

# LITHIC MONUMENTS ON EXMOOR: SOME NEW DISCOVERIES THE WARCOMBE WATER STONE ROW AND A STONE SETTING ON TROUT HILL

Hazel Riley



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## **SUMMARY**

A previously unrecorded stone row was discovered in 2006 on the low spur between the West Lyn River and Warcombe Water, bringing the total number of these monuments in the Exmoor National Park to nine. A previously unrecorded stone setting was also discovered recently on the north-western edge of Trout Hill. These two monuments were surveyed at scales of 1:200 and 1:100 respectively, and a photographic record of the stones was taken. During the course of the survey an area of presumed Bronze Age field clearance and a pair of small upright stones were discovered close to the stone row. A small area of field system on Ilkerton Ridge which had been interpreted as prehistoric in date was also investigated; it probably dates from the historic period.

## **CONTRIBUTORS**

The fieldwork was undertaken by Hazel Riley with the help of Heather Smith and Jane Wilson. The illustrations in the report were drawn by Hazel Riley.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

Rob Wilson-North commented on a draft of the report.

## **ARCHIVE LOCATION**

The report archive is located at the National Monuments Record Centre, Swindon.

## **DATE OF THE SURVEY**

The fieldwork was carried out in May 2007.

## **CONTACT DETAILS**

English Heritage, 5 Marlborough Court, Manaton Close, Exeter. EX2 8PF.  
Hazel Riley; 01392 824901; [hazel.riley@english-heritage.org.uk](mailto:hazel.riley@english-heritage.org.uk)

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# LITHIC MONUMENTS ON EXMOOR: SOME NEW DISCOVERIES. THE WARCOMBE WATER STONE ROW AND A STONE SETTING ON TROUT HILL

## INTRODUCTION

### Location

Warcombe Water and Ilkerton Ridge lie within Exmoor National Park, some 5km to the south of Lynton, at SS 730 440 and SS 720 445 respectively. Trout Hill is also within Exmoor National Park. It lies 9km to the south-east of Lynton at SS 790 425 (Fig 1).

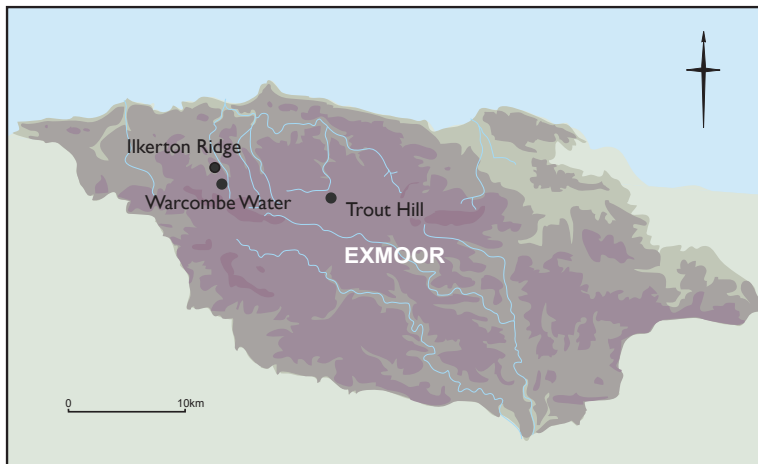


Fig 1 Location map

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### The survey

The survey was undertaken at the request of the Exmoor National Park archaeologist in order to locate the new lithic monuments to the National Grid and define their extent and nature. It was undertaken using Trimble 4700 series differential GPS equipment and the data was post-processed using Trimble's TGO GPS processing software. The survey data was located to the National Grid using the Ordnance Survey's active station network and the OSTN02 transformation within the TGO software. The survey was undertaken by staff from the EH Exeter Archaeological Survey and Investigation Team with the help of two students from the MA in Landscape Archaeology programme at the University of Bristol, Heather Smith and Jane Wilson. The fieldwork was carried out in May 2007.

The stone row was discovered after an area of heather had been burnt, therefore a walkover survey of the newly burnt area was carried out, resulting in the discovery of several new features, dating from the prehistoric and historic periods. The stone row itself was recorded at a scale of 1:200, each stone was measured, described and photographed. The paired stones discovered during the walkover survey were recorded at a scale of 1:100; the probable prehistoric field clearance was planned at a scale of 1:500. Other features located during the walkover survey were located to the National Grid using differential GPS; the field system and other features on Ilkerton Ridge were recorded at a scale of 1:10 000 and the newly discovered stone setting on Trout Hill was



Fig 2 Surveying the paired stones using differential GPS (Hazel Riley).



Fig 3 Recording the stone row (Hazel Riley).

recorded at a scale of 1:100 (Figs 2 and 3). Details of all the sites investigated during the course of the survey were entered into the EH AMIE database.

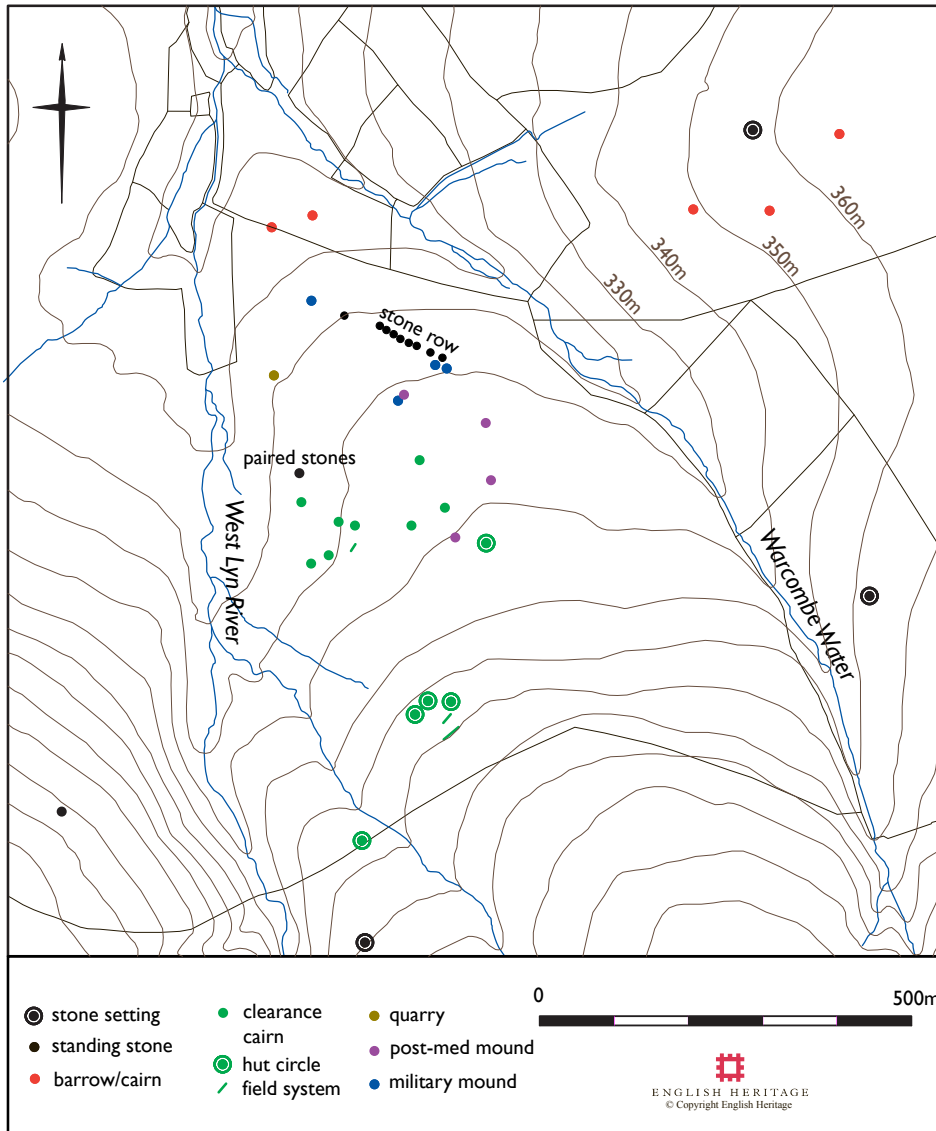
### **Geology, topography and land-use**

Warcombe Water, Ilkerton Ridge and Trout Hill all lie on Hangman Grits of the Devonian Series. These are predominantly sandstones with some shales and slates (British Geological Survey sheets 277 Ilfracombe and 294 Dulverton). The stone row and related features are located on a low spur between the valleys of Warcombe Water to the east and the West Lyn River to the west. The spur slopes gently up from some 300m OD to the north to over 400m to the south where it merges into the plateau of the Chains. Ilkerton Ridge is a long, narrow spur of unenclosed heath, bounded to the west by the Barbrook and the east by the West Lyn River. Ilkerton Ridge forms a roughly level ridge of land at some 310m OD, before the ground rises quite steeply to merge with the high plateau of the Chains (Fig 4). The vegetation on these sites is predominantly heather with rough grass and bracken, together with some gorse. Warcombe Water and Ilkerton Ridge lie on Lynton Common, one of the commons which bound the former Royal Forest of Exmoor.



*Fig 4 Ilkerton Ridge and Warcombe Water (RAF/540/846/PFFO-0167 22-AUG-1952 English Heritage (NMR) RAF Photography).*

Trout Hill, a spur of land defined by two streams which flow into Hoccombe Water and Badgworthy Water, lies within Exmoor Forest. The northern tip of the spur follows the Forest boundary. Trout Hill slopes up from its northern end at around 350m (Fig 13) to the ridge of Great Buscombe to the south at over 400m OD. Great Buscombe is on the watershed between rivers which flow south into the English Channel (the Exe) and those which flow north into the Atlantic (Badgworthy Water and the East Lyn River). The vegetation on Trout Hill is predominantly rough grassland (purple moor grass and cotton grass).



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Fig 5 Warcombe Water: location plan.

## HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The lithic monuments of Exmoor were recognised by antiquarians by the early 17<sup>th</sup> century. Two publications in the early years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century established the general distribution and nature of Exmoor's standing stones and stone settings, recognised their antiquity and called for their study and preservation (Chanter and Worth 1905; 1906).

Chanter and Worth recognised the potential of our study area:

On the hill between Warcombe Water and West Lyn River, especially on its Northern slopes, are several standing stones of no great dimensions. These are rather widely scattered, but it is possible that careful search might be repaid. On the same hillside we found several flint chips and cores in the mole-heaps, and this neighbourhood has yielded some good stone implements (Chanter and Worth 1906, 547).

The 'good stone implements' mentioned by Chanter and Worth include a discoidal polished flint knife, found in the Furzehill area.

Ilkerton Ridge, Warcombe Water and Trout Hill were included in the air photographic transcription of Exmoor National Park (McDonnell 1985a). Such a transcription is unlikely to locate new lithic monuments of this size. The field system on Ilkerton Ridge was not located as part of the 1985 transcription (Map reference no. SS 74 SW). The stone setting on the west edge of Trout Hill lies just to the west of the western boundary of the area considered by Richard McDonnell during his survey of the ENPA estate at Warren, Pinford, Tom's Hill and Haye's Allotment (McDonnell 1985b).

Hazel Eardley-Wilmot reported the field system on Ilkerton Ridge in 1981. She interpreted the features as prehistoric field walls and also located two upright stones within the field system, one of which was named 'Sheepstone' (Devon HER SS 74 NW 68). Alan Preece subsequently visited the site and made analogies with prehistoric field systems elsewhere on Exmoor but also noted the possibility of a medieval date for the features (Devon HER SS 74 68). The site was investigated during the RCHME archaeological survey of Exmoor National Park but only a few of the features could be located in dense heather (NMR no. SS 74 SW 102).

The RCHME carried out a survey of the lithic monuments of Exmoor between 1988 and 1992 (Quinnell and Dunn 1992). This survey recorded the known standing stones, stone settings and stone rows around Warcombe Water and Ilkerton Ridge (Fig 16) and the dense concentrations of stone settings on Lanacombe and Trout Hill (Fig 12), but did not locate the lithic monuments considered here. The RCHME carried out an archaeological survey of Exmoor in the 1990s; the lithic monuments recorded here were not located during the course of this survey (Riley and Wilson-North 2001).

In 2006 Celia Haddon contacted the Exmoor National Park archaeologist with her discovery of a possible prehistoric stone row on a terrace to the west of Warcombe Water; a site visit subsequently confirmed her discovery. Jeremy Holtom contacted the Exmoor National Park archaeologist with the discovery of a previously unrecorded stone

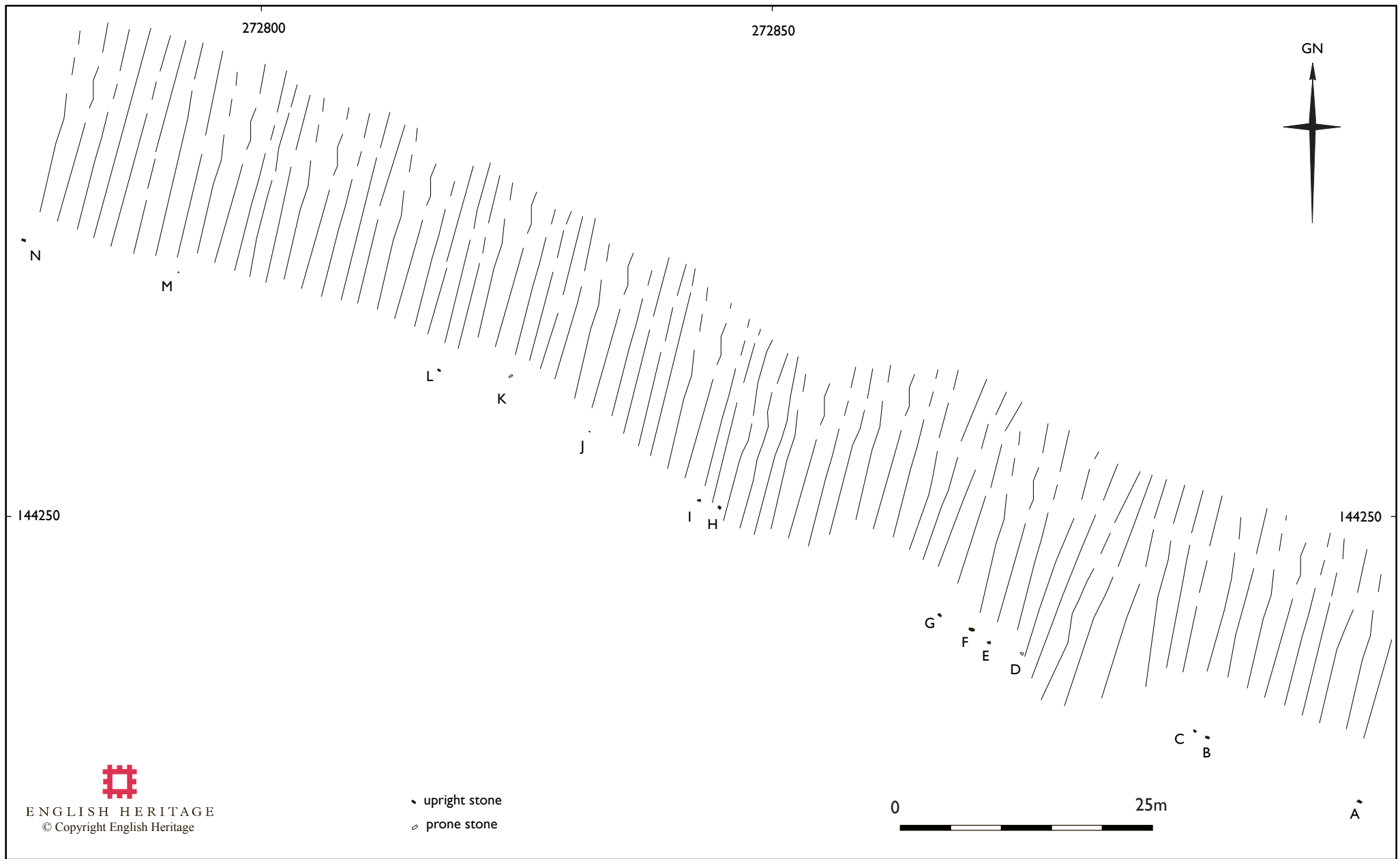


Fig 6 The Warcombe Water stone row.

setting in 2005, on land owned by the Exmoor National Park Authority; a site visit by the Exmoor National Park archaeologist confirmed this discovery.

## WARCOMBE WATER

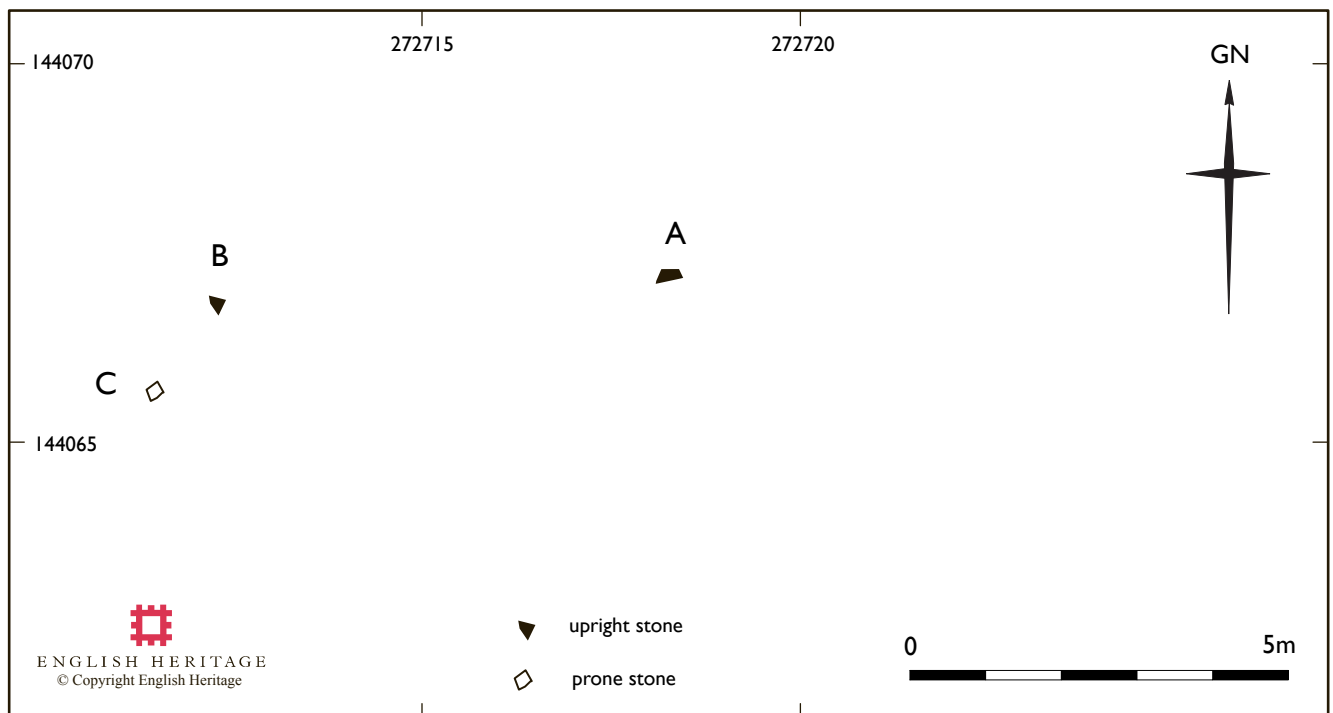
### Lithic monuments

Two lithic monuments were recorded during the course of the survey: a stone row and a pair of upright stones. The stone row is centred at SS 7286 4424 (NMR no. SS 74 SW 164). The row lies on the edge of a terrace (a geomorphological rather than man-made landscape feature) on the west side of Warcombe Water, at a height of 320-330m OD (Fig 5). It comprises nine upright and three prone stones (A-L) which form a single row 99m long (Front cover). Two further stones, a prone quartz block and an edge-set slab (M & N), on the same alignment and some 43m and 27m to the north-west were also recorded but are unlikely to be associated with the stone row (Fig 6).

The stones are all of pale yellow/grey sandstone, local to the area. Their dimensions are set out below:

Stone	Length	Width	Height	Notes
A	48cm	6cm	8cm	Upright & edge-set, slight lean to north
B	30cm	8cm	11cm	Upright & edge-set; lean to north
C	16cm	8cm	10cm	Upright post buried in heather
D	36cm	28cm	7cm	Prone & close to original position
E	26cm	12cm	12cm	Upright post
F	30cm	10cm	14cm	Upright post, slight lean to north
G	20cm	9cm	6cm	Upright post
H	17cm	6cm	10cm	Upright post, lean to north
I	20cm	5cm	7cm	Upright & edge-set
J	18cm	14cm	-	Prone stone exposed by sheep path
K	42cm	13cm	5cm	Prone stone off line, prob part of row
L	13cm	5cm	9cm	Upright & edge-set
M	7cm	7cm	-	Prone quartz block: doubtful
N	26cm	8cm	5cm	Doubtful upright

Fig 7 Paired stones east of Warcombe Water.



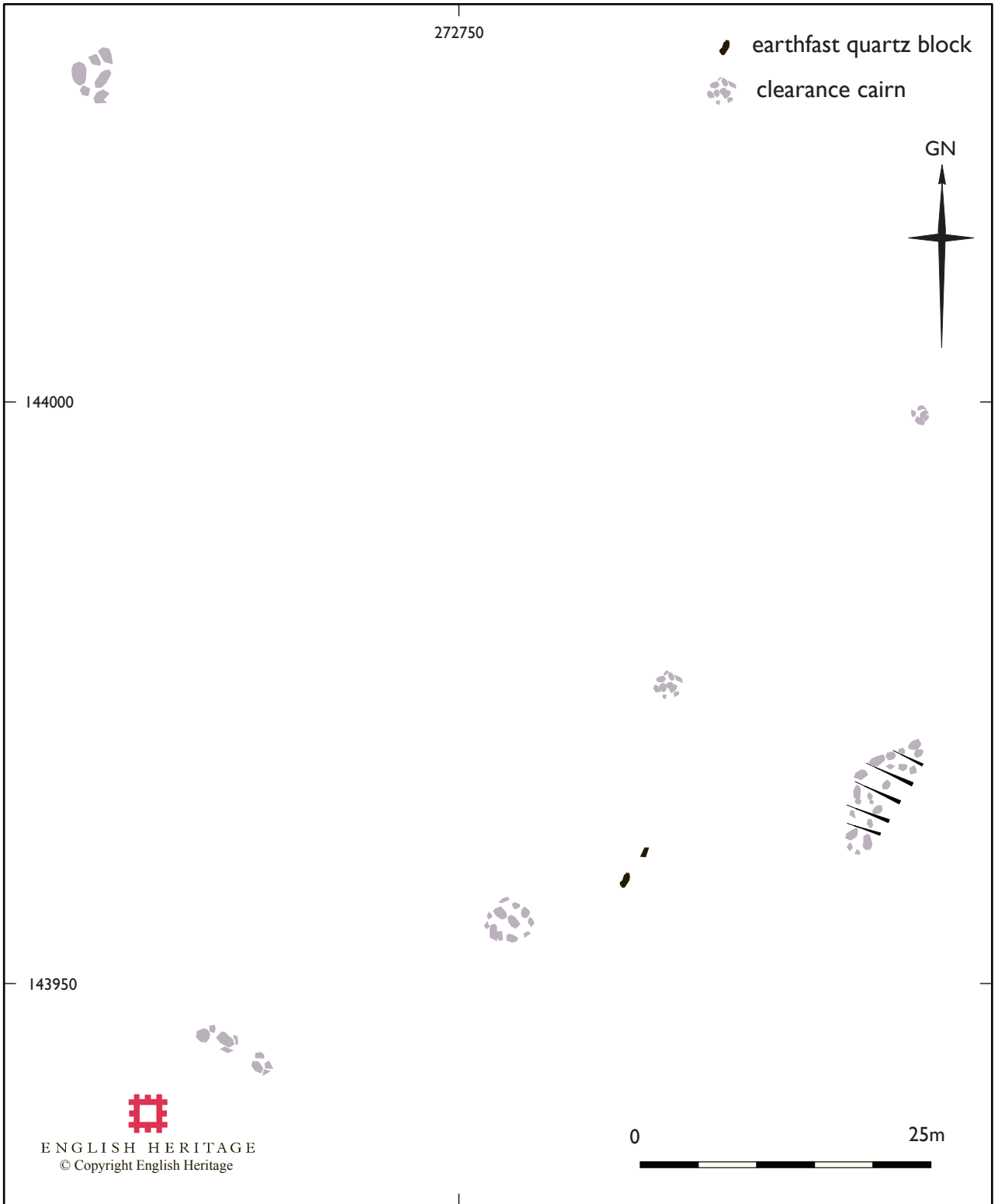


Fig 8 Prehistoric field clearance east of the West Lyn River.

A pair of upright stones lies some 230m to the south-west of the stone row, on the western edge of the spur, on the eastern side of the West Lyn River at SS 7271 4407 (Figs 2 and 5) (NMR no. SS 74 SW 165). The stones are oriented west-east and lie 60m apart. A prone stone lies some 15m to the south-west of the western upright stone (Fig 7). It is unlikely to have formed part of the feature and is probably a piece of surface stone. All of the stones are slabs of sandstone local to the area. The measurements of the stones are given below:

Stone	Length	Width	Height	Notes
A	30cm	8cm	10cm	Upright
B	20cm	8cm	12cm	Upright
C	20cm	23cm	6cm	Prone

### Prehistoric settlement and field clearance

During the course of the walkover survey several small stony mounds and a stony scarp were discovered (NMR no. SS 74 SW 166). These lie some 100m to the south of the paired stones, on the east side of the West Lyn River at a height of 330m OD and centred at SS 7275 4397 (Fig 5). The remains comprise four stony mounds, 1-4m in diameter and 0.4-0.5m high, and a stony scarp, 12m long and 0.5m high, which are all aligned north-east/south-west forming a block of clearance features 80m long and 20m wide. Two small, upright quartz blocks form a distinctive feature in the centre of this area. A single field clearance cairn, 4m in diameter and 0.5m high, lies some 75m to the north-west of the main area of field clearance features (Figs 8 and 9), and three field clearance cairns lie 100m to the north-east.

On the south of the spur, just below the steep climb up to the Chains and 250m to the south of the field clearance features described here, is a prehistoric settlement, consisting of three hut circles or hut platforms and some fragmentary field banks; a single hut circle lies 200m to the south-west. A further hut circle, disturbed by a track, lies some 200m to the east of the field clearance features (NMR nos. SS 74 SW 25, 26, 28).

The field clearance features described here are most likely to be Bronze Age in date and associated with these settlement remains. They compare in form and location to similar features discovered elsewhere in the area, for example those associated with a hut circle on Holdstone Down (Riley and Wilson-North 2001, 43 and fig 2.34).

### Other sites

The walkover survey also located several sites concerned with the use of this spur of land in the historic period (Fig 5). A small quarry pit, 5m north-south, 4m east-west and 2m deep, with associated spoil mounds, lies at SS 7268 4419 and was probably dug to provide stone for the nearby enclosure wall (NMR no. SS 74 SW 169). Four mounds, all composed of peaty, uncompacted material, lie towards the centre of the spur, centred at SS 7296 4410 (NMR no. SS 74 SW 167). The mounds are all circular and measure between 2-4m in diameter and 0.5-0.9m in height. They are probably associated with turf or peat cutting and date from the medieval or post-medieval period when the commons provided fuel as well as grazing for the commoners.

Four sub-rectangular hollows with associated spoil mounds were located on the

northern end of the spur, centred at SS 7256 4420 (NMR no. SS 74 SW 168). All are very similar in form and size and comprise a sub-rectangular mound, between 3-4m long, 1.4-2m wide and 0.5m high, with a corresponding hollow to the side, some 2.5-3m long, 1m wide and 0.5m deep. One of these mounds lies close to the north-west end of the stone row, two lie very close to its south-east end. A group of seven similar features have been recorded on Thornworthy Common, some 500m to the west (NMR no. SS 74 SW 122). These were interpreted as resulting from military training during the Second World War and it seems very likely that the features recorded here are also the result of that activity.

*Fig 9 Surveying the prehistoric field clearance.*



## ILKERTON RIDGE

### Prehistoric burial cairn and relict field system

A rather disturbed, low circular mound lies on the south-east side of Ilkerton Ridge at SS 7238 4466 (Fig 10). The mound measures 8.9m north-south and 8m east-west and is 0.5m high. The northern sector is ill-defined and appears to have been robbed out, probably to provide stone for the nearby enclosure walls or for the relict field system described below. The mound is a previously unrecorded prehistoric burial cairn (NMR no. SS 74 SW 170).

Two upright stones were located in this area by Hazel Eardley-Wilmot. The larger of the two stones was named the Sheepstone by its discoverer. It lies within an area of relict field system at SS 7229 4459. The second stone lies at SS 7233 4464 by the junction of two relict field banks and close to track. The measurements are set out below.

Stone	Length	Width	Ht
Sheepstone	65cm	23cm	32cm
By field corner	40cm	20cm	6 cm

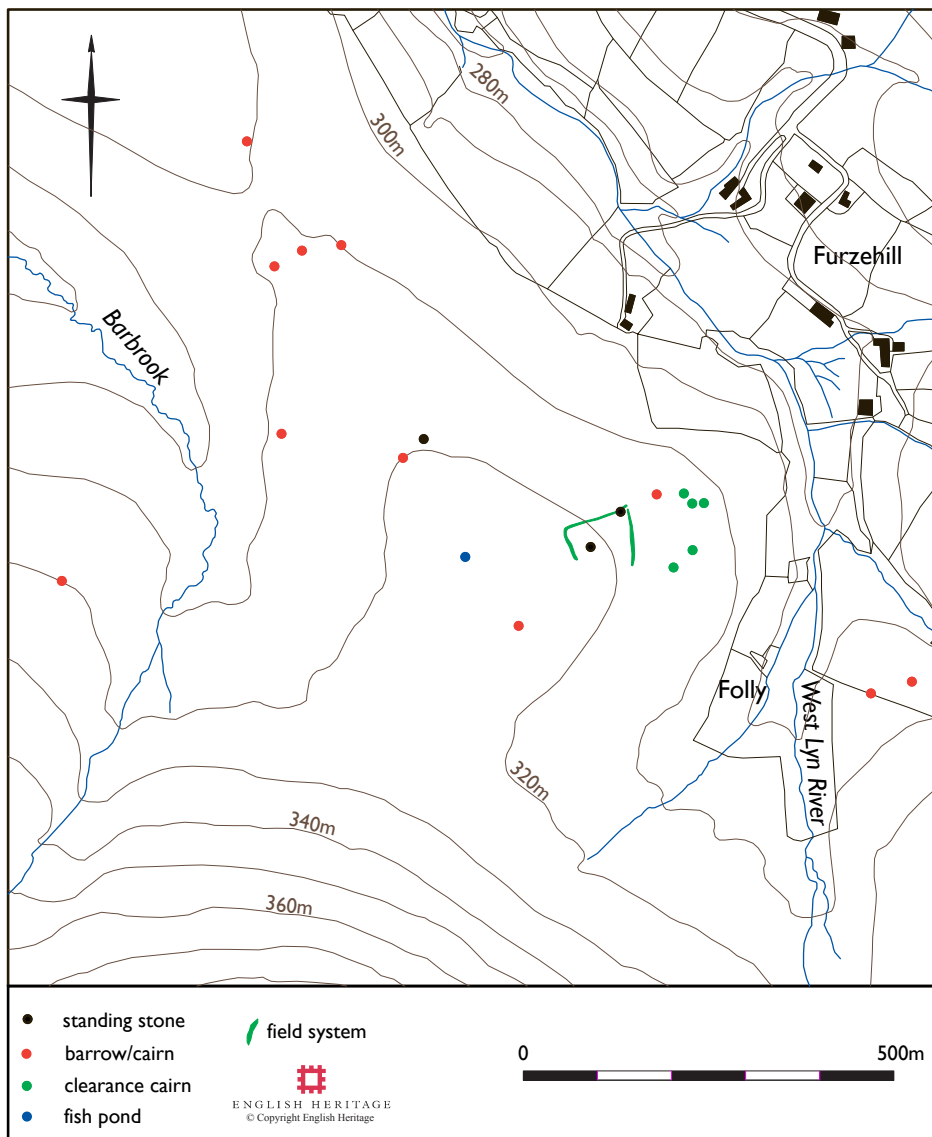


Fig 10 Ilkerton Ridge: location plan

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Hazel Eardley-Wilmot also noted a group of five prone stones (Devon HER SS 74 SW 68) The stones lie at SS 7241 4459, close to a track and do not appear to be part of any archaeological feature.

The relict field system is difficult to discern in an area of dense heather and gorse. Three sides of a field were surveyed, enclosing the north, west and east sides of a field measuring perhaps 100m by 100m (Fig 10). The field boundaries are low, stony, heather covered banks some 4m wide and 0.5m high. On the south and east sides of the relict field system are groups of field clearance mounds. These are quite substantial features, comprising circular, stony mounds, 3-4.9m in diameter and 0.3-0.5m in height. Two of these mounds, at SS 7240 4459 and SS 72443 4458 were interpreted as barrows by Hazel Eardley-Wilmot (Devon HER SS 74 SW 68).

The form of the relict field system and the clearance mounds and their location – close to existing enclosure – suggests that they are not prehistoric in origin but relate to the enclosure of this area in the historic period. Such features are difficult to date. The

nearest settlement is Folly, a smallholding in 1838 but 'in ruins' by 1891 (Tithe map and apportionment, Lynton, 1838; Ordnance Survey 1<sup>st</sup> edition map, Somerset 32 SE 1891) (Fig 11). The layout of the relict field system corresponds with the western edge of the Folly smallholding and it may well be associated with an abandoned attempt to enclose more land for this holding. Such an enterprise is difficult to date but the name 'Folly' suggests a fairly late date, perhaps in the 17<sup>th</sup> or 18<sup>th</sup> centuries. The Ordnance Survey map of 1804-5 of the area does not show Folly or its holding, suggesting that it may date from the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, although the mapping on this document can be somewhat schematic, particularly in more remote areas (OS two-inch drawing no. 33, 1804-5). Furzehill is a much older settlement, mentioned as early as 1199 (Chanter 1906, 163), and the location of Folly and its relict field, at the southernmost edge of enclosure, suggests it was laid out at a late date in the sequence of enclosure (NMR no. SS 74 SW 102).



Fig 11 Extracts from the Lynton tithe map (1838) (Devon Record Office) and the Ordnance Survey 1st edition map (Reproduced from the 1891 Ordnance Survey map).

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## TROUT HILL

### Stone setting

A stone setting lies on the north-west edge of Trout Hill at SS 7895 4302 at an altitude of 370m OD (Figs 12 and 13) (NMR no. SS 74 SE 151). The setting comprises four stone slabs arranged to form a rather flattened parallelogram. Two of the stones are upright, two are prone. A further small upright stone lies some 10m to the north-west of the westernmost stone of the setting (Figs 14 and 15). The stones are all sandstone slabs from the local area. The measurements of the stones are as follows:

Stone	Length	Width	Height
A upright post	15cm	10cm	32cm
B upright (+ trigger)	47cm	17cm	20cm
Trigger for B	24cm	8cm	10cm
C prone	95cm	50cm	6cm
D prone	64cm	28cm	12cm
E upright outlier	14cm	3cm	8cm

Although two of the stones of the setting are prone, this new setting is a remarkably well preserved monument (Fig 14). Both stone A, an upright post, a fine example of this kind of upright used in a stone setting and the upright B with its associated trigger stone, stand upright (rather than leaning) and the prone stones appear to have fallen on their sides from their original upright positions – they do not seem to have been knocked over or moved.

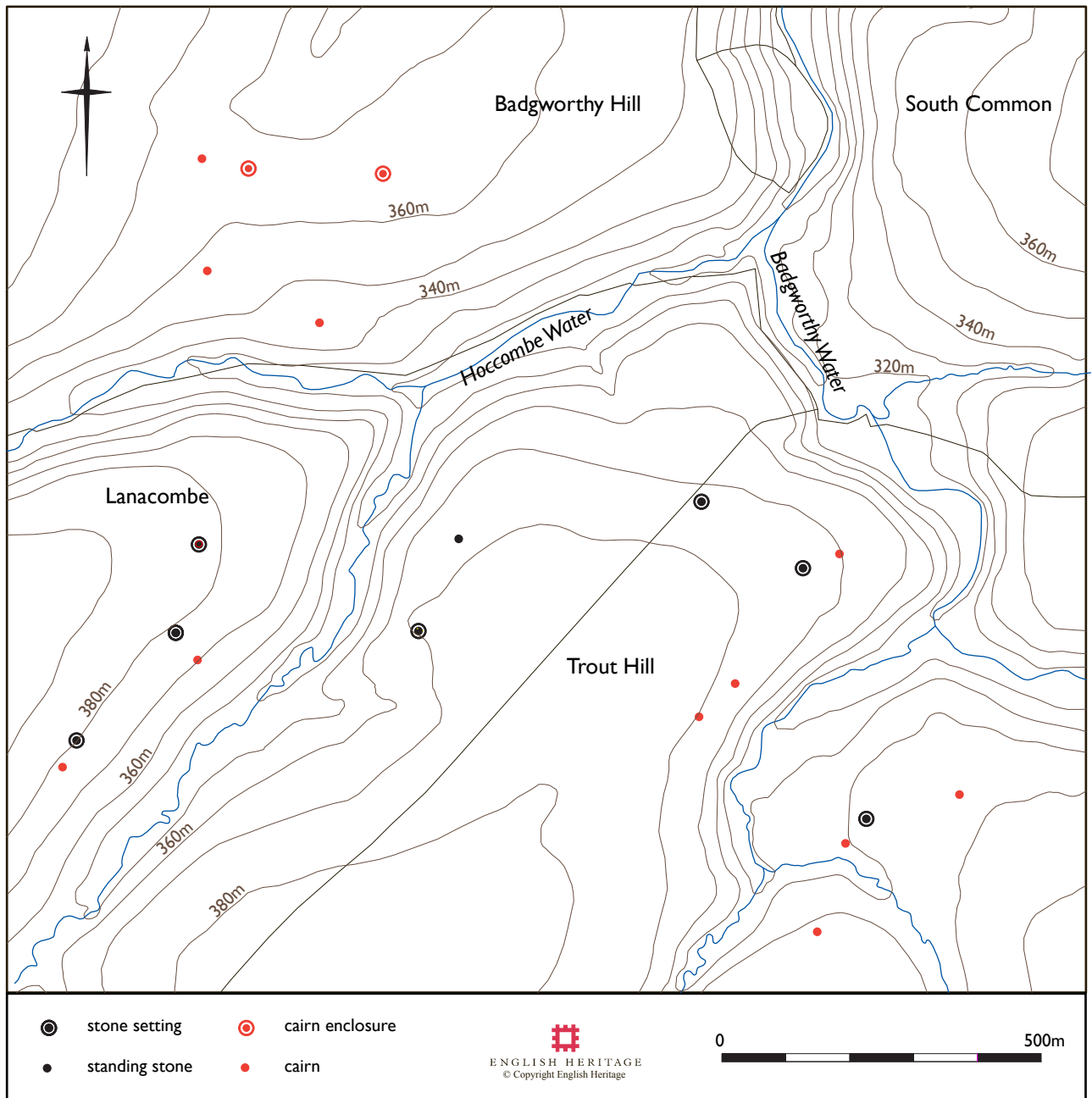


Fig 12 Trout Hill: location map

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*Fig 13 The stone setting on Trout Hill from Lanacombe: the stone setting is close to the top of the path in the centre of the photograph (Hazel Riley).*



*Fig 14 Detail of the stone setting on Trout Hill (Hazel Riley).*

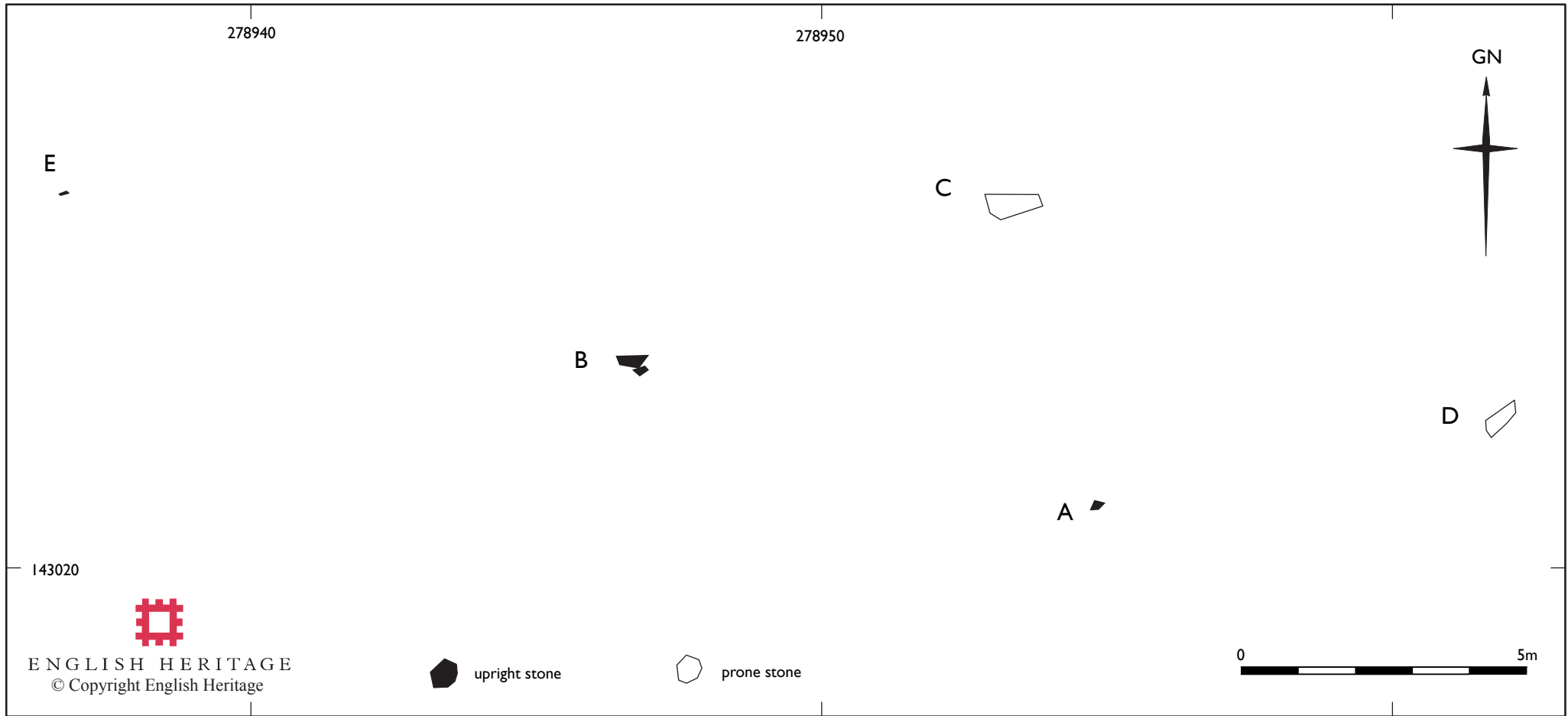


Fig 15 The stone setting on Trout Hill: 1:100 plan.

## DISCUSSION

The discovery of the stone row at Warcombe Water brings the total number recorded within the Exmoor National Park to nine. A study of the known stone rows in 2001 divided the rows into two kinds: three long rows (280-420m) and five short rows (12-68m) (Riley and Wilson-North 2001). The stone row at Warcombe Water, at 99m, makes this division rather less clear cut.

The long fingers of open heath which stretch down towards the coast from the Chains between Barbrook and Farley Water are now each defined by a stone row: Thornworthy Little Common, Warcombe Water, Furzehill Common and Cheriton Ridge. Each sits within a prehistoric landscape of stone settings, paired and solitary upright stones and burial cairns and barrows (Fig 16). The spur between the West Lyn River and Warcombe Water is now defined by prehistoric ritual monuments: the paired stones and the stone row lie in similar positions on the west and east sides of the spur. Two barrows, now in enclosed land, mark the northern tip of the spur.

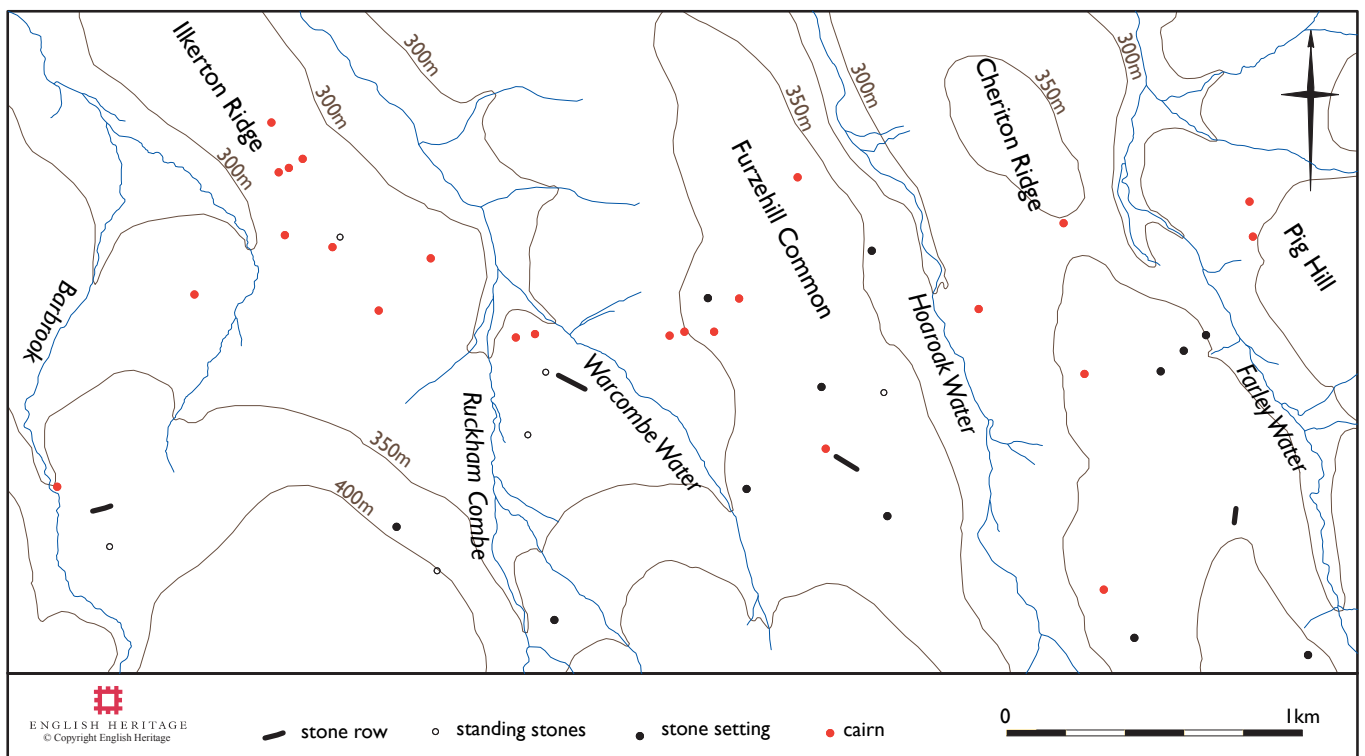


Fig 16 Thornworthy Common, Furzehill and Cheriton Ridge: stone rows and other prehistoric monuments.

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The fragmentary remains of prehistoric field clearance to the east of the West Lyn River fits with the general distribution of prehistoric settlement remains on Exmoor described in 2001. The western side of Exmoor is characterised by hut circles with small areas of relict field systems and clearance features; the eastern side, centred on the Dunkery massif, contains evidence for more extensive field systems. (Riley and Wilson-North 2001, fig 2.32).

The new stone setting on Trout Hill adds another of these monuments to the remarkable area around the headwaters of Badgworthy Water (Fig 12). Badgworthy Hill, Great Tom's Hill, Pinford, Trout Hill and, in particular, Lanacombe contain a significant proportion of the known stone settings of Exmoor. This area, just to the north of the watershed between watercourses which flow into the Channel and the Atlantic, was of particular importance in the 2<sup>nd</sup> and later 3<sup>rd</sup> millennia BC.

The potential for the discovery of more prehistoric features, both ritual and domestic, within the former Royal Forest of Exmoor and its surrounding commons, remains high. The size of the stones utilised in the lithic monuments and the fragmentary nature of the field systems and field clearance remains means that field survey is the only way to locate such features: for example, recent surveys of the unfinished hillfort of Shoulsbury Castle and the Exmoor National Park Authority's estate at Larkbarrow located two unrecorded prehistoric lithic monuments (Jamieson 2001; 2005).

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