

8. Bincombe – Discovering the Ridgeway

26.04.18

Key Features

Bincombe is no more than a hamlet of farms the Church among them, perched in the slope of the chalk downs below Bincombe Hill just under the Ridgeway which forms the parish boundary with its neighbour, Winterborne Came.



West Farmhouse and Barn, Tumbledown Barn

Farming was the main source of employment in Bincombe with West Farm, Middle Farm, Lower Bincombe Farm, East Farm, Icen Farm and Bincombe Marsh Dairy. Many farm buildings are interspersed between cottages with West and East Farm houses at the two extreme ends of the settlement are set up high on the hill, dating from 1843 and 1878 respectively. With modernisation and the consequent decline in agricultural employment, the character of the village changed as residents left for various larger centres of employment.

Travelling along the lane leading to the Church, the first building on the south side was once the village school. Of Victorian origin, it was in use until about the latter half of the twentieth century. It replaced an earlier school that stood in The Square, further down on the edge of the village.



The Victorian School and Granary House both postdate the Tithe Map of 1837

The school stands in isolation opposite the SW Coast Path to Winterborne Came and Hardy's Monument and access to Dirty Lane which runs parallel to the main approach (Icen Lane). There was also a timber framed village hall next to Hillside in front of Tumbledown Barn, demolished at the end of the C20. Two walls remain of Hill Barn, now derelict, latterly a lambing pen and chicken house. To the west is a rifle range, granted under a Bye-Law by the War Department post 1914, situated between Coombe Valley and the summit of Bincombe Hill.

It is recorded that Ralph Wightman, freelance journalist broadcast the peace time Christmas message from Bincombe on the BBC Home Service.



The approach from the west to the church and East Farm Yard, horse trough of 1988

Origins and Settlement Pattern

Bincombe is mentioned in the Domesday Book as Beincombe and was held by Earl Harold, later King Harold who was defeated at the Battle of Hastings by William the Conqueror. The place name is attributed to a place where beans were grown a staple food stuff in Saxon times. William I gave the land at Bincombe to the monastery of St Stephen in Caen, and under Henry VIII who suppressed the foreign house it went to the college of St Stephen in Winchester. At the dissolution of the monasteries it was given to Richard Baker and Richard Sackville. In 1570 it was bought three years before his death by John Caius, former student of Gonville College, Cambridge, and physician to Edward VII, Mary Tudor and Elizabeth I. Caius College still own the land together with Broadway Church and parish which were consolidated in 1738. Caius College built a number of fine stone barns and cottages circa 1830 and farms in and around Bincombe which occupied the plots between the two lanes with many houses being single aspect because of the steeply sloping ground. The remains of one original barn is evident at Lower Bincombe Farm and the Corn Barn, Hack Stables, Lower Barn and cow house all survive intact at East Farm.

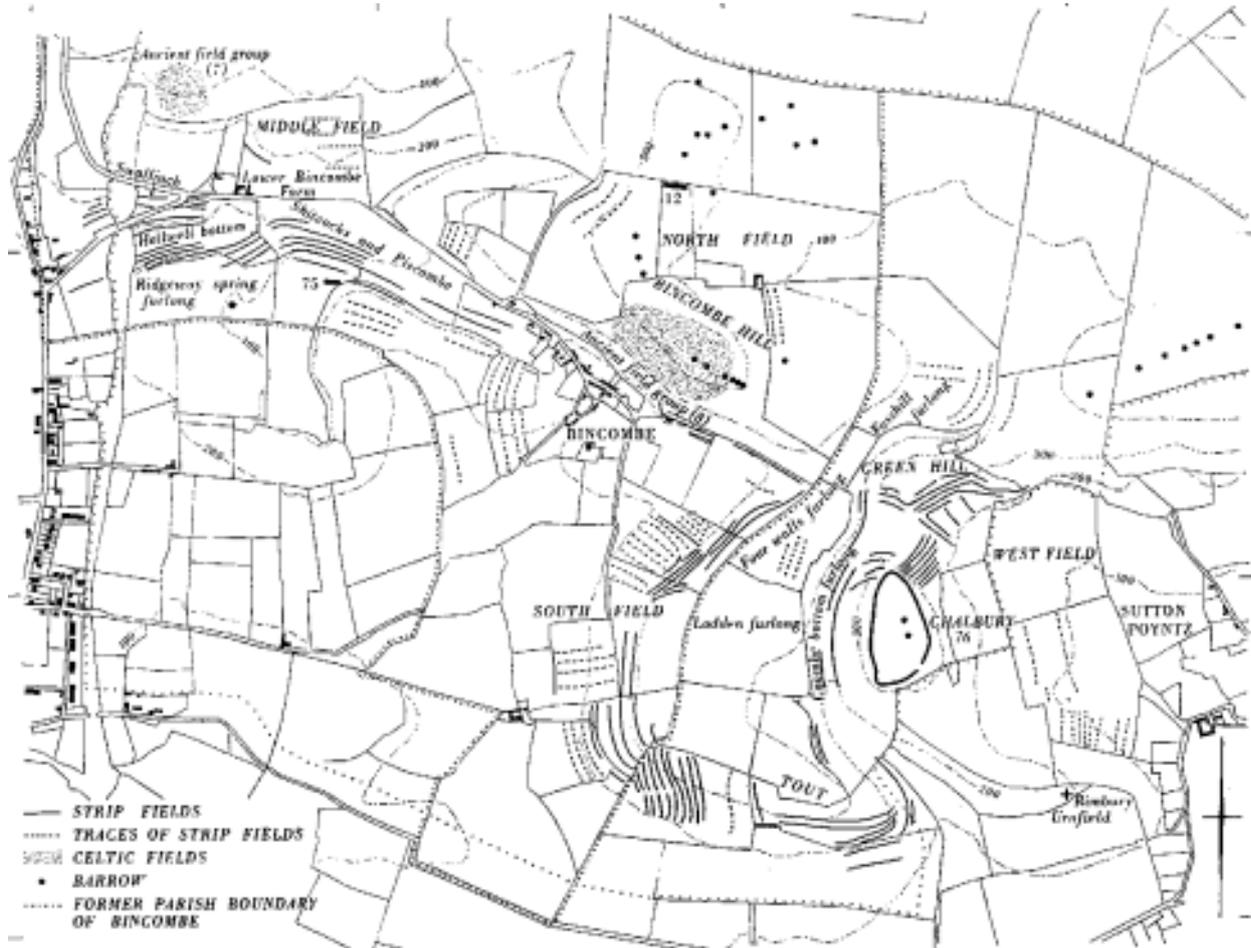


Hack Stables and Corn Barn, now a community hall with plaque to Geoffrey de Sevney for 50 years' service on the farm

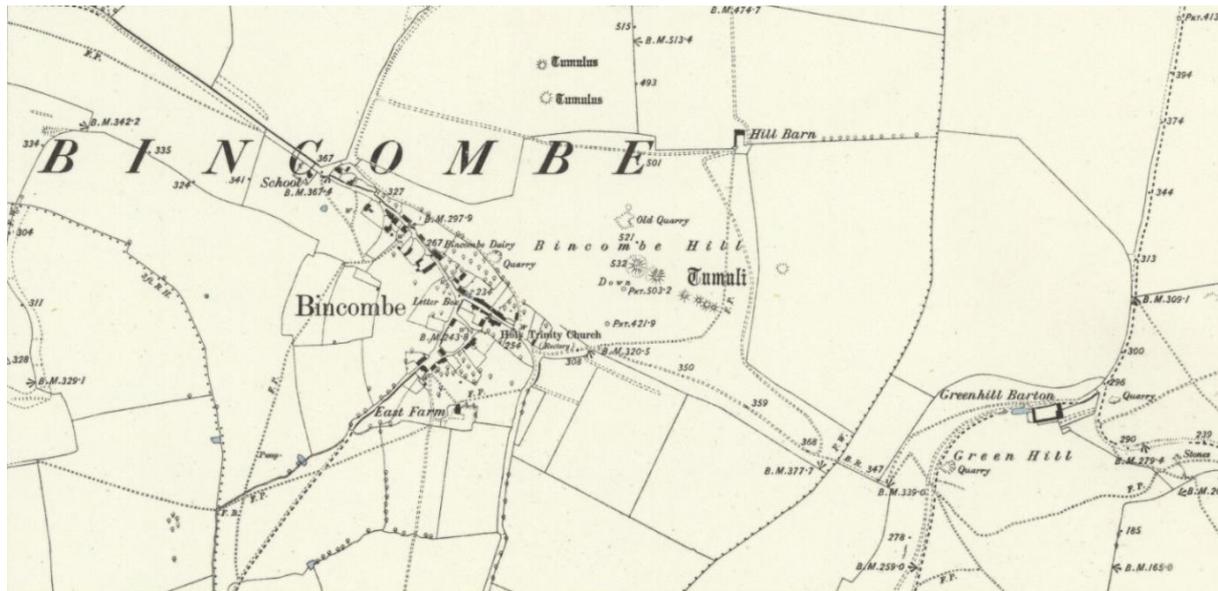


The Tithe Map of 1837 shows property belonging to the Masters and Fellows of Caius College

Approaching the settlement from Bincombe Marsh, the tower of the Church with cottages clustered around is clearly evident as is Tout Hill to the east and the towering Ridgeway to the north.



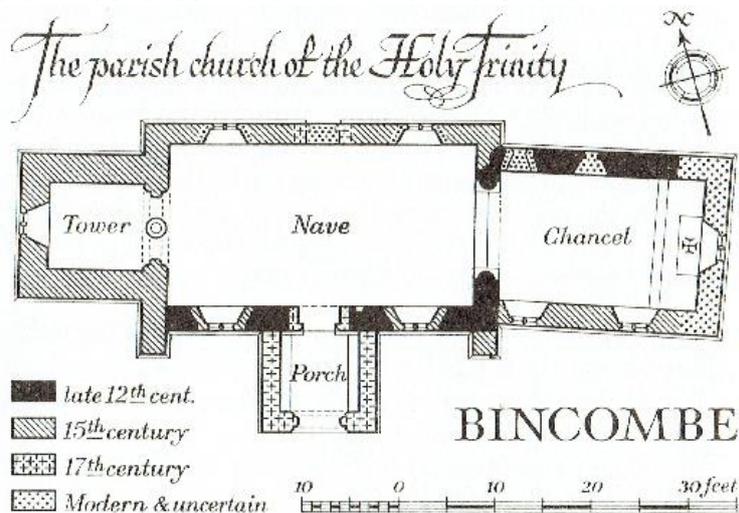
Extract from the RCHM of the archaeology of Bincombe – 12 Long Barrow, 13 -74 Round Barrows, 75 – Mound, 76 Chalbury Hill-fort, 77 Roman Burial, 7 & 8 ancient field groups



Extract from 1888 Map illustrates how many buildings have been demolished or burned since this date, particularly the first School in the Square and the cottages on both side of the lane

Listed Buildings

There is only one Parish Church of Holy Trinity Grade I listed building. Holy Trinity church dates in part from the 1250 – 1350 with an earlier Norman north door and font. The tower dates from the fifteenth century, as does much of the walling of the church. The walls of the tower are entasised to give an illusion that the tower is narrower at the top. The chancel and nave dated from 1175. The north wall of the chancel dates from the twelfth century with a Victorian east end added. The font is also of the C12. The chancel was renovated in 1862, the plan below illustrates the evolution of the Church.



Hardy wrote in 1890 about Bincombe in his short story - The Melancholy Hussars of the German Legion "Outside the gates of the world where may usually be found more meditation than action..." which recounts the death of two German Hussars aged 22, shot for desertion in 1801 on Bincombe Down and they are buried in unmarked graves to the east of the chancel.



View of The Knoll from the Churchyard and Portland Harbour from Bincombe Bumps



View of Sutton Poyntz and Preston with Chalbury Hill-fort in the foreground

Summary of other Quality Buildings

As the road begins to descend, on the north side is the Dairy House, raised above street level. There was an eighteenth century thatched house adjacent to Dairy House to the west, (seen on the tithe map) but like so many such buildings in Bincombe, it has long since disappeared, either demolished after the demise of dairy farming or burned in a fire. The masonry has been removed and there is no evidence of any building materials surviving.

Dairy House is of two storeys and was built in the C17. It has an end fireplace in each of two ground floor rooms and two carved corbel figures at first floor level salvaged from the churchyard. The corbels are supported on figures, a standing figure with sword and shield and a seated figure. They were originally of good quality stone dating from the C14 or C15. Probably from a monument or shrine rather than the church building which was restored in 1862.



Dairy House, corbel detail and barns at Lower Bincombe Farm

The 4 barns at Lower Bincombe Farm were all built in the first half of the C19 of identical size and plan form.

The barns are all dated with C1827 C for Caius College Cambridge, C1826 and one slightly later with a small subsidiary porch which is flanked by outhouses with lean-to roofs.

Nos 1 & 2 The Square, rendered with pronounced hood moulds over the west gable. The same detail occurs at Granary House and at West End Farm Cottages.



Farm buildings and No1 The Square

East Farm and Yard, buildings of both Ridgeway stone and Cornbrash. The farmhouse is of Purbeck with bricks dressings and the barns of Cornbrash.

Nos 1 & 2 College Close of 1957 Purbeck rangework.
Church Cottage of stone under a modern tiled roof with a chimney at each gable.



College Close of 1957 and Church Cottage which is C17 in origin with new tiled roof



Hillside and Tumbledown Barn behind with double Roman tiled roof

Bincombe Marsh Dairy is of two storeys and attics, built in the late C18 and comprised two rooms and an outhouse at the rear with a lean-to roof.

Key Views

Views include The Knoll and the villages of Preston and Sutton Poyntz as well as Portland Harbour. Contour lynchets, ridge and furrow and terracettes are seen at South Field and The Knoll. Chalbury Hill Fort is conspicuous as are many other barrows including Bincombe Bumps.

Traces of Celtic field patterns are seen on Bincombe Hill and NE of the South entrance to the railway tunnel to the north-west. Bincombe Marsh Dairy is seen on the moor.

Palette of Materials

The predominant building stones found in Bincombe are either Lower Purbeck Limestone and Lower or Upper Cornbrash Limestone which formed in shallow water and overlays the Forest Marble with a pebble bed at its base, indicating a beach or a sandy marl followed by a limestone with a hummocky top. Boundary walls and raised pavements are all of quality construction and of locally sourced materials. Icen Lane is bounded by Corallian (Forest Marble) stone walls. Of special interest is the raised pavement which lines the north side of the lane from Dairy House to the entrance to Tumbledown Barn and the K6 telephone kiosk.