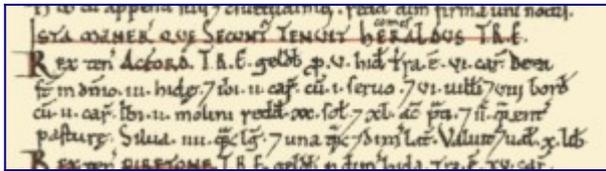


What's in a Name. – Child Okeford

The Village Name



The first recorded name of the village is in the Domesday book [1086] when it was known simply as Ackford. [The “Exeter” version of Domesday calls us Ackforda”.

The origin appears to be “oak-tree” ford from the old English *ac* [oak] and [*ford*]. The ford is long gone but it is tempting to think it was where Hayward bridge is today.

The definitive list of the variations in the village name was compiled by A. D. Mills of the English Place Names Society. He published four volumes of “The Place-Names of Dorset” in 1989. Child Okeford is found in volume 3 wherein he listed over 42 variations of the name. These have been published in full, together with a list of source materials at:

<http://placenames.org.uk/browse/mads/epns-deep-59-b-subparish-000009>

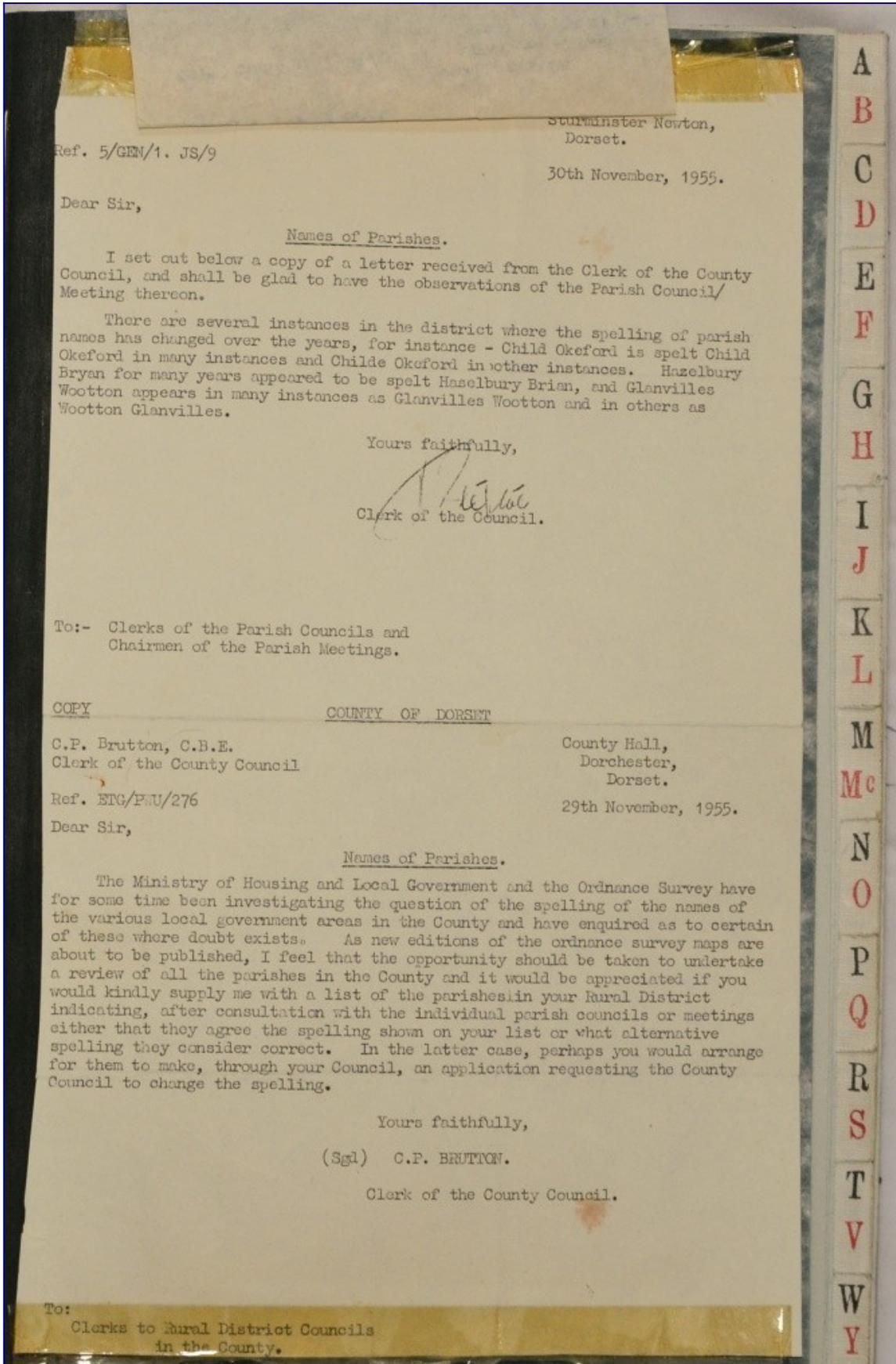
The name Ackford persisted in use until 1245 but in 1210 a prefix, *chilt-*, became attached and is recorded in some documents. Thus in 1210 we find Chiltaneford, in 1212 Chiltacford, and in 1227 Childacford.

Childe first appears in 1262 only to be replaced by Chyld in 1284 and then makes a comeback in 1307 when we find Childe Okford. Another century passed until finally in, 1410, we come across the modern spelling Child[e] Okeford- the “e” on child being an optional extra.

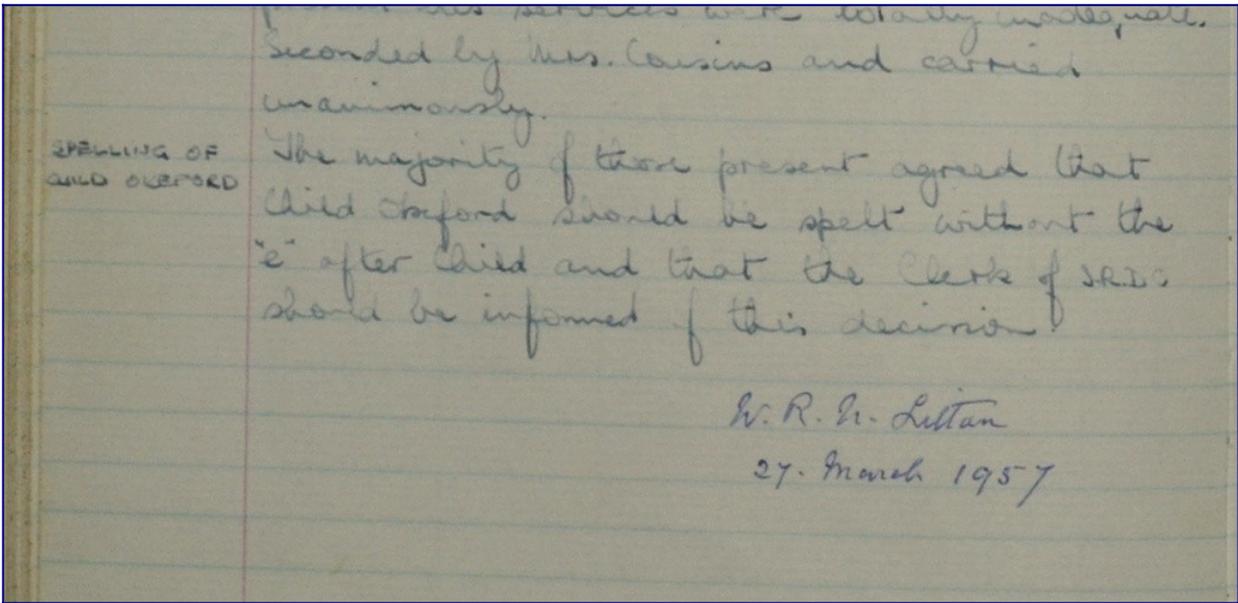
If the “oak ford” is readily explained what about the Child? Mills considered two principle origins, the first is that it comes from *Celde* or *Cielde* a West Saxon word meaning “a spring”. The Domesday book tells us that in the time of Edward the Confessor one of the two Manors was held by the future King Harold and that after the conquest it was held by King William and his half brother the Count of Mortain which explains why the second option is the more favoured. For “Child” probably derives from “*cild*” an old English word meaning “son of a royal or noble family”. Thus the full meaning would be come “the Oakford manor belonging to the young nobleman”.

These 42 variations would continue to reoccur in documents over the centuries, as late as 1575

we find Chele Aukford and in 1870, Child Ockford, but the tidy minds of the Government and Ordnance Survey set to work. In November 1955 they wrote to county councils about village names where some doubt as to the spelling existed.

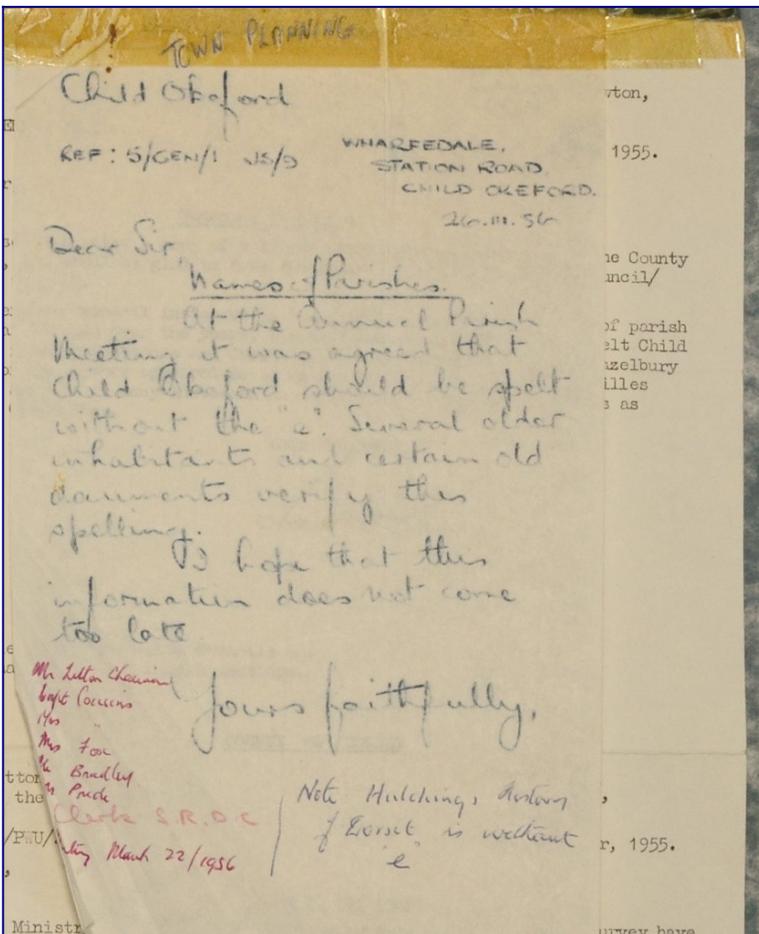


Naturally enough this was brought to the attention of the Parish Council who considered the matter on 22nd March 1956 [the date of 1957 was added afterwards]



They wrote back to the County Council as follows :

“At the annual parish meeting it was agreed that Child Okeford should be spelt without the ‘e’. Several older inhabitants and certain old documents verify this spelling.”



Fontmell Parva

The name “Fontmell” derives from one of the few Celtic words that have survived in the area meaning: “*spring by the bare hill*”. Fontmell Parva appears to have been a separate manor in some distant past but in the 17th century it became a part of George Trenchards manor in Child Okeford. Later still it was owned by the St Loe family one member of whom, William, married the famous “Bess of Hardwick”.

The name “Fontmell” seems to have changed relatively little; it was first recorded in 877 as Funtemell, in 1250 Parva Funtemel , in 1412 Little Funtymels, before settling down to Fontmel Parva in 1770.

Gold Hill

Its tempting to think that all names are of ancient origin and most probably are, even though they are not necessarily recorded in any documents. Thus Duck street does not appear before 1811. In the case of Gold Hill the name first appears on the 1840 tithe map but was clearly used long before that. Several counties have localities called Gold Hill: Surrey, Norfolk, Dorset, and Buckingham all have their “Gold Hills”, and all appear to have the same meaning : ‘Golda’s hill’.

This comes from the Old English plant name of ‘*Golde*’, (the modern “Marsh Marigold”) and presumably relates to the places where these plants grew. The name “*Marigold*” refers to the use of the flower in medieval churches at Easter as a tribute to the Virgin Mary, as in “Mary gold”. In Appleby Magna, Leicestershire there are several fields called Blobbs, Upper Blobbs and so on, In this case they are named for “water-blobb” a local dialect word for marsh marigolds. This was clearly a common plant at the time.

A second possible derivation is that the word as ‘Golda’ was also used as a personal name, to give ‘Golda’s hill’. However there are no known records of this word being used as a surname.

Hambledon Hill

For many people Child Okeford is “the Hill”. Hameledun appears to be the first name recorded in about 1270. Hambledon, Humbledown were recorded in 1570, Hamildon hill 1773, Hamilton Hill in 1811 and 1840 [on the tithe map] and finally Hambledon in the later Ordnance Survey maps.

The name is not uncommon; Mills states that it is found in 7 counties and the derivation is seemingly straightforward from old Norse. *Hamel* or *hamol* meaning, “scarred or mutilated” and *dun* meaning hill. Hambledon Hill is thus a tautology. No doubt the name comes from the appearance of the Neolithic earthworks and hill fort.

Haywards Bridge

For how long has a bridge crossed the Stour at Child Okeford? Sadly – we don’t know. “*Pontem de Heyford*” is first recorded in 1268 and the English form Heyford Bridge in 1270. However the French form persisted in use as by 1280 the name is back to Pontem de Heyford. No further

mention of the bridge can be found until "*Haifordsbridge*" in 1337. "*Hayward ys Bridge*" is recorded in 1494 then, "*Eyford*", 50 years later, before changing to "*Hewood*" in 1584. "*Hayford*" in 1618 is followed by its transition to its final form with "*Hayward Bridge*" being recorded in 1774.

The name in its first form derives from old English "*heg*" [hay] and "*ford*". In other words a ford used at the time of hay-making later conflated with "*brycg*" or bridge. The 1494 entry appears to attribute ownership to an individual as in "Hayward his bridge" implying it belonged to a person called Hayward. Mills however believes this to be an error. Haywards were villagers appointed to look after the hedges in a village the name deriving from old English "*hecge-weard*" or hedge keeper. In the Medieval period people generally did not have family names, they were often derived from their jobs; for example "Robert the Hayward" became simply Robert Hayward. The very earliest form is undoubtedly "ford" however so Mills prefers this derivation.

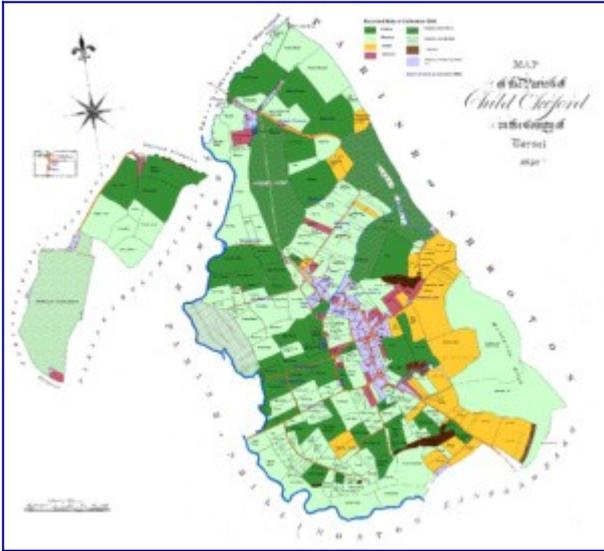
The Hundred of Redlane.

Child Okeford was a part of the "Hundred of Redlane" in ancient times. The hundred was a subdivision of a county and was supposed to contain enough land to support one hundred families. The Hundred of Redlane was formed about 1252 from parts of two earlier hundreds – Gillingham and Farrington. It is made up for Fifehead Magdalen, Kinston Magna, Silton, East and West Stour, Todber, Buckland Weston, Child Okeford, Shroton, Manston and Sutton Waldron.

The name "redlane" comes from, as Hutchins History of Dorset, describes it", a very small hamlet, situated about half a mile SW from Todbere remarkable for nothing but its giving its name to a hundred."

As you travel from Manston to Gillingham, Redlane is the last part of the road before it joins the B3092 Gillingham to Marnhull road. It is still named Redlane and there is a farm there that almost certainly dates from medieval times if not earlier.

The Field Names of Child Okeford



The naming of places is fraught with difficulty; the naming of Fields is even worse. The only time that all the fields in the parish have been mapped and named was in 1840 when John Martin of Evershot drew the Tithe Map. On the map itself the fields are numbered but in the accompanying “apportionment” document the names of the fields are given and this has been used to plot them on the above picture.

I have drawn on a number of sources to arrive at what I hope is a coherent account of the field names of Child Okeford. The first is a book written by the eponymously named John Field, “English Field Names – A Dictionary” which has become a standard work. The second is the definitive, “The Place-Names of Dorset” by A D Mills volume 3 which not only lists place names but also field names.

Nearly all English village were in existence by the time of the Norman Conquest and the majority were named by the Anglo-Saxons. Field names are much more difficult to date.

In large part of the country, including Dorset, the land was originally farmed as “open” or “common” fields. Typically there were three fields in a parish; one was planted with wheat to feed the people, one with barley to feed any overwintering animals and the other left fallow. They were very large, several hundred acres and, except at the boundaries, were not surrounded by hedges. As each family had to produce its own food each family had to have land in each of the fields. They had multiple small “strips” in the fields and in a large parish there could be several thousand of these strips. The remnants of these open fields were still seen in 1840 when North, South and Middle fields were recorded even though the parish had for the most part been inclosed [the term they used at the time] many years before.

It was impossible to name so many strips so they were allotted a number instead and these were recorded in the manorial field book.

From the 13th century on the open fields slowly began to be inclosed with consolidation of the strips into larger “closes”, what we would today call fields. At some stage these closes began to be named; the earliest in Dorset that I have found dates from the 13th century but we have no idea when they were first named, or by whom or how they changed over the years or whether the local inhabitants actually used these names. We cannot even be certain whether those named for people were named by themselves or by someone else at a later date. All we can be certain of is the names recorded in 1840.

An example of the problems encountered are seen with Arnolds Mead. The first mention of the Arnold family is in 1664 and there is an Arnold in the village in 1727 but when was the field actually named? Who knows. Another problem is that some field-names have disappeared. The ‘The Historical Gazetteer of England’s Place-Names’ and Mills gives a list of field names that are not present on the 1840 Tithe map. Why these names disappeared or what names replaced them is also not known.

1372	Derthehilla
1612	Bandolls Mead
1612	Marle Lane
1648	Rowham
1648	Scotts Meade after Robert Scott
1648	Chillpitt furlonge
1652	Farmers Ham
1661	Goosehill or Gooseham
1702	Lamphayes
1725	Higher Meade
Undated	Crouke, Goss’s Ground, Mansion House, Pleasure Pond, Rack Plots, Trenchard.

Field No.
on tithe
Map

Name

Meaning

105

[Little]Alder Coppice

A rather drab tree which favours wet ground used to stabilise river banks. The hard wood is easily shaped and was in great demand by clog makers. It provides excellent tool handles and charcoal. Alder coppices provided charcoal to gunpowder factories in the New Forest and lake district.

106

Little Alder Close

Strictly speaking today’s fields should not be known as fields but as closes. Close was another word for an enclosure

111 Great Alder Close

197 Alder Moore Moore presumably “moor” was marshy land which in this case would suit the tree

313 Arnolds Mead “meadow belonging to a man named Arnold” In this case probably Thomas Arnold mentioned in the waywardens rate [see above]. Several fields were named after people in this document and yet 113 years later there was no trace of their descendants.

The word *acre* is derived from oe “*æcer*” originally meaning “open field”. It was originally a functional ¹ unit of measurement being the amount of land tillable by a yoke of 8 oxen in one day. The only problem with such definitions is that there is no consistency since local conditions vary enormously and this determined how much could be ploughed. H C Darby describes the problem well in his book “Domesday England”.

340 Acre and a half *“It is impossible to reduce plough teams and acres to say nothing of the various miscellaneous entries to a common denominator. The number of acres needed to feed the 11th century team is very uncertain and may well have varied from place to place. Moreover we do not know the size of a Domesday acre which may also have varied.”*

There is little evidence of greater accuracy in mediaeval times when conventional, fiscal, local and standard acres may all be found and all varied in size. ² What is certain is that the early a reference to an acre is the less likely it is to equate to the modern definition which is the area of 1 chain by 1 furlong (66 by 660 feet), which is exactly equal to $\frac{1}{640}$ of a square mile, 43,560 square feet, approximately 4,047 m², or about 40% of a hectare.

As a consequence field names with acre in them are rarely of the area stated; in this case it is about an acre and a quarter.

243 Barley Close

An enclosed arable field presumably used to grow barley. Barley was a part of a “three field” crop rotation system which is know to have operated in CO. It was based on a Roman system of “feed, food and fallow”. The feed was barley grown for overwintering the animals, barley straw being more digestible than wheat. The food was wheat for human consumption and the fallow was ground left empty for a year to recover from two previous years of cereal

cultivation.

77	Beckhams	Oe homestead belonging to a man called Becca. This is likely to be one of the few references to a really ancient name.
101	Bush Close	An enclosed field originally scrub land.
181	Birds	1. Oe “Bridd” almost always a field where young birds would congregate. See also Crawls.
182	Lower Birds	
184	Higher Birds	2. May be named after Thomas Burt villager in 1664.
192	Brick Close	Oc Celtic one of the few Celtic derived names in the village; “Brig” meaning hill. Thus enclosed field at the bottom of a hill. The field is actually in Fontmell Parva and Fontmell itself is a Celtic name. See Fontmell Mead.
193	Brandless	Oe “Brand” meaning fire, flame; firebrand, piece of burning wood, torch. The suffix could derive from oe -leas meaning devoid of or more likely oe -laes meadow land. There was a stone bridge here of this name in 1791 [see below].
99	Breach Breach Orchard	Oe “Bryce” or “brec” meaning a breaking into, an opening or gap. Usually taken to indicate either a field previously pasture now arable or a field carved out of a wood.
206 207	Blackley	Elsewhere it has been reported that “Black” is usually taken to indicate the colour of the soil. In some cases it has been shown to be due to previous industrial activity. This seems unlikely in CO.
209	Black Ley Mead	However Hutchins History of Dorset lists stone bridges extant in 1792 one of which is called “Blacks” situated at Fontmell Parva. It is probable that the field and bridge were named after a man called Black. -ley is usually a field that was originally land ploughed and then left fallow.
216	Broad Close	Oe “Brad” – sound like it means. Wide Open and extended. First noted in a Deed deposited at the Dorchester History centre dating from 1689.
211	Lower Broad Field	
221	Higher Broad Field	
225	Butts Mead	Two possible explanations ; 1. Probably relates to ownership by a Robert Butt

		mentioned in the Hearth tax returns of 1664. First noted in a Deed deposited at the Dorchester History centre dating from 1689.
289	Butts House Orchard	<p>2. When it comes to Butt and Butts there are several possibilities. In Frankish the word “but” means a stump possibly derived from old Norse “butr” a log of wood. By the 13th century Old French it had come to mean aim, goal, end, target (of an arrow, etc.) Most people today would think of Butts as a target for archery practice forgetting perhaps that the first targets were usually tree stumps.</p>
226	Blackmoor	Black usually relates to colour of field and moor was any marshy ground.
229		
243	Barley Close	An enclosed field growing barley.
292 293	Blandford Way	Probably from OE “blæge” + “ford” meaning a ford where Blay [a fish] or gudgeon are found.
296		First noted in a Deed deposited at the Dorchester History centre dating from 1689.
		OE bean + aecer ; A field where beans of some sort are grown.
317	Benacre	<p>These were an important crop. In lean years following a poor harvest bean meal was mixed with flour in bread.³</p> <p>The will of John Moore 1763 however refers to this field as Benn Acre so it may have been after a person originally.</p>
199	Breach	From OE “ <i>brec</i> ” Breach, Brake. From the Middle Ages on meaning newly broken land.
189	Calves Ground	<p>Presumably where young calves were brought on,</p> <p>According to Field and Mills this often refers to the site of ancient earthworks.</p>
341	Castles	There is of course a “Castle Lane” in Okeford Fitzpaine and one in Shillingstone. Mills is of the opinion that the earthworks concerned were those near Bere Marsh farm.

20 149 150	Chalk Crate and Orchard	Crate is one of the many terms for a small enclosure.
129	Chalk Pit Twilands	A chalk pit in the field described as Twilands [see later]
250	Chalwell	1. Chal refers to chalk and usually this combination means a spring arising in a chalky area.
247	Chalwell Orchard	2. Possibly from “ <i>ceald</i> ” cold spring or stream and “well”.
297 298 299 300	Chisell	Oe Chisel, chesil, chesille -gravelly ground. Some names are used frequently. In this case they are all in close proximity but this is not always the case.
302 303		These fields were given in a marriage settlement date 1703
157	Cleverhays	Oe clafre -clover. The suffix *hays and variants indicates a mown meadow or a meadow overgrown with a particular plant .
254 255	Culverland	Dofe [oe dove] and culver [oe culfer] relate to pigeons. Presumably these fields were particularly popular with pigeons.
335	Cosats mead	Not known. Had it been *sart it would mean land cleared from woodland or tree stumps.
213 218 310	Cowleaze , little , great and great	Oe leasow – another word for an enclosed field. An alternative explanation is that some fields were “stinted” that is to say the number of animals allowed in them was limited to avoid over grazing. The term used widely is gate or gait so you will often find a gait for 20 cows [for example]. In Dorset however the term gait was often replaced by the word “lease”.
		From old english “crawe” meaning a crow. Probably means a field or clearing inhabited by crows.
3112 314 315 316	Crawls	It is truly incredible that any wildlife survives in our country. An act of 1523 by Henry VIII ⁴ ordered that each parish had to provide itself with a net to catch crows rooks and choughs. A penny was paid for every three heads of crows , for every six young owls and six unbroken eggs. Over the years more and more animals were added to the list. John Housley ⁵ has found vestry minutes in CO indicating the payment of money

for sparrow heads. The rate in CO was 3d per dozen which appears to be the going rate as in Warblington Hants 18s was paid for 12 dozen. In Bedfordshire they hated hedgehogs – at Eaton Socon over 1500 were killed. The only animal to do well was ironically the fox the 18th and 19th century saw the introduction of coverts to provide breeding areas for them. I suspect Shroton Brake was one of these.

261 272 Dodcrate

Crate means an enclosure but Dod ? No ideas. In 1777 the field was known as Doderates

180 Downs

In 1840 there were several people in the village called Down. However in the waywarden rate register 1727 [see above] there were two Downs listed – and I would prefer to believe it was named after one of them.

222 264
Eight Acres
Locks Eight Acres

A number of fields are named with the acreage . Rarely do they match the number of acres stated. For example the first eight acres is only 6 and Locks is only 5. There were several “Locks” living in the village in 1840 and presumably one of their predecessors once owned the field since none of them did at this time.

415 Eleven Acres

At least this one is pretty close it was 10 acres 32 perchs – only 8 perchs short of 11 acres.

200 Fontmill Mead

First recorded in 877 “funtemell” in relation to Fontmell Magna it was originally from the Celtic “spring by the bare hill”. Fontmell Parva [the one in the parish of CO] is not mentioned until 1250 and was a manor. It was a new creation as it is not mentioned in Domesday.

183 187
Furze Close at Whist Lane
Furze Close at Gallows Corner

Furze or Gorse grows very well on heathland and other poor soils. Both these fields have been “cut” out of the “Higher Common” and may indicate the nature of the vegetation on the common. Furze can be eaten directly by ponies and if crushed up or mixed with chopped straw by cows. In literature furze was made famous by Thomas Hardy where Clym Yeobright in “Return of the Native” becomes a furze cutter – the furze being used as firewood.

Whist usually means “white” in this context possibly a boundary stone. The origin of Gallows corner is lost in time.

281 Gale Mead

Probably relate to the great myrtle or sweet gale Myrica Gale. On the other hand so many names relate to people who had lived in the village that I would not be surprised to learn

there was a Mr or Mrs Gale.

304 Gardeners Coppice Presumably the name of somebody but if so I have not been able to trace them..

157 Giddy Acre I would like to think that just as there was a Mr Jubber there was a Mr Giddy. If there was I have not found him sadly.

It was in any case 1.5 acres.

There are several localities, called Gold Hill, in the counties of Surrey, Norfolk, Dorset, and Buckingham. All have the same meaning of 'Golda's hill', from the Old English pre 7th century plant name of 'Golde', (the modern 'Marigold'⁶) and describing where these plants grew. "Marigold" refers to its use in medieval churches at Easter as a tribute to the Virgin Mary, as in "Mary gold".

154 Gold Hill In Appleby Magna, Leicestershire there are several fields called Blobbs, Upper Blobbs and so on, In this case they are named for "water-blobb" a local dialect word for marsh marigolds. This was clearly a common plant at the time.

A second possible derivation is that the word as 'Golda' was also used as a personal name, to give 'Golda's hill'. However there are no known recordings of any surname associated with these places, or anything like them.

208 Gore Gores were the triangular pieces of land where two furlongs or fields met. Post enclosure they retained the name. On this occasion however the field is not that shape so I wonder if there is another explanation.

255b Greenway Lane Rarely do we get names specifically linked to a particular use. "Green" lanes or ways are very common and in at least one case, Green lane in Garton on the Wold [Yorkshire], there is an ancient charter recording its meaning as "an occupation road giving access to selions in open fields."

Here is evidence for an open field system in CO. Such lanes were used to access the open fields but were also used for grazing. In 1840, though the fields surrounding it had been enclosed, this long narrow lane was still being used as pasture for cattle. By then the fields surrounding it were inclosed by hedges but in the days of the open fields there were none to stop the animals wandering. The answer was to

tether graze them .

- 140 137 Ham
Little Ham
- Oe An enclosure often used for a piece of land in the bend of a river or stream
- Hameledun appears to be the first name recorded in about 1270. Hambledon, Humbledown were recorded in 1570, Hamildon hill 1773, Hamilton Hill in 1811 and 1840 [on the tithe map] and finally Hambledon in the later Ordnance Survey maps.
- 121 Hambledon Hill
- The name is not uncommon; Mills states that it is found in 7 counties and the derivation is seemingly straightforward from old Norse. *Hamel* or *hamol* meaning, “scarred or mutilated” and *dun* meaning hill. Hambledon Hill is thus a tautology. No doubt the name comes from the appearance of the Neolithic earthworks and hill fort.
- 118 Harveys acre
- Clearly belongs to a man named Harvey and John Harvey owned several fields in CO. I have not been able to trace him. The plot is about half an acre.
- 161 Haines Close
- Oe haegan; if so its a tautology as it means enclosure. The name also makes you think of a name. However though there is a Hain family in the village he was young and an agricultural labourer. The only other Haines recorded in the village was John Haines committed in 1818 [with 5 others one aged 12] to between 6 and 12 months hard labour for “lopping and topping”. The 12 year old was sent home on account of his age.
- 173 Hay Croft
- 274 Hay House
- Hay enclosure and Hay House. House is commonly found in tithe apportionments? What its significance is as there are rarely houses present nearby.
- Haywards Lane
- Although not a field the origin of this name is of some interest. Hayward derives from oe *hege-weard* “guardian of the fence/hedge
- The Hayward was an important official in the village. He was one of the villagers appointed to the post and his duties are described in “Husbandry” by Walter of Henley in 1280.
- He was something of a foreman and his duties extended throughout the year. According to Walter he “*ought to sow the lands and be over the ploughers and harrowers at the time*

of each sowing. And he ought to make all the [tenants] who are bound and accustomed to come do so. to do the work they ought to do.”

After ploughing and sowing in January and February the next main task for the Hayward was to supervise hay-making and the harvest;

“And in haytime he ought to be over the mowers, the making, the carrying, and in August assemble the reapers and the [tenants] and the labourers and see that the corn be properly and cleanly gathered; and early and late watch so that nothing be stolen or eaten by beasts or spoilt.”

Finally when the work of the year was complete; *“he ought to tally with the provost all the seed, and boon-work [the work the villagers did for the lord of the manor, and customs, and labour,*

which ought to be done in the manor throughout the year”

No wonder that Walter says of the Hayward he *“ought to be an active and sharp man for he must, early and late, look after and go round and keep the woods, corn and meadows and other things belonging to his office.”*

With the passing of the open field system and feudalism the Hayward was not made redundant. As the fields began to be inclosed he became responsible for maintaining the villages hedge rows ensuring animals could not escape and ditches were kept clear of undergrowth. It is not to fanciful to see him as a pre-cursor to today’s tree officers.

Haywards Lane today is a shadow of its former self. The Inclosure map of 1845 shows it running from Haywards bridge to the Cross. The opening of the Somerset and Dorset Joint Railway led to the lower portion being renamed Station Road.

- | | | |
|-----|--------------------|---|
| | | 1. Oe hyrning horn shaped or curved hill. |
| 108 | Herringway Orchard | |
| 109 | Herringway | 2. In 1729 this land was called Herring Hay which could be the name of a person combined with oe “haeg” an enclosure. There is a lease from 1733 so it must have been enclosed before then D1/9321A |
| 188 | Hill Bottom | Self explanatory |

319	Higher Mead	Higher/ lower are relative terms with often no great significance. Mead is of course meadow land.
		At first sight this might seem to be a name but possibly it is a corruption of Holloway
138 139	Holways Holways Coppice	No farmer wanted roads running through his land. It was customary for landowners to mark their boundaries by embanking them. This left a track formed by the excavation and these were typically called Holloways. Subsequently they were filled in when tarmac was laid so the depth of the track is lost. It may be thought that the road was formed by simple erosion and wearing away but the clue is given by the fact of the bank being higher than the field it enclosed. The stretch of road where these fields lay shows such embankment. ⁷
294 295	Holly Wool * 2	? Holy Well or stream; Holly could just be Holly but then why pair this with wool.. However oe wylla means spring or stream References are made in various documents [of other places] in the 18 th century to Holy well.
15 29 190 246	Home Plot	Home field etc is virtually standard throughout the country for the enclosure nearest the settlement centre or farmhouse. Plot is oe plot – a small piece of land.
248 409	Home Ground	Ground was often used to denote a piece of land that once arable had been converted to pasture. This often happened at the time of enclosure.
411	Home Field	Home Ground was recorded in 1729 and there was a Home Close in 1648.
198	House Tucking Mill	My thanks to John Housley for using this extract from his book Child Okeford The End of an Era 1815-1860 “Dorset was well known for its wool and by the later Middle ages was using technologies learned from continental weavers to produce its broadcloth...The raw material was short staple wool , carded and spun into yarn. The yarn was then woven on a broad loom to produce broadcloth. The cloth was then “fulled” by a process that took place in a fulling, or <u>tucking</u> , mill.”
		Basically the process eliminate oils, dirt, and other impurities, and making it thicker. The man who performed

the fulling was a Fuller or Tucker.

It would appear that there was a fulling mill at Fontmell Parva.

To quote Housley again “I have found no direct reference to the Fontmell Parva mill ..but a document of 1702 refers to John Jeanes of Child Okeford as a fuller..Also the will of John Newman of Hammoon who died in 1814 gives his occupation as fuller.

330 Horse Mead It would be nice to think Horse had some obscure meaning – but it doesn’t. Probably then a meadow where the horses were kept.

Jacob the son of Isaac was fleeing from his brother Esau who had vowed to kill him for stealing his [Esau’s] birthright. Whilst asleep he was dreaming and had a vision of a ladder between heaven and earth with angels using it going up and down from heaven. Jacob took this to indicate that this was a holy place and vowed to give one tenth of his income to further Gods work.

245 Jacobs Ladder Jacobs ladder is also the name of a plant which is native in temperate climates and was once used as a medicinal herb to treat syphilis and rabies.

Finally Jacobs Ladder is also the name given to a cut of beef known also as short ribs. A long-standing resident recalls that the field [now houses] belonged to the local butcher who used to keep the cows there before slaughter. In an agricultural setting naming the field for its links with butchery makes this explanation seem more likely than anything else.

153 Jubbers Mr Jubbers was living in CO when he paid 4s 6d in rates for the maintenance of the roads [see above]. He also had a short drove road named after him as well

249 251 Knot
252 Oe knottr , knepp = hillock

116 Kimbers Acre Farmer Edward Kimber paid in 1727 as rates to the waywarden of 4s 6d. He died in 1755. May relate to a relative John Kimber also in the village dead by 1767.

124 125 Kinnicks field Unfortunately I have not been able to trace the origin of this

field.

126 127

48 Legs Orchard

Derived from oe Leggr – a narrow strip of land resembling a [thin] leg.

166 Leggs

In so far as “long” is concerned there are no surprises. However the “Long Close behind the town” is interesting.

Long close

Town derives from oe tun “enclosure, garden, field, yard; farm, manor; homestead, dwelling house, mansion;” This in turn became “group of houses, village, farm,” Its later meaning “inhabited place larger than a village” (mid-12c.) arose after the Norman conquest when the French equated the word with their word for a larger habitation –*ville*.

237 238 Long close behind the town

The word village comes from the late 14c., “inhabited place larger than a hamlet but smaller than a town,” from Old French *vilage* “houses and other buildings in a group”. Town in field names is associated with the presence of open fields.⁸

239 241 Little Long Moors

244 262 Long Mead

Great Long Mead

Hoskins classified villages into Nucleated -those centred around farmsteads, linear -those extended along a road and scattered, conforming to no definable pattern. At first sight CO might seem to be a linear village and certainly housing developments since 1840 reinforce that impression. However a more than cursory glance at the tithe map shows that the vast majority of houses lie within half a mile of the church with a few outliers at places like Gold Hill. The presence of so many farms within the village centre confirm it as a nucleated village.

219 Louseland

According to The 1811 Dictionary of the Vulgar Tongue. Louseland refers to Scotland! Could this be a corruption of leasow land?

256 257 Great Lynch

Little Lynch

258 259 Lynch

Lynch

Lynch oe hlinc is a fascinating word which has even generated learned articles on its meaning. In medieval times it was simply a boundary between land holdings. In 1669 it was first used to indicate a green-sward separating selions in arable fields. In 1797 it acquired a new use to describe terraces on chalk hill sides. In 1923 the term “strip lynchett” was used to denote the terraces seen in Celtic fields.⁹

Some of these fields were given in a marriage settlement dated 1703 .

290 291 Markstone “stone serving as a landmark,” Old English *mærstan* “boundary stone,” from *mære or maerc* “boundary, object indicating a boundary. Given the position in the village this could have been between CO and Hanford.

234 Mew Close The best offering I can give here is Old English *mæw*, “seagull,” This was a big field and one can imagine it as a meeting place for seagulls.

123 Middle Field Fairly obvious really although there are many fields which could be so named it is unclear why some are chosen and some are not.

329 Middle Mead

280 286 Millways “Child Okeford. Deeds. Messuage in manor of Child Okeford, lands called Millway, Roughham, Gossip Mead, Stonymead, and pasture land not named, 1665. (St. Loe, Rossiter)”

287 308 Great Mill way.

This is the first record I could find of specific field names being used in legal documents. It indicates that at least partial enclosure of the parish must have occurred before this date

The name seems fairly obvious but the question has been raised – what mill? There were two mills mentioned in Domesday in CO but the question must then be asked where were they?

It might seem obvious -from the name -that one was near the current Millbrook House but was this the case?

We know that one mill was sold on 30 April 1776 from a note I found by H E S Simmons, Watermills of Dorset;

“Jno Rossiter of Child Okeford, near Blandford, in the Co. of Dorset, Farmer. On his dwelling house and millhouse adjoining brick and mud built and thatched, situate at Child Okeford, £110.’

The transcription gives the position as being R Stour 0.75m SW. Unfortunately this does not help in defining the position but indicates it was some way from the actual river.

I can find no other mention of a possible mill house and unfortunately although he left a will in which he names John Jnr as the heir to a house in CO he does not specify where

that house is and John Jnr. does not appear to own a house in the tithe files. He is listed in 1841 as living in Okeford farm but where that was is not clear.

John Housley has given a history of Millbrook house in his book but there appears to be no mention of a mill being present even though the house dates from about 1600.

Are there any other clues as to where the mills might be? The tithe map of 1840 shows very few waterways but the choice is interesting.

The first is the Stour of course as we might expect. Next is the network of streams around Fontmell Parva including the Fontmell brook.

Near Millbrook there is a stream which runs across the road [on the 1888 OS it is marked as a ford] and then along the back of what is now Nutmead Close where it appears [on the map] to terminate although of course it runs down to the Stour. The map depicts a widening of the stream above the site of Millbrook house could this have been a millpond?

There is [currently] of course a pond at the back of Portman Drive but this does not correspond to the position of the widening on the map and furthermore on the 1888 OS map the pond is not shown as present. It must have been of a later date.

The third stream is shown arising from a field described as watering pieces and running down under the Duck street and Melway lane eventually to the Stour. Some of the fields nearby are Millway etc. Could there have been a mill here? If so there is little evidence of it. None of the streams mentioned here appear large enough or strong enough to power a watermill.

The interesting thing to me is that the streams shown on the maps *are not the complete courses* of those streams and other streams which must have been extant in 1840 are not shown at all. The streams at Fontmell Parva of course still served the "withy beds" [coppiced willow in what is water logged ground] which were still economically active [they were included in the tithe apportionment] and I wonder whether the other streams were included because they had some other economic significance.

The streams around Millways

It seems to me that we must accept that there were mills in CO but where is not known.

Oe -neat meaning a bovine animal. Given its situation and liability to flood Net Mead was almost certainly not used for arable farming. It is possibly the most interesting field on the map. For more information please see the paper on field systems in CO.

In 1786 the following has been found.

Various	Netmead	<p>“That close of meadow or pasture known as Broadlands and one acre of meadow ground in the common mead called Lot Mead alias Neat Mead, Child Okeford, with 2 enclosures of final agreement between Robert Goodfellow and Joseph Longman and Jane his wife, of land in Child Okeford “</p> <p>The allocation of individual doles of meadow land was often done prior to harvesting by drawing lots¹⁰ which would fit with its other name.</p>
114 115	New Close	Self evident but no clues as to when they were enclosed.
211 223	Nine Acres	One was 7 and the other 8 acres.
235	Norton Hedge	Hedge has a complex derivation – Old English <i>haga</i> “enclosure, fortified enclosure; hedge ” <u>as well</u> as Old English <i>hecg</i> “hedge, <u>and</u> oe <i>ton</i> meaning a place surrounded by a hedge or palisade, a town, village or farm. The Nor means north so “ <i>The hedge around the North Farm.</i> ”
227	Little Northfield	Self evident
12	Parks Orchard	There are two possible derivations depending on context. I favour oe derived from “ <i>pearroc</i> ” an enclosed piece of land. However after the Norman conquest in some settings it had another meaning- mid-13c., “enclosed preserve for beasts of the chase,” from Old French <i>parc</i> “enclosed wood or heath land used as a game preserve” (12c.)
152	Park Field	
260	Park	
44	Peddle Mead	In 1788 it was known as Piddle Furlong; Piddle derives from oe “ <i>marsh or fen</i> ”. Presumably it was a damp sodden field.
98	Play Close	This is an oddly shaped field which could refer to a playground. Field, in his book notes, that in Blandford “The

		Play Close” is on record as being used for the purpose of shooting at Butts.
342	Pleck	Plot, Pleck, Plack derives from middle english “ <i>a small piece of ground</i> ” “a worthless trifle”.
47	Plots	See Pleck above
205	Pond Close and Withy bed. Withy bed under Trenchard	This shows withy beds on the river Wey. ” rivers all across Britain, were for many hundreds of years fringed with expansive withy beds to supply villagers with materials for making baskets, eel-traps, artists’ charcoal, revetment for river edging, fencing and thatching spars. “
265	Poor Ground	According to Field there is very little reference to the land actually being of poor quality. Usually it relates to land granted to the poor under the Select Vestry act 1819. This is certainly documented in the case of a similar plot in Hazelbury Bryan but since the field in CO was owned by George Hatcher and not the Overseers of the Poor we must assume it was not good quality land after all.
186	Porters Hill	This would seem self explanatory. The current bridleway from Fontmell Parva to Gallows corner has been variously called Porters Hill or Fontmell Lane.
275	Qosser Ground	I haven’t been able to find any clues as to the meaning of Qosser; or indeed any English words where Q is not followed by U. The Bower family lived in Iwerne Minster and had connections with the village . Any link to this field? At Queen Hoo Hall Herts the name recorded in a charter is
288	Queen Bower	Queenhildhaga. *haga yet another oe word for enclosure belonging to a woman, queenhild. Bower in this sense could be from Bur – dwellingBurgh- fortified stronghold Bura -of the peasants. Thus we have the dwelling house of a queen and if you believe that you will believe anything!!
271 273	Rat Furlong	These fields were mentioned in a lease of 1716. “Lease. 1) <i>Walter White of Child Okeford, clothier</i> 2) <i>Robert</i>

Henbery of Bedcister in Great Fontmill, gentleman. Land called Ratforland. Mentioned: George Munke of Child Okeford, clothier. Signature: Walter White. Witnesses: Philip Nicholas, Salathiel Norris, Elizabeth Honywell “

Clearly Ratforland has been changed to Rat furlong on the tithe map.

Assuming this is about rats then there is an interesting history. In 1693 the only rat recorded in England was the black rat. It had arrived from India and was very particular, it only lived in warm environments usually the roofs of houses with fires. It did not survive in unheated barns etc. In a list of agricultural pests in 1713 mice, foxes etc were listed – the Rat was not. In 1725 however a new pest arrived -the brown rat. It came from Europe and finding the climate to its liking spread rapidly throughout the country, settling in cellars and farm buildings. Unfortunately it liked Dovecotes and the bottom courses of many of these had to be filled in to prevent occupation and spread by rats. Until the mid 1700’s corn ricks had been built on bed of furze sufficiently deep to keep it dry but this was no defence against the brown rat and it is from this time that we see the use of staddle stones¹¹.

276 278

279

158 159

160 163

Ridgeway

164 169

Higher Ridgeway

170 171

174 175

Field says “The uniformity of ridges produced by ploughing gave rise to many field names with ridge in.” Given the number of plots with the name and their shape this could indicate that this was the site of one of the open fields. On the other hand it is on a ridge albeit a very slight one.

320 331

In Running Acre

Running Acre

332

Adjoining Running acre

I have no explanation for this name. However this fields is mentioned in 1728; There are records at Dorset History Centre; “Deeds of messuage with 3 1/2 acres, orchard, garden, barn, stable etc, two closes called Verinlands and first share of Running Acre, formerly parts of copy hold tenement in Child Okeford. (Scott, Downe, Holdway, Saintloe).”

282

Scard Mead

Probably named for James and Elizabeth Scard who died in 1798 and 1800 respectively.

242

Shoulder of Mutton

Such names almost always refer to the shape of the field.

231	Slickbeard	Slick or slick is derived from "oe slicu" smooth.
167	Soreland	Probably a corruption of sourland – waterlogged.
263	South Field	
266	Lower south field	Names such as this were common in the open field system and we must assume that this was indeed the south field.
322 323	Higher south field	
324	Hedge south field	
210	Stitching	A certain irony here. Stitch refers to a small piece of land typically less than half an acre.
176 177	Stockhayes	Stock, stocks, butts, stub indicates land with tree stumps and "haeg" oe became middle english hay = enclosure
233 236	Stoney Land Higher and Lower	Self explanatory. Loads of stone.
284 325	Stoney Mead	
270	Summer Ground	Some ground was too wet to be used all the year round and was confined to the summer
337	Three acres	Only two in the case of three acres and eight respectively for all three, twelve acres.
267 268	Twelve acres	
269		
230	Thorn Hedge	Thorn trees, usually hawthorn for its quick growing abilities, were widely used for boundaries particularly after enclosure.
318	Tilleys Mead	Mrs Tilley mentioned in the same waywarden document above.
194 195	Towns Great Towns	Old English <i>tun</i> "enclosure, garden, field, yard; farm, manor; homestead, dwelling house, mansion;" later "group of houses, village, farm, it only came to mean the modern equivalent of our town from the mid 12 th century onwards.
196	Tuckers Ham	Fulling, also known as tucking or walking, is a step in woollen cloth making which involves the cleansing of cloth (particularly wool) to eliminate oils, dirt, and other

impurities, and making it thicker. The worker who does the job is a fuller, tucker, or walker.

In 1700 one of the “worsted combers” was one Robert Scott.

Ham oe for an enclosure particularly in the bend of a stream.

128 129

“Land” oe meaning cultivated ground.

130 131
132

Twiland

Several derivations for the Twi prefix Oe “*betweonan*” meaning place between Or oe “*twinn, twi*” meaning double.

306 307

Verney Land*2

The derivation for all of these is oe “*fearn*” or Fern. Interestingly on the OS map from 1888 Vernhays Coppice has been recorded as Fernhayes. oe “*faern*” with “*haeg*” enclosure.

100 103

Vernhays

104

Little Vernhays

Vernhays Coppice.

These fields are mentioned in 1728; There are records at Dorset History Centre; “Deeds of messuage with 3 1/2 acres, orchard, garden, barn, stable etc, two closes called Verinlands.

112

Watering Pieces

Pieces were small patches of ground which were often given to the parish officers. In this case however it is probably what it means a piece of ground used to water animals.

253

Winshard

Gap fit for a wagon. From oe “*waegn and sceard.*”

326

Woods Mead

The only Woods who lived in the village was James who made a will in 1770 but he does not appear to have left any land.

117 118

Yonder Field

“within sight but not near,” c. 1300, from Old English *geond*. Given the situation of the field this would seem appropriate.

Page last updated 01/02/2019

[2](#)See Land Measurement in England, 1150-1350 Andrew Jones Agriculture History Review volume 27 1979

[3](#)“I’ve no penny’ quoth Piers...only two green cheeses some curds and sour cream and an oaten cake, two bean-loves with bran just baked for my children” Langland The Vision of Piers Plowman

[4](#)The Parish Chest W E Tate 3rd Edition 1983

[5](#)Child Okeford 1815-1860 The End of an Era 2016 John Housley

[6](#)In mediaeval times one of the various species of wild flower we call Marsh Marigold not today's cultivated forms.

[7](#)W G Hoskins Making of the English Landscape Penguin 1955

[8](#)The Curving Plough Strip and its Historical implication. S Eyres Agricultural History Review 1955

[9](#)G Whittington Towards a Terminology for Strip Lynchetts . Agricultural History Review 1967

[10](#)The English Village Community and the enclosure movements W E Tate 1967

[11](#)Rural History Today issue 31 August 2016 John McCann