

**FOLLOW-UP WORKS TO CRAMBER TOR
ARCHAEOLOGICAL BASELINE
CONDITION SURVEY, DARTMOOR
TRAINING AREA.**

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District:	West Devon
Parish:	Sheepstor/Walkhampton
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Contractor:	S Probert
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FOLLOW-UP WORKS TO CRAMBER TOR ARCHAEOLOGICAL BASELINE CONDITION SURVEY, DARTMOOR TRAINING AREA.

1 INTRODUCTION

The Cramber Tor Training Area covers approximately 841ha of open moorland and is used for dry training by the Ministry of Defence. Topographically the area consists of a series of roughly east to west oriented ridges separated by deep valleys containing fast-flowing moorland streams.

There is a large archaeological element to this particular landscape with a significant amount of prehistoric features on the ridge tops while the valley sides and bottoms are dominated by the remains of the tin industry. The valley sides on the western margin of this area display a series of abandoned field systems dating from the post medieval period.

1.1 Previous Work

A baseline condition survey of the Cramber Tor training Area was undertaken by the Exeter Office of English Heritage during 2006/7 (English Heritage 2007). The survey recorded and assessed 145 monuments, 28 of which are Scheduled Ancient Monuments. The survey concluded that the Training Area was in a stable condition overall though 20 sites were threatened by incidental factors in the form of human and animal activity or vegetation growth.

2 FOLLOW UP WORKS JANUARY-MARCH 2008

2.1 Background and methodology

As part of its process of ongoing site management Landmarc Support Services, the principal service provider to Defence Estates, created an action plan to further monitor and, where necessary, redress the problems. Of the 20 sites (listed below) 11 required monitoring, the remainder remedial action. Of the latter, the responsibility for three sites was assumed by the Dartmoor National Park Authority and English Heritage following a site visit on 29th January 2008. These sites are summarised at the end of this report.

During the course of the 2008 works each site was visited, assessed with regard to the management issues raised by English Heritage and photographed. The location and direction of each photograph was recorded and is available as an ESRI GIS file on the accompanying CD. The site and its immediate surroundings were also assessed for damage, military use and potential threats. Details were recorded on a standard DE condition form. These forms are available as .doc files on the accompanying CD.

NB All identification numbers relating to the following sites are those assigned by the National Monuments Record Centre of English Heritage.

2.2 Sites requiring monitoring

438583 Down Tor stone row

SX 59686925

This monument is perhaps the major attraction for visitors to this area. Several of the stones exhibit erosion hollows at their bases, the result of being used as rubbing posts by livestock. These hollows are showing signs of regeneration as the numbers of grazing animals on this part of the moor continues to decline. The stones remain in a stable state but of more concern is the vegetation covering of the footpath immediately to the north of the row which has been denuded and, in places, removed exposing the peat and growan. This situation is exacerbated by wet weather and recedes during the drier periods of the year. This is a problem common to most of the lithic monuments on Dartmoor and in this case its effects are mitigated by the isolated nature of the site which draws relatively few visitors. At present the stones forming this monument are not in any immediate threat though monitoring of the adjacent footpaths should continue and military activity should be excluded from the immediate area.



Fig 1 Footpath adjacent to Down Tor stone row. Probably the most extreme example of erosion

438852 Newleycombe Farmstead

SX 58766995

In common with most of the abandoned structures on Dartmoor this ruined farmstead and its associated outbuildings act as magnets for visitors and livestock seeking shelter. While there is evidence of past disturbance to these remains in the form of dislodged and rearranged stonework there are no signs of fresh disturbance in the period since the recorded date of the last investigation by English Heritage in August 2006.



Fig 2 Former outbuilding at Newleycombe farmstead

438971 Tinnars Hut

SX 58556981

This former structure remains in a stable condition though it apparently attracts a number of human visitors. There is evidence to suggest the creation of small fire rings in the level interior in the recent past though the stones appear to have been derived from the surrounding area rather than the walls of the structure. A small amount of litter was removed from the interior.



Fig 3 Tinnars' hut amidst streamworking remains on Newleycombe Lake

440219 Classiwell Farmstead

SX 58097004

This site lies in a very exposed position almost adjacent to Raddick Lane and in the past has suffered from stone removal and displacement. It now exists in a stable condition with no evidence to suggest recent disturbance.



Fig 4 The main structure at Classiwell farmstead

441591 Siwards/Nun's Cross

SX 60176991

An erosion hollow at the base of this feature has been refilled in recent years. This fact coupled with the decline in the amount of livestock grazing this part of the moor has largely removed the threat to the cross. Though the area around the base of the cross does not possess a covering of vegetation, there is no suggestion that the former erosion hollow will be re-established in the near future.



Fig 5 Siwards/Nuns Cross. This feature lies on a popular footpath between Princetown and Eylesbarrow

1446125 Tinnners' Hut

SX 60077030

Although this feature lies in an isolated position divorced from the network of footpaths in this area it has attracted a number of human visitors. Again there is no evidence of recent deliberate damage though a significant amount of civilian litter was removed from the interior.



Fig 6 The remote tinnners' hut on Chants Hill

1446210 Tinnners' Hut

SX 58556982

This substantial former structure again displays signs of past disturbance though few signs of recent activity. Several stones in the interior show fresh, unweathered faces and appear to have been randomly moved. Their disturbance is probably a consequence of livestock seeking shelter amidst the ruins.



Fig 7 Tinnners' hut in streamworking remains flanking Newleycombe Lake

1446519 Tinnerns' Hut

SX 59826995

Again there is no evidence to suggest recent intentional disturbance to this monument despite its proximity to the well-used footpath adjacent to the Devonport Leat.



Fig 8 Tinnerns' hut at Drivage Bottom. Devonport Leat service hut in background

1146523 Tinnerns' Hut

SX 59757028

Though this well-concealed feature lies in an isolated position it has not escaped disturbance in the relatively distant past. The interior has been crudely subdivided by the construction of a low boulder wall though there is no evidence to suggest any recent activity on the site which also remains litter free.



Fig 9 Tinnerns' hut on the upper reaches of Newleycombe Lake

1448375 Streamworks

SX 59105917

This massive feature covers several hectares flanking the Narrator Brook and possesses relatively few crossing points. The main crossing lies at SX 59176921 and carries the bulk of human and livestock traffic across this part of the moor. At this point the sides and base of the working have been denuded of vegetation and, in

places, eroded. However, the affected area consists of a relatively thin strip of land the location of which is determined by local topography. There appears to be little chance of the damage spreading to adjacent areas and the gradual decline of this ribbon should be tolerated. The creation of alternative routes is impractical in this area.



Fig 10 Footpath erosion on the northern bank of the Narrator Brook. At the time of investigation, 4th February, hoof prints greatly outnumbered footprints

1450575 Reave

SX 59217035

This low stony bank is only visible where exposed by the Nosworthy to Peat Cot track and it appears to be a remarkably robust feature. There is no evidence to suggest any deterioration since it was first recorded and photographed by English Heritage in August 2006. The track carries a large number of pedestrians and is occasionally used by vehicles servicing the surrounding area. It should be noted that the strength of this feature rests on its integrity; once stones are loosened or removed its disintegration will probably follow quite rapidly.

The condition of this reave should continue to be monitored and, in the event of any deterioration a small excavation should be considered.



Fig 11 1450575. Reave at threat from vehicle damage

2.3 Sites requiring remedial action.

Clearance work on these sites was undertaken by contractors acting for Silvanus Services Limited. Brash was removed from the immediate site environs and the stumps treated with an appropriate herbicide. No stumps were removed and the ground surfaces were not disturbed.

438861 Three cairns containing cists

SX 58386956

This unusual cluster of prehistoric sepulchral monuments was threatened by small scale gorse encroachment. In particular the easternmost cist was occupied by a young gorse bush which, if allowed to mature, would severely disrupt any surviving deposits. A second, larger bush was removed from the northern cist. Despite being depicted on all current maps of the area these features are difficult to locate and are not deemed to be subject to any additional threats.



Fig 12 The eastern cist before gorse removal



Fig 13 The eastern cist after gorse removal

438999 Combeshead Mine

SX 58506838

The stability of the processing area of the former Combeshead tin mine was threatened by three mature thorn trees rooted in structural elements of the site. Two trees lay in the north wall of the site overhanging the dressing floor, the third in the wheelpit.

The trees were reduced to stumps and the brash deposited beyond the northwestern boundary of the site. A large amount of rubbish, mostly drinks cans and bottles were removed from the site by the clearance contractors.

This site lies adjacent to the main footpath between Deancombe and Combeshead Tor and as such makes it vulnerable to interference and accidental damage. It would be advisable to monitor the condition of this site on an occasional basis and remove any further litter.



Fig 14 The site of Combeshead Mine before clearance. The tree in the middle left occupies the former wheelpit



Fig 15 Combeshead Mine, view of processing area after clearance

1446155 Tinworks

SX58887007

Three hectares of probable post-medieval tinworks northeast of Newlycombe Farmstead are largely obscured by gorse. The majority of the visible remains appear to consist of shallow shafts, water channels and linear spoil heaps, typical of monuments of this type on Dartmoor. However, amongst these earthworks were traces of an 18th or 19th century whim platform and associated shaft.

Clearance of the entire site would serve little benefit and it was decided to concentrate on the more salient later features. The gorse was cleared to expose the whim platform and shaft and the brash removed from the site.

The exposed features are robust earthworks distanced from footpaths and are not subject to any potential threats. This area should be flagged for further archaeological investigation following a controlled or accidental burn.



Fig 16 1446155 before clearance. Whim platform, middle distance, and shaft middle left



Fig 17 1446155 after clearance

1446207 Plym Consols Mine

SX 58596992

The main shaft, processing area and mine building of Plym Consols tin mine were largely obscured by mature gorse at the time of the English Heritage survey. The structural integrity of the stonework forming several of these features was potentially threatened by the vegetation which also served to hamper the investigation of the remains.

An area of approximately 0.2 hectares was cleared of gorse exposing the wheelpit, shaft, drainage channels and dressing floor. The mine building, to the north of this complex, was also cleared of gorse.

Potential threats to this site have been removed.



Fig 18 Plym Consols Mine before clearance



Fig 19 Plym Consols Mine after clearance. Processing area and wheelpit in centre of photograph, shaft and bob pit beyond

1446217 Tinworks

SX 58577028

Approximately 3.5 hectares of tin Streamworks on the north side of the Newleycombe valley are obscured by gorse. The earthworks are similar in form to 1446155 above but do not appear to contain any features of significance. In this case the gorse is acting as a barrier to interpretation rather than as a threat to the heritage resource, its clearance would present little short term benefit. This site should be flagged for re-examination if the area is subject to a controlled or accidental burn.



Fig 20 Streamworking remains 1446217. Gorse obscuring the characteristic water channels and linear spoilheaps

1448366 Dressing Floor

SX 58256990

A tin dressing floor and associated structure on the north bank of Newleycombe Lake had become overrun with gorse prior to the English Heritage survey. The walls of the structure were threatened by root action while the dressing floor was becoming obscured with a potential threat to sub-surface deposits.

Both elements of this site were cleared, the brash deposited beyond the east and west boundaries of the site.

This monument is divorced from the footpath network and no longer subject to potential threats.



Fig 21 1448366 The associated structure before clearance



Fig 22 1448366 The structure after clearance

2.4 Sites for which responsibility has been assumed by Dartmoor National Park Authority/English Heritage

1446212 Tin Stamps/Dressing Floor SX 58916984

This site is infested with bracken which possesses the potential to severely disrupt any sub-surface remains. The site lies adjacent to Newleycombe Lake making the use of chemical sprays impractical. A 'bracken stamp' whereby the emerging shoots will be trampled underfoot by a team of volunteers is to be organised for the late spring/early summer.

438589 Cairn SX 59196944

This large stony feature acts as a magnet for visitors to this area and has been subject to a number of disturbance episodes in the past. Of particular note is a large central hollow used as a shelter but of particular concern is a small, freshly built stone pile on the northeastern fringe of the cairn. This recent feature will attract more visitor attention and will inevitably be added to if not removed quickly.

438743 Cairn SX 59966860

One of the cairns at Eylesbarrow is in a similar situation to 438589 above.

The structural change to these latter two features requires Scheduled Monument Consent from English Heritage. This has been obtained and work is scheduled for the spring/summer of 2008.

3 CONCLUSION

The majority of the issues raised by the English Heritage Baseline Condition Survey have been successfully addressed. The remainder will be completed during the course of 2008. Overall the sites visited are in a stable if not improving condition and intentional damage to the stone built structures appears to be an historical rather than a current issue. The amount of litter deposited on these sites, the instances of footpath erosion and the vandalism of several of the cairns reinforce the necessity of a modest monitoring element to the future conservation of the heritage resource of the Cramber Training Area.

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4 BIBLIOGRAPHY

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