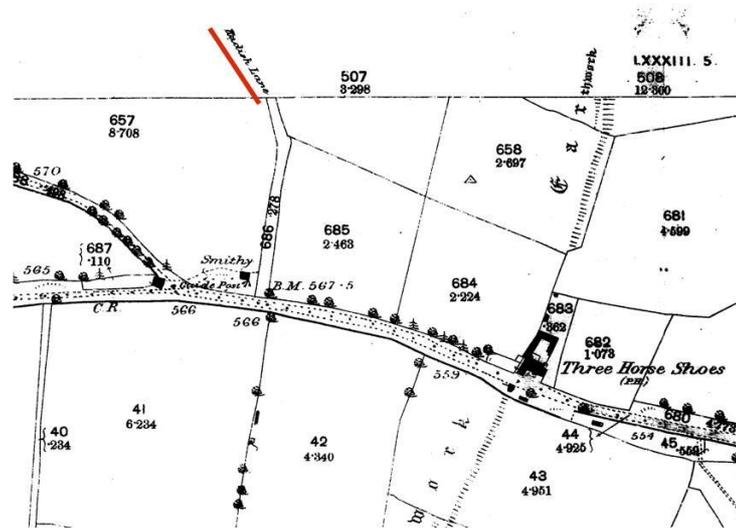


Three things to note:

1. The road is straightened out, and north is at bottom — so it was drawn from the north side of the road, looking south towards Branscombe.
2. The area north of the road, now part of Southleigh parish, was then — and had been for centuries — part of Colyton. So the map was drawn from the Colyton side, a Colyton map. Colyton, Branscombe and Salcombe Regis were the three parishes at the meeting, represented by their chief landowners.
3. On the map and in documents with it, this stretch of road is called RADDIS LANE. A very old, interesting name, as we shall see.

After the turnpike, the name Raddis Lane was not used for this stretch of it, but the name Radish Lane survived for a track

that runs past 3 Horseshoes Farm and across to Blackbury Camp. Radish Plantation nearby was named after it.



The 1728 map shows fields on either side of Raddis Lane, with boundaries much as they are now – most probably enclosed for 200 years. So the road ran between hedges on both sides. The documents mention 'the Branscombe hedge' and 'the Branscombe ditch'.

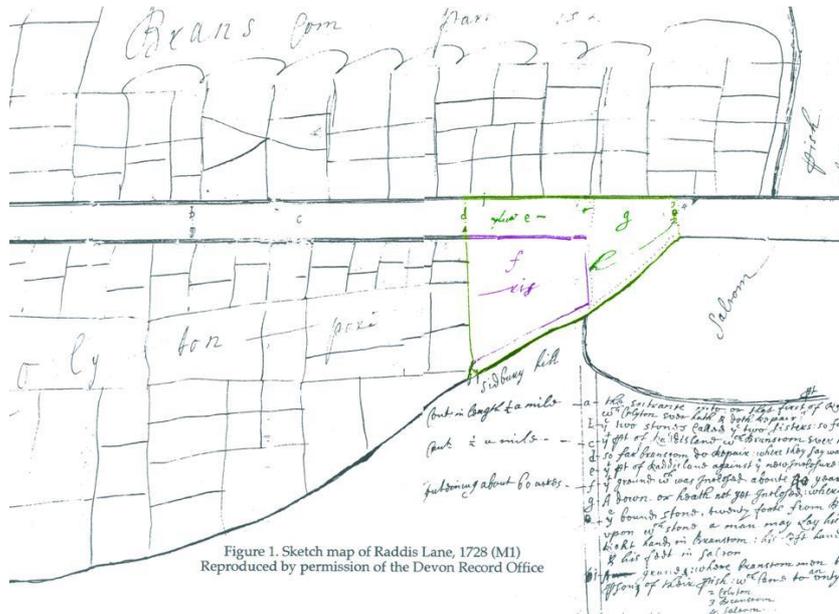
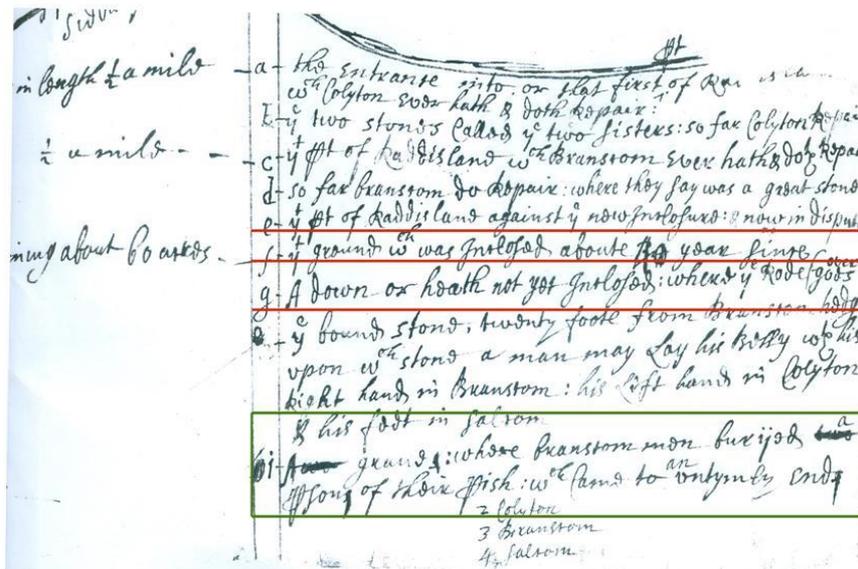


Figure 1. Sketch map of Raddis Lane, 1728 (M1)
 Reproduced by permission of the Devon Record Office

One reason for the 1728 dispute was the progressive enclosure of what was still left unenclosed: Kingsdown Common, at the western end (purple). By the 1700s the remaining areas of old common land everywhere were gradually being enclosed, hedged, drained and improved for agriculture. The old road from Ottery and Honiton divided across Kingsdown Common, one branch going to Branscombe Cross and Bulstone, as now, and the other to Kingsdown Tail and Trow – that’s now a green lane behind the caravan site. Here is the small writing from the map:



The enclosures are indicated: 'YE PART OF RADDIS LANE AGAINST YE NEW INCLOSURES AND NOW IN DISPUTE' 'YE GROUNDS WHICH WAS

INCLOSED ABOUTE 40 YEAR SINCE' and 'A DOWN OR HEATH NOT YET INCLOSED WHERE YE RODE GOES OVER'. At the meeting, the parish bigwigs offloaded some of their roadmending duties on to the encloser, John Woolcott of Sidbury, who rented Kingsdown Farm, now called Long Chimney.

The documents described the road as 'founderous', and furze was cut beside the ditches. A local waywarden had ordered digging to 'find out a bottom road' but with no success. 50 years earlier, in 1681, the road was so impassable that a magistrate had ordered gaps to be made in the Colyton hedge to let travellers detour through the fields.

Another note on the map says: 'GROUND WHERE BRANSCOM MEN BURYED A PERSON OF THEIR PARISH WHO CAME TO AN UNTYMELY END'. The documents add that this was 'ABOUT 50 YEARS AGO'. He was called May, and committed suicide.



Suicide was then a crime as well as a sin. Since suicides were not allowed a Christian churchyard burial, they were often buried at crossroads, but in this case the Branscombe men seem merely to have placed May and his ghost outside their parish.



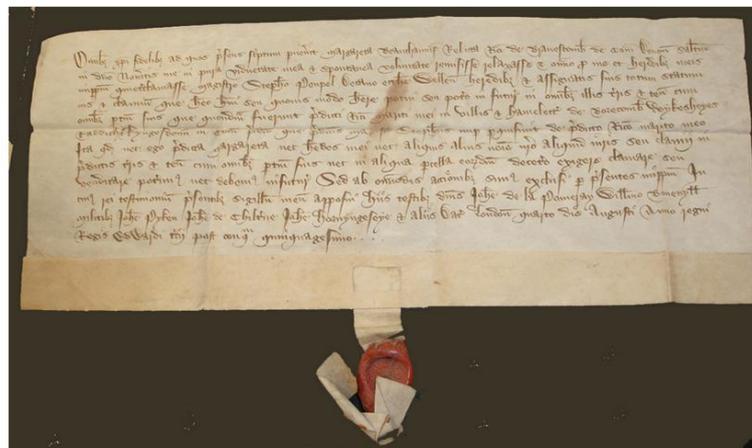
This is the lay-by where the lane from the village hall joins the A 3152, which has been called Norman's Grave on maps since at least 1890. But why? Another suicide burial?

Why was this stretch of highway called 'Raddis Lane' in 1728? A clue turns up 150 years earlier, in the reign of Henry VIII. In 1546 Henry granted many farms and small estates in Colyton manor to about 100 named tradesmen and farmers of Colyton, for £1,000 which they had collected between them. A Chamber of Feoffees, drawn from among them, was to act as trustees for the manor. Among the subscribers was William Hooke, who got 'our Messuage and Tenement and all our Lands Tenements Marshes and Pastures whatsoever called Radeche containing by estimation Sixty acres of Land and Marsh with their appurtenances in the Tything of Woodlande'. (Woodland Tything was the part of Colyton that included this area north of Branscombe.) William Hooke was probably the tenant at Radeche already, and wanted to secure his holding. The name Radeche seems a likely source of the name Raddis Lane.

Henry VIII was in a position to do this because he had recently beheaded his cousin Henry Courtenay, Marquis of Exeter, whom he suspected of plotting, and confiscated his lands. They included the manor of Colyton, which Henry turned into hard cash.



So before this, in the Middle Ages, Radeche belonged to the Courtenay Earls of Devon. Its medieval history shows to some extent in old deeds in the Devon Record Office.



In the 13th century a bigger estate here was split into two, Raddych and Borcombe. Borcombe is described as 'next to Raddych' – 'apud Raddych'. Borcombe farm is still there, and Raddych or Radeche farm probably lay west of it, where the 3 Horseshoes Farm stands today, behind the inn. It disappeared as a separate

farm, but an old barn pulled down in 1870 was probably the last of the Radeche farm buildings.



Most of its fields were swallowed up by Borcombe (above), which belonged to Lord Petre until it was bought by John Stuckey of Weston, about 1800, and later by other owners. On the tithe map of 1840, a field behind the 3 Horseshoes was still called Raddiss, a memento of the farm.

From Middle Ages let's jump back to 1089, when William the Conqueror compiled Domesday Book. It listed all the manors in his new kingdom and their yield in service and taxes. In our area only three manors were listed: Branscombe, which belonged to the Bishop of Exeter by gift of King Athelstan; Colyton, which had belonged to the Saxon kings – and 'REDDIX'.

Roger holds WEYCROFT from Ralph. Viking held it TRE, and it paid geld for 1 hide. There is land for 4 ploughs. In demesne is 1 plough, and 2 slaves; and 3 villans and 6 bordars with 1½ ploughs. There are 2 mills rendering 7s6d, and 3 acres of meadow and 25 acres of woodland. Formerly 10s; now it is worth 20s.

Geoffrey holds BRUCKLAND from Ralph. Æthelheard held it TRE, and it paid geld for 1 hide. There is land for 4 ploughs. There are 3 bordars, and 4 acres of meadow and 4 acres of pasture. It is worth 12d.

Geoffrey holds 'RADISH' [in Southleigh] from Ralph. 2 thegns held it TRE, and it paid geld for half a hide. There is land for 2 ploughs. There are 15 acres of scrubland. Formerly, as now, worth 3s.

These 3 manors had been given to Ralph in exchange for 1 manor of 1 virgate.

Unlike Branscombe and Colyton, Reddix was very small, probably about 140 acres. There were no dependent labourers attached to it. Domesday says that in the time of William I's predecessor Edward the Confessor it was held by two thegns. Some Saxon king, in fact, must have cut off a little bit of Colyton manor to reward two faithful soldiers.



Very likely they were brothers, and they probably ran it as two family farms, perhaps on the two sites that later became Raddyh

and Borcombe. By 1089 they were both supplanted by a Norman called Geoffrey.

So we have traced the name 'Raddis Lane' back to Reddix, and to two Saxon farmers owning this land north of the road. We can go further back, but by way of a detour forwards to the year 1392. In that year the Dean and Chapter of Exeter cathedral, who owned Branscombe, granted John Lacy the tenancy of 'messuages tenements and lands in Raddych in their demesne of Branscombe'. So far, the name Raddych or Reddix has appeared only in Colyton, north of road, but here's an area south of it, in Branscombe, also called Raddych. And Alexander Law's 1793 survey of Branscombe shows a field named Raddish, just east of the 3 Horseshoes. It was part of Elverway Farm — not the present Elverway, but an older farm of same name, near Baldash in the valley below. This was probably where John Lacy's farm was too.

No. 27. Elverway				
H . 1.	Farm Houses, Courtyards, Mowhay and Waste			1 2 2
H . 2.	Garden	0 1 36		
H . 3.	Eastern Orchard	1 0 21		
H . 4.	Middle D ^o	0 3 0		
H . 5.	Western D ^o	0 3 33		
H . 6.	Gaddy's Plot		0 2 38	
H . 7.	Willow Beere		0 2 8	
H . 8.	Little Meadow		2 0 2	1 1 36
H . 9.	Hill Orchard	0 2 20		
H . 10.	Coppice and Garden	0 0 20		0 2 32
H . 11.	Back Orchard	1 2 3		
H . 12.	Ten Acres		9 2 30	
H . 13.	Chapel Meadow		6 1 33	
H . 14.	Higher Chapel Hays		4 0 32	
H . 15.	Lower D ^o		5 2 7	
H . 16.	Great Meadow		9 0 0	
H . 17.	Broad Park		5 1 2	
H . 18.	Raddish		5 3 0	
H . 19.	New Park		8 2 36	
H . 20.	Gould's Hill		4 1 27	
H . 21.	Orchard	1 0 12		
H . 22.	Allers			0 3 12
H . 23.	Aller Beere			1 2 33
H . 24.	Great Orchard	3 3 13		
H . 25.	Way Park		7 1 24	
H . 26.	Down Park		5 2 10	
H . 27.	Orchard	1 1 34		
H . 28.	Bushments			0 1 2
H . 29.	Old Orchard	1 0 5		
H . 30.	Furse Brake			8 2 1

This is not the only evidence of an area south of the road called Raddych. In 1862 the Sidmouth antiquarian Peter Orlando Hutchinson met Samuel Chick of Berry Farm to look at some foundations found while ploughing a field called Chapel Meadow

opposite the 3 Horseshoes, and next to Raddish field. Here's Orlando Hutchinson:



He thought it was the site of a medieval chapel, and this is borne out by a Visitation of Branscombe ordered by the Bishop of Exeter in 1280 to assess church furnishings and equipment. The Visitation reported that 'At Ridic is one small chalice and one pair of vestments'.

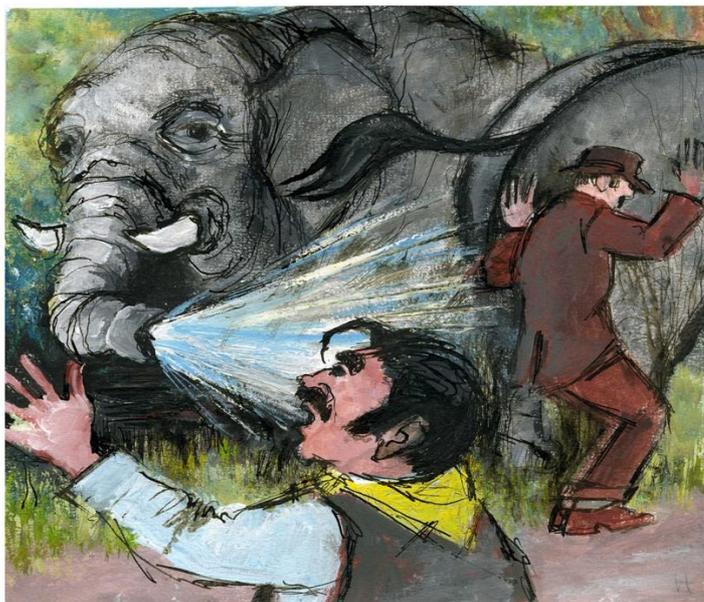


'Ridic' is another version of Reddix or Raddych, and the presence of these items shows that a wayside chapel stood there in the 13th century.

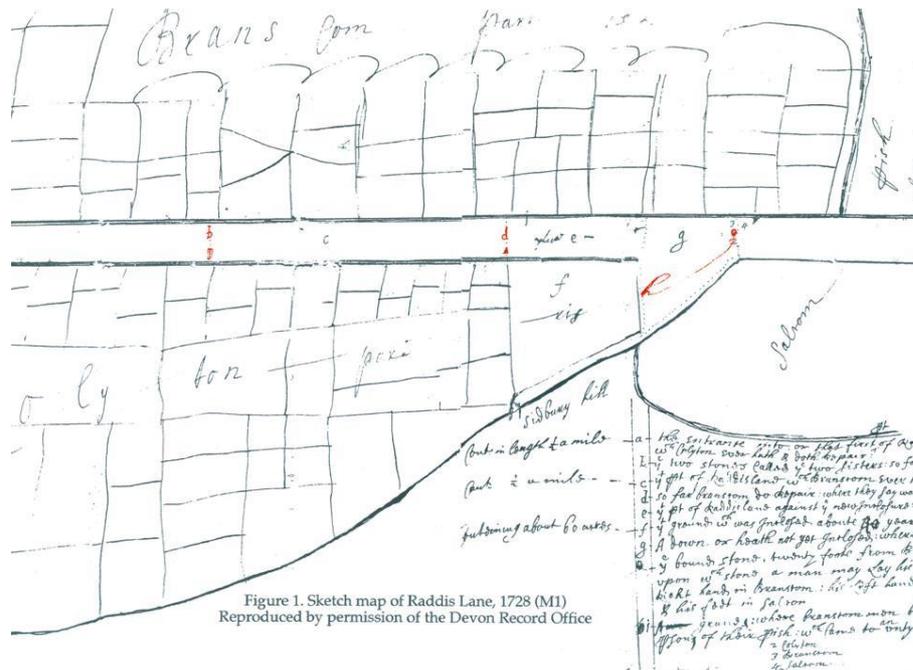


It was an Iron Age fortification, put up either to control the track, or to resist attack from the east by other British tribesmen. It may have been built to resist the Roman advance into Devon, but there is no evidence that the Romans actually came this way – their main route was further north, close to the A35 and A30, by Axminster and Honiton.

Not much of either bank or ditch is left now, but John Moore, owner of the 3 Horseshoes, was told there used to be a reedy pond by the road opposite the pub, and when the circus came to and from Exeter, elephants would stop to drink there.



This pond could have been a remnant of the ditch. In 1872 an old man told Hutchinson he remembered the bank being 12 or 15 feet high. He was no doubt exaggerating, but bank and ditch must still have been a big feature when Saxons arrived here about 500 AD, and that's when they might have named it Red or Reed Ditch. Saxons did come this way, because Harepath Hill, the name of the A 3052 behind Seaton, is from the Anglo-Saxon for 'army path'.



We started from the name Raddis Lane on a road-mending map of 1728, and have arrived back at the late Iron Age, 48 AD or even 200 BC, when Blackbury Camp was occupied. Can we go further back? Maybe, and the same map gives us clues.

The customary roadmending stints of Branscombe and Colyton are marked by large stones at B, D and H. One might suppose the stones were put up to mark the stints, but the reverse may be more likely: like the Hangman Stone, further east, these may be ancient waymarks which were then used to mark the stints.

in length $\frac{1}{2}$ a mile
 $\frac{1}{2}$ a mile
 in length about 60 acres

a the entrance into or flat part of the
 with Colyton road hath B both do repair
 b y two stones called ye two sisters: so far Colyton repair
 c y ft of the island w^{ch} Branscom over hath do repair
 d so far Branscom do repair: where they say was a great stone
 e y pt of Branscom land against y now p^{ro}posed: now in dispute
 f y ground w^{ch} was p^{ro}posed, aboute 40 year since
 g A down or heath not yet p^{ro}posed: where y rode over
 h y bound stone; twenty foote from Branscom hedge
 upon w^{ch} stone a man may lay his belly w^{ch} his
 right hand in Branscom: his left hand in Colyton
 & his foot in Salcom
 i y ground: where Branscom more but y^{et} a
 p^{ro}posed of above p^{ro}posed: w^{ch} stands to an
 antym^{ly} endy
 2 Colyton
 3 Branscom
 4 Salcom

'b - YE TWO STONES CALLED YE TWO SISTERS: SO FAR COLYTON REPAIR',
 'd - SO FAR BRANSCOM DO REPAIR, WHERE THEY SAY WAS A GREAT
 STONE', and 'h - YE BOUND STONE, TWENTY FOOTE FROM BRANSCOM
 HEDGE UPON WHICH A MAN MAY LAY HIS BELLY WITH HIS RIGHT HAND
 IN BRANSCOM, HIS LEFT HAND IN COLYTON AND HIS FOOT IN SALCOM'.

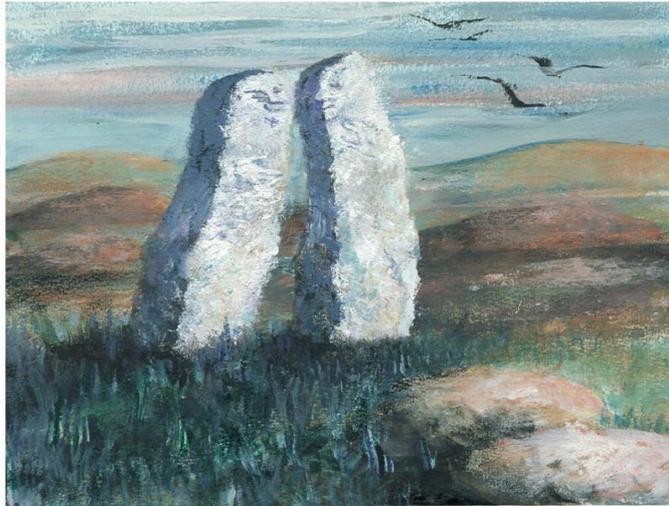


There's no sign of these stones now. Barbara & I thought we'd found the Bound Stone inside the gate of Kingsdown Tail Caravan Park, but were told Terry Flay put this one there for the owner, to stop thieves. The Bound Stone is on the 1770/1790 map with the turnpike, so wasn't broken up to make the new road, but its site now holds an electrical substation. It was probably older than the 3 parish boundaries it marked; it might, like Hangman Stone, which marks where 4 parishes meet, have been prehistoric, and then used by the Saxons when they laid out parish boundaries. The Hangman Stone and The Bound Stone marked the two ends of Raddis Lane. Kingsdown Tail is also thought to be on the line of a prehistoric trackway from Putt's Corner, where the Witches' Stone or Rolling Stone lies in front of the Hare and Hounds.



By 1728 the 'great stone' at 'd' was only a memory. But if it was ancient, it may have marked the only spring on this stretch of road, near a bend at the head of Youngcombe Wood, a spot which the roadmending documents call Youngcombefall.

Named settings of stones, like Two Sisters at 'b', are usually thought to be of prehistoric origin.



These two stood on the north side of road just east of the site of the 3 Horseshoes, near a crossing of old footpaths. This was a likely starting-point for a trackway branching off north to join the track from Putt's corner. It would cross Broad Down and Farway Hill, where there are Bronze Age cemeteries with 80+ burial mound, now much destroyed and eroded but once imposing.



The Two Sisters may therefore have been part of a Bronze Age sacred landscape. Bronze Age people lived in the valleys – the Bronze Age houses drawn here were excavated near Honiton – but they used the high ground for burials and ceremonies, as well as for travelling, hunting and pasture.

So, finally, to the Hangman Stone itself.



It's not on the 1728 map because the Colyton roadmending stint began just west of it, and was not in dispute. Hutchinson's drawing depicts the legend: a sheep-stealer, with a sheep's legs tied round his neck, sat down to rest, with the sheep on the stone. When the sheep slipped off backwards he was strangled. A warning: even when you think you're safely outside the parish, retribution will catch up with you and you'll be hanged.

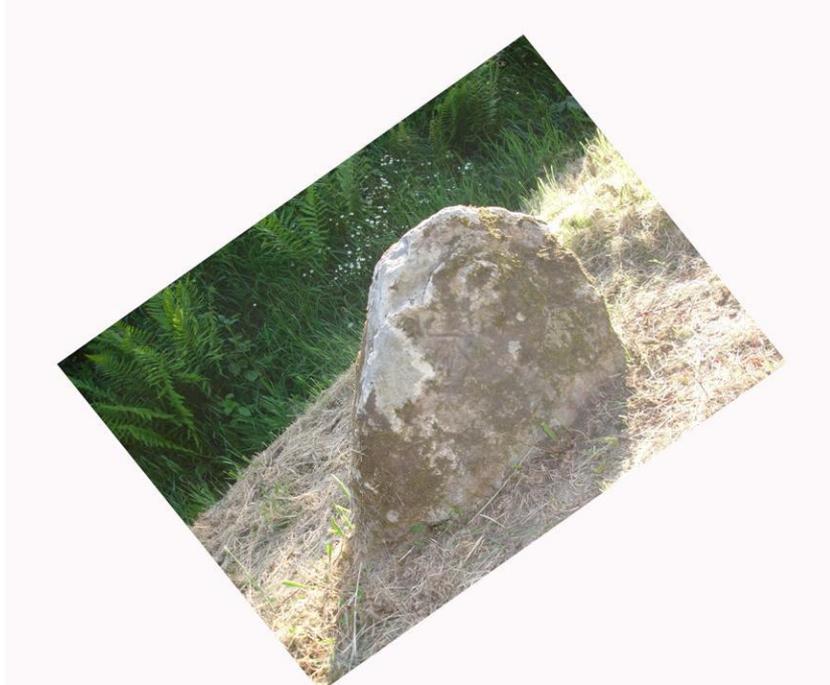


Here's a sketch-map about 1700 where the Hangman Stone looks much bigger. It also marks 'THE ROAD TO EXETER CALL'D RADDIS LANE' and the 4 parishes which meet here. One reason the

Hangman Stone looks so small today is that when the Council cemented it into the ground it was not put in upright.



There's an OS mark on it, probably dating from late 19th century, which would have been cut vertically, but now it's at an angle.



If the stone were set back upright, it would probably be about 3' high.

Since Beer was an important source of flint implements in the Bronze Age, and before that in the Neolithic, and since they were widely exchanged or passed on, it's pleasing to imagine that the Hangman Stone may have once marked the way down to the cliffs full of flint.

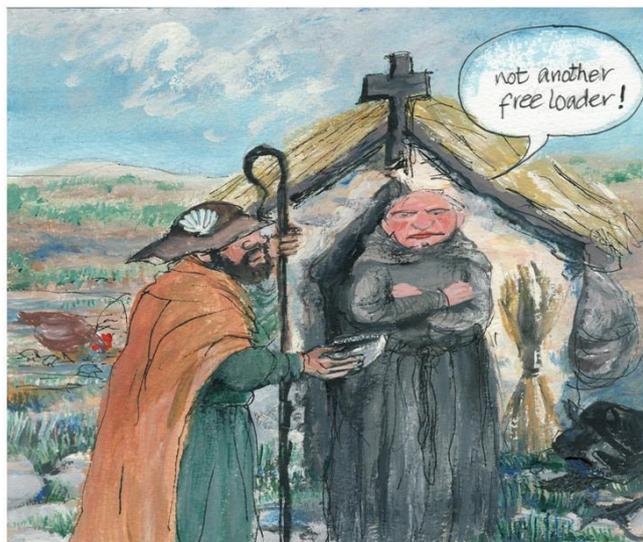


Starting from the recent past we have reached prehistory. Coming forward, we can see that many types of traveller might have used this route at different times. Neolithic people may have come for Beer flint; by the Bronze Age, itinerant merchant smiths used these long-distance trackways, joined in the Iron Age by other craftsmen and pedlars. Animals would be driven to and from pasture. The Iron Age was a more warlike period: cattle raiders and invading tribal groups were on the move, and before the Romans there were migrations of British Dumnonian people from Devon to Brittany, so we might imagine Celtic family parties trudging along here with pack animals to local harbours.



OS maps used to call the A 3052 a Roman road, but they don't now because no definite evidence of Roman road-building has been found. But it was undoubtedly used in Roman times, for there was a Roman villa and port at Seaton, and Exeter was the Roman regional capital. The Romans also opened Beer quarry, but the stone would have been removed by sea, not road. Whether the road crossed the Axe in Roman times is disputed. The salt marsh extended further upstream then, because the pebble bank hadn't yet closed the river-mouth, so the estuary was bigger.

I've already mentioned invading Saxons marching up Harepath Hill behind Seaton, and during the 500 years of Saxon rule the typical English landscape of villages, lanes and parishes developed; the road would have served local peasantry as well as kings, lords and bishops visiting their estates (Colyton was a royal manor, Branscombe and Salcombe belonged to the Bishop of Exeter). These travel patterns greatly intensified in the Middle Ages – drovers and farmers, fishermen and craftsmen attending fairs and markets in local towns; travelling merchants and tradesmen; regular progresses by kings, nobles and bishops; priests scurrying about on church and government business; and friars selling pardons to peasants.

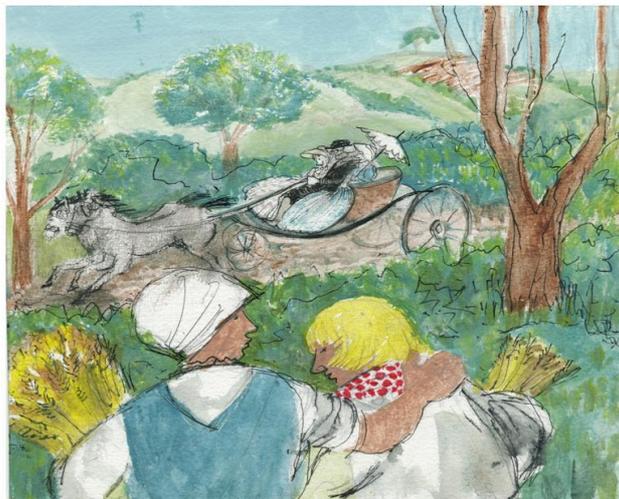


Pilgrimages became popular in the 1300s and 1400s. There were shrines at Salcombe Regis, Sidbury and Exeter, where pilgrims sought pardons and remission of time in Purgatory. Many

pilgrims crossed to St James of Compostela in Spain, and because war with France made eastern ports unsafe, Topsham and Plymouth were the chief ports they used. Companies of pilgrims, like those described by Chaucer in *The Canterbury Tales*, would have passed the chapel at Ridic and prayed or rested there.

In 1600s and 1700s, there was military marching and counter-marching here in the Civil War of the 1640s. In 1685 Devon rebels rallied to the Duke of Monmouth's flag, against James II, and redcoats would have hunted them down here after the Battle of Sedgemoor. In the 1700s naval press-gangs would have hunted sailors and deserters, and nocturnal pony-chains of smugglers would be pursued by revenue-men. In 1787 Roncombe Gurt, a lonely place on the Honiton turnpike (B 3174), was scene of brutal murder of two revenue officers by a gang of smugglers.

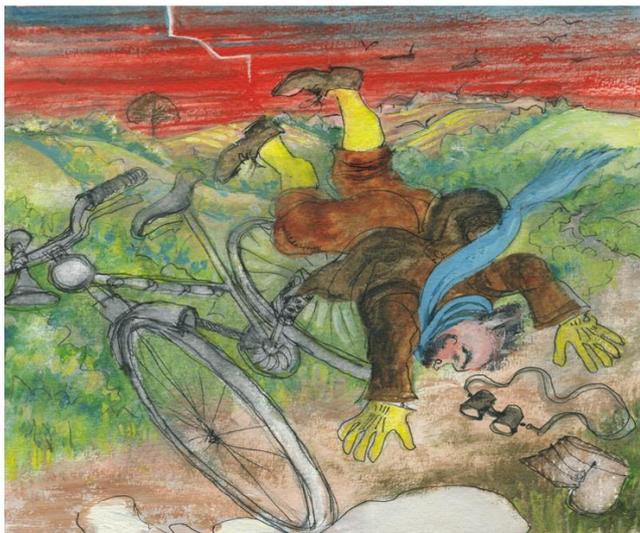
Wheeled vehicles were rare on Devon roads up to 1800. The turnpike brought long-distance coach traffic, but local transport was still mainly on horseback or by pack animals, because the lanes were still unsuitable for carts and wagons. But middle-class tourists appeared: the Rev John Swete, driving past Branscombe from Lyme Regis in 1795, noted that 'This road was extremely good though I had no view till I made my approach to Sidford'.



In mid-Victorian times we can read about Orlando Hutchinson's antiquarian travels round East Devon in his carriage with his Sidmouth friend Mr Heineken. But this painting by Hutchinson shows that wheeled vehicles still suffered because of bad roads.



And so to the tarmac age, the age of the bicycle and poor Dr Gilbert-Smith,



and then the age of the motor car, of the crash near the Hangman Stone



and, finally, back to the truckloads of pigs with which we began.



Further reading:

Torrance, J. (2008) 'Raddis Lane: What's in a Name?' *The Devon Historian*, vol. 77, pp. 51-66.

Torrance, J. (2009) 'Parish politics and the king's highway', *Transactions of the Devonshire Association*, vol. 141, pp.237-268.