

7 **Emblance Downs and Lady Down**

7.1 Situation

Emblance Downs is situated two miles east of St Breward churchtown and to the west of Lady Down which it formerly adjoined.²⁶ Both Emblance Downs and Lady Down are registered together as Common Land no.124 and are estimated to be 402 acres in total. Lady Down is situated one mile south-east of St Breward churchtown and to the west of Emblance Downs. A small strip of land that formerly linked the two tracts of Common Land is today in private ownership.

7.2 Landscape/topography

Emblance Downs is a broad sweep of downland that gently rises from Ivey's Plain in the south to the manorial boundary of Blisland with Hamatethy on the northern horizon. Here, King Arthur's Hall²⁷ is a prominent landscape feature that can be seen from all parts of the common. There is a broad marshy hollow in the centre of the downs, with a more extensive area of marshland on the western boundary, both a carpet of white cotton grass during the summer months. The red rushy marsh vegetation contrasts with the short turf on the higher ground where both gorse and heather is slowly emerging through the grass as a result of recent reductions in grazing levels. The area around the southern leg of the downs at Whiteheads is more stoney, with a number of granite surface boulders scattered across the pasture. The downs are surrounded by low rounded hills, with the craggy outlines of Brown Willy and Roughtor dominating to the north-east and Alex Tor to the north-west.

In contrast with Emblance Downs, the long narrow tract of land known as Lady Down is relatively level with only minor undulations. It has well grazed moorland turf with occasional large bushes of European gorse, with the exception of one small area of marsh to the north of Hallagenna Farm. Looking north from the hilltop where the prehistoric hut circles are there panoramic views of St Breward Church across the surrounding farmland. To the south a view

²⁶ Emblance Downs and Lady Down were formerly joined together by an additional strip of Common Land and therefore were recorded as one area at the time of the Common's registration in 1965. Today, the strip of land is no longer part of the Common.

²⁷ King Arthur's Hall is a Scheduled Ancient Monument, Cornwall no.81.

of an old crane's jib, in the now defunct Hantergantick quarry, is a reminder of St Breward's once rich granite industry.

7.3 Archaeology/industry

Although King Arthur's Hall is actually on King Arthur's Down in the Manor of Hamatethy, it features significantly in the landscape of the Manor of Blisland. The rectangular earthwork is considered to be originally an early medieval animal pound for the hundred of Trigg, later retained as a pound for both the manors of Hamatethy and Blisland.²⁸ Here straying animals from either manor would be impounded with a fee payable for their release.

Just to the south of King Arthur's Hall is a medieval earth bank running west to east and dividing the Manor of Blisland from the Manor of Hamatethy. Both Blisland and Hamatethy are recorded in the Domesday Book suggesting that this boundary may be very early. Compared with the earth banks on Trehudreth Downs, this bank is very much more substantial. A similarly broad earth bank, originally a continuation of the former, can be seen on Lady Down at Irish, dividing Lady Down from the Treswallock Downs, part of Hamatethy. In addition to these medieval boundary features, there are also the visible remains of medieval field systems to the north of Leaze and below Mount Pleasant and Priest's Hill. Within these old fields are two stone circles, one of which is damaged.²⁹ Close by there is an old turf stead – a rectangular platform surrounded by a drainage ditch where turf would have been stacked to dry out before being taken back to the homestead for winter fires, while to the west of Leaze Farm is an open cist grave and several hut circles. To the north of Ivey, at the area known as Ivey's Plain, there is another medieval earth bank of smaller proportions that formerly enclosed an area of land around the farm.

There is little evidence of industry on Emblance Downs, although Herring³⁰ has identified the remains of a leat running parallel to the old manorial boundary bank near King Arthur's Hall. This, he suggests, formerly fed a tin streaming works to the north of Leaze.

²⁸ Herring, P.C. (1986), *An Exercise in Landscape History: Pre-Norman and Medieval Brown Willy and Bodmin Moor, Cornwall*.

²⁹ These stone circles are Scheduled Ancient Monuments, Cornwall nos. 123 and 397.

³⁰ Herring, P.C. (1986), *An Exercise in Landscape History: Pre-Norman and Medieval Brown Willy and Bodmin Moor, Cornwall*, p.127.

At both ends of Lady Down there is evidence of earlier settlements, cairns, hut circles and enclosures. Again, there is little sign of industry on Lady Down except for the occasional stone splitting, although just below Lady Down to the south are the granite quarries of Hantergantick and De Lank that have been major employers in the parishes of both St Breward and Blisland - St Breward granite adorning many of the most prominent structures in London, including Tower Bridge and the Thames Embankment.³¹

7.4 Emblance Downs

The name Emblance is first recorded in c.1580 in the Early Chancery Proceedings as *Emlands*, and according to Gover (1948, 104) the name is possibly Old English *efn* or *emn* 'smooth' + 'land'.

The north side of Emblance Downs is bounded by a series of boundary stones that run from the marsh on the western boundary, across to a tributary of the river De Lank at the eastern boundary near Mount Pleasant and Priest Hill. These closely follow the line of the medieval bank that marks the boundary between the manors of Blisland and Hamatethy, and several of them are positioned right on the medieval boundary bank. Just below and to the east of King Arthur's Hall a second earth bank runs east and joins another earth bank that formerly enclosed a medieval field system above the existing inbye fields to the north of Leaze. The western boundary of Emblance Downs is marked by a fence that runs north-south through an area of marsh, where it joins the boundary of inbye land at Bolatherick. The southern boundary is also marked by the enclosed fields or inbye land around Whiteheads, Ivey and Bedrawl Farms. The eastern boundary is bounded by the fields and inbye land at Leaze.

There are nineteen boundary stones recorded on the maps of Emblance Downs and of those only two are missing. The stones can be divided into three groups: those that mark the manorial boundary / the northern boundary of Emblance Downs, a row that follow the marshland on the western boundary, and a further group that is set up on the medieval boundary bank on Ivey's Plain.

³¹ Methven, D. and Bousfield, D. 1988 'The De Lank Granite Quarries' in Pamela Bousfield (ed) *A History of St Breward: The life of a moorland village*, p.101.

The western group of stones within the marsh area include boundary stones nos. 124/1, 124/2, 124/11 and 124/13. Today stone no. 124/1 remains missing, while stone no. 124/2 is enclosed on private land. All three of the surviving stones display the letter **M** for Molesworth on their eastern face. At the northern boundary, stone no. 124/4 on the south-east corner of the inbye land of Lower Candra has been removed, but may be the additional boundary stone recorded as no. 124/20 that stands one field to the west of the same boundary hedge and is not shown on any of the maps that were examined. Boundary stone no. 124/6 has been broken off at ground level and only the stump can be identified, while boundary stone no. 124/21 is a modern granite way marker set up in 1994. Of the remaining stones on the northern boundary, stones nos. 124/3, and 124/12 display an **M** on their south face. However, stone 124/3 is buried in the hedge up to the **M** and therefore could have a hidden **X**. Boundary stones nos. 124/5, 124/7, 124/8, 124/9 and 124/20 also display **MX** for the Manor of Blisland. Again, the boundary stones with **M** or **MX** are used apparently randomly.



*Fig. 14 Boundary stone on manorial boundary between the manors of Blisland and Hamatethy displaying the letter **M** for Molesworth.*

On the south side of Emblance Downs one stone stands on its own beside the roadside (no. 124/10). This prominent stone displays no visible marks, but has been included in the survey because it is a upright pillar that resembles all the other boundary stones on the down; it is marked as a 'stone' by Ordnance Survey. On Ivey's Plain a group of five boundary stones, nos. 124/14, 124/15, 124/16, 124/18 and 124/19, are set up on the old medieval earth bank and all display a monogram consisting of the letters **VI**, with the **I** positioned across one bar of the **V**.



Fig. 15 To the left, One of the five boundary stones on Ivey's Plain with the monogram VI.

7.5 Lady Down

Maclean notes a reference to Lady Down as Lady Moore in c1550, however no knowledge of which lady this refers to has been discovered.³² The down is a long irregular strip of ground, running east to west and enclosed by the inbye land of Penquite, Hallagenna, Irish, Bolatherick, East Rose and West Rose.

Seven boundary stones are recorded on maps of Lady Down and an eighth was discovered during the survey. Today only five of the eight stones survive, while stones nos. 124/29, 124/30 and 124/33, have not been located. Boundary stones nos. 124/28, 124/31 and 124/32 all display the letters **MX**, with an **M** on the remainder. Boundary stone no. 124/32 stands beside a cattle grid on the western entrance to the down from Penquite, while boundary stones nos. 124/26, 124/27 and 124/33 mark a small area of land at the south-western end of the down. Boundary stone no. 124/28, outside the entrance to Blackthorn Cottage at Hallagenna, that was formerly removed in the early 1990s from its original position to a position two fields to the north, was returned in 1998.³³ At Irish Farm another medieval earth bank marking the northern boundary of Lady Down,

³² Maclean, Sir. J. (1873) *The Deanery of Trigg Minor*, Vol. 1.

³³ Ref. Correspondence between David Attwell, North Cornwall District Council, St Breward Parish Council and Mrs P. Bousfield.

which is also the manorial boundary between the manors of Blisland and Hamatethy was marked by another three stones, nos. 124/29, 124/30 and 124/31. Today only stone no. 124/31, which was discovered lying down, survives on this medieval boundary, and is now situated on private land. This area was formerly part of the Common that adjoined Emblance Downs.

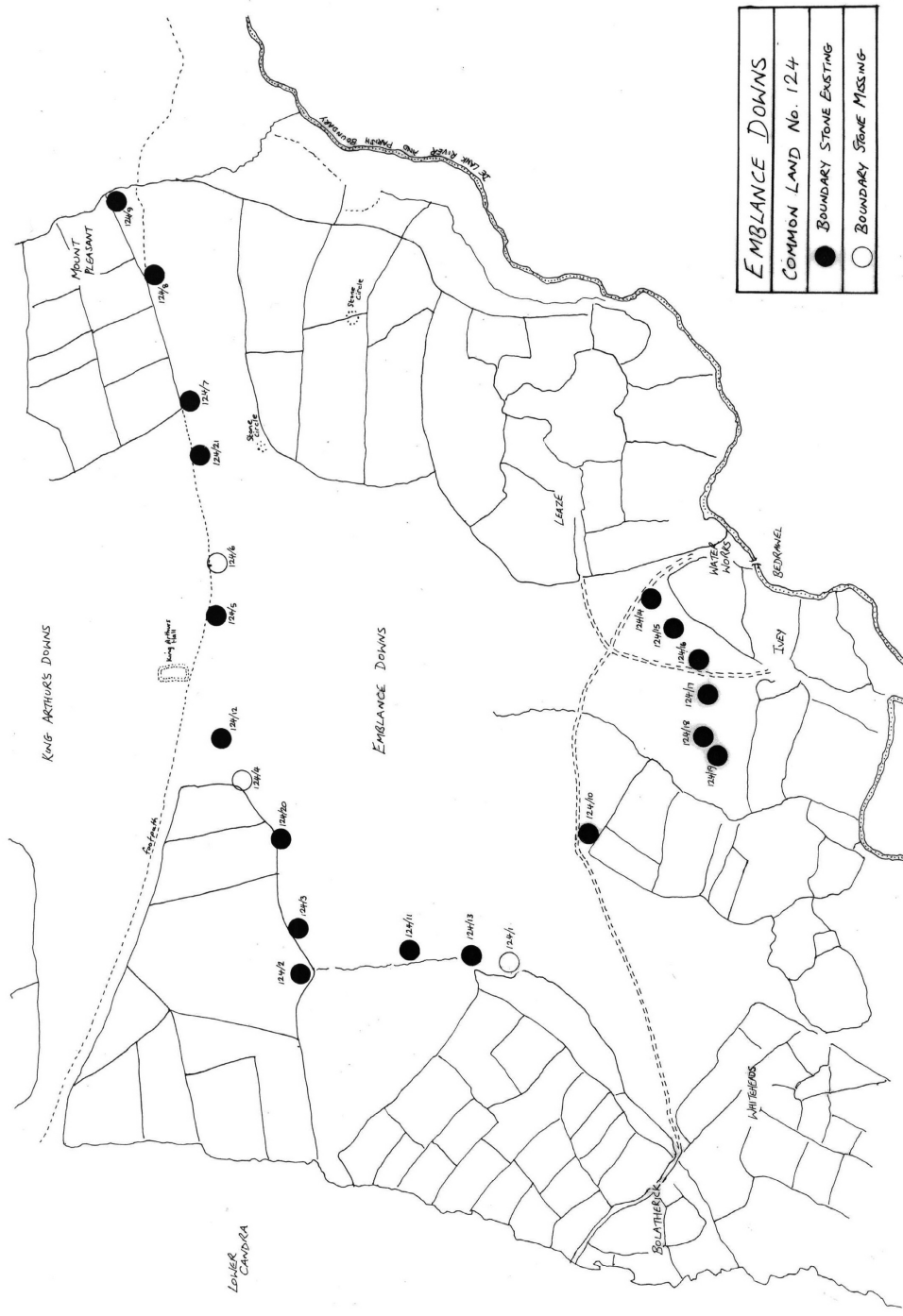


Fig. 16 Map showing the boundary stones on Emblance Downs.

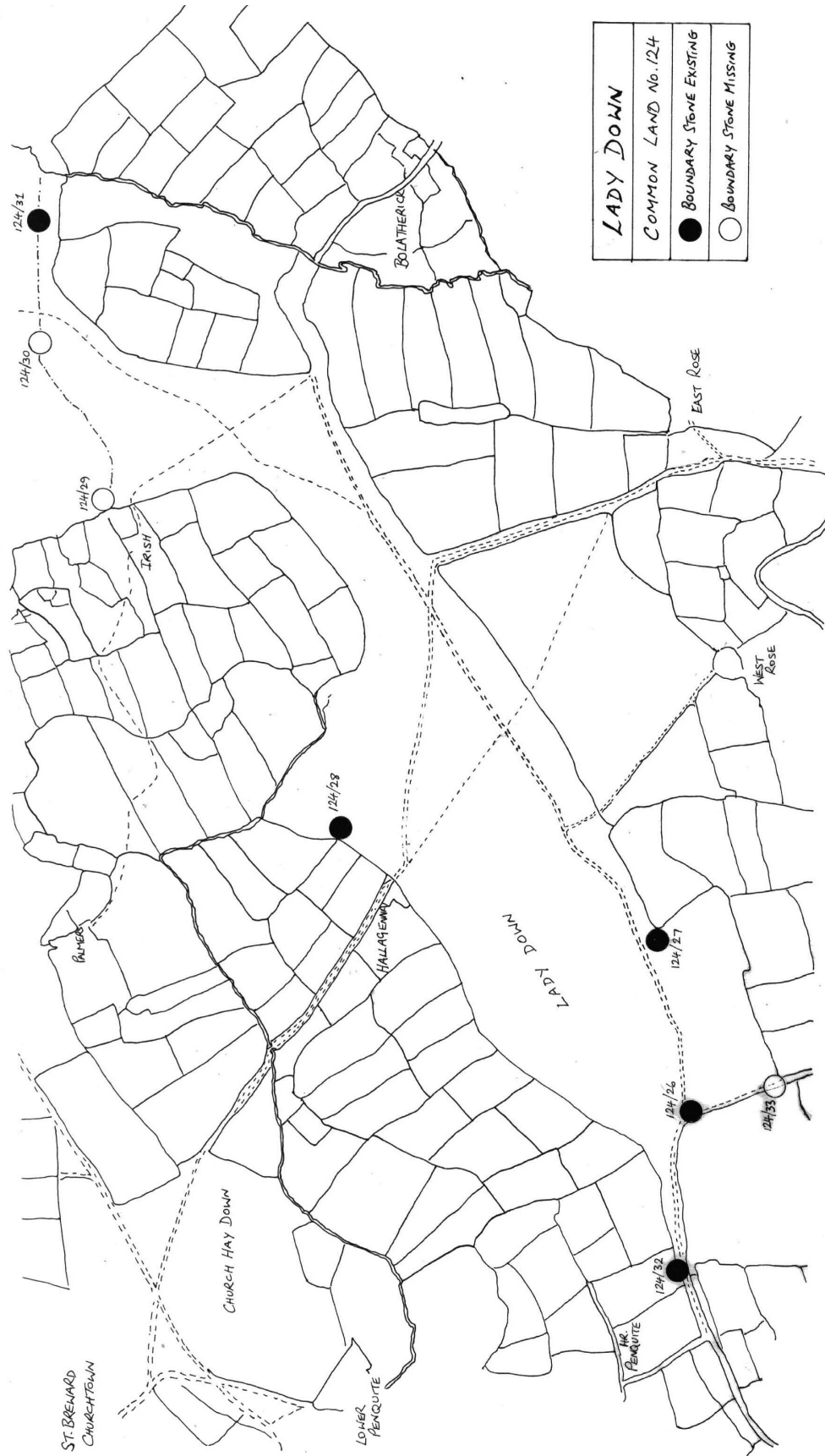


Fig. 17 Map showing the boundary stones on Lady Down.

7.6 Analysis

Altogether twenty-one boundary stones were identified on Emblance Downs by the desktop survey and another eight on Lady Down, and of these seventeen still exist on Emblance Downs and five on Lady Down. The good survival rate on these commons is probably because many of the stones mark the manorial boundary between the manors of Blisland and Hamatethy.

Of these stones, nine existed on Emblance Downs and six on Lady Down in 1840 (tithe map). Twelve of the boundary stones, three on Lady Down and the nine on Emblance Downs, were set up along the remains of a wide medieval bank that divided the two manors. Emblance Downs (manor of Blisland) from King Arthur's Downs (manor of Hamatethy) and Lady Down (manor of Blisland) from Treswallock Downs (manor of Hamatethy) (see figs. 16 and 17). The remaining three boundary stones on Lady Downs divide a small rectangular area of land to the north of Hantergantick that must have once been in separate ownership.



Fig. 18 Medieval boundary bank dividing Lady Down from Treswallock Downs.

All the boundary stones that exist on the manorial boundary with Hamatethy are only marked on the south (manor of Blisland) side. Two have an **M** for Molesworth and seven have **MX** for the manor of Blisland, while stones nos. 124/29, 124/30, 124/6 and 124/4 are missing. The Molesworth family have held the manor of Blisland for many generations, so it is not surprising to find a mixture of boundary stones with both types of legend.³⁴ On most boundary stones, the letters **MX** are different in size, the **X** being smaller and usually less defined. The **X** is therefore easily missed if viewing the boundary stones in poor light. The difference in size and shallowness of the **X** suggests that the letters were carved at different times and by different hands. Did the Molesworth's add an **X** to clearly differentiate the land that was part of the Manor of Blisland from other land they owned?

Running down across a marsh on the west side of Emblance Downs are boundary stones nos. 124/11, 124/13 and 124/1 (missing). Only boundary stone no. 124/13 is shown on the 1880 OS map, while all three are shown on the 1907 map. These boundary stones display an **M** for Molesworth, but have been clearly cut by a different stonemason than those on the manorial boundary and show a much more rounded style of character without serifs (see fig. 19). Boundary stones nos. 124/1 and 124/11 were either set up subsequently or were omitted from the 1880 map.



*Fig.19 Boundary stone displaying rounded **M** character, different in style to those on the manorial boundary.*

The boundary stones on Ivey's Plain stand on the remains of a medieval earth bank, with smaller stones between them, and appear relatively modern, perhaps early 20th century.

The 1840 parish tithe map for St Breward shows the boundary as a dashed line with seventeen marks to represent the smaller unmarked stones, while the tall inscribed boundary stones are not shown (see fig. 20). Neither are

these boundary stones shown on either the 1880 nor 1907 OS maps, suggesting that they are relatively modern. This is further supported by visual inspection, which shows the carving

³⁴ Even Lt.Col. J. A. Molesworth St Aubyn was uncertain about the letters **MX**, in a letter to Mrs Bousfield in July 1985, he confirmed that boundary stones displaying an **M** represented his land, but was unsure about **MX**.

on the stones to be sharp and crisp and not weathered or worn. Each stone has the monogram **IV** carved on it. Should this read **IV** and does this represent Ivey? This boundary is also used for grazing rights and is recorded on the maps of the Commons Registration in 1965.

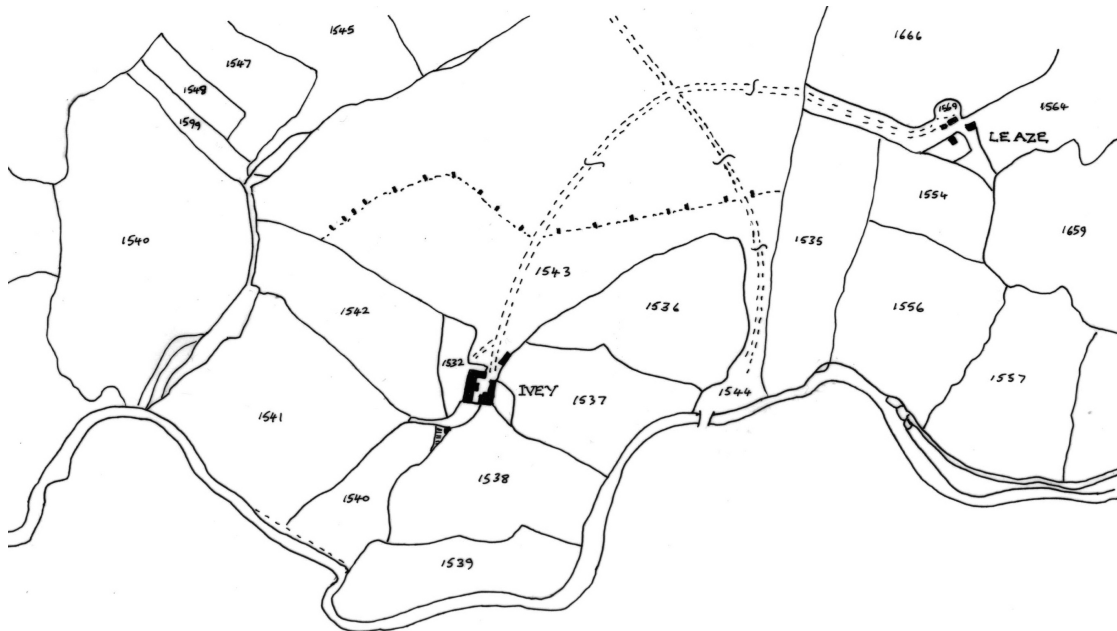


Fig. 20 A copy of the St Brevard Tithe map showing the boundary on Ivey's Plain.

The three additional boundary stones that are shown on the TA map at Lady Down mark a discreet area of land to the north of Hantergantick. (see fig. 21). Again these boundary stones are only marked on the outside face with the letter **M** for Molesworth. The inside face on the stones that would represent the owner of this small tract of land are not cut. On the tithe map this parcel of land is recorded as no.1368, part of the common of Lady Down pasture and held under Hantergantick; it was owned by Lady Grenville and leased to Christopher Stevens.

Another boundary stone that is just beyond the area of study at Hantergantick was shown to the writer by Mrs. P. Bousfield. It serves as a gatepost to a cottage garden at Hantergantick and displays the letters **PM** on its north face, these letters have not been identified.

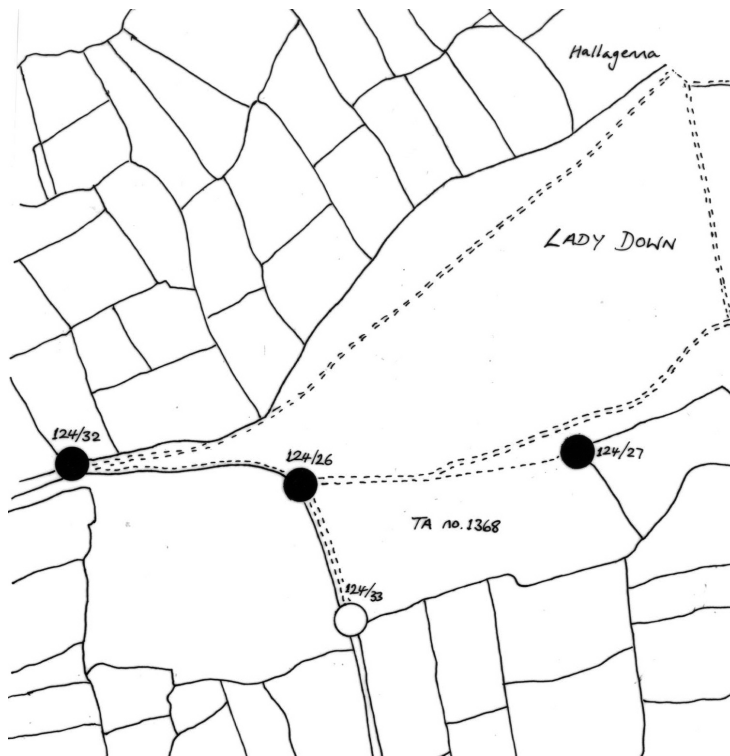


Fig.21 Parcel of land no. 1368 on the Tithe Map.