

ANCIENT MONUMENTS LABORATORY REPORT

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AUTHOR

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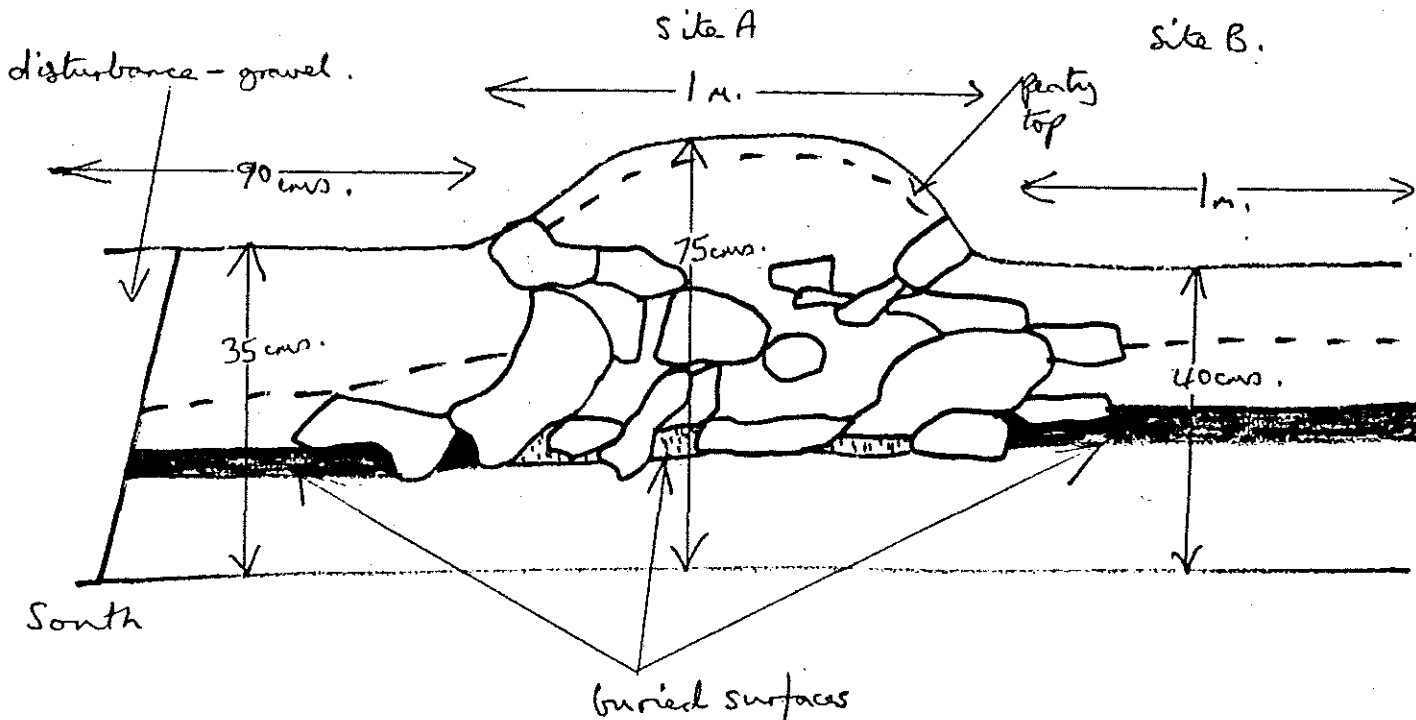
TITLE

Report on a Field Visit to
Central Excavation Unit Sites on
Wotter Common, Dartmoor, Devon.
(July 1979)

Report on a Field Visit to Central Excavation Unit Sites on Wotter Common,
Dartmoor, Devon (July, 1979)

By Helen C M Keeley

A section across a prehistoric reave was examined in Area A. A rough sketch is shown below:-



NB measurements are approximate

Soil descriptions were carried out at Sites A and B across the section.

This part of the site appeared to be moderately well drained and there was no iron pan, although it appeared in patches about 5 metres to the east, often apparently, immediately underlying stones of the reave. Vegetation was predominantly grasses and bracken.

Site A - Below the wall

60 to 65 cms. below the top of the wall was very dark grey (10YR3/1) friable relatively stone-free silty loam, underlying the stones of the reave.

Structure was moderate medium blocky; roots common, coarse to fine, fibrous and woody (mainly bracken roots). Many small quartz fragments were present but no large stones. This layer appeared to represent a buried topsoil; examination

of the same layer, after removal of a very large stone from the base of the wall, tended to confirm this. In addition, fine material washed down between the stones may have resulted in the silty texture.

65 to 75 cms, was very dark greyish brown (10YR3/2) friable coarse gravelly loam with moderate medium blocky structure, containing many stones - gravel to large - but no roots.

Below 75cms was mixed brown (10YR5/3) and darker material from above. The coarse gravelly loam was friable, with moderate medium blocky structure. Roots were few, fine fibrous; stones many, gravel to large, including some large granite boulders. This material was overlying dark yellowish brown (10YR4/6) moderately firm coarse sandy clay loam with medium prismatic structure, containing occasional medium, distinct rusty mottles.

Stones were abundant, gravel to large (including many large granite boulders); roots absent.

Site B - North of the wall

At this site a very dark topsoil was preserved under material which appeared to have washed down from the reave rather than from upslope - it was present on both sides of the bank.

0 to 3 cms was a root mat.

3 to 15 cms was very dark brown (10YR2/2) moderately friable humose medium sandy loam with medium blocky structure. Roots were abundant, coarse to fine fibrous and woody (bracken roots); stones few (gravel), apart from occasional large granite boulders.

16 to 28 cms was very dark grey (10YR3/1) friable coarse loamy sand and gravel with medium blocky structure. Roots were common, fine fibrous; stones many gravel to small (mainly gravel-size quartz fragments).

28 to 33 cms was black (10YR2/1) humose medium sandy silt loam, moderately friable and with medium blocky structure. Apart from occasional gravel-size

quartz fragments and large boulders of the wall, this layer was relatively stone-free. Roots were few, fine fibrous. This layer appeared to represent a buried landsurface concurrent with that beneath the reave.

33 to 46 cms was very dark greyish brown (10YR3/2) friable coarse sandy loam with medium blocky structure. Stones were abundant gravel to large (mainly quartz gravel and occasional large granite boulders); roots common, fine fibrous.

Below 46 cms was mixed dark yellowish brown (10YR4/4) friable coarse gravelly loam and darker material from above. Structure was medium blocky. Roots were few, fine fibrous; stones many, gravel to large, including some large granite boulders.

This layer overlay dark yellowish brown (10YR4/6) moderately firm coarse sandy clay loam with medium prismatic structure. Occasional medium distinct rusty mottles were noted. Stones were abundant, gravel to large; roots absent.

Comments

A buried soil was found beneath the reave which extended on either side of the wall. The top of the profile buried below material washed down from the wall was considerably more humose than that below the wall itself. The latter may have been deturfed prior to building the reave. Alternatively oxidation of organic matter beneath the stone wall may have occurred, as at Site 15. Further work, ie micromorphological investigation, is required to clarify this point. The soil appeared to be a stagnohumic gley.