

9 **Shallow Water, Brockabarrow Common and Sprey Moor**

9.1 Situation

Shallow Water Common is situated to the north of and adjoins Brockabarrow Common, which is seven miles north-east of Bodmin on the north side of the A.30 Bodmin to Launceston road. Adjoining Brockabarrow Common to the east is Sprey Moor, bounded by a stream that runs between them. These three areas of common are the remotest and highest of the Blisland Commons, situated in the north eastern corner of Blisland parish. Originally, Brockabarrow Common was part of Shallow Water Common, but was divided off in the nineteenth century. Today Brockabarrow Common remains the largest area of Common Land within Blisland Commons at 574 acres and is registered as Common Land no. 165. Shallow Water Common is registered as Common Land no. 187 and consists of 440 acres, while Sprey Moor is Common Land no. 166 and is 256 acres. Sprey Moor was formerly a detached part of Cardinham, even though the land was within St Neot parish; today it is recorded on modern maps as part of Blisland parish, however, boundary stones suggest it is actually within the modern parish of Boventor.

9.2 Landscape/topography

The western boundary of Shallow Water Common consists of a marshy valley where the Warleggan River (River Bedalder) rises and separates Shallow Water Common from Hawkstor Downs. The northern boundary meets Scribble Downs where it is divided by a hedge and fencing. The eastern boundary follows the line of a stream dividing it from Butterstor Downs (alias Bottreaux Tor) and the stream to the west of the forest at Priddacombe. The southern boundary with Brockabarrow formerly had a boundary stone no. 187/1 marking its division. Today, this stone is missing and the line of the boundary is indistinct.

Brockabarrow Common or Downs rises steeply from the A.30 highway in the south to a three hundred metre high ridge that runs north-east across Shallow Water Common. To the west, the large pool at the Hawkstor China Clay works is visible. To the north, there are views of Garrow Tor with Roughtor and Brown Willy in the distance, while to the east, across the valley, is the forestry at Priddacombe. The western boundary of Brockabarrow is also divided from Hawkstor Downs by the Warleggan River that rises on Shallow Water Common and flows south, under the new and old A.30 roads into the parish of Warleggan. The eastern

boundary follows the same stream from Shallow Water Common, on the west of Priddacombe south-east, before turning due south along a marsh marked by a row of boundary stones, dividing Brockabarrow from Sprey Moor. The southern boundary of the common is marked by the old A.30 road, east from Temple and the modern A.30. The main ridge of Brockabarrow and Shallow Water Common has relatively short grazed turf, although on the slopes there are increasing amounts of dense tussocky *Molinia* making walking difficult.

Sprey Moor is almost triangular in shape, and has short grass and slopes north towards the forestry and also west towards a wide valley where a stream acts as the boundary with Brockabarrow Common. The outlook from Sprey Moor is limited due to areas of forestry at both Stanning Hill and Priddacombe that block views of the distant hills. Its southern and south-eastern boundaries are bounded by the A.30 highway, which divides the moor from Great Lord's Waste and Minzies Downs. A small area of Sprey Moor near Bolventor extends beyond the modern A.30, to its south side near Deep Hatches Farm. The northern boundary is marked by a stream that flows around the inbye land at Stanninghill and is also the parish boundary between Altarnun and St Neot. There are also a row of small unmarked granite boundary posts along part of the northern boundary (these are not included in the survey). The western boundary is marked by a stream that divides the moor from Brockabarrow Common and this is reinforced by a row of boundary stones recorded under Brockabarrow. While the north-eastern end extends as far as the churchyard of Holy Trinity Church at Bolventor.

9.3 Archaeology/industry

On the western slopes of Brockabarrow Common are the remains of a large prehistoric settlement with many round houses and small enclosures. Some of the houses are large and well-built, indicating that they could have been permanently occupied rather than seasonal.⁴² Near the summit of Brockabarrow Common are two small cairns. In the valley bottom close to Priddacombe there is evidence of extensive tin streaming, with the stream divided into channels, and re-routed to provide the necessary flows of water for the industry. The legacy of this former activity is a confused site with much of the ground disturbed, leaving mounds of gravel and a wider area of marsh causing considerable difficulty in locating the boundary

⁴² Herring, P. and Rose, P. (2001) *Bodmin Moor's Archaeological Heritage*, Cornwall Archaeological Unit, Cornwall County Council, p.34.

stones, several of which may be buried. The adit of an iron mine appears on the eastern slope of Brockabarrow and extends a long way west into the hillside. At the northern end of the Shallow Water Common along the ridge there has been extensive turf cutting in the past. There is some evidence of prospecting on Sprey Moor, although this is not extensive. Turf cutting has also taken place there in the past.

9.4 Shallow Water Common

Shallow Water Common was first recorded in the Assize (Plea) Rolls in 1284 as *aqua de caldewater*. As noted previously, Shallow Water Common formerly included Brockabarrow Common, although today they are registered separately.

Six boundary stones beside the stream once marked the eastern boundary of Shallow Water Common, but of these, three are now missing (stones nos. 187/2, 187/6 and 187/7). Two of the boundary stones (nos. 187/4 and 187/5) that do survive display an **M** for Molesworth on the western face, with an **O** for Onslow carved on their eastern face. Boundary stone no.187/3 near Priddacombe displays an **M** on its western face and an **R** for Rodd on its eastern face.

9.5 Brockabarrow Common

The name Brockabarrow is first recorded in 1732 by Camden (Gover: 1948, 93) and means 'Barrow of the badgers'. Brockabarrow is also mentioned in the perambulation of Blisland Commons in 1816.⁴³

There are twenty-one boundary stones recorded marking Brockabarrow Common, of which only eleven survive. Several of the boundary stones that marked the southern boundary along the A.30 have been lost, probably due to road widening schemes: numbers 165/3, 165/4, 165/5 and 165/21, have not been located. On the eastern boundary, stones nos. 165/12, 165/15, 165/16, 165/17, 165/18, 165/19 and 165/20 are also all missing. Of those that survive stone no. 165/6, located below a large road sign to Colliford Lake on the northern side of the A.30, is the only one of the group that is different. It is a late parish

⁴³ The perambulation of the bounds of the manor of Blisland, see appendices.

boundary stone and has *Blisland* carved on its western face and the modern parish of *Bolventor* on its eastern face. Bolventor is a modern parish created in 1848⁴⁴ because of increased population associated with the mining industry. The boundary stone is one of a series that mark Bolventor parish and appear to be late nineteenth century. The remaining seven boundary stones, nos. 165/7, 165/8, 165/9, 165/10, 165/11 and 165/14, all have an **M** for Molesworth on their western face and a **G** on their eastern face. At the south-west corner of Brockabarrow Common is stone no. 165/1 which also displays a **G**, while to the east, along the old A.30, stone no. 165/2 remains uncarved.

9.6 Sprey Moor

Sprey Moor is first recorded in 1842 on the tithe map for St Neot as Spray Moor (Gover: 1948, 96). This area of common land is also known as Standing Ball on the Cardinham tithe map. For the purposes of this survey the boundary stones on the western boundary of Sprey Moor, nos. 165/6, 165/7, 165/8, 165/9, 165/10, 165/13 and 165/14, are recorded under Brockabarrow Common.

Omitting those mentioned above, only three boundary stones marking Sprey Moor are shown on maps. Stone no. 166/1 stands on the northern boundary, to the north of Stanninghill Farm, and displays a **G**. On the opposite side of the A.30, the ancient stone cross known as the Four Hole Cross (stone no. 166/2), was adopted as a boundary stone for Great Lord's Waste and has **GLW** carved on it. This cross not only marks the manorial boundary between Sprey Moor and Great Lord's Waste, but also the parish boundary between St Neot (now Bolventor) and Cardinham.⁴⁵ The remaining stone no. 166/3 is situated south of the Four Hole Cross at the turning to Colliford and is not marked.

On the southern side of the A.30 road and to the west of Deep Hatches Farm is a small strip of common that is part of Sprey Moor. Here two large standing granite stones dominate this small piece of common, and although neither of them has any signs of carving, they could

⁴⁴ www.genuki.org.uk/big/eng/Cornwall/Bolventor/index.

⁴⁵ The Four Hole Cross was re-sited in 1996 when the A.30 road was widened.

have once marked the southern boundary of Sprey Moor with the enclosed land at Lower Minziesdown Farm.

9.7 Analysis

Out of the thirty boundary stones recorded on these three areas of common land, only one is recorded on the parish tithe map, indicating that by far the majority were set up after 1840. These boundary stones can be divided up into three groups: firstly those that mark the long boundary north along the stream dividing Brockabarrow Common from Sprey Moor and Shallow Water Common from Priddacombe and Butters Down, secondly those that mark the south-east boundary of Brockabarrow Common along the old A.30, and thirdly the group of three stones that mark the extent of Sprey Moor.

The main characteristic of the larger group that follows the valley from the A.30 north to Scribble Downs are their size. All these boundary stones were originally at least two metres in height and have been set up beside the stream, often in extremely marshy ground. Although some have sunk down into the marsh, many still stand over two metres above ground level. Boundary stone no. 165/8 measures 2.02M (6ft 8ins) above ground level, while no. 165/10 measures 2.02M (6ft 7½ins) above the ground, and another three on Brockabarrow Common and Shallow Water Common all measure over one and half metres, even though they stand in marsh (see figs. 32 and 33). All the stones in this group are also similar in width and thickness, suggesting that they were all cut and set up at the same time. It is also probable that in this case both landowners initials would have been added before the stones were erected, as the marshy ground would have made it very difficult for a stonemason to work them *in situ*.

All the surviving boundary stones have a letter **M** for Molesworth carved on their western face, indicating that the Molesworth family owned both Brockabarrow and Shallow Water Common; and indeed the Molesworth Estate still own this land. On the reverse or eastern face there are one of three different letters carved: **R**, **O** or **G**. **R** is the mark of the Rodd family from Trebartha in North Hill, who in 1828, purchased large tracts of land in Altarnun

and St Neot parishes from Dame Elizabeth Morshead of Blisland.⁴⁶ Here, Rodd owned Priddacombe on the east of the stream. The **O** is for Onslow of Hengar in St Tudy parish. Sir Henry Onslow inherited both the manor of Hametethy and Penrose Burden from Mrs Louisa Sarel in 1847. This included Butters Tor (Bottreaux Tor) that lies to the east of Shallow Water Common.

The letter **G**, however has proved more difficult to identify. Initially the **G**, it was thought to represent Davies Gilbert as **G** is his mark on the boundary stones on Trehudreth and Greenbarrow Downs, but no record has been found to suggest that he ever owned Sprey Moor. When his lands were sold at auction at Bodmin in 1874 (CRO-GB/10/3/1), there was no mention of Sprey Moor, and the only lands the family owned in this area were in Blisland, Helland and St Mabyn.

Alternatively, a chance note written by Joseph Polsue in his Parochial History of Cornwall about the manor of Pengelly in St Neot parish could possibly identify the anonymous Mr 'G' as Gregor. Polsue (1870, 409) stated that in 1788, a Sir Lionel Copley Bart. sold the manor of Pengelly in St Neot parish to Francis Gregor of Trewarthenick in Cornelly parish and later in 1866, his nephew by marriage, Francis Glanville Gregory sold it again to a Mr G. F. Remfrey together with its ancient rights over Great and Little Trenay, Gills Wood and Spray Moor. However, these ancient rights would have been rights of pasture and turbary etc., and the reference does not necessarily mean that Gregor owned Sprey Moor. Another 'outsider' is the Revd. Richard Gerveys Grylls, vicar of St Neot who owned extensive areas of land within St Neot parish.

The 1842 Cardinham tithe map schedule records Sprey Moor by the name 'Standing Ball'; the joint landowners of this common land were Humphrey Williams and Thomas Runnalls⁴⁷ and the moor was leased by John Bunt. Thus if Gregor did purchase the land here, it must have been after 1842. And if this is correct, and if Gregor then sold the rights to Sprey Moor in

⁴⁶ Latham, B. (1971) *Trebartha: The House by the Stream*, p.95, Francis H. Rodd purchased 1565 acres of land in Altarnun and St Neot, including Trewint Moor and land around Codda.

⁴⁷ In this case Standing Ball alias Sprey Moor was $\frac{3}{4}$ owned by Humphry Williams and $\frac{1}{4}$ owned by Thomas Runnalls.

1866, as Polsue suggests it would indicate that this row of boundary stones was set up between 1844 and 1866.

As the Molesworth family held all the land on the western side of the boundary, they may have been responsible for setting up all the stones, in this united group, while causing some arrangement were their neighbouring landowners: Rodd, Gregor and Onslow.

Only two of the six boundary stones that stood on the southern boundary of Brockabarrow Common still exist. Of these, no.165/2 is uncarved, while no. 165/1 has the letter **G** carved on its southern face. Again, it is uncertain who this **G** represents. There is no evidence that Gilbert ever owned land in Temple parish, but according to Polsue (1870, 409), Gregor's manorial rights through the manor of Pengelly extended into Temple parish, so he is perhaps the best candidate. Another boundary stone with a letter **G** is no.166/1, on the north east side of Sprey Moor, to the north of Stanning Hill. Again, this probably refers to Gregor.

On the opposite side of Sprey Moor beside the A.30 is the ancient stone cross known as the Four Hole Cross. Carved on the western face of this ancient monument is **GLW** for Great Lords Waste. It marked the boundary between that area of waste land and Sprey Moor, which today is reinforced by the A.30 trunk road. In 1996, when the A.30 highway was widened to a dual carriageway, the cross was re-positioned and turned through 90 degrees. Previous to this, the face with the initials **GLW** faced south towards Great Lords Waste. No landowners' name appears on the St Neot tithe apportionment schedule for Lords Waste. Another boundary stone displaying the letters **GLW**, but not within the area of study, is on the road leading from the A.30 to Colliford reservoir, beside a car park near Simon's Stone. It is indicative of perhaps a series of boundary stones that marked Great Lord's Waste. A second boundary stone to the south-west of the cross and on the road junction between the A.30 and a minor road to Colliford Lake is unmarked.

Furthermore, on a rental of the manor of Blisland dated 1817⁴⁸ and part of the Glencross collection at the Courtney Library, a boundary stone is noted displaying the letter **G** at Temple Water, which appears to be boundary stone no.165/1. This evidence indicates that boundary stones existed on Blisland Common several years before the tithe maps were drawn.

⁴⁸ RIC MO/1/40, Glencross Collection.

