

HOAR MOOR & CODSEND MOORS EXFORD & CUTCOMBE, SOMERSET EXMOOR NATIONAL PARK HISTORIC LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS

Hazel Riley



HOAR MOOR AND CODSEND MOORS EXFORD AND CUTCOMBE, SOMERSET EXMOOR NATIONAL PARK

Historic Landscape Analysis

Hazel Riley

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SUMMARY

A survey and analysis of the archaeology and historic landscape surviving on Hoar Moor and Codsand Moors in the parishes of Exford and Cutcombe, Somerset, within Exmoor National Park, was carried out in 2008 by the English Heritage Archaeological Survey and Investigation Team (Exeter). The work was undertaken following concerns about the potential for degradation of historic environment features in the area, resulting from the MIRE Project and from changes in land use on the moors. Hoar Moor and Codsand Moors preserve an extensive prehistoric and historic landscape which, in close association with palaeoecological deposits and an excellent set of documentary sources, contains some of the most complete evidence for the story of the development of Exmoor's landscape from the 3rd millennium BC to the present day. The prehistoric elements include a ritual or ceremonial landscape of burial cairns and standing stones dating from the late 3rd/early 2nd millennium BC which is associated with the great barrow cemeteries on nearby Rowbarrow and Dunkery Beacon. The most important components of the prehistoric landscape are an extensive relict field system and associated settlement features which date from the mid-late 2nd millennium BC to the 1st millennium BC. Overlying the prehistoric landscape are relict field systems which date from the 16th/17th century AD and deserted farmsteads, established in the early 19th century. The landscape as it survives today is a striking feature in this part of Exmoor, with the massive fields enclosed from the southern flanks of Rowbarrow and Dunkery standing as a reminder to the grand visions of the 19th-century reclaimers of Exmoor.

CONTRIBUTORS

The analysis and interpretation is based on the original survey work of RCHME field investigators Paul Pattison and Iain Sainsbury. Cain Hegarty transcribed the archaeology of the study area from aerial photographs as part of the Exmoor NMP Project.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

English Heritage would like to thank the owners who allowed access for the survey. Rob Wilson-North, Lee Mowbray and Mark Bowden commented on the report.

FRONT COVER

Stone posts marking the way into a prehistoric field on Codsand Moors (Hazel Riley)

DATE OF SURVEY

2008

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INTRODUCTION

Location

Codsend Moors and Hoar Moor lie at the heart of Exmoor National Park, 2 kms NE of the village of Exford and within the parishes of Cutcombe and Exford, in the county of Somerset, centred at ST 87 45 (Figure 1). The moors are a significant landscape feature in this part of Exmoor, as the block of enclosed land cuts high into the open moor of Rowbarrow and Dunkery Beacon (Figure 2).

The survey

The survey and analysis of the remains on Codsend Moors and Hoar Moor was carried out at the request of Exmoor National Park Authority, occasioned by Natural England's intention to increase stocking levels on the moors to attempt to retain the last known colony of marsh fritillary butterflies on Exmoor (Borsje *et al* 2006) and by the future implementation of groundwork relating to the MIRE Project (Exmoor National Park Authority 2008).

The area was visited in late April and early May 2008 so that the archaeological remains could be seen when bracken cover was at its lowest. A walkover survey was carried out, with the aid of the Level 2 survey (EH 2007) carried out in 1987-8 by the RCHME (below). Several new features were noted and these were recorded using the Geo-XT GPS (with differential GPS survey enabled). The Exmoor National Park National Mapping Programme mapped the area using aerial photographs and new features noted as a result of this were examined in the field and recorded using the Geo-XT GPS.

The areas examined as part of the walkover survey were: Sites 1, 2, 3 and 5 (numbers from the RCHME survey). Site 4 and the standing stones were not examined due to denial of access by the landowner (Fig 2).

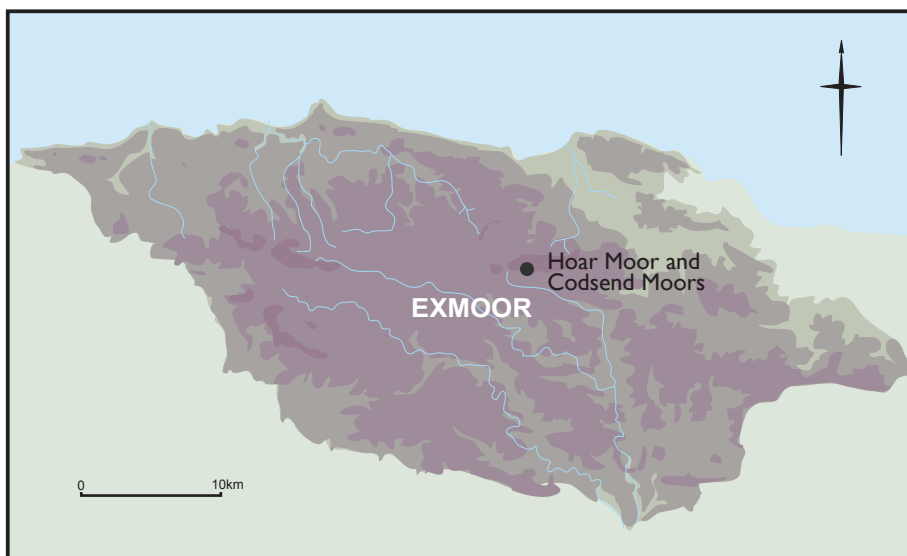


Fig 1 Location map (© Crown Copyright. All rights reserved. English Heritage 100019088. 2009)

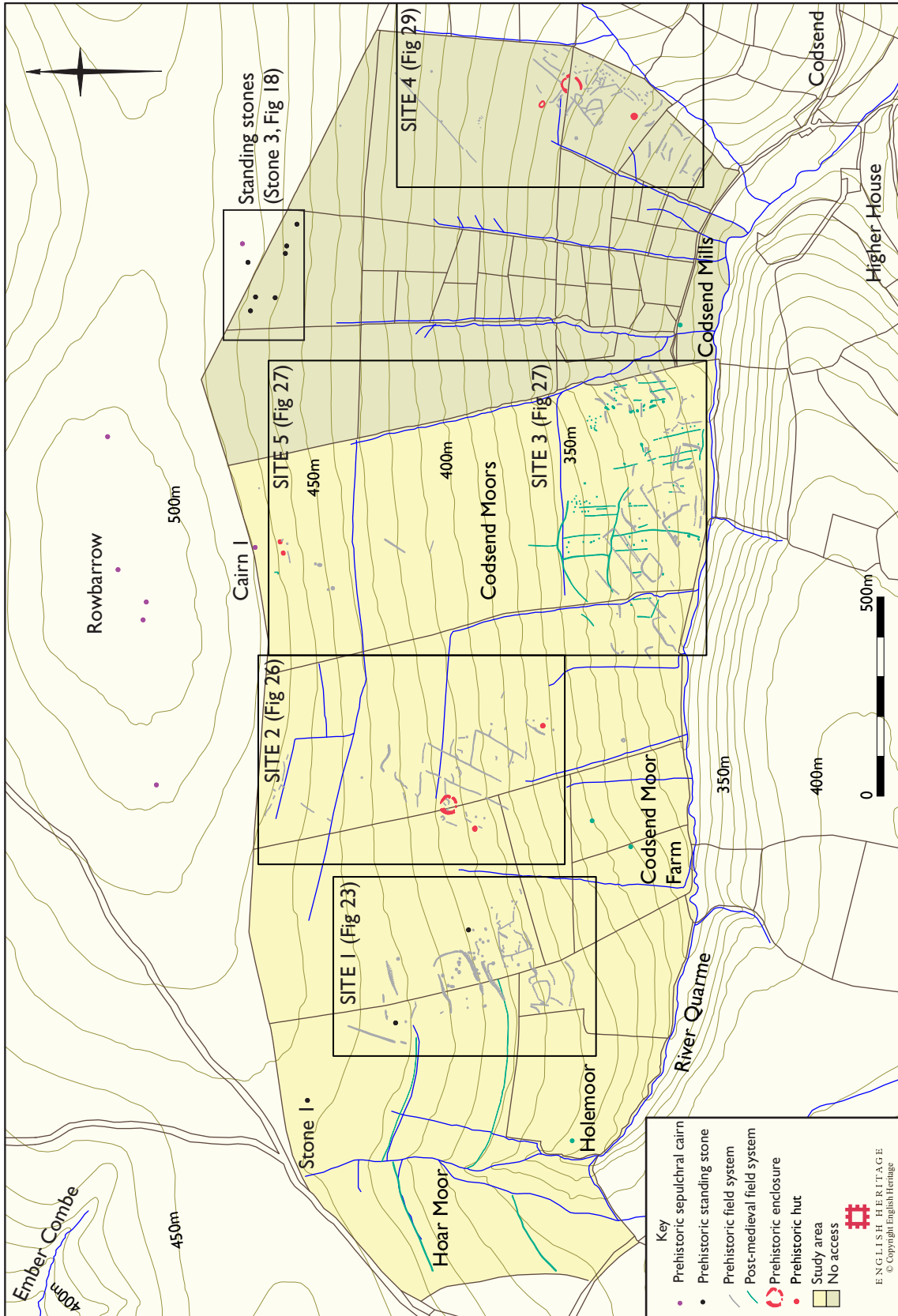


Fig 2 The study area. Codsend Moors and Hoar Moor: location of the main archaeological features (© Crown Copyright. All rights reserved. English Heritage 100019088.2009)

Geology, topography and land use

Codsend Moors and Hoar Moor have Devonian rocks as the underlying geology. The northern part of the area, over about 400m, lies on sandstones, slates and siltstones of the Middle Devonian Hangman Grits; to the south are slates, siltstones and sandstones of the Avill Group and Cutcombe Slates (British Geological Survey, sheet 294, Dulverton).

The moors form a rectangular block of land, some 4km long and 1km wide, occupying the ground which rises steeply from the Quarme Valley at 300m OD to the open moor of Rowbarrow and Dunkery Beacon at 480m OD. The land has an open, south facing aspect and is drained by several streams which form tributaries of the River Quarme. The moors present a striking landscape feature in this part of Exmoor; particularly in the winter months when the creamy grass of the moors contrasts with the surrounding green fields on the one hand and the dark, brooding presence of Dunkery on the other. The massive fields epitomise the grand but flawed vision of the 19th-century gentlemen reclaimers of the 'wastes' of Exmoor (Fig 3).



Fig 3 Looking across the Quarme Valley to Hoar Moor and Codsend Moors (Hazel Riley)

A recent report into the state of Exmoor's moorlands classified most of the study area as part of Exmoor's Northern Heather Moors. It contains all of Unit 10 (Codsend Moors) and a small part of Unit 8 (Porlock and Wilmersham Commons) (Land Use Consultants 2004, table 2.1; fig 2.3). Broadly, the vegetation consists of grass moorland with some fairly extensive areas of bracken, particularly on the lower slopes (Fig 4). It also contains



Fig 4 Bracken on the relict field system at Site 3 (Hazel Riley)

Fig 5 (below) Sheep on the relict fields system in improved pasture at Site 1 (Hazel Riley)

a small parcel of improved pasture (Fig 5). The drier grassland comprises *Agrostis-Festuca* (bent-fescue communities) (Fig 6). On the wetter areas, generally across the centre of the study area, peat has accumulated; these peaty flushes support *Molinia caerulea* (purple moor grass), *Juncus* (rushes) and *Sphagnum* (bog moss) (Fig 7) (Tinsley 2000, 1). The moors contain Units 16-21 of Natural England's North Exmoor SSSI; in addition



Fig 6 Exmoor pony grazing on drier grassland near Site 2 (Hazel Riley)



Fig 7 (below) Peaty flush supporting purple moor grass and rush above Site 3 (Hazel Riley)

Hoar Moor lies within a Special Area of Conservation. North Exmoor SSSI is designated for its south west lowland heath communities and for transitions from ancient semi-natural woodland through upland heath to blanket mire (Natural England Citation for North Exmoor SSSI). The land is grazed extensively by sheep, some cattle and a herd of Exmoor ponies (Fig 6).



HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

A farmstead or hamlet at Codsend was well established by the early 14th century, indicated by the reference to Roger de Coddessone in the 1327 Tax Roll for Somerset (Dickinson 1889). This was just one settlement in a landscape which was, by this time, characterised by dispersed farmsteads or small hamlets. Others in the vicinity of Codsend mentioned in the 1327 Tax Roll include: Ackland; Blagdon; Cutthorne; Prescott; Little Quarme; Stone; Thorne; Watercombe and Wheddon Farms (Aston 1982). The deserted settlement in Mansley Combe, its fields taking in a chunk of the lower slopes of Dunkery between Dunkery Gate and Bincombe, was part of this landscape of dispersed settlements (Riley and Wilson-North 2001).

By the 18th century Codsend was part of the estate of Sir Thomas Pym Hales. A survey of the Exmoor part of his manor, published in 1772, shows that he owned five farms at Codsend: High House, Bawdens, Addicotts and two recorded as simply 'A Messuage at Codisend'. None of the moorland is recorded in this survey, suggesting that the area was common land at this time (SRO 1772).

The Ordnance Survey surveyor's drawings for the one-inch maps (Ordnance Survey 1802-3) is the first map to depict Codsend Moors (Fig 8). Hoar Moor was not enclosed at this time. The northern enclosure, separating Codsend Moors from the open heathland of Rowbarrow and Dunkery, is shown on this map, together with some regular enclosures to the east, creating a large block of enclosed land from the boundary between the parishes of Exford and Cutcombe in the west to Dunkery Gate in the east. This enclosure was carried out in the 18th century, probably by Sir Thomas Pym Hales, and consists of substantial stone-faced hedge banks with a quarry ditch and beech hedge (Fig 9). At about the same time as this map was surveyed, a plan for enclosing the Commonable Land in Cutcombe was drawn up (SRO 1804) (Fig 10). Codsend Moors was parcelled up into many small strips, belonging to various properties in the parish,



Fig 8 Codsend Moors at the beginning of the 19th century (OS 1802-3)

Fig 9 18th-century enclosure bank and prehistoric sepulchral cairn (centre) (Hazel Riley)



Fig 10 (below)
Plan to enclose Codsend Moors at the beginning of the 19th century (Somerset Archive and Record Service) (SRO 1802-3)

several at some distance away. This scheme, involving the division of Codsend Moors into 48 separate parcels of land, was not pursued on the ground. The construction of Codsend Moor Road, giving access to these enclosures, was not completed, although a track did run from just south of Dunkery Gate to the fields above Bank Down. This is confirmed by a fine map dating from shortly after the enclosure plan was drawn up. Between 1809 and 1812 the Acland's Exmoor estates, centred on Holnicote, were surveyed (SRO 1809). Although only Hoar Moor in Exford is part of the Acland estate,





Fig 11 Part of the survey of Holnicote Manor (Somerset Archive & Record Centre) (SRO 1802-3)

the surveyors mapped much of adjoining countryside in some detail, giving a picture of this part of Exmoor in the very early part of the 19th century (Ravenhill and Rowe 2006, 111). This shows that the scheme set out on the 1804 map was never executed: Codsend Moor is shown as a single block of land, with the northern enclosure boundary in place. The land to the east is enclosed. Acland's property on Hoar Moor is recorded as Holmoor, a small farm on the southern edge of the moor, with grazing on the moor (Fig 11). Another member of the Hales family commissioned a survey of the Cutcombe estates in 1826. This is a well drawn map with a survey book and for the first time shows the main division of Codsend Moors into substantial rectangular blocks of land (SRO 1826). It is also the first map to depict the small farm to the west of Codsend. Known as Codsend Moor, this is a small farm on the lower slopes of the moor, with several small closes and tiny garden plots, together with a large parcel of grazing on Codsend Moor to the north (Fig 12).

The title surveys for Exford (SRO 1840) and Cutcombe (SRO 1841) show that Hoar Moor (enclosed by now) and Codsend Moors were used for grazing (Figs 13 & 14). The small farm of Holemoor had rights to common pasture on Hoar Moor; Codsend Moor farm was a holding of 125 acres which included a block of Codsend Moors to the north of the farmstead; Fernmoor was a detached holding of a large parcel of moorland grazing with two small plots (away from Codsend) of pasture and arable. The mills at Bank Down had land divided into several small fields to the north; Addicotts had a large parcel on the east of Codsend Moors.



Fig 12 Part of the survey of the Hale Estate in 1826 (Somerset Archive and Record Service) (SRO 1826)

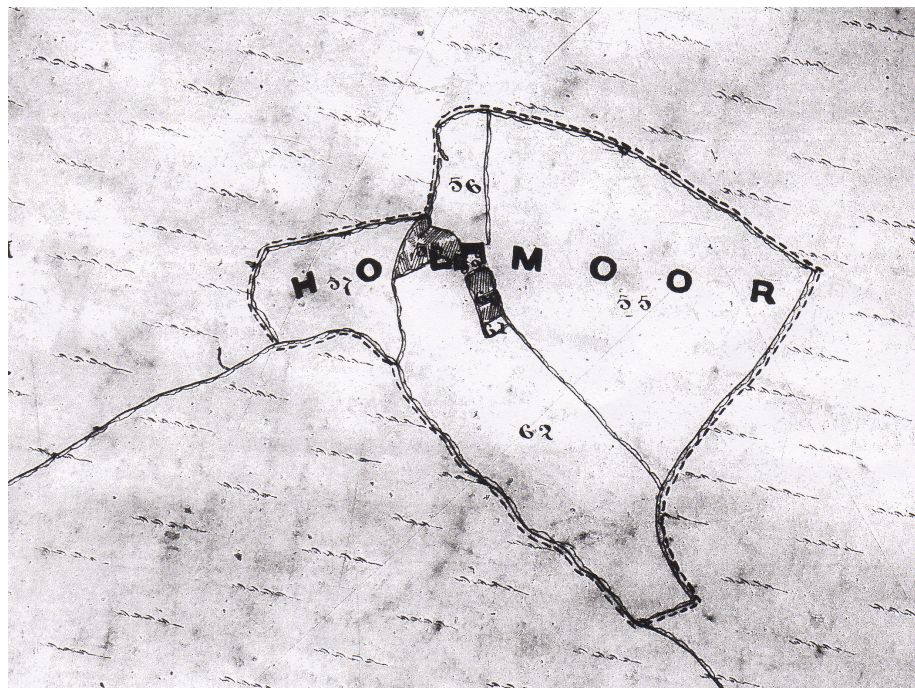


Fig 13 Extract from the Exford tithe map (Somerset Archive and Record Service) (SRO 1840)



Fig 14 Extract from the Cutcombe tithe map (Somerset Archive and Record Service) (SRO 1841)

The First Edition Ordnance Survey map of the area was published in 1890 and shows the pattern of enclosure of Hoar Moor and Codsand Moors. The farmsteads of Holmoor and Codsand Moor have been abandoned and apart from two fields on the south east corner of Hoar Moor the moors are depicted as rough pasture and furze (Fig 15).

The relict field systems and enclosures on Hoar Moor and Codsand Moors were recorded by Richard McDonnell during the CRAAGS aerial photographic transcription of Exmoor National Park (*Proc Somer Archaeol Nat Hist Soc* 122, 118). The RCHME surveyed the remains at 1:2500 scale in the winter of 1987-8 (Pattison and Sainsbury 1989).

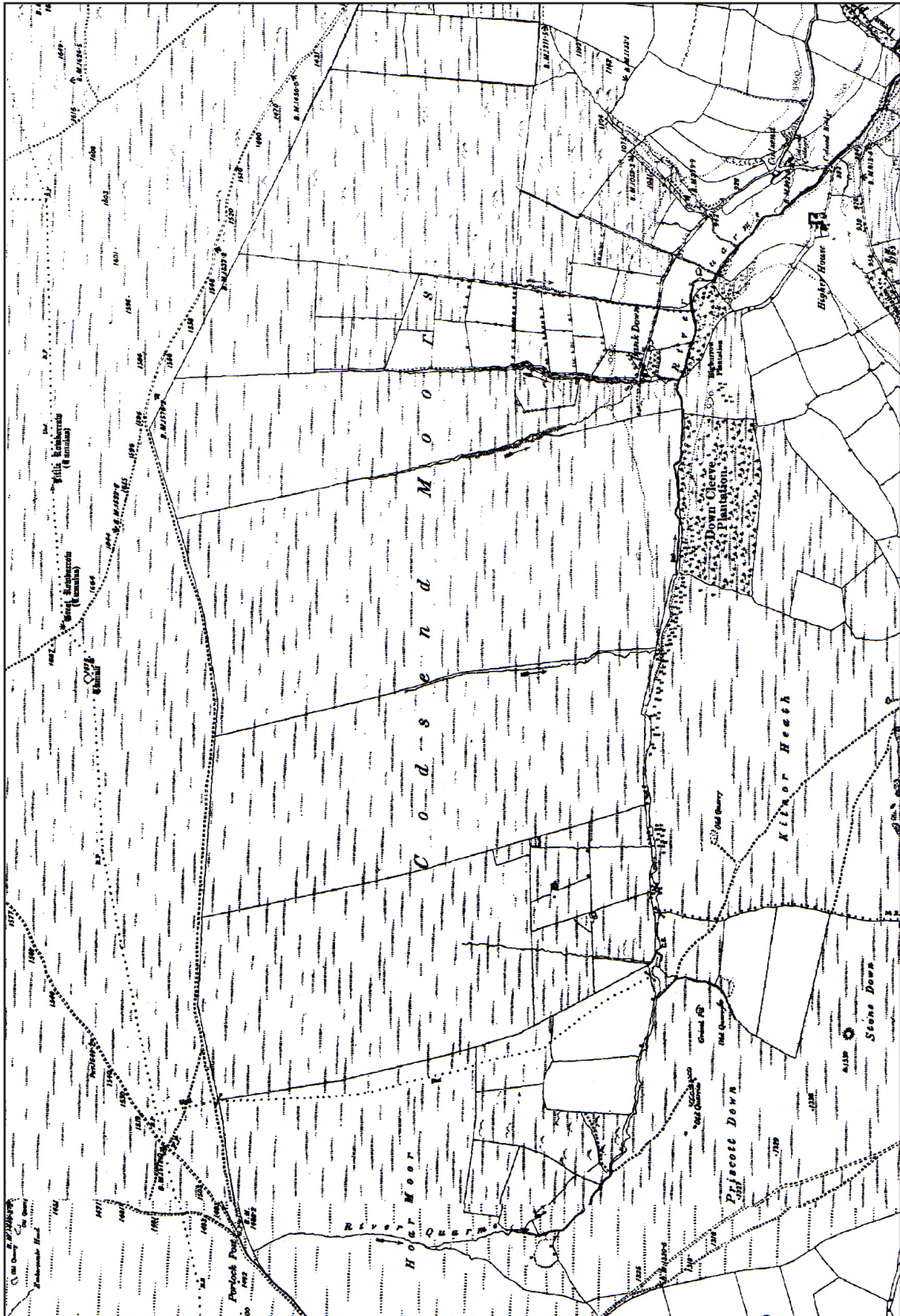


Fig 15 Extract from the OS 1st edition map 1890 (© and database right Crown Copyright and Landmark Information Group Ltd (All rights reserved 2009) Licence numbers 00394 and TP0024)

LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS

The development of the historic landscape

Hoar Moor and Codsend Moors contain some of Exmoor's most impressive and extensive historic landscapes (Fig 2). The prehistoric period is represented by a ceremonial landscape of standing stones, a stone row/setting and at least one funerary cairn. These monuments date from c 2500-1500 BC and form part of an impressive group of prehistoric ceremonial monuments which are centred on Dunkery Beacon and Rowbarrow to the north. Hoar Moor and Codsend Moors now feel isolated from Dunkery Beacon, due to the 18th-century beech hedge banks which enclose the moors, but the summit of Dunkery Beacon is only a kilometre from the stone row/setting on Codsend Moors and its presence must have been a factor in the articulation of the moors' ceremonial landscape. The surrounding area showed no evidence for arable farming, but areas within woodland were cleared for browsing stock, with some trees lopped for fodder.

By around 1500 BC the moors began to be used for settlement and agriculture in a way which has left significant traces on the land today. Hut circles and small areas of field systems were integrated into, or replaced by, larger blocks of fields, laid out on a mostly NNE/SSW axis. Some of the fields were used for the cultivation of arable crops – barley and wheat – some were used for livestock, probably, as today, mostly cattle. The livestock also had access to large areas of grazing to the north on Dunkery and Rowbarrow and, over the River Quarme to the south, on Prescott Down and Kitnor Heath.

Two hillslope enclosures were built over parts of the field system, perhaps around 1000 BC; the fields may well have continued in use, perhaps with an ever-increasing emphasis on livestock as the climate became cooler and damper.

Sometime between 800 BC and AD 20 the upper parts of the moors began to be engulfed in blanket mire, making arable cultivation impossible and livestock management difficult over quite a large part of the area. By the 14th century AD the farmsteads and hamlets which line the River Quarme were well established in an open landscape of grassy meadows with trees and shrubs. Part of Codsend Moors was cultivated periodically, probably for a crop of rye which could be used for both its grain and its straw in thatch. In the 18th century the area belonged to the Hales estate and formal enclosure of Hoar Moor and Codsend Moors, some of which is in use today, began. The farmsteads of Holemoor and Codsend Moors, and the mill and farm at Bank Down were built at the beginning of the 19th century. These were all small holdings, with access to grazing on the moors above the farms. All had been abandoned by 1890.

RESOURCE ASSESSMENT

Prehistoric ceremonial sites

There are two standing stones on Hoar Moor. One, Stone 1, at SS 8621 4106, is a post of local sandstone, 1.2m long, 0.2m by 0.25m in section with a 'chisel' top. The stone leans to the north east and is 0.6m high, with an erosion hollow at its base (Figs 2 and 16). The other, Stone 2, at SS 8640 4084, lies on the Exford/Cutcombe parish boundary. It is a slab of local sandstone, 0.7m high, 0.6m wide and 0.3m thick. Part of the prehistoric field system is aligned on the stone, suggesting that it is a prehistoric standing stone which has also been used as a parish boundary marker, demonstrating the longevity of archaeological features in this landscape (Figs 17 and 23).



Fig 16 Prehistoric standing stone on the northern edge of Hoar Moor (Hazel Riley)

Fig 17 Standing stone in the prehistoric field system, Site 1, Hoar Moor (Hazel Riley)



A stone setting (Stone 3) was recorded on the northern edge of Codsens Moors, centred at SS 8833 4111 (Fig 2). Six stones are located in the enclosed land, a seventh lies on the open moor, close to a cairn. Five of the stones are upright posts, one is an upright post with a pyramidal top, and one is a surface block (Fig 18). The arrangement is difficult to resolve. One interpretation is that they represent the remains of one or more stone settings (Quinnell and Dunn 1992, 35). The stones could represent the remains of a single stone row, c 250m long, with its central portion damaged or disturbed by a field drain. The stones which lie to the north east and south west of the row would then be outliers to it. The hedge bank marking the northern extent of Codsens Moors respects this arrangement and follows the same alignment, although it post-dates the stones by some 4000 years. Similar associations of stone rows and the upper limit of enclosure have been noted on Dartmoor, for example on Holne Moor, where the layout of the Bronze Age Dartmeet reave system has been influenced by the alignment of a stone row (Fleming 1988, fig 34).

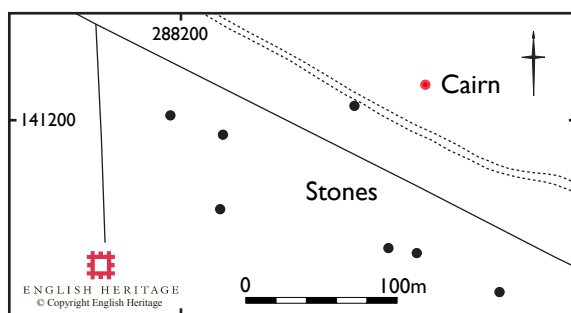


Fig 18 Plan of standing stones on Codsens Moors (after Quinnell and Dunn 1992)

Most of the stone cairns on Hoar Moors and Codsens Moors result from field clearance and are directly associated with the relict field systems. One of the cairns, Cairn 1, at Site 5, however, is more likely to be a prehistoric sepulchral cairn, an outlier of the Rowbarrow group of barrows and cairns. It lies adjacent to the hedge bank at SS 8760 4119 (Fig 2) and comprises a well formed, flat-topped, oval mound with a high stone content, 9m EW, 5.5m NS and 0.75m high (Fig 9).

The standing stones and stone setting(s) or stone row date from the later Neolithic/early Bronze Age (c 2500 – 1500 BC), although a stone row on Cut Hill on Dartmoor has recently been dated to the earlier part of the Neolithic (R Fyfe pers comm). The lithic component of the historic environment of Codsens is significant regionally and nationally. If the stones do represent a stone row, then the monument is one of only 10 on Exmoor, making it 10% of the known resource within the National Park (Riley 2007). On Exmoor no stone rows have been the subject of recorded excavations, and, nationally, little is known about the function, chronology and meaning of these monuments. If the stones represent the remains of a stone setting then it is one of some 60 such monuments within the National Park (Riley and Wilson-North 2001; Jamieson 2001; 2005; Riley 2007), 1.6% of the known resource. Although some research on Exmoor's stone settings is currently underway, virtually nothing is known about the chronology, function and meaning of these monuments, thought to be unique to Exmoor.

The Bronze Age burial mound, as part of the Rowbarrow group, forms part of a nationally significant prehistoric ceremonial complex on Exmoor, about which virtually

nothing is known in terms of absolute dates, structural details, mortuary practices and phases of use and abandonment.

Prehistoric settlement sites

The prehistoric settlement on Codsend Moors comprises two types of monument: hut circles and hillslope enclosures. There are five hut circles. Two hut circles lie close to, but not physically associated with, the field system and enclosure at Site 2 (Fig 26). One, Hut 1, lies at SS 8689 4064. It comprises a large, sub-circular mound, 12m in diameter and 0.3-0.5m high, rising to 0.9m high to the south east (Fig 19). Set into the top of this, and slightly offset to the north west, is an oval structure, measuring 7m by 5m internally, with traces of coursed walling, 1m thick, on the east side. A possible entrance, 0.5m wide, lies in the NW. At SS 8715 4047 is a second hut circle, Hut 2. It measures 4.6m by 6.9m. The walls, low banks of turf covered stone, are quite spread and measure 1-2.3m in width and 0.25m high. The interior has been levelled into the slope by cutting in to a depth of 0.45m on the north side and building up to 0.65m on the south side. No entrance is visible.



Fig 19 Hut circle on the western edge of Site 1 (Hazel Riley)

Two hut circles, part of Site 5, lie close to the northern hedge bank of Codsend Moors (Fig 27). One, Hut 3, at SS 8758 4112, is a good example of a small hut circle and typical of those found elsewhere on Exmoor. It is formed by a roughly circular stony bank, 0.8m wide and 0.4m high, terraced into the gently sloping hillside to a height of 0.9m. A break in the wall to the south east, 1m wide, may be the site of an entrance. Externally, the hut circle is 7.6m NS and 6.6m EW. Thirty metres to the east, at SS 8761 4122 is a second hut circle, Hut 4, of very similar form. It is formed by a stony bank, 0.8m wide, 0.4m high with a break to the south east which could be an entrance gap. The hut is built on a platform, 0.9m high, terraced into the hillside, and has external measurements of 5.8m



Fig 20 Hut circle with fragmentary field bank, Site 5 (Hazel Riley)

NS and 6.5m EW. A stony bank, 7m long and 0.6m high, runs from the south east corner of the hut circle (Fig 20).

A single hut circle, Hut 5, lies within the field systems at Site 4 at SS 8868 4023 (Fig 29). The hut circle is defined by spread, stony banks or scarps, 2.5-3.5m wide and 0.3m high, with an external diameter of 13m and an internal diameter of 7m. The site is terraced into the hillside. Like the hut circles to the west at Site 2, this hut circle is not directly associated with any of the nearby prehistoric features.

There are two hillslope enclosures on Codsens Moors. The best preserved enclosure, Enclosure 1, forms part of Site 2 and is centred at SS 8695 4070 (Fig 26). The enclosure is overlain by a substantial post-medieval hedge bank and a field drain runs across its northern edge (Fig 21). The enclosure comprises a substantial stony bank (of local sandstone), 48m in diameter and enclosing an area of just less than 0.1 ha. The bank, once probably a substantial drystone wall, is now a spread of stone 5.5m to 8m wide. The enclosure is terraced into the slope and so the stony bank varies in height from 1.2m to 0.5m (Fig 22). A platform, formed by a stony scarp, occupies much of the northern part of the enclosure, forming a level stance, 14m long, 12m wide and 0.6m high. This was probably occupied by a building. The enclosure overlies the field system; the building platform may have used part of the field banks for its southern side.

A second hillslope enclosure (Enclosure 2) very similar in size and morphology to the one described above, forms part of Site 4 at SS 8876 4040 (Fig 29). The enclosure is formed by an intermittent circuit, c 45m in diameter, of stony banks and scarps, 3-5m wide and up to 0.6m high. No entrance gap is visible. An 18th-century hedge bank has been constructed across the enclosure.

A third enclosure (Enclosure 3) also part of Site 4, lies at SS 8876 4040 (Fig 29). It is sub-rectangular, 16m by 13 m, formed by a stony bank, 2m wide and 0.6m high and only

Fig 21 Hillslope enclosure overlain by 18th-century hedge bank, Site 2 (Hazel Riley)



Fig 22 (below) Detail of the enclosure, Site 2 (Hazel Riley)

associated with the field system spatially. This is more likely to be a small agricultural enclosure rather than a settlement feature.

The hut circles are regionally and nationally significant. Unenclosed hut circles on Exmoor are relatively rare (45 recorded in Riley and Wilson-North 2001) and the group on Codsend Moors therefore form some 11% of the resource within the National Park.



The Codsend sites are in a good state of preservation and probably contain hearths, structural details, artefacts palaeoecological and chronological evidence which will give valuable evidence for the daily life of Exmoor farmers 4000 years ago. The hut circles are associated spatially with the earliest of the relict field systems which survive on Hoar Moor and Codsend Moors and were an integral part of them. They probably date from the later Bronze Age (1500 – 1000 BC), although there are no recorded excavations with absolute dates from any of the examples on Exmoor.

The hillslope enclosures on Codsend Moors are regionally and nationally significant. Exmoor contains some 48 extant examples (Riley and Wilson-North 2001), but very little is known about them. As a group they are generally dated to the Iron Age, but recent excavations both on Exmoor and more widely in south west England have shown that some have their origins in the mid- late Bronze Age. Field observation on several of Exmoor's hillslope enclosures suggests that some contained a stance or platform for a circular building, this has been confirmed by geophysical survey at Bagley and by excavation at Higher Holworthy. Recent excavations here have shown that the enclosure was constructed in the middle of the 2nd millennium BC; the settlement was abandoned, in a structured way, in the 12th century BC. The site was re-used in the Iron Age (T Green, draft excavation report, Exmoor National Park).

Excavations at Volis Farm and Ivyton Farm have demonstrated that cropmark enclosures on the southern edge of the Quantock Hills can have their origins in the second half of the 2nd millennium BC (Thorpe 2002; K Wilkinson, *Somerset Archaeological Symposium* 2004). At Volis Farm a large enclosure which was occupied in the 1st millennium BC had a precursor of Middle Bronze Age date. A large complex of cropmarks occurs on south-facing slopes above Ivyton Farm on the south west edge of the Quantock Hills. A bronze sickle of late 2nd millennium date was found in the ditch of a D-shaped enclosure, placing it in the later Bronze Age. Similar enclosures in Cornwall, known as rounds, date from the Iron Age until the early post-Roman period. At Trethurgy near St Austell, the round was occupied from the mid-2nd to the 6th century AD (Quinnell 2004). An excavated hill-slope enclosure at Rudge, Morchard Bishop, in NW Devon was occupied during the period AD 55-80 (Todd 1998).

The two hillslope enclosures on Codsend Moors are therefore important for several reasons. They form c 4% of the known resource within the National Park. The enclosures appear to be in a good state of preservation. They should contain the remains of hearths, structures, artefacts, palaeoecological and chronological evidence to build up a detailed picture of life here in the later prehistoric period. The spread, stony banks will help to preserve such evidence. Their association with extensive prehistoric field systems, presumably in use at the same time as the enclosures, and extensive areas of palaeoecological potential (below), add to their significance.

Prehistoric field systems

Relict field systems of the later second and early first millennium BC are usually described as coaxial or aggregate in layout. A coaxial field system has one dominant orientation, with axial boundaries following this orientation, and transverse boundaries running at

right angles to it. They are, generally, laid out with little regard for the local topography and can cover large tracts of ground, such as those encountered on parts of Dartmoor. Aggregate field systems, where no single axis is dominant, occur when the field blocks were added to on a piecemeal basis. These types of site are common on Bodmin Moor (Yates 2007, 15).

The prehistoric field systems on Hoar Moor and Codsens Moors cover a block of ground roughly 2.4km EW and 1km NS. The fields lie on sloping ground from the Exford/Cutcombe parish boundary on the west to a tributary stream of the River Quarne north of the hamlet of Codsens to the east, and are laid out on land at altitudes of between 300m and 450m. The field systems are not continuous across the area but can be divided into four areas: Sites 1, 2, 3, 4 (as in Pattison and Sainsbury 1989). There is evidence to suggest, however, that the field systems may have once been more extensive, perhaps even covering most of Codsens Moors (below).

Site 1

Site 1 lies to the west of the area, and is centred on the Exford/Cutcombe parish boundary at SS 865 406. There are elements of both aggregate and coaxial field systems. The main part of Site 1 is an aggregate field system. It comprises a block of fields, 470m long and 268m wide, aligned NE/SW. There are four rectilinear fields, A, B, C, D, with two track ways (Track 1, Track 2) running through them (Fig 23). The fields are defined by stony banks, 1-2.5m wide and 0.2-0.4m high, or by lynchets, up to 2.5m high (Fig 5). In the improved pasture to the south of Site 1 the relict field system has been ploughed over (E) and the remains survive as lynchets c 1m high. Clearance cairns are a characteristic feature of site 1. Some are substantial features, such as that on the western edge of the fields which is a wedge shaped mound, 15m long, 8m wide and 1.5m high (Fig 25). Several are incorporated into the lynchet which forms the northern side of Track 1; several clearance cairns lie across the eastern end of this trackway, suggesting that it fell out of use or that it may have been deliberately blocked by the cairns. Two upright stones at the eastern end of the trackway (Front cover) may be surviving gateposts from a robbed out field bank, or they may also have functioned in closing this access track and so this phase of use of the fields, a process perhaps similar to the deliberate abandonment and sealing of the Bronze Age houses at Trethellan Farm in Cornwall (Nowakowski 1991).

There is some evidence to suggest that this aggregate field system was overlain by a second phase of coaxial field system which was laid out on the same axis as the coaxial field system on Site 2 (below). Elements of field boundaries on the axial NNE/SSW alignment can be seen in fields D and E, and the main area of clearance cairns in field B are on the transverse NW/SE boundary alignment, suggesting that the coaxial phase was not completed here. On the northern end of Site 1 part of a large field, F, on the coaxial alignment survives.

Site 2

Site 2, centred at SS 870 406 comprises a block of coaxial fields, 680m long and 295m

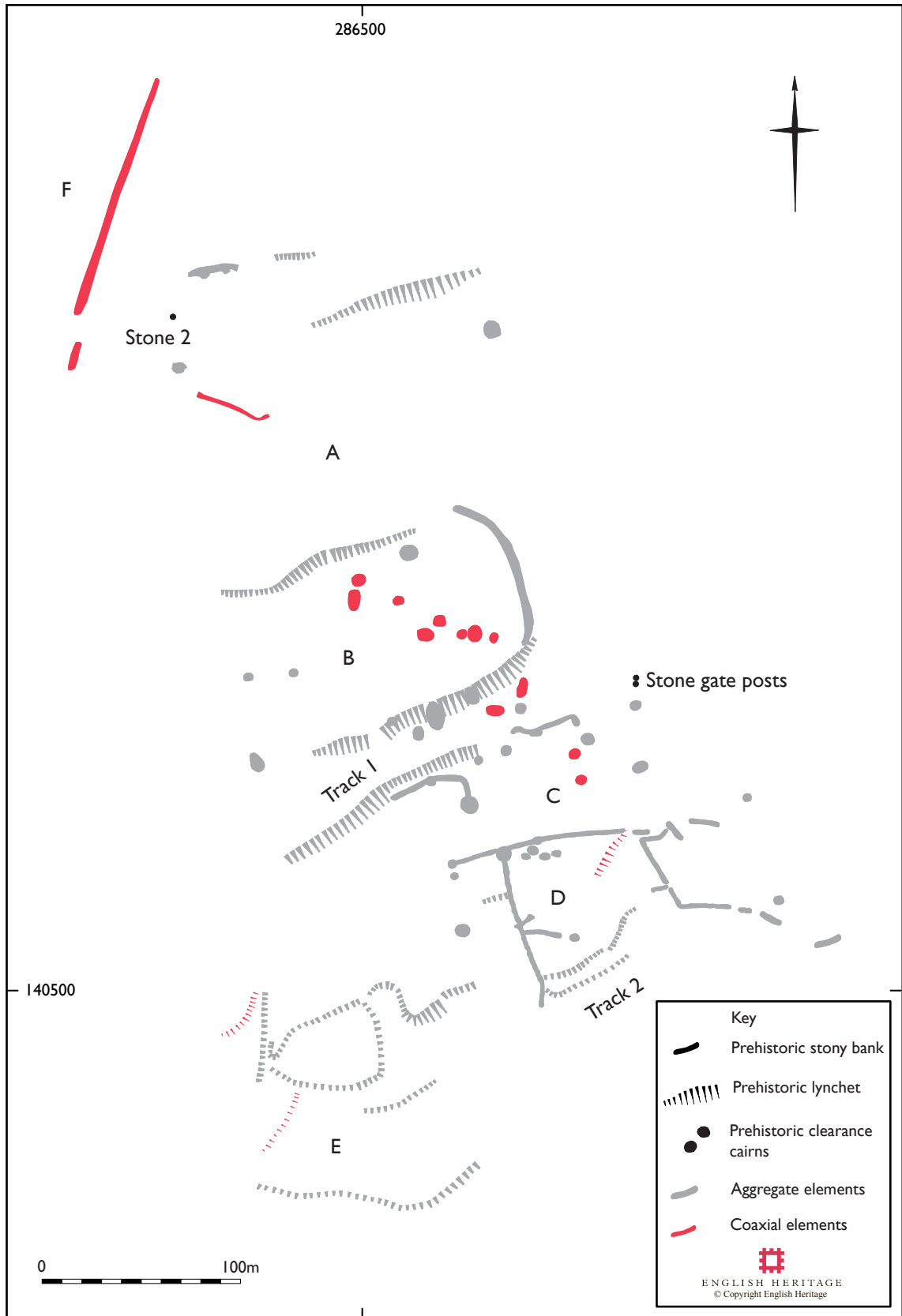


Fig 23 Site 1 Interpretation plan

Fig 24 Site
1: detail of
prehistoric field
banks (Hazel
Riley)



Fig 25 (below)
Site 1: large
clearance cairn
(Hazel Riley)

wide, with axial boundaries on a NNE/SSW alignment and transverse boundaries on a WNW/ESE alignment (Fig 26). The boundaries are stony banks, c 3m wide and 0.3-0.9m high. The most complete block comprises at least four rectilinear fields, G, H, I, J, at the centre of the site. Clearance cairns lie towards the edges of Site 2, particularly around the hut on the south east corner. There are also some linear spreads of stone and some clearance cairns have been placed on the field boundaries. The relict fields were originally



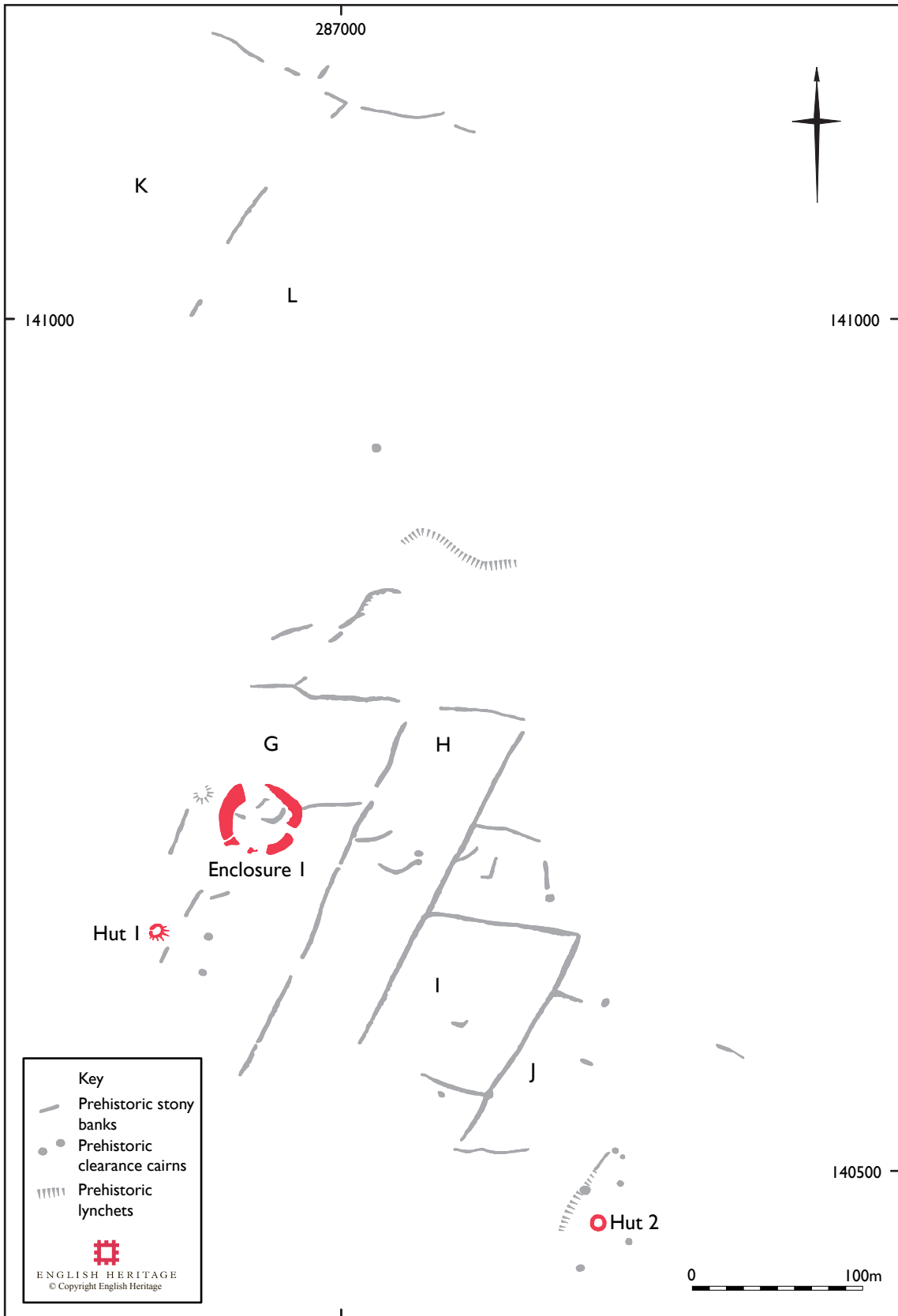


Fig 26 Site 2 Interpretation plan

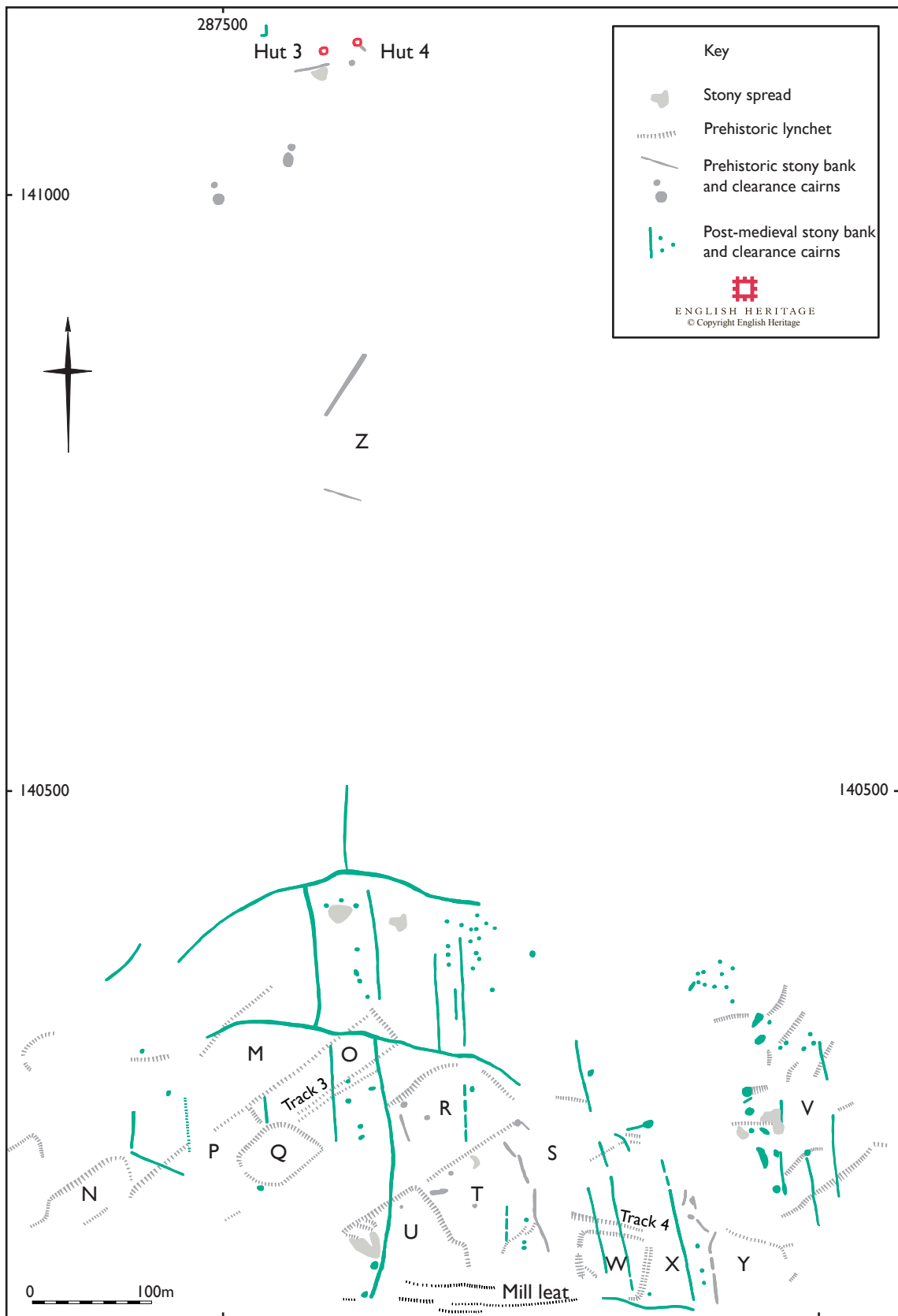


Fig 27 Site 3 Interpretation plan



*Fig 28 Site 3:
prehistoric track
overlain by
post-medieval
field boundary
(Hazel Riley)*

more extensive: there are isolated elements to the SE, for example, and the remains of at least two fields, K, L, lie on the north edge of the site. The field system is overlain by a prehistoric hillslope enclosure and is spatially associated with two prehistoric hut circles.

Site 3

Site 3, centred at SS 877 402, comprises a block of coaxial fields 685m long by 275m wide, with axial boundaries on a NE/SW alignment and transverse boundaries aligned NW/SE (Fig 27). There are at least nine fields (M-U), with an access track defined by two lynchets (Track 3) (Fig 28). An extension of the coaxial fields lies to the east (V). Three further field, W, X, Y, on a different orientation and of aggregate type, lie in between the two areas of coaxial fields of Site 3; a trackway (Track 4) formed by lynchets runs along to the top of field W. These field boundaries are all formed by lynchets with an average height of 0.75m. An isolated field, defined by two stony banks (Z) lies 485m to the north. This is on the same orientation as the coaxial fields of Site 2.

Site 4

Site 4 lies on the eastern edge of Codsens Moors, north of the hamlet of Codsens, centred at SS 887 403. The area of relict field system is complex (Fig 29). It comprises a block of fields, 230m long by 140m wide, with a further field to the north, a, at SS 886 407, and some lynchets to the south, b, at SS 885 401. The field system has elements of a coaxial plan. The isolated bank, a, with field clearance marking the south east side of a field can be interpreted as a field 288m by 90m on a NE/SE alignment. This same alignment can be found in the main part of the relict field system on site 4, where there are at least five coaxial fields (c, d, e, f, g). Two trackways (Track 5, Track 6) are associated with this block. The field system to the south west has more in common with aggregate or more piecemeal enclosure, with four smaller, irregular fields or enclosures (e, f, g, h).

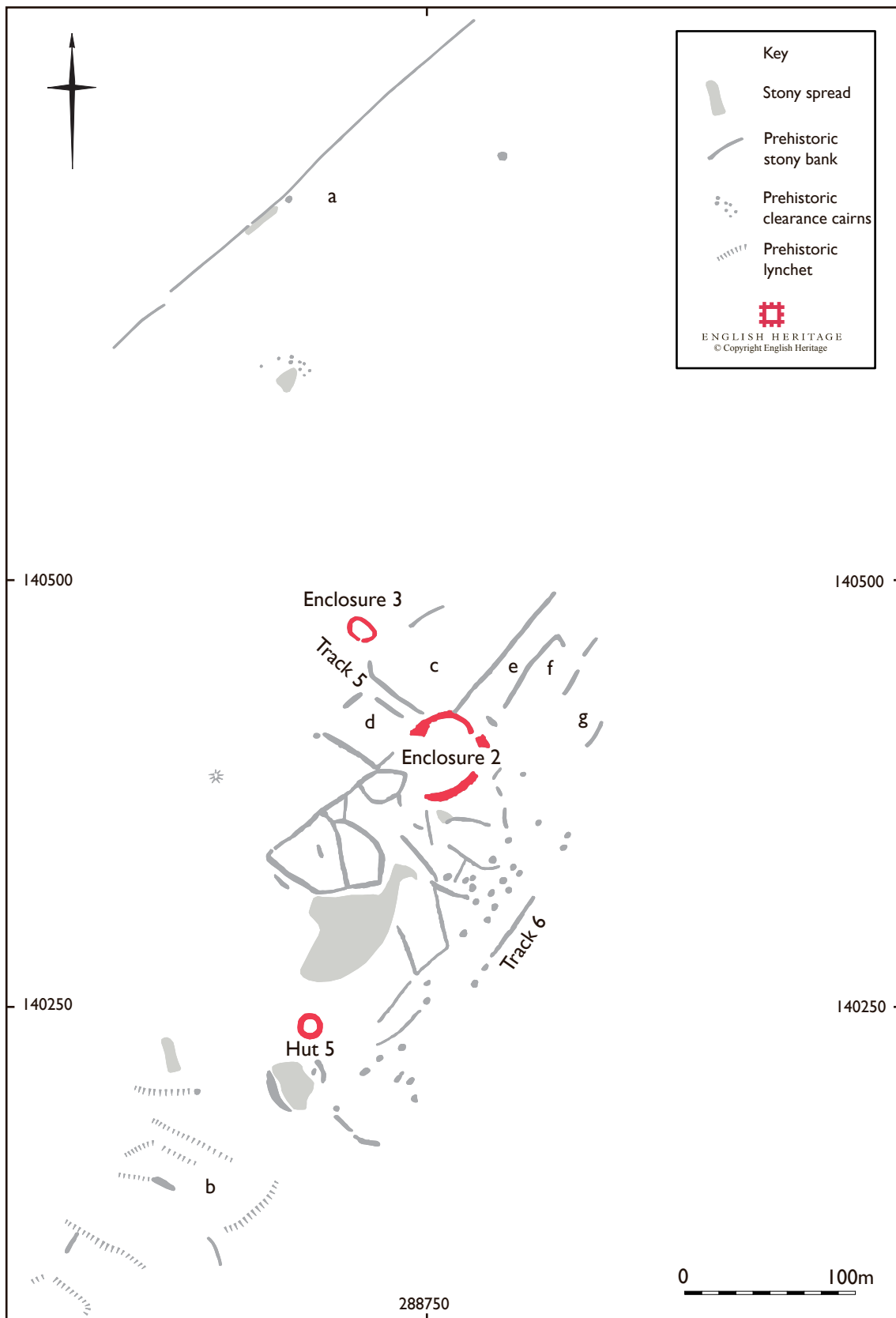


Fig 29 Site 4: interpretation plan

The lynchets to the south, b, may well be related to later phases of land use (below). The coaxial fields are associated with the hillslope enclosure, Enclosure 2, although the relationship between the two is unclear, and spatially associated with an isolated sub-rectangular enclosure and a hut circle (Enclosure 3 and Hut 5) (above).

The prehistoric field systems in context

The aggregate field systems

The aggregate field systems on Hoar Moor and Codsand Moors are probably the earliest elements to the prehistoric agricultural use of the area. On Dartmoor, small irregular field systems with small houses, such as those at Shovel Down and Throwleigh Common West seem to pre-date the coaxial field systems (Fleming 1983, 223). In Cornwall, on Bodmin Moor, coaxial field systems are relatively uncommon but curvilinear, accreted fields with settlements at Stannon South, Louden Hill and Roughtor are overlain by substantial block boundaries (Johnson and Rose 1994, 72).

The coaxial field systems

The prehistoric relict field systems on Codsand and Hoar Moors have been the subject of several small-scale sampling projects, primarily designed to extract palaeoecological information (below). During the course of one of these projects, a small trench was dug to the north east of the enclosure, Enclosure 1, in Site 2, at the (buried) junction of a coaxial and transverse field boundary (Fig 38). Radiocarbon dating indicated that the field system post-dated a buried soil dated to AD 340-620 and was engulfed by peat by AD 1250-1440 (Tinsley 2000, 4). These dates are rather problematic. The presence of cairns, stone monuments and hut circles support a prehistoric date for the coaxial and aggregate field systems. Coaxial field systems on Dartmoor have been dated to the later Bronze Age (radiocarbon dates from excavations at Holne Moor and Shaugh Moor (Smith *et al* 1981, 269-70).

The lynched nature of the field systems on Site 3 may suggest that it is of a different phase to those of Sites 1,2 and 4 which are formed primarily of stony banks. Lynched field systems on Bodmin Moor, with roughly square fields, 1 ha or less in area, such as at Sharptor, have been placed in the later prehistoric or Roman period, but not absolutely dated (Johnson and Rose 1994, 64).

A recent review of prehistoric field systems in southern England suggests that there are two major phases of prehistoric coaxial landscaping: the later Bronze Age (1500 BC-700BC) and the late Iron Age/Romano-British period (Yates 2007, 15).

On balance, the coaxial field systems on Hoar Moor and Codsand Moors are prehistoric in date, and most likely to date from the later Bronze Age. The radiocarbon dates obtained from Site 2 must be considered as erroneous until corroborated by further dating work (below).

The prehistoric relict field systems are significant regionally and nationally. On Exmoor

there are 10 other sites with aggregate or coaxial field systems. By area, the prehistoric field systems on Hoar Moor and Codsens Moors represent c 29% of these types of site within the National Park. Apart from the work done for palaeoecological analysis on Codsens Moors (below), there are no recorded excavations or geophysical surveys on Exmoor's prehistoric field systems. The potential for the survival of features associated with the use of the fields has been demonstrated on Dartmoor, where a large area of animal footprints was found close to the Saddlesbrough Reave (Smith *et al* 1981, 214). The field boundaries preserve a buried land surface, containing palaeoecological and chronological evidence. The potential of the survival of features in the 'empty' spaces inside the fields exists, as shown by the work done on Dartmoor as part of the Shovel Down project (Johnston *et al* 2003).

The extant remains of prehistoric field systems in the uplands of southern England are only now beginning to be seen in a national context: a large amount of data from developer funded archaeology in lowland southern England has recently been collated and published in a synthetic account (Yates 2007). This shows arrangements of extensive enclosure across the study area, with coaxial fields and evidence for livestock management systems such as watering holes, drove ways and races, apparently focused on cattle. How the upland field systems, such as those on Exmoor, functioned in relation to the lowland economy, remains to be assessed.

Medieval and post-medieval agriculture

Medieval/early post-medieval field systems

A block of relict field system, 600m by 430m, overlies most of the lynched field system at Site 3 (Fig 27). It comprises at least eight, large rectilinear fields, with their main orientation being NS. The field boundaries are small, stony banks, 1m wide and 0.3m high: quite different in character to those which make up the prehistoric field systems described above (compare Fig 24 with Fig 28). A large number (89) of clearance cairns are associated with this field system. Again, these are different in character to those associated with the prehistoric field systems, being small, neat circular heaps of stone, 2m in diameter and 0.4m high

Fig 30 Site 3: post-medieval clearance cairn (Hazel Riley)



(maximum dimensions) (compare Fig 25 with Fig 30). Some of the rectilinear fields are sub-divided into smaller strips. A building platform some 630m to the north of this field system (SS 8754 4114), may be associated with its use. All that remains of the structure are short lengths of turf covered wall, 0.35m high, which meet at right angles and mark out an area 6m by 5m.

The date of this relict field system is given by its relationships to the prehistoric features and to features which can be dated to the 19th century (below). The field system clearly overlies the prehistoric system at Site 3 (Fig 28). Elements of it extend beyond the early 19th-century enclosure banks on its western edge, suggesting that it is the earlier of the two.

Although elements of the layout are on a similar orientation to the enclosure plans set out in 1804, it has already been noted that this scheme was never implemented (above: Historical Background). No field systems on this orientation are shown on any of the 18th or 19th century maps and plans available for consultation at the Somerset Record Office. Morphologically, the field system is similar to the relict field system on Bossington Hill in Exmoor, which, like this one at Codsens, had fallen out of use by the beginning of the 19th century (SRO 1809). Cultivation of common or more marginal land was widespread in south west England and has been dated on the Quantock Hills by documentary and field evidence to the late medieval and early post-medieval periods (Riley 2006). The cultivation was periodic and rye was usually grown, both for its grain and for its straw which was used for thatch. A 16th/17th century date for this field system at Codsens Moors fits with the settlement pattern of dispersed farmsteads in the Quarne Valley at this time. The common was periodically cultivated, perhaps communally, to provide an occasional crop of rye for food and for roofing material.

Post-medieval farmsteads



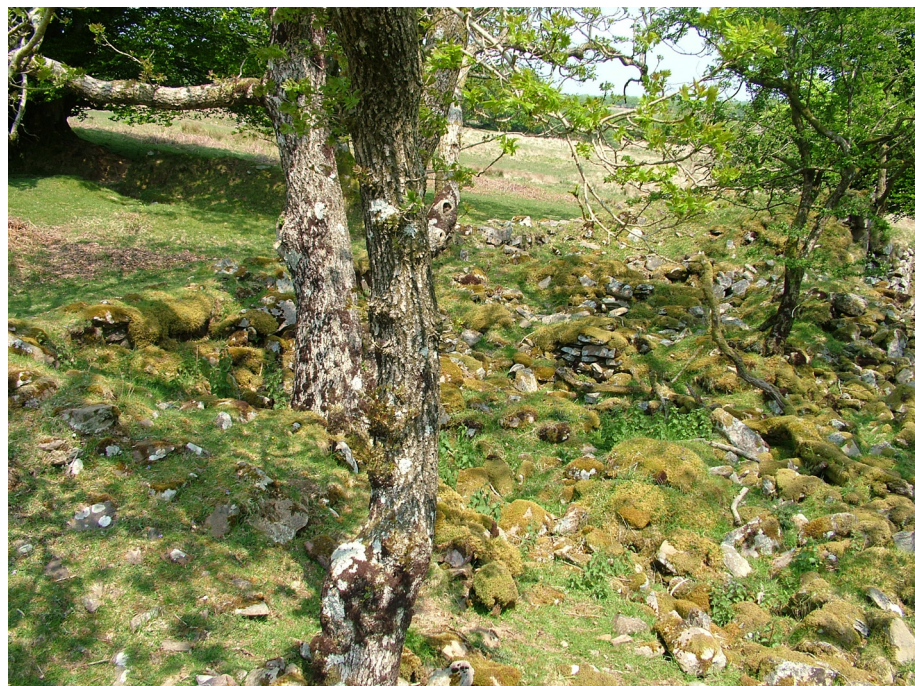
The remains of three abandoned farmsteads lie on Hoar Moor and

Fig 31 The abandoned farmstead on Codsens Moor, with yard (left) and privy (centre) (Hazel Riley)



Codsend Moors. The remains of a small building and associated garden enclosure lie at SS 8691 4034 on the south west edge of Codsend Moors. The building is 16m by 6m (external measurements) and the walls, of local stone, stand to a height of 1.3m. The building had four rooms. The two central rooms were accessed from the south side; the

*Fig 32 (top)
Farm house
converted to
cattle housing
on Codsend
Moor Farm
(left) with yard
(right) Hazel
Riley)*



*Fig 33 Codsend
Moor Farm:
detail of ruined
cattle housing
(Hazel Riley)*

two rooms at the west and east ends were accessed through gaps on their outer walls. The remains of a small, stone building lie to the west, across a stream. This was the privy. Regular, rectangular fields associated with this building survive as both relict features and boundaries which are maintained as part of the areas current agricultural regime (Fig 31).

This small farm is first recorded in 1826, when it was part of the Hales estate. The holding totalled c 130 acres, but 91 acres were rough pasture on Codsens Moors. A small amount of arable (4 acres) is recorded, together with four large garden plots (Fig 12). The farm was leased by Phillip Hancock (SRO 1826).

Some 120m to the south west, at SS 8684 4024, are the remains of a third building. It measures 17m by 5m (external measurements) and is aligned along the contour and cut into the slope. It was divided into four small rooms or stalls internally, with a common, covered passage along the south wall. The walls are of roughly coursed local stone, 0.5m to 0.7m wide and 0.5m high. The large amounts of rubble at the west and east ends indicate the collapse of gable ends and probably chimneys and fireplaces. There are a few



Fig 34 Access track to Codsens Moors (Hazel Riley)

broken roof slates in the rubble. A yard, 19m by 10m, adjoins the building on its south side; the walls are substantial, earth-faced stone banks, 2m wide and 1.6m high (Figs 32 and 33).

This building was erected sometime between 1826 and 1842 (SRO 1826 and 1842). By 1842 it was the home of William Owen, with a garden plot to the north and an access track to the grazing on Codsens Moors now surviving as an earthwork feature (Fig 34). The stalls and the substantial yard suggest that the house was converted to cattle housing sometime in the latter part of the 19th century. The farmstead was abandoned by 1890 (Ordnance Survey 1st edition map).

Fig 35 The farmstead and enclosure at Holemoor (Hazel Riley)



Fig 36 (below) Oval enclosure at Holemoor (Hazel Riley)

On the southern edge of Hoar Moor, on the edge of a steep slope above the River Quarme, at SS 8610 4039, are the remains of another farmstead. The building comprises a ruined, stone structure. The main range is oriented NE/SW with a small, additional structure attached to its south corner. The main range is 17.5m by 4m (external measurements) and is divided into three small rooms. The structure on the south corner



is 5.5m by 3.5m. On the SE side of the farm are three rectangular enclosures, formed by substantial beech hedge banks (Fig 35) and the remains of four small fields surround the farm (Fig 13). The earthwork remains of an oval enclosure on the north side of the Quarme, at SS 8598 4035 (Fig 36), together with banks and drainage ditches on Hoar Moor, identified from air photographs, may be associated with the farmstead (Fig 2).

This farmstead, known as Holemoor, was in use by 1809-1812 when it was part of the Acland estate (SRO 1809). Like the farms on Codsens Moors, the infields (25 acres in 1809, only 9 acres in 1842) were supplemented by a large amount of rough grazing (151 acres) on the moor above. It had been abandoned by 1890 (Ordnance Survey 1st edition map).

The third farmstead lies on the south east side of Codsens Moor, on a south facing slope just above the River Quarme. The remains of farm and mill buildings are centred at SS 8815 4012, on the south side of the track giving access from Codsens. The system of water management, in the form of a series of leats, a holding pond, culvert and tailrace,



Fig 37 Codsens Mills depicted on the estate map of 1826 (Somerset Archive and Record service) (SRO 1826)

also survives. North of the track are the remains of a barn; 50m to the east are the ruins of a small cottage.

The farm and mill buildings are included in the 1826 survey of Hales' Cutcombe estates. The name Codsens Mills is given on the map, in the reference book the holding is called Bankdown and is leased by Philip Gibbs (SRO 1826). Both this survey and the tithe survey of 1842 show most of the holding divided into very small plots of between 1 and 4 acres (Fig 37). These were mostly used for arable cultivation, with the grain presumably processed at the farm. The buildings were still in use in 1890 and 1903 (Ordnance Survey 1st and 2nd edition maps), but it is not clear when the mill fell out of use. The building and small plots are not shown on early 19th-century maps (OS 1802-3; SRO 1809). The mill

seems to have functioned for only a few decades in the early-mid- 19th century.

The medieval/early post-medieval relict field systems and the post-medieval farmsteads on Hoar Moor and Codsens Moors are locally and regionally significant. There are numerous examples of periodic cultivation or encroachment onto common lands for arable crops, usually rye, on Exmoor. The significance here on Codsens Moors is local and lies in its association with the prehistoric field system.

The evidence for 19th-century agriculture on Hoar Moor and Codsens Moors is regionally significant. Here there are the remains of a range of agricultural and domestic buildings, including houses, cottages, animal housing and barns, which survive as ruined structures. Alongside this are the remains of the fields where the farmers worked, together with an excellent set of documentation showing how the farms worked in the earlier half of the 19th century. This part of the story of the improvement and enclosure of Exmoor by smaller estates in the 19th century has been rather neglected in favour of the study of the enclosure of the former Royal Forest and the Knight farmsteads, and the history of other large estates such as the Exmoor estate of the Acland family at Holnicote.

The palaeoecological resource

Previous work

Hoar Moor and Codsens Moors have been the subject of three palaeoecological studies. The first, and most comprehensive, the 'Exmoor Upland Archaeology and Ancient Land Use Project' was carried out by P D Francis and D S Slater at the Dept of Archaeology, University of Calgary (Francis 1986). A core was taken on Hoar Moor, west of Site 1 and north of Holmoor Farm, towards the centre of an area of blanket peat at SS 8626 4074 (Fig 38). A pollen diagram with four radiocarbon dates was published from a peat monolith 108cm in length (Francis and Slater 1990). The radiocarbon dates showed that the peat preserved palaeoecological material from the mid-5th millennium BC to the present day (Francis and Slater 1990, Table 1; dates recalibrated in Straker and Crabtree 1995, 50). A second core was taken close to the fragmentary remains of the coaxial fields north of Site 3, towards the NW edge of an area of blanket peat, at SS 8701 4106 (Fig 38). Here, a peat monolith 90 cm in length was examined, and a pollen diagram with four radiocarbon dates was published (Francis and Slater 1992). The radiocarbon dates showed that the peat preserved palaeoecological material from the early 1st millennium BC to the present day (Francis and Slater 1992, table 1; date recalibrated in Straker and Crabtree 1995, table 2).

A project was carried out on Codsens Moors in the late 1990s to examine the date and environmental context of the coaxial field system at Site 2 (Tinsley 2000). A trench was dug at SS 8704 4077, where part of an axial field boundary is covered with blanket peat (Fig 38). The radiocarbon dates have been discussed above (The prehistoric field systems in context); the peat here was c 40cm deep (Tinsley 2000, table 1).

Two cores were taken on Codsens Moors as part of an undergraduate dissertation.

The cores were at SS 8762 4105, 75m south of the hut circles at Site 5, and at SS 8782 4043, 200m NE of the main coaxial field system at Site 3 (Fig 2). No radiocarbon determinations were obtained, but the peat depths were 90cm and 53cm respectively (Chatten 1997). A mammoth tooth was recently found on Codsens Moors (c SS 861 406) (R Wilson-North pers comm).

Blanket mire on Hoar Moor and Codsens Moors

The studies outlined above have shown that significant depths of peat are present on Hoar Moor and Codsens Moors which preserve a sequence of palaeoecological deposits which can be dated back to at least as early as the earlier Neolithic period. The peat on Hoar Moor is over a metre deep; on Codsens Moors it is 90cm deep. The extent of the blanket mire on Hoar Moor and Codsens Moors has been mapped by Francis and Slater as part of the 'Exmoor Upland Archaeology and Ancient Land Use Project', although the eastern extent of the blanket mire on Codsens Moors is not shown on the published map (Francis and Slater 1990, fig 2; 1992, fig 2). The extent of the blanket mire on Fig 38 has been delineated using Francis and Slater's diagrams. The area of palaeoecological potential is taken from Fyfe and Adams (2008, fig 4). This shows that the potential for the preservation of palaeoecological sequences on Hoar Moor and Codsens Moors is

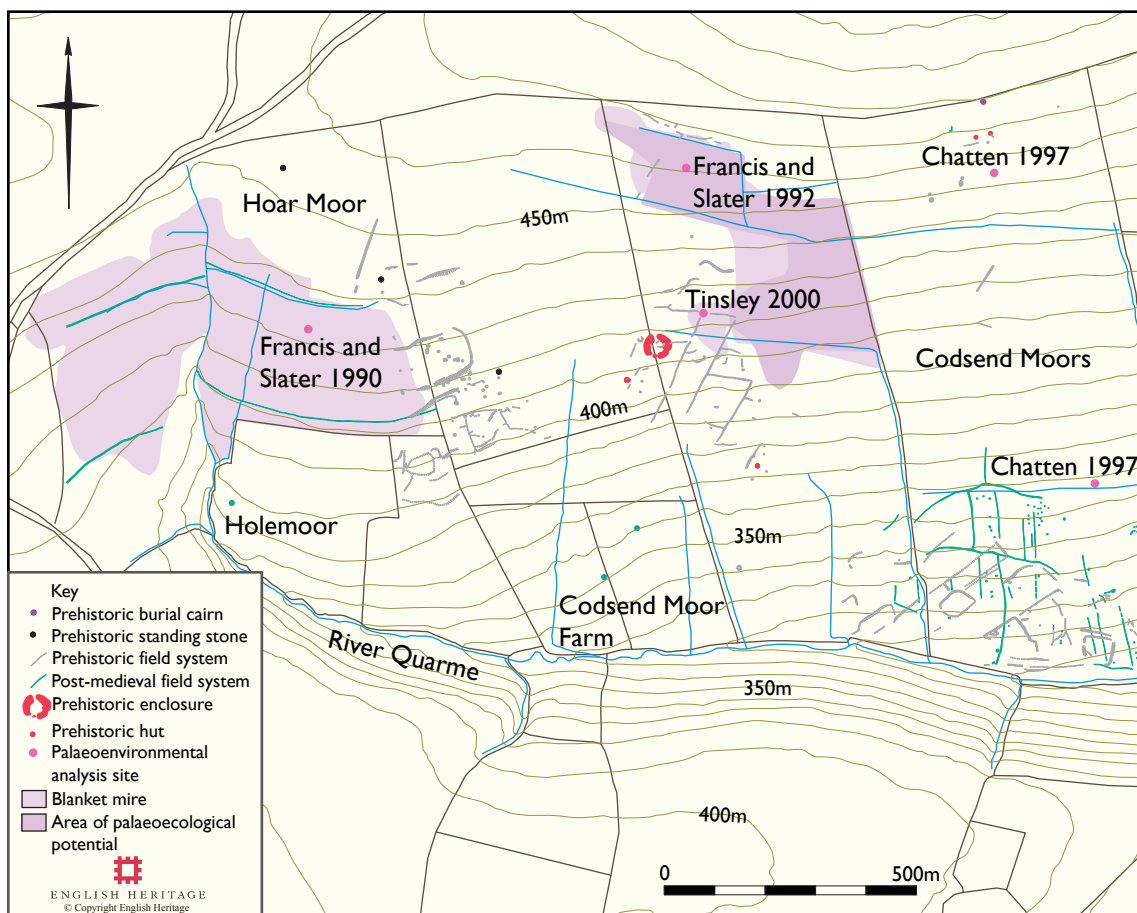


Fig 38 Hoar Moor and Codsens Moors: previous palaeoecological work, blanket mire and area of palaeoecological potential (after Francis and Slater 1990, fig 2; 1992, fig 2; Fyfe and Adams 2008, fig 4) (© Crown Copyright. All rights reserved. English Heritage 100019088.2009)

very high. The depth of the peat is known from previous work, as is the date range. The detailed work of Francis and Slater has also illustrated that pollen preservation in the deposits is good. The mapping of the blanket mire from previously published information has demonstrated that c 35ha of blanket mire occur on Hoar Moor and Codsand Moors, much of it in direct association with a range of archaeological features which date from the later Neolithic (or possibly earlier) to the 19th century. This is what makes the blanket mire survival on Hoar Moor and Codsand Moors so valuable. It is, as far as is known, the only place on Exmoor where such a range of archaeological material occurs in conjunction with such extensive and potentially deep peat deposits. In particular, the potential for a detailed examination of the palaeoecological sequence associated with the medieval and post-medieval agrarian economy exists here, a subject which has been poorly researched and understood in South West England until recently (Geary *et al* 1997; Rippon *et al* 2006).

FUTURE WORK

The following research activities should be considered

Field survey, geophysical survey and documentary research

Investigation and large scale survey of the stone setting(s)/row; photographic record to supplement written description of the stones

1:500 analytical survey of the enclosure (Enclosure 1) and hut circle (Hut1), Site 2

1: 500 analytical survey of the hut circle (Hut 2), field banks and clearance cairns, Site 2

1:500 analytical survey of the hut circles (Huts 3 and 4), field boundaries, cairns and building platform, Site 5

1:500 analytical survey of the enclosures (Enclosures 2 and 3), Site 4

1: 500 analytical survey of hut (Hut 5), Site 4

1:500 analytical surveys and photographic record of the deserted farmsteads of Codsend Moors, Holemoor and Bank Down

Field survey to determine the extent and depth of the blanket mire on Hoar Moor and Codsend Moors

Documentary research to determine the social history of this part of the parishes of Exford and Cutcombe

A programme of geophysical survey of the hillslope enclosures to determine the existence of features in the interiors and the presence of exterior ditches.

Use of geophysical survey techniques to determine whether the prehistoric field systems extend into the areas of blanket mire

Excavation and palaeoecological analysis

Targeted excavation to determine the relationship of the hillslope enclosures to the field systems.

Targeted excavation to obtain an absolute chronological sequence for the monuments, including both the prehistoric and early post-medieval field systems.

Any further palaeoecological analysis should be carefully planned to maximise the amount of information gained. Pollen sequences should be dated by radiocarbon determination.

Designation

None of the archaeological features on Hoar Moor and Codsend Moors are protected as historic environment features, but all fall within areas designated for their ecological value. Consideration should be given to the future protection of the prehistoric ceremonial monuments, enclosures, hut circles and field systems; due weight should be given to the medieval and post-medieval archaeology and the presence of extensive palaeoecological deposits.

MANAGEMENT ISSUES

This investigation was carried out because Hoar Moor and Codsand Moors specifically face the issues outlined below. A programme of monitoring the effects of such changes has been set out in Fyfe and Adams (2008).

Re-wetting the blanket mire

Issues include: the erosion and damage of archaeological features by vehicles; the destruction of archaeological features, both extant and buried, by the processes involved in re-wetting (cutting and baling vegetation, dam construction), and the destruction of palaeoecological material within the peat by dam construction.

Changing land use

Issues include: changes in stocking levels (both increases or decreases in animal numbers); the installation of stock management infrastructure; the siting of stock feeders and gateway alteration for vehicle access. These activities have the potential to cause damage, erosion and/or destruction of both extant and buried archaeological features and palaeoecological material.

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- * Archaeological Projects (excavation)*
- * Archaeological Science*
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- * Architectural Investigation*
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