

Archaeological Sites within Willsworthy Training
Area, Dartmoor National Park, Devon:
A condition survey on behalf of Defence
Infrastructure Organisation

February 2019



Southwest Landscape Investigations



Dr Phil Newman MCI(A), FSA

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Survey and report by

Dr Phil Newman MCI(A), FSA
Southwest Landscape Investigations

[www:philnew.co.uk](http://www.philnew.co.uk)
07730 978321



A hut circle on Tavy Cleave

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DVD containing GIS .shp files; ground photography; DIO HAC survey forms; Excel spread sheet.

INTRODUCTION

A survey was requested by Defence Infrastructure Organisation (DIO) as part of the on-going management and monitoring of heritage assets within the Dartmoor Training Area. The purpose of this report is to provide an updated condition assessment for all known archaeological sites within the Willsworthy estate. This includes scheduled monuments (SMs) and non-scheduled sites recorded in the Dartmoor HER and the National Monument Record (NMR), but excludes listed buildings. Previous condition surveys were completed on Willsworthy in 2013 and 2007. The revised survey, presented here, was undertaken between December 2018 to January 2019.

The Survey Area (Fig. 1)

Willsworthy Training Area is the third largest of the Dartmoor training areas (DTAs), and covers 14560ha within the western sector of Dartmoor National Park. It is one of three Dartmoor Training Areas where live firing is practised. The range boundary, where possible, follows river courses and parish boundaries. The northern limit follows the moorland section of the River Lyd for 2km before cutting across to meet the Lydford/Peter Tavy parish boundary at Walla Brook head then to Deadlake Foot on the Rattlebrook. From there it follows the Dartmoor Forest boundary, south along the Tavy and up Western Redlake near the head of which it cuts across to Baggator Brook and follows it west to meet the Tavy again near Standon, which it follows north. Near Nattor the boundary cuts a mostly arbitrary line west across to and beyond Willsworthy Brook. It then follows the outer enclosures south and west to meet the Peter Tavy/Mary Tavy parish boundary near Wheal Jewel Reservoir, then following the parish boundary to old Willsworthy Camp. From there it again clings to the edge of enclosed land, then through the enclosures of Bearwalls back to the Lyd. Between the river sections, this boundary is marked out by 46 granite boundary stones, each separately inscribed with a number.

The majority of the area is common land on open moorland, also designated as Access Land, though a small area on the western slope of Standon remains in use as enclosed pasture. Vehicular access to the area is restricted to a metaled road from the A386 to the target area, and a single trackway across White Hill, with offshoots for servicing of the targetry. Neither is available for use by the public, other than on foot, at any time.



Fig 1. Dartmoor National Park showing DIO Dartmoor Training Area, with Willsworthy TA highlighted.

Training Area Name	Size in Kms ²	Monuments recorded	SAMs	%SAM	SAMs per Km ²
Ringmoor	6.1	92	43	46.7	7
Cramber	8.4	146	28	19	3.3
Willsworthy	14.5	179	31	17	2
Merrivale	33.2	118	35	30	1.05
Okehampton	61.8	272	56	20	1.1

Table 1 Demonstrating low percentage of SMs per Km² compared with the smaller Dartmoor TAs.

In terms of area, Willsworthy is the third largest of the Dartmoor TAs, and contains the second largest concentration of heritage assets, compared with the smaller ranges, but has approximately only two scheduled monument (SMs) per square kilometer, and of the total archaeological sites recorded within Willsworthy, only 17% are SMs, which is the lowest for any within the Dartmoor estate. This statistic is due mainly to the skewing effect of having so many military sites (including 46 range boundary stones) within the training area, none of which are designated.

Methodology

The 2019 condition survey is the third of its kind on Willsworthy and follows earlier surveys in 2013 and 2007 by S Probert. The baseline survey for this training area was completed by English Heritage in 2001. The essential methodology of the condition survey has not changed and requires a field inspection and report for all the heritage assets listed in previous surveys. Any deterioration or improvement in condition is noted, and recommendations are made as to future management of any assets with conservation issues. Photographic evidence for each heritage asset acts as a visual means of monitoring site condition over time and digital photographs from each survey are archived by DIO for back reference.

The current survey has made use of the 2001 EH baseline survey of Willsworthy TA (on which the first condition appraisal was based) as a means of establishing location and extent of the archaeological sites recorded in that report (Appendix 2). In the course of fieldwork, a vector map of the archaeological sites recorded in 2001 was uploaded into a mapping-grade GPS device to aid precise location.

Since the 2001 survey, no additional sites had been added to the baseline list. Of the 179 heritage assets for which records have been updated, 31 (17% of the total) form the whole or part of scheduled monuments (SMs), or they are within the protected zone of an SM.

The 2018-19 condition survey was conducted using pro-forma sheets (in digital format) to record field observations, with the results collated into an Excel spreadsheet. Condition photographs are filed using the monument numbers, enabling cross-referencing with the spread sheet and similar photographs from previous reports. Location and approximate extent of each monument is presented in GIS polygon format (.shp). Each entity in the GIS file also has a short descriptive field. The results are summarized in this report, which also highlights any issues that may require conservation action.

LEGACY CONDITION AND MONUMENT TYPE

Condition of field monuments is to some extent dependent on their age. A prehistoric site, which may be up to 5000 years old at Willsworthy, may have less visible fabric but has had much longer to decline and stabilise than a ruined 20th-century military earthwork or structure, whereas the condition of modern sites can decline rapidly if unprotected and subject to neglect and abuse. Clearly, a consistent approach when applying a condition category is difficult for an assemblage of monuments with such a diversity of ages. Allowances therefore have to be made for the legacy condition, which is described below for each category. For the purposes of this survey the *Condition* terms (good, fair, poor) have

to take this into account but are still somewhat arbitrary depending on the observer. However, the *Stability and Change* record for each asset is more accurately gauged and is related solely to damage, threats or other management issues visible at the time of inspection. These observations can be cross-referenced to past inspections to establish whether the asset's status has declined, improved or remains static since last observed.

The archaeology of Willsworthy Training Area can be broken down into eight distinct categories, based on chronological period and site types:

Prehistoric burial – cairns

Prehistoric settlement / land division– hut circles, enclosed settlements and reaves

Medieval agriculture – field system

Medieval/post-medieval settlements

Medieval/ post medieval industrial – tinworking, charcoal making

Nineteenth-century industrial - tin mining, quarrying

Miscellaneous (mostly post-medieval) – boundary stones and large stone artefacts

Twentieth century military - structures and earthworks

This is a fairly typical assemblage of archaeological site types found on Dartmoor's moorlands, but although the area is well endowed with prehistoric hut settlements and cairns, ritual monuments (stone rows and circles) are absent and although prehistoric reaves are present in this area they are not as numerous as some other parts of Dartmoor. The early tin industry is well represented with many hectares of tin streamworks following river valleys, and several pit-type workings as well as disused water courses. However, tin processing and smelting sites and other tin associated structures such as huts or lodges, are almost non-existent in this area. The area does contain the remains of a 20th-century tin mine beside the Baggtor Brook and a somewhat diminutive quarry exists north of Doe Tor Farm.

Cairns

There are records for a total of 24 prehistoric (Bronze Age) round cairns or barrows in the training area, of which 12 are scheduled, or form part of a scheduled monument. There is also four cairnfields of unverifiable date, including three scheduled examples. Most of the cairns in this training area are of insignificant appearance, and many are obscured by vegetation, especially those on White Hill. The most significant of the cairns as landscape features is that on Standon Down, a large flatish, stony mound which incorporates the summit outcrop (440627) and a very fine ring cairn (440699) not far from Willsworthy old camp. In general, however, cairns in this TA are small and discreet. Some survive as bare heaps of stone, while others have a certain amount of turf covering. Two of the smaller cairns contain stone cists (440667; 440705;), though both have been disturbed. A number of small, low, stony or earthen mounds have been included within the cairn category in past recording, though in some cases the remains are poor and their prehistoric authenticity is questionable.

Cairns were frequent targets for interventions by antiquaries and looters in the past, often leaving the remains heavily disturbed with results unrecorded, though this occurred usually over a century ago. Most of the above examples, where visible above the vegetation, show signs of interference, especially the cists, which have both been opened.

Hut circles and settlements

Records exist for 16 sites where prehistoric round houses survive, together in many cases with elements of enclosure walls, often in small to large groups, forming settlements. Most of the hut circles and their associated settlements probably had origins in the early to mid 2nd millennium BC. Eleven of these settlements are scheduled.

The largest and most impressive of these is at Standon Down (440624) where at least 76 stone hut circles are associated with various enclosures, though most of the huts are free standing. Also on the north slope of Standon Down is a hut group with several very fine, well-preserved stone hut circles (440611), and on the south-facing slopes of the Tavy, NE of Ger Tor, is a settlement of 12 hut circles (440591), some of which are visually among the finest examples found on Dartmoor, with good survival of walls and with door jambs *in situ*. However, their condition may owe something to the antiquarian excavations that took place here in the 19th century. Other fine examples are located on the western lower slopes of Standon Down (440742). Further significant settlements exist on Nattor Down (440702) and two open hut groups are at Hamlyn's Newtake (440684) and White Hill (440746). Three extensively robbed settlements, all with vestigial enclosures are Walla Brook (440749) and Doe Tor (1151130), Baggator Brook (1157015; 440661).

Many of Dartmoor's hut circles have been subject to archaeological investigation in the past, principally in the late 19th century, though, unlike cairns, these have usually been recorded to a limited extent. Notable within Willsworthy TA, as well as the settlement at Ger Tor where five huts were investigated and at Standon Down where 41 huts were excavated. In general, if not disturbed by antiquarians or 19th-century stone robbers, hut circles stabilised many centuries ago and have varying levels of turf covering the stony remains.

Reaves

Reaves (prehistoric linear boundary banks) are common over parts of western Dartmoor, but within Willsworthy TA the evidence is limited to only one untypical example (440761), which curves through Hamlyn's Newtake. These linear banks of earth and stone, although collapsed and spread, are normally very stable and insusceptible to casual damage, although many have been fossilized into later walling schemes and some have become disguised by a natural overgrowth of turf.

Medieval/post medieval agriculture and settlement

The majority of the Willsworthy TA comprises high moorland, where medieval and later attempts to settle and farm are very few. However, on the slightly lower lands around the western peripheries there is a number of deserted farmsteads with medieval or post-medieval origins, possessing ranges of ruined rectangular buildings representing houses, barns and out buildings, as well as their associated enclosures; many of these enclosures remain in partial use today. Three such ruined settlements are located along Willsworthy Brook. Furthest north is Reddaford Farm (440733), comprising a complex of field walls spread along both sides of Willsworthy Brook and the remains of the Farmstead buildings. The latter, known to have been occupied from the 14th century until 1907 was demolished in the 1940s (Greeves 2007) and survives only as turf-covered foundation walls. Further SW on the west side of the stream, the earthwork foundation remains of two rectangular structures (440736) survive, and may be remains of a farmstead with unknown origins, abandoned much earlier than Reddaford. A further 750m SW is the remains of Yellowmead Farm, with similarly flattened foundations of a dwelling and outbuildings, first documented in the 17th century and abandoned in 1904 (Greeves 2008). In the northern sector of Willsworthy TA is Doe Tor Farm, probably established in the 1730s and occupied until the 1950s (Greeves 2007). Although Reddaford and Yellowmead were demolished due to the needs of the military, Doe Tor Farm was simply abandoned, but not demolished until the 1970s. All of these demolished farmsteads survive only as stable ruins, becoming progressively turf covered, though their associated enclosures survive in better condition.

Medieval/post-medieval industrial

Tin streamworking remains are to be observed along many of the river valleys and tributaries within Willsworthy TA, including sizable areas on either side of Willsworthy Brook (1143702), Deadlake (1159606) and Baggator Brook (1160081). The largest worked areas may be found along the Walla Brook, which has been worked along its entire extent, and Doe Tor Brook. The latter meets the River Lyd, and the area formed by the confluence of the Walla Brook and the Lyd has been extensively worked (1143697). Although several tinworks have been scheduled elsewhere on Dartmoor, none within this training area have been so designated.

Tinworking remains of this type represent episodes of major upheaval within the landscape, sometimes for considerable periods of time, followed by abrupt abandonment. The activity leaves deep scars rather than the more subtle evidence of some other past activities, though parts of the workings have become smoothed by time. The interiors of the tinworks comprise much discarded material left behind by the extraction process, now often overgrown by turf. Despite the inherent robustness of tinwork remains they have, over time, become subject to encroachment by mires, which, in some cases have completely obscured parts of the evidence and rendered large areas inaccessible. This process is irreversible, so we have to consider what does remain to be in a stable state. Beyond this, they have not been subject to robbing or re-use of stone and survive, as far as can be known from observation, largely undisturbed. Pit works and prospecting pits of various size and extent are found in several places across Willsworthy TA, such as on either side of Walla Brook (1151141) and along Willsworthy Brook (1143731) but are generally less common here than in more intensively worked areas of Dartmoor. These have not been subject to any interference since they were abandoned, though the soft earth of the spoil mounds has in some cases made a home for burrowing animals.

Small rectangular buildings or shelters are commonly associated with the tinworks, often built within the worked area, and usually referred to as tanners' huts or lodges. These also are uncommon in Willsworthy TA, though remains of buildings close by the stream beds may have some association with tanners, including one beside Willsworthy Brook (1156810).

A small tin mine of probable 19th-century origins, though certainly worked until the 1920s, on the north bank of Baggator Brook (1147657), comprises only an open adit with a spoil heap and an alignment of pits spread up the slope. It is the only later period metal mine within Willsworthy TA. Although the interior of the adit (currently inaccessible) is in irreversible decline the surface remains are undisturbed.

Evidence of peat charcoal burning, which took place on Dartmoor from at least the 13th century until the 18th, or possibly 19th century, is scattered on the flatter ground of Standon Down (1160678). The remains comprise subtle earthwork mounds with low profiles, some with slightly sunken centres. Although located within extremely wet ground, this does not appear to be adversely affecting their survival.

Several leats running through the Willsworthy estate are still in use, including the Reddaford Leat (1143688), original constructed to serve 19th century mines but now supplying a small power station. Abandoned leats, mostly undated and now dry and silted earthworks, are also present on Doe Tor Common (1143693), Baggator Brook (1143730), While Hill (1158956) and Willsworthy Brook (1147635).

Boundary stones and stone artefacts

A disproportionate number of recorded heritage assets with Willsworthy TA is given over to boundary stones. There are 51 records for 59 stones, representing 28 per cent of the total assets. Of these, 46 are War Department boundary markers delineating the limits of the TA, installed when the range was established in the early 20th century. These granite posts are each numbered and inscribed with the letters 'WD'. Of the 46, only one is currently not found (1338128), possibly due to coverage by vegetation.

Evidence of a moorstone industry can be found at several locations, particularly on the west slopes of Hare Tor, where tell-tale signs of granite cutting are present amongst the clitter (1149278), and a large, incomplete granite trough was abandoned amongst it (1149292). Two smaller troughs were abandoned beside the Walla Brook (1157017; 1149281) and a small mill stone lies amongst a prehistoric settlement on the slopes of Doe Tor (1151126). Limited evidence of later stone quarrying is found at the northern end of Doetor Common (1159553), where a small pit with spoil heap is located.

Military

Evidence of past military activity on Willsworthy TA is more subtle than on Dartmoor's other firing range at Okehampton TA. Abandoned, stone-built observation huts on Doe Tor (1159439) and Hare Tor (1158952), are accompanied by fixtures

for flagpole bases and other minor pieces of evidence, such as miscellaneous diggings and trenches. There is, however, a number of almost intact disused target ranges. They are of two types, though both seem to have a standard block-built, partly sunken, operator bunker reinforced with an earthwork mound. Ironwork associated with pop-up targets and target railways are evident associated with these features. Two of these, with very fine target railways, are located within Hamlyn's Newtake (11437023). Both have apparently intact iron rails in situ, though partly buried, though the northern bunker of one of these is almost completely obscured by the spoil from a particularly large badger set. Several others examples are concentrated around Nattor Down and Willsworthy Book, and a group of eleven bunkers is located on White Hill (1156692). Ironwork associated with the targetry will eventually rust away and turf overgrowth is beginning to cover the bunkers but otherwise they remain in good condition.

THE CONDITION SURVEY: RESULTS

Condition

Of the 184 heritage assets listed within the 2013 report, 7 were recorded as either not found, or find spots (*see* Table 3). Finds have not been included in the 2019 survey or statistics and only three assets are not found. A total of 179 sites have therefore been revisited for the 2019 survey, presented on the Excel spread sheet and output as Appendix 1.

Of the 179 assets included in the 2019 statistics, 122 (68%) may be stated to be in good condition, 21 (11%) in fair condition and 15 (8.5%) in poor condition. Three further sites are not found or non-antiquities representing (1.5%).

For the 2013 survey the figures differed slightly with 124 (67.5%) out of 184 assets in good condition, 46 (25%) in fair condition and 1 (3%) in poor condition.

Of the 31 scheduled monuments (SMs), 18 (58%) can be stated to be in good condition in 2018, while 13 (42%) are fair condition and 5 (14.5%) are in a poor condition. This compares with the 2013 statistics of 12 good (34.5%), 9 fair (25.5%), 6 poor (17%). The variation in these statistics is due, in the most part, to the subjectivity of this form of assessment (which has to include varying degrees of legacy damage) than any actual change in condition since 2013.

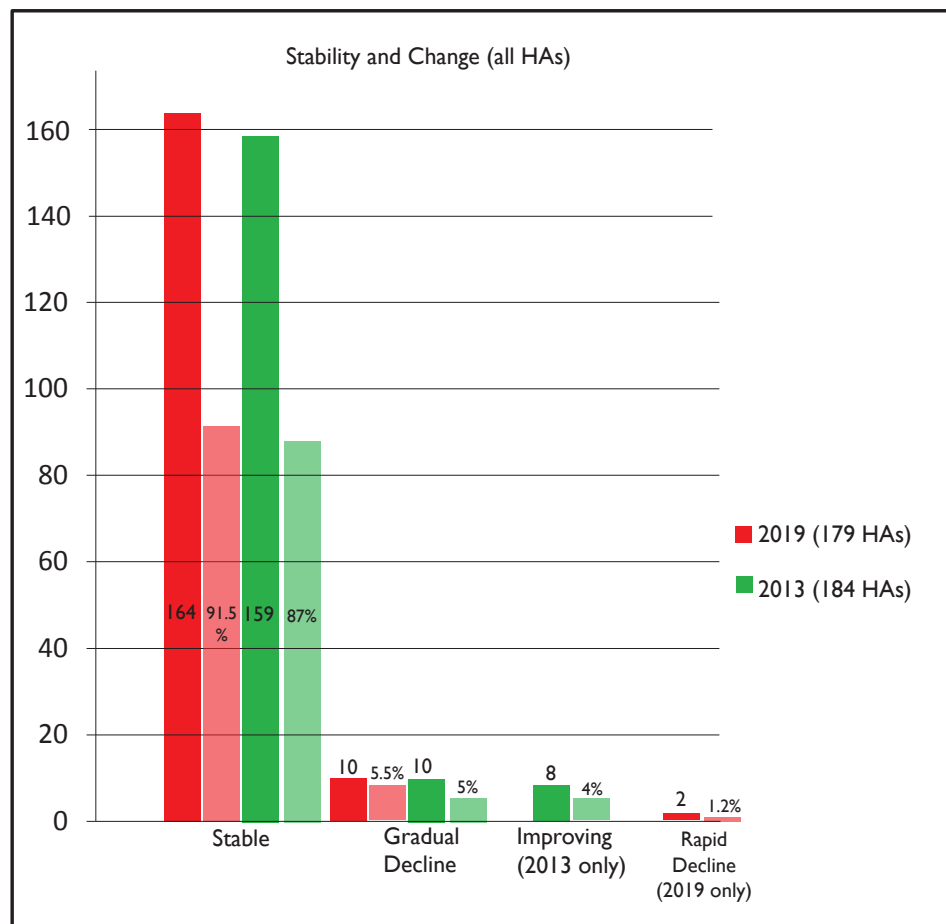
Stability and Change

This more objective category measures the extent to which a heritage asset may be said to be in a stable condition, or otherwise, and notes any changes following previous surveys, which may be the result of damage through various causes, or erosion. This measure also acts as an indicator as to whether intervention may be beneficial in halting the decline, especially where caused by human agency.

2019 survey of 179 heritage assets assessed	No.	% of total
Stable	164	91.5
Gradual Decline	10	5.5
Rapid Decline	2	1.2
Improving	0	
Not found	3	1.8
2013 survey of 184 heritage assets assessed		
Stable	159	87
Gradual Decline	10	5
Rapid Decline	0	0
Improving	8	4
Not found & find spots	7	4

Table 2 Showing actual numbers and percentages of the total in terms of stability and change (2013 figures from Probert Figs 1&2).

Fig. 2 Graph presenting the statistics and percentages for stability and change for all heritage assets (HA) recorded in Willsworthy TA 2013 and 2019.



In 2019, 164 (90%) of the total sample (179) remain in a stable condition, while 10 (5.5%) are reported as in gradual decline, in most cases this is due to very insignificant patches of erosion or minor threats. Zero assets may be seen to be improving, as no measures have been in place, but two have been moved to the rapid decline category (see below).

The figures are summarized in Table 2 and Fig. 2, which includes the statistics from previous surveys for comparison and represent an increase of 4.5% in the total number of heritage assets reported to be in a stable condition, while those considered to be in gradual decline has reached equilibrium, which indicates a generally positive direction of travel for the aggregate statistics within this TA.

Scheduled monuments

It should be noted that the numbering scheme for all assets including scheduled monuments (SMs) used in this report, was originally based on the National Monument Record system, which differs from the Historic England scheduling numbers. This means that some entries on the accompanying spread sheet (Appendix 1) will include several SMs. Also, the polygons used on Appendix 2 only delineate the limit of upstanding monuments, and not necessarily the outline used in the schedule, as the latter often does not reflect the full extent of the asset.

Thirty out of 31 assets which include one or more SMs, can be reported to be in a stable state (but see discussion below) only one SM is reported to be in gradual decline. This represents only 0.03%, whereas in 2013, 3% were in gradual decline and 7% were improving (Probert 2013, Fig. 13), so a marked overall stabilisation can be perceived.

MANAGEMENT ACTIONS

Management measures

No management measures are currently in use for any of the heritage assets, scheduled or unscheduled, within Willsworthy TA, where threat levels are minimal. The use of off-road vehicles is not a problem in Willsworthy TA, where the military needs are served by made up tracks, and stock keepers require minimal vehicle access to the moor. The use of ordnance by the military in the TA is restricted to small arms within the rifle ranges, and mostly non-intrusive. Stocking levels of

sheep, cattle and ponies are currently not high, reducing the problem of poaching, although some instances still occur and the pressure from civilian visitors for much of the TA is minimal due to its remoteness.

SCHEDULED MONUMENTS (SMs)

Gradual decline requiring remedial work

All but one SM in Willsworthy TA is in a stable state. The exception is the large tor cairn on Standon Hill (**440627**; SM No. 1016253), which has very recently been disturbed by persons unknown, removing stones from the cairn to construct a wall beneath a nearby overhanging rock, to build a shelter. Demolition of the shelter could be followed by returning the stones to the hollows from where they were removed to restore this damage, which although not severe, the presence of the shelter could encourage others to augment its walls and escalate the problem.

Gradual decline requiring monitoring only

A large cairn to the west of Hare Tor (**440579**) has been reported in previous condition reports as having suffered interference, whereby a secondary stony cairn has been constructed within the main turf-covered cairn. Despite remedial action following the 2007 survey, the interference continued and the stony cairn had reappeared by 2013 and has remained stable since then. A further intervention could restore the cairn but would not prevent the continued interference. It may be more practical to leave the illegitimate cairn in place and re-assess the condition at the next survey cycle rather than continuously moving the stone about.

Although a high number of SMs are stable, it is also true that vegetation is a serious problem in terms of monument management and monitoring over large parts of the TA. Two cairns on Nattor Down (**440710**) are now completely obscured by gorse as is part the nearby settlement (**440702**), and several very flat cairns recorded in previous surveys (**440678**; **1143706**) on White Hill are barely perceivable beneath Western Heath type gorse. This affects their visibility and inhibits a thorough condition assessment, but is unlikely to contribute to the decline of the monuments' condition.

NON-SCHEDULED MONUMENTS

There is little to report in the way of specific damage or erosion to individual non-scheduled assets in Willsworthy TA. However, the forces of attrition continue to contribute to the decline of some heritage assets.

A stony mound to the north of Hare Tor (**1146812**), which may or may not be an extensively ruined cairn has signs of probable animal poaching. However, with its significance very questionable, intervention is unnecessary.

Animal poaching around the base of boundary stones is an ongoing issue, highlighted in previous reports but most seem to be surviving well at present, with only two stones having excessive erosion (**1146705**; **1146695**). This may cause them to topple eventually. Only one stone is currently threatening to do this (**1157552**), which is currently leaning, hence its 'rapid decline' status.

A stand of willows in the interior partly-standing cottage ruins (**1147005**) near Standon, has increased in size since 2013, if allowed to continue unchecked it will in years to come cause further undermining of the ruins.

Two stone troughs (**1149362**; **1135491**) in the yard of Standon Farm are still being used as barbecue pits which is causing heat damage and fresh cracks are visible. This was reported in 2013 but continues. The culprits may be members of the public, but perhaps more likely military personnel using the accommodation at the farm, in which case measures should be taken to stop this activity, perhaps by provision of an information sheet inside the accommodation.

CONCLUSIONS

The great majority of heritage assets within Willsworthy Training Area survive in a good to fair condition, those that are classified as poor (15 out of 179) are mainly so by way of legacy. Under the heading of *Stability and Change*, the percentage of assets reckoned to be in a stable state has increased by 4.5% since the last survey of 2013. With no increase to those in gradual decline. Although two assets may be stated to be in rapid decline, neither are scheduled and remedial action would be straightforward in both cases if deemed necessary. Of the 31 scheduled monuments, only one is reported to be in a gradual decline and easily remedied. This is the only asset where urgent action is recommended regarding conservation. The statistics confirm (Fig. 2; Table 2) that since the first condition assessment in 2007, the number of sites in a stable condition has steadily increased. In the handful of cases where concerns are raised, most are due to unavoidable attrition, though in some cases could be ameliorated some light-touch remedial action and/or continued monitoring.

Overall the survey has provided a clean bill of health for the vast majority of assets within the TA which is a very positive result, proving that both the conservation management and the monitoring process are working well. The increase in the number of stable assets since 2013, continues the trend, noted by Probert, when comparing the 2013 statistics with those of 2007. Since the previous survey of 2013, the heritage assets in Willsworthy TA have not suffered any serious damage through human intervention, either wanton or accidental, and that current activity and management of the TA provides favorable conditions for the assets to continue to survive in a stable state.

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Fig 3. 440627. The tor cairn on Standon Hill showing details of stone removed from the fabric of the cairn.



Fig 4. 440627 The tor cairn on Standon Hill showing details of a recent shelter built nearby from material robbed from the cairn.



Fig 5. 440579 A small cairn to the north of Hare Tor, with un-authorised modifications.

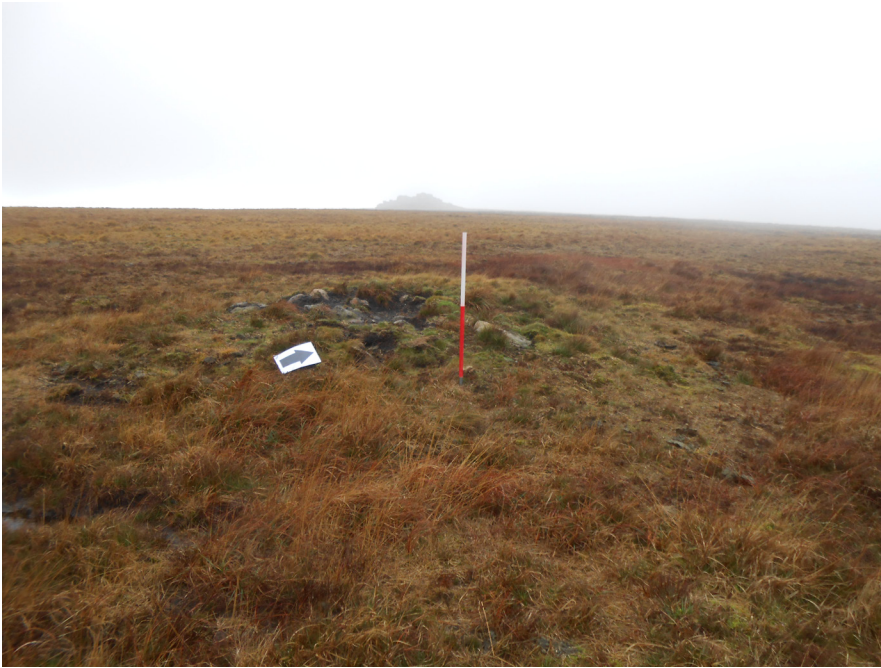


Fig 6. 1146812. A mound, possibly a cairn, north of Hare Tor which has suffered recent damage.



Fig 7. 1157552 A leaning War Department boundary stone near the head of Baggator Brook.

Figs 8 and 9. Granite troughs (1149362; 1135491) in courtyard of Standon Farm, showing evidence for use as barbecue pits. Both now have fresh hairline fractures as a result.

