A Condition Survey of the Archaeological Sites of the Cramber Tor Training Area, 2017

County:	Devon
District:	West Devon
Parish:	Sheepstor, Walkhampton
NGR (Centre):	SX 593699
Surveyed:	April – May 2017
Contractor:	S Probert
Client:	Landmarc/Defence Infrastructure Organisation

CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES

A CONDITION SURVEY OF THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES OF THE CRAMBER TOR TRAINING AREA, DEVON, 2017

1 INTRODUCTION

The MoD licencehold of the Cramber Tor Training Area covers approximately 841 ha, the majority of which is currently open moorland but includes 27 ha of abandoned enclosed land. The area spans two parishes. Most of the licencehold lies within Walkhampton with 127 ha at the extreme southern end of the training area forming part of Sheepstor parish. The entire area is contained within the Burrator Reservoir water catchment, which is defined by a series of boundary stones. The Walkhampton section of the training area forms part of Walkhampton Common, which has been assigned Premier Archaeological Landscape (PAL) status under the Dartmoor Futures designation.

The 2007 Baseline Survey cited 145 National Monument Record (NMR) numbers. On examination of the spreadsheet supplied there were found to be only 144 records of which four were duplicate sites. The latter remain in the spreadsheet but are not qualified by condition assessments to avoid double counting. In addition to the 140 records of extant sites are two additional sites, New1 and New2, supplied by the Dartmoor National Park HER. No NMR numbers are available for these sites. Two sites were not found. One, 438995, is probably another duplicated site, the other, 1448381, is likely to be obscured by vegetation.
Twenty eight sites are Scheduled as Ancient Monuments and protected under the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act of 1979.

The range and general survival of the archaeological resource and pre-assessment activities in the Cramber Tor area have already been discussed by English Heritage, 2007.

1.1 Archaeological Baseline Survey 2007

This condition survey was undertaken in adherence to work already completed under the aegis of the **Revised Action Plan (RAP)** (2001) that resulted from the **Willsworthy Integrated Land Management Plan** of 1998. The RAP articulated a number of actions aimed at defining the nature of the archaeological resource and promoting its conservation; in effect the blueprint for heritage management on the MoD Dartmoor Estate.

The **Revised Action Plan** (March 2001) identifies five tasks that cover the maintenance and assessment of the archaeological landscape:

51 Review the current maintenance condition survey programme for scheduled sites and revise if desirable.

52 Produce and revise a threat assessment for all Scheduled Ancient Monuments and ensure that measures are in place to prevent damage.

56 Extend threat assessment to cover non-scheduled sites.
57 Develop a system for regular condition surveys of non scheduled sites.
60 Gather detailed information on potential vehicle damage to archaeological sites.

Completion of these tasks will enable the following dependent actions:

61 Investigate damage caused by horses and livestock.
62 Identify features where developing gorse cover threatens buried archaeology.
63 Agree and implement a system whereby farm and MOD vehicles avoid appropriate areas, keep to tracks in others.
64 Set up system by which routes used shall be varied, avoiding scheduled or other archaeological sites.
65 Prepare and carry out plan to remove gorse where necessary and prevent re-growth.

To fulfil these objectives an Archaeological Baseline Condition Survey was undertaken in 2005 and 2006 by English Heritage and presented to Defence Estates in 2007 (English Heritage 2007). The work involved a complete resurvey at 1:2500 scale of the training area. All previously recorded and newly discovered upstanding archaeological features were assessed for active damage and potential threat. These assessments were supplemented, when possible, by ground photography either of the monument, an element of the site or its location.

1.2 Follow up works January-March 2008

In response to issues raised by the 2007 baseline survey a series of follow up works was commissioned by Defence Estates/Landmarc in the late winter of 2007/2008. Twenty sites were identified as being threatened by incidental factors in the form of human and animal activity or vegetation growth. Of these 11 required monitoring and the remainder remedial action. Of the latter, the responsibility for carrying out the prescribed actions for three sites was assumed by the Dartmoor National Park Authority and English Heritage. The remaining six sites were wholly or partially cleared of gorse and trees to avoid disturbance to the sub-surface remains. The sites were deemed to be in a stable condition following the completion of these works (Probert 2008).

1.3 Archaeological Condition Survey 2013

The findings of this survey served to qualify the findings of the 2007 Baseline Survey. It was concluded that the vast majority of the recorded archaeological sites within the Cramber Tor Training Area could be regarded as stable though there remained a small element of gradual decline (Probert 2014).

2 ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONDITION SURVEY 2017

2.1 Methodology

The second Archaeological Condition Survey was carried out in April and May 2017 during which every site was revisited, including those recorded as not found by previous investigations. A photograph was taken at each site either of the whole feature or, more often, an element of the site or its location. These photographs are presented on an accompanying CD. The site and its immediate surroundings were assessed for damage, military use and potential threats. Details were recorded on a standard DIO condition form.

The location and direction of each photograph was recorded and is available as a GIS file on the associated CD. The standard DIO condition forms are synthesised in the appendix to this report and are again available as .doc and .pdf files on the accompanying CD.

All monument reference numbers referred to in this report are those assigned by the National Monuments Record (NMR).

3 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

3.1 Introduction

The findings of the 2017 survey are summarised in Fig. 1 (actual numbers of monuments) and Fig. 2 (percentages). The number of stable monuments forms the bulk (135 monuments or 95%) of the sample while those in gradual decline constitute only 5 or 3.5%. There are no monuments deemed to be improving.

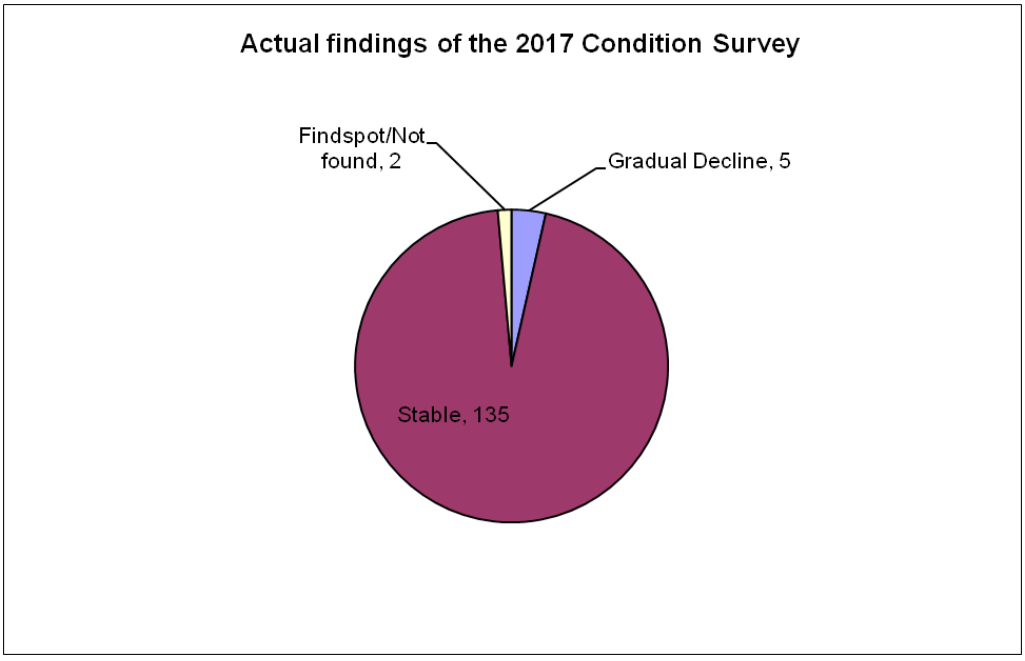

Fig 1 *Actual findings of the 2017 Condition Survey*

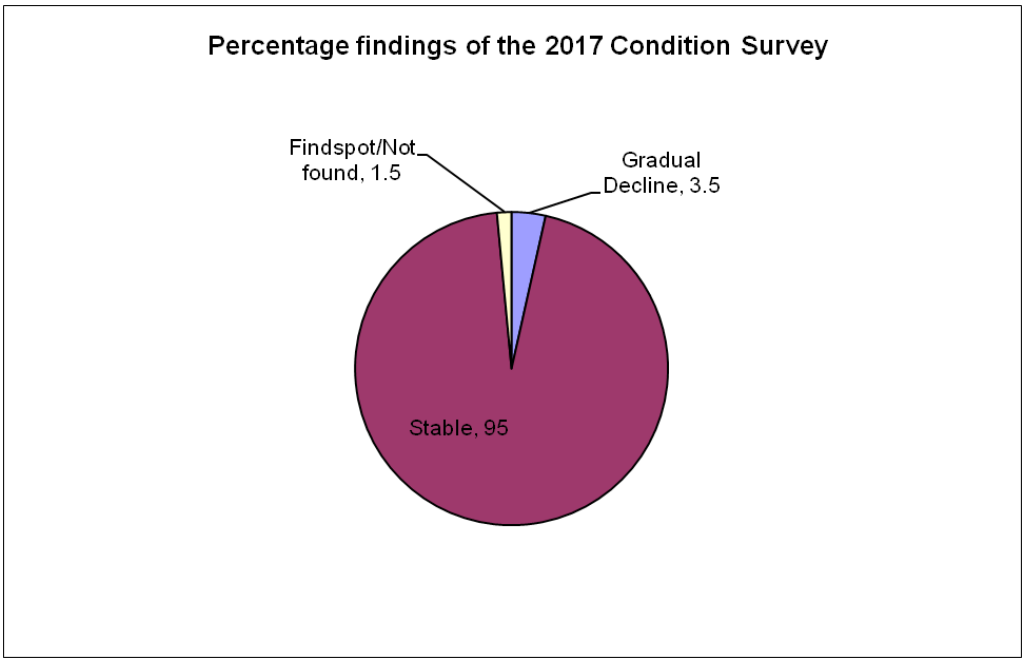

Fig 2 *Percentage findings of the 2017 Condition Survey*

3.2 Gradual Decline

The five monuments in this category are affected by a number of factors:

3.2.1 Vandalism

The stony matrix of the Eylesbarrow cairns, 438743, has been rearranged to create small shelters. Similar disturbance was recorded by the 2007 baseline survey and the damage rectified by DNPA/EH as part of the follow up works (Probert, 2008). The problem had reoccurred in 2013 and was again dealt with. These features are vulnerable to this kind of disturbance. A small cairn has also been constructed from loose stone on the prehistoric feature 438589, west of the Down Tor stone row. Such action is in contravention of the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act of 1979. It is not thought that these disturbances are a result of the military use of the area.

Fig 3 *Detail of recently constructed shelter on prehistoric monument 438743 at Eylesbarrow.*

Stones lying within the ruined rectangular building 441725 near the Devonport Leat portal have also been rearranged to form a small shelter. It is possible and probably likely that should it be allowed to remain this recent construction will be further enhanced by the addition of stones removed from the building's walls

Fig 4 *Detail of recently constructed shelter in the ruined building 441725.*

3.2.2 Footpath/cycleway erosion

The short length of reave, 1450575, that is visible as it crosses the Nosworthy Bridge to Peat Cot track is the only monument deemed in decline by virtue of footpath erosion. While it appears to be a remarkably robust feature it is being reduced slowly by foot and cycle traffic. There has been some minor deterioration in this feature since 2013 but not sufficient to trigger any further action. Once one or more of the larger stones become displaced its disintegration will probably follow quite rapidly. The diversion of the track at this point is not only impractical but would also expose further elements of this feature. In the event of major deterioration a small excavation should be considered.

Fig 5 *1450575. Reave at threat from foot and cycle damage*

3.2.3 Bracken

Bracken is concentrated in one corner of the training area and affects parts of several monuments. Of particular note is the small tin processing works, 1446212, on the left bank of Newlycombe Lake. Despite remedial work by DNPA/EH described in the 2008 follow up works programme (Probert 2008) the ruined structure is still occupied by bracken. This has the potential to severely disrupt any sub-surface remains. The proximity of the site to the watercourse makes the use of chemical sprays impractical. The continuation of the bracken stamping strategy is to be encouraged.

Fig 6 *Bracken occupying interior of tin processing works 1446212*

3.2.4 Summary

While the deconstruction of the disturbance at Eylesbarrow,438743, the cairn east of the stone row, 438589, and the small building 441725 will restore these features in the short term they remain vulnerable to similar activity. As with the reave 1450575 the process of monitoring at regular intervals should be continued. The continuance of the 'bracken stamp' programme at the small tin processing site 1446212 will eventually lead to its removal from the Gradual Decline category.

3.3 Stable

The majority, 95%, of the archaeological resource consists of monuments in a stable condition. In general the condition and state of survival of most archaeological features are determined by their remote positions and robust construction. They are generally in a good state though several may become vulnerable to damage from threats 3.3.1/2/3.

3.3.1 Vegetation

The reduced stocking levels have resulted in a significant increase in the areas covered by shrubs such as gorse and heather. The issue of undergrazing and the subsequent spread of gorse in particular has already been raised by the 2007 baseline survey. A result of this was the scrub clearance carried out in the 2008 follow up programme (Probert 2008). Amongst the features cleared of gorse were three small cists, 438861, to the northeast of Down Tor. The 2013 Condition Survey noted the presence of small gorse shoots within these features though during the 2017 survey it was noticed that these had not matured and the plants appear to be dying back naturally.

Fig 7 *Gorse regrowth in cist 438861*

3.3.2 Livestock

The impact of livestock on the archaeological resource has been significant though, since what appears to have been a dramatic decrease in stocking levels and recent mitigation works (**3.4**), it is now limited mostly to poaching marks either side of the Down Tor stone row and erosion hollows around the bases of some stones. The former have been further enhanced by cycle and pedestrian traffic (Fig 8). The erosion hollows are caused by the use of the stones as rubbing posts by cattle and ponies. Fortunately no stones appear to be loose and in danger of collapse.

Fig 8 *Hoofprints, footprints and bicycle tracks adjacent to the Down Tor stone row, 438583*

3.3.3 Footpath/cycleway erosion

While several sites at the Cramber Tor Training Area are affected by footpath erosion they are to be considered as stable. Damage is limited to paths crossing linear features where remedial action in the form of diversions would only lead to the transfer of the problem to a different stretch of the same feature. In these cases the very localised disturbance is to be tolerated.
An example of this lies the eastern side the enclosure 1451219, associated with the medieval settlement at Outcombe (Fig 9). Similarly the footpath crossing the streamworks 1448375 on the upper reaches of the Narrator Brook was first raised as an issue by the 2007 Baseline Survey. Examination of the ground photography from 2008, 2013 and 2017 indicates that there has been no appreciable deterioration in the state of the monument during this period.

Fig 9
Footpath cutting through the Outcombe enclosures. 1451219

3.3.5 Summary

It is ironic that two of the potential threats to the monuments at Cramber Tor are inversely related, a reduction in grazing leading to an increase in shrub growth. On the whole the result of this relationship, witnessed during the present Condition Survey, appears to be generally beneficial to the heritage resource. The human impact on the stable monuments at Cramber Tor is, at present, tolerable with inevitable though restricted areas of erosion.

3.4 Mitigation Work
Previous assessments of the stones marking the boundaries of the catchment area for Burrator reservoir and the former Royal Forest of Dartmoor have noted the erosion hollows around many of these features. Indeed some of the stones situated in the wetter areas were recumbent. (Fig 10). These features were first recorded in detail as archaeological monuments in 1995 (RCHME 1995). These earlier records show that erosion hollows were present and several stones lay fallen. While their condition was regarded as stable in subsequent assessments there existed the potential for further stones to fall and those

already recumbent to disappear beneath the peat. In a programme of work undertaken since 2014, several concerned parties coordinated by the Dartmoor Society have filled the erosion hollows and re-erected the fallen stones (Fig 11).

Fig 10 R*ecumbent boundary stone 106366, 2013*

Fig 11 *Boundary stone 106366, 2017, after restoration*

The 2013 assessment highlighted burrowing animal damage (Fig 12) to a major feature of the former Eylesbarrow Mine, 1300628. Conservation work has discouraged further burrowing and this shaft has been returned to a stable condition (Fig 13).

Fig 12 *1300628, 2013. Burrowing animal damage at Eylesbarrow Mine*

Fig 13 *1300628, 2017. Area restored*

4 COMPARISON OF FINDINGS

4.1 2007 and 2013 Surveys

The relative quantities of each condition type in the 2013 and 2017 Condition Surveys can be seen in Figs 14 and 15.

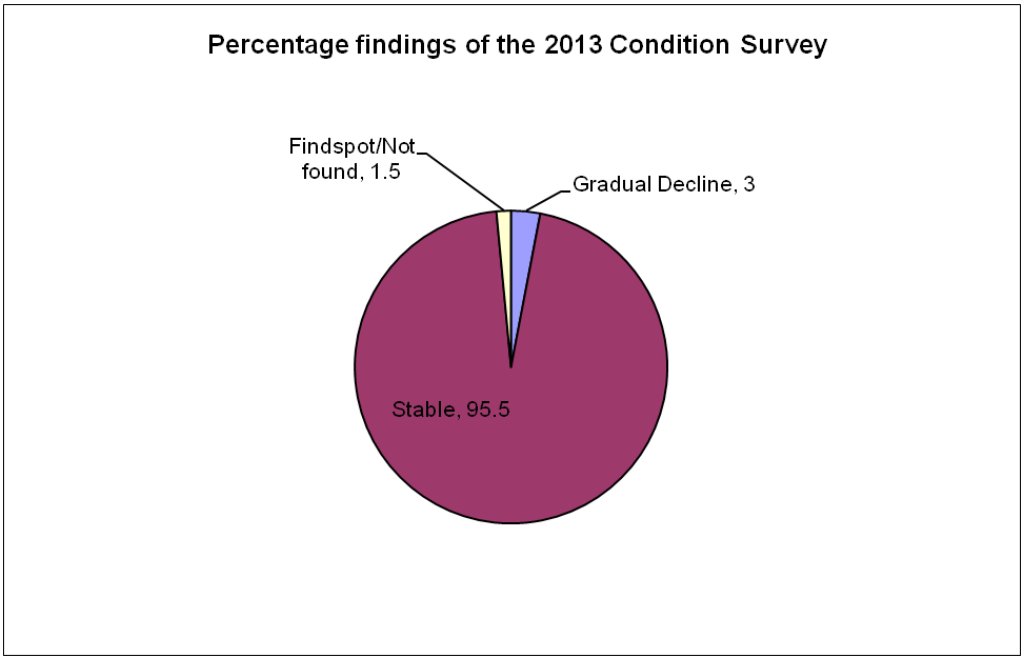

Fig 14 *Percentage results of 2013 Condition Survey*

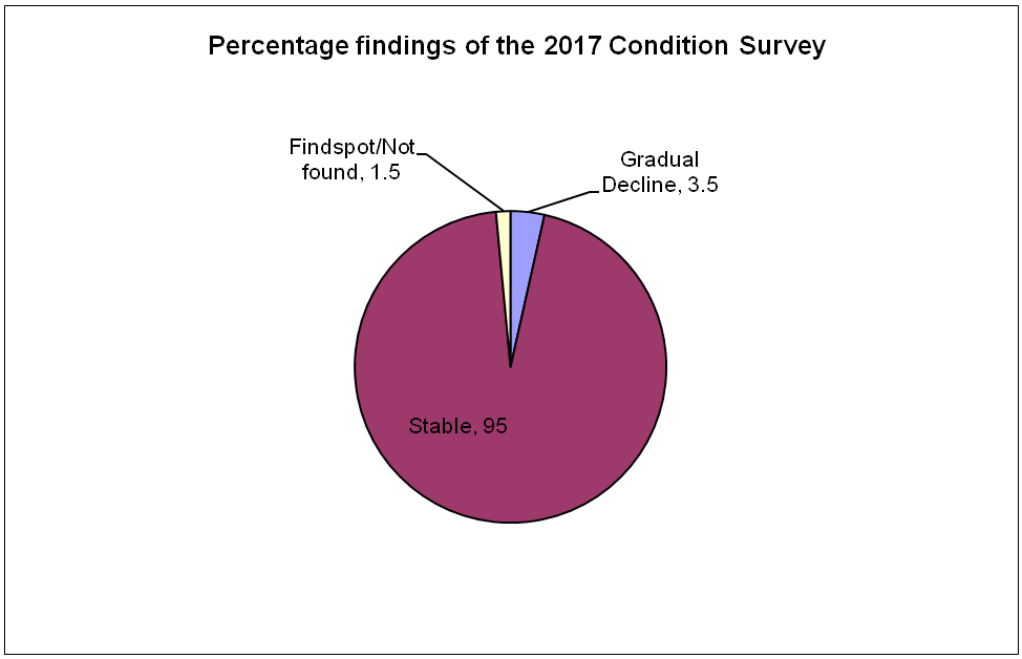

Fig 15 *Percentage results of 2017 Condition Survey*

The figures show a minimal decline in the condition of the heritage resource on the Cramber Tor Training Area, the Stable category decreasing slightly to 95.% of the total from a 2013 level of 95.5%, the difference of a single site.

In the 2017 Condition Survey the category of Gradual Decline contains only five sites. Of these three (438743, 1446212, 1450575) remain from the 2013 survey with two new additions (438589, 441725). One site (1300628) present in the 2013 Condition Survey has received attention and been reassessed as Stable.

4.2 Scheduled Ancient Monuments

The premature suspension of the Monuments Protection Programme has resulted in the omission of many sites in the Cramber Tor area that would normally have been deemed suitable for inclusion in the Register of Scheduled Monuments.

Fig 16 shows the 2013 condition of the Scheduled Monuments (SM) within the Cramber Tor Training Area. Fig 17 presents the 2017 assessment of the same dataset.

DIO No	SAM No	NGR	Condition	Stability
NMRE438556	SM10742	SX5906968517	POOR	STABLE
NMRE438574	SM10737	SX5669067839	POOR	STABLE
NMRE438577	SM34466	SX5910768779	FAIR	STABLE
NMRE438580	SM24083	SX5864069309	FAIR	STABLE
NMRE438583	SM24084	SX5883969320	GOOD	STABLE
NMRE438586	SM24121	SX5911569472	GOOD	STABLE
NMRE438589	SM24122	SX5919969447	FAIR	STABLE
NMRE438592	SM10750	SX5799268273	FAIR	STABLE
NMRE438743	SM10739	SX5996768596	FAIR	GRADUAL DECLINE
NMRE438806	SM24123	SX5966469807	POOR	STABLE
NMRE438861	SM24051	SX5838869558	FAIR	STABLE
NMRE438950	SM10742	SX5909068322	POOR	STABLE
NMRE438983	SM24082	SX5861569209	FAIR	STABLE
NMRE438986	SM10626	SX5898368280	POOR	STABLE
NMRE440023	SM22386	SX5918370298	GOOD	STABLE
NMRE440026	SM22381	SX5788570265	FAIR	STABLE
NMRE440094	SM22391	SX5837870397	GOOD	STABLE
NMRE440199	SM22389	SX5967070018	POOR	STABLE
NMRE440219	SM24068	SX5822470008	FAIR	STABLE
NMRE441591	SM24133	SX6047469937	GOOD	STABLE
NMRE619135	SM10745	SX5838468169	GOOD	STABLE
NMRE619136	SM10746	SX5803368046	GOOD	STABLE
NMRE1172972	SM22392	SX5843570519	GOOD	STABLE
NMRE1300505	SM34467	SX5930968214	GOOD	STABLE
NMRE1332225	SM24124	SX5956469740	FAIR	STABLE
NMRE1343106	SM24069	SX5825870166	FAIR	STABLE
NMRE1386458	SM34472	SX5895168486	POOR	STABLE
NMRE1451175	SM10745	SX5835068221	POOR	STABLE

Fig 16 *Tabulated condition and stability of Scheduled Monuments, 2013 Condition Survey*

DIO No	SAM No	NGR	Condition	Stability
NMRE438556	SM10742	SX5906968517	POOR	STABLE
NMRE438574	SM10737	SX5669067839	POOR	STABLE
NMRE438577	SM34466	SX5910768779	FAIR	STABLE
NMRE438580	SM24083	SX5864069309	FAIR	STABLE
NMRE438583	SM24084	SX5883969320	GOOD	STABLE
NMRE438586	SM24121	SX5911569472	GOOD	STABLE
NMRE438589	SM24122	SX5919969447	FAIR	STABLE
NMRE438592	SM10750	SX5799268273	FAIR	GRADUAL DECLINE
NMRE438743	SM10739	SX5996768596	FAIR	GRADUAL DECLINE
NMRE438806	SM24123	SX5966469807	POOR	STABLE
NMRE438861	SM24051	SX5838869558	FAIR	STABLE
NMRE438950	SM10742	SX5909068322	POOR	STABLE
NMRE438983	SM24082	SX5861569209	FAIR	STABLE
NMRE438986	SM10626	SX5898368280	POOR	STABLE
NMRE440023	SM22386	SX5918370298	GOOD	STABLE
NMRE440026	SM22381	SX5788570265	FAIR	STABLE
NMRE440094	SM22391	SX5837870397	GOOD	STABLE
NMRE440199	SM22389	SX5967070018	POOR	STABLE
NMRE440219	SM24068	SX5822470008	FAIR	STABLE
NMRE441591	SM24133	SX6047469937	GOOD	STABLE
NMRE619135	SM10745	SX5838468169	GOOD	STABLE
NMRE619136	SM10746	SX5803368046	GOOD	STABLE
NMRE1172972	SM22392	SX5843570519	GOOD	STABLE
NMRE1300505	SM34467	SX5930968214	GOOD	STABLE
NMRE1332225	SM24124	SX5956469740	FAIR	STABLE
NMRE1343106	SM24069	SX5825870166	FAIR	STABLE
NMRE1386458	SM34472	SX5895168486	POOR	STABLE
NMRE1451175	SM10745	SX5835068221	POOR	STABLE

Fig 17 *Tabulated condition and stability of Scheduled Monuments, 2017 Condition Survey*

Figs 18 and 19 display the percentage findings of the above data.

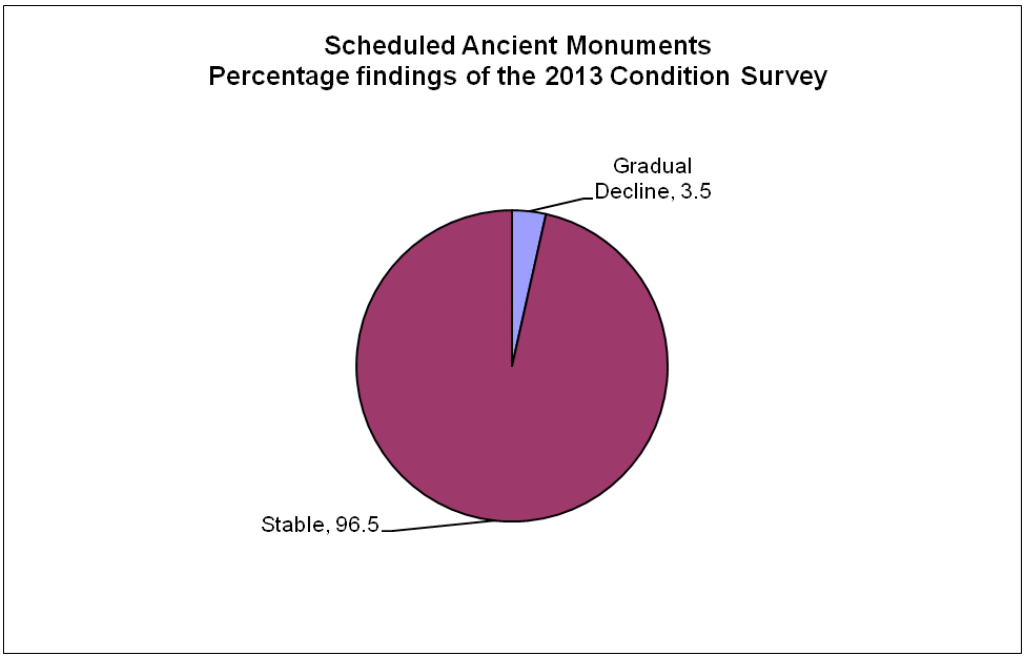

Fig 18 *2013 Condition Survey, relative stability of Scheduled Monuments.*

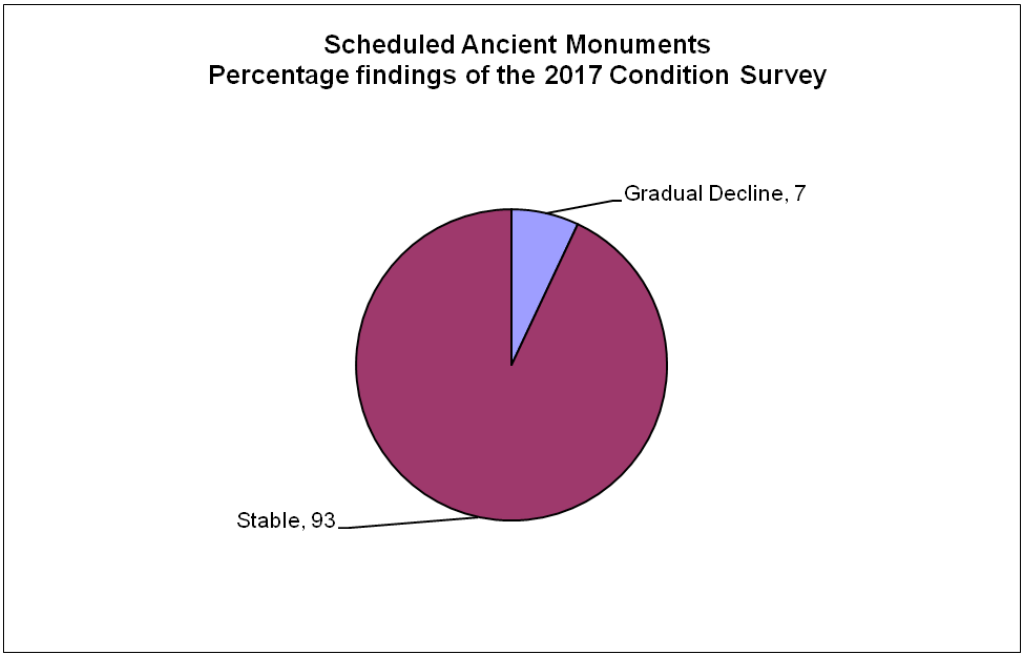

Fig 19 *2017 Condition Survey, relative stability of Scheduled Monuments.*

These data are an approximate reflection of the entire heritage resource. The sites considered to be in gradual decline have been described at length above (*3.2.1*) and are relatively easily remedied (*3.2.4*).

5 CONCLUSION

The vast majority of the recorded archaeological sites within the Cramber Tor Training Area can be regarded as stable though there remains a small but easily managed element of gradual decline.

The potential for the decline of a whole class of monuments, the boundary stones described in section *3.3.5,* has been removed for the short to medium term thanks to the activities of the various parties. Prompt remedial action at Eylesbarrow Mine has averted the partial destruction of part of one of the shaftheads.

Livestock levels on the open moor seem to be at an historic low level which, in the short term certainly, appears to benefit the heritage resource. Such a low intensity of grazing coupled with the prompt rectification of the casual vandalism that occurs in this area should ensure the continued stability of the archaeological monuments.

In 2013 it was noted that the Cramber Tor Training Area was the most stable of the five Dartmoor training areas administered by DIO (Probert 2014). This has not changed. As a landscape the multi party approach to its conservation is an exemplar of good management.

Simon Probert
28 May 2017

6 BIBLIOGRAPHY

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Appendix Synthesised summary of DIO field sheets