

CRAMBER TOR TRAINING AREA

Monument Condition Survey

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1. Introduction

- 1.1. This Monument Condition Survey, for Landmarc , follows five years after the *Cramber Tor Training Area Monument Baseline Condition Survey* carried out by Phil Newman (Newman, 2007), and four years after *Follow-Up Works to Cramber Tor Archaeological Baseline Condition Survey, Dartmoor Training Area* (2008) by Simon Probert (Probert, 2008). The Cramber Tor Training Area comprises 841 hectares of open moorland or former enclosed land.
- 1.2. Some 28 sites are legally protected as scheduled monuments, but the whole area of the Training Area is so rich in archaeological features that these designations have little relevance for management in terms of distinguishing ‘important’ archaeology from ‘less important’, as the whole area is archaeologically and culturally sensitive. That part of it which falls within Walkhampton Common has been identified by Dartmoor National Park Authority as a Premier Archaeological Landscape (PAL).

2. Methodology

- 2.1. Over a period of ten days between December 2011 and February 2012 each site listed in Newman (2007) was visited in the field and its condition observed. Newman (2007) allocated each site with a Heritage Object Unique Identifier number, and these numbers are used in this report. Newman supplied a copy of an unpublished English Heritage map on which all archaeological features are marked together with their identifying numbers – this was used as the primary tool for identification of sites on the ground [though it was noted that a few sites are not numbered on the map]. A photographic record was made of each site or a representative part of a site (e.g. where extensive tinworks fall under the same unique number).

- 2.2. Two claimed sites (438995 and 619145), which were not found by Newman in 2007, were not observed as part of the current survey. A third site (1241864) was also not observed.

3. Comment on condition of sites

- 3.1. The condition of sites is summarised on the accompanying spreadsheet and visually in the photographs (see accompanying CD). In general, the condition of archaeological features within the Cramber Tor Training Area is stable and good, and the richness of the resource is very striking.
- 3.2. Significant erosion was observed in connection with several of the boundstones marking the boundary of the Training Area between South Hessary Tor and the south-western flanks of Eylesbarrow (1063721 – rushes; 1063875 – hollow; 1063953 – rushes; 1063626 – hollow; 1063630 – hollow; 1063631 – hollow and rushes; 1063639 – hollow and rushes; 1063660 – prostrate stone, plus hollow and rushes; 1063662 – hollow, rushes and lean; 1064677 – hollow; 1064747 – rushes; 1237960 – at least ten boundstones described under this unique number have hollows, some water-filled, and one has a pronounced lean). While the stones themselves are robust, several are now exposed on ‘islands’ of vegetation surrounded by a damp or watery hollow, sometimes filled with rushes which obscure the stones themselves, and the long-term stability of these stones is compromised by this. This erosion almost certainly predates 2007 but it was not highlighted then, and it would seem sensible now to suggest that remedial action should be taken to prevent the stones falling over (one is prostrate, and some others have a lean to a lesser or greater degree).
- 3.3. The only site which seems potentially vulnerable due to visitor pressure is the scheduled prehistoric stone row at Down Tor (438583 – see cover image) due to several wet and eroded areas along the length of the row on its north side, which people

naturally walk along (see photographs). This was highlighted in Probert (2008, p.4) with a recommendation that 'military activity should be excluded from the immediate area'. Military personnel were observed on one occasion walking along the row during current fieldwork.

3.4. Undergrazing

A major influence on the visibility and general condition/stability of some sites is undergrazing, which has caused growth of grass and gorse which, in some areas, is obscuring features to a significant extent. This was noted as a 'growing concern' by Newman (2007,p.9). At least 33 sites (approximately 23 % of the total number of sites) have 'undergrazing' issues – they tend to be larger sites, or linear features such as leats or reaves. Several scheduled sites are affected (438556; 438806; 438950; 438986; 440199; 619135; 1172972; 1332225; 1451175) which represent 32 % of the total number of scheduled sites within the Cramber Tor Training Area. Areas particularly affected include the upper reaches of the Hart Tor Brook, the hillslopes on the north side of the Devonport Leat in the Newleycombe valley, and the lower westernmost slopes of Eylesbarrow on the south side of the Outcombe enclosures, as well as the latter enclosures themselves (e.g. site 1451287). Within parts of the Newleycombe valley itself, gorse (tall European gorse in particular) remains an issue as far as tinworkings are concerned, despite useful clearance at some sites in 2008 (Probert, 2008). A few buildings have 'excess' vegetation growth obscuring walls and internal features – Colliers (1343106), Godshole (1446522), East Hughes (438968), Blacksmiths Shop (1446212), at Drivage Bottom below the leat (1446519) - see the spreadsheet for summaries, and the photographs on the accompanying CD. Stonework associated with the fireplace of the building (441725) by the Devonport Leat tunnel is unstable, as is some on the E side of the wheelpit associated with East Hughes Mine dressing floor (1446215), and on the N side of the wheelpit at Wheal Chance (440204), though each of these is a relatively minor issue.

- 3.5. In one instance, natural erosion was observed - in the huge openwork (1446179) adjoining Plym Consols where an area of bare ground has been exposed on the steep NW side of the openwork due to slippage - but no remedial action is possible here.
- 3.6. A prehistoric hut circle, part of site 438950, could not be located due to being obscured by rushy vegetation growth which is a direct result of water draining from an adit connected with Eylesbarrow Mine. This spread of vegetation below the adit is largely a phenomenon of the past forty years or so. If water from the adit could be channelled more directly into the valley below, grassland vegetation could be restored and prehistoric features revealed once more.
- 3.7. The only recent human disturbance noted was the placing of a 'letterbox' in a prehistoric cairn (SX 58422 70598) forming part of the enclosed cairnfield (1172972) on the N side of the Devonport Leat. This has been reported to administrators of the letterbox community.
- 3.8. No significant litter was observed in any part of the area.

4. Newly recorded sites

During fieldwork, two notable features were recorded which were not included in Newman's survey of 2007:

- 4.1. Prehistoric cairn, SX 58193 67806. A stony roughly circular mound, approx. 3m in diameter x 0.30m high, with a possible kerb or double concentric ring of stones on its NW and W sides. The largest visible stone is approx. 0.50m in length. The cairn has a hollow in its centre measuring 1.2m x 0.80m.
- 4.2. Post-medieval inscribed parish boundstone, SX 59098 68634. Granite stone 1.2m high and approximately 0.40m x 0.35m in roughly square section, but tapering to top. On its S side is a well cut letter 'S' , for Sheepstor, 0.12m wide x 0.17m high; on its N

side is an equally skilfully cut letter 'W', for Walkhampton, 0.24m wide x 0.13m high. Both letters are towards the top of the stone.

- 4.3. These sites have been included at the end of the spreadsheet, and photographs are included at the end of the CD of images. In addition, a previously unrecorded mortarstone was noted built into a structure at the site of Combeshead tin mill (438999), thanks to the clearance work of 2008 (Probert, 2008), but this has not been treated as a separate feature.
- 4.4. Other unrecorded features, mostly related to tinworking, such as leats, were observed, especially in the upper Deancombe valley, and it is clear that further detailed survey would undoubtedly reveal more archaeological data, as long as it was undertaken in the winter or early spring before seasonal vegetation growth.

References

Newman, P. (2007) *Cramber Tor Training Area – Monument Baseline Condition Survey January 2007* (English Heritage, Swindon)

Probert, S. (2008) *Follow-Up Works to Cramber Tor Archaeological Baseline Condition Survey, Dartmoor Training Area* (Defence Estates)

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Cover photo: Stone row near Down Tor (438583) from east end, showing waterlogged areas (Scale: 1m).