

# Archaeological Field Survey Report



Royal Commission on the Historical  
Monuments of England  
Brooklands  
24 Brooklands Avenue  
Cambridge CB2 2BU  
Telephone: 01223 324010

---

## TRENCROM CASTLE, LUDGVAN CORNWALL

by Alastair Oswald

---

Library Copy



TRENCROM CASTLE, LUDGVAN  
CORNWALL

NMR NUMBER SW 53 NW 18

INDUSTRY AND ENCLOSURE IN THE NEOLITHIC

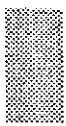
JANUARY 1996



RCHM  
ENGLAND

---

RCHME (CAMBRIDGE)  
*Brooklands*  
24 Brooklands Avenue,  
CAMBRIDGE, CB2 2BU



## CONTENTS

1. Introduction	1
2. Archaeological history	3
3. Description of the earthworks	6
4. Interpretation and discussion	12
5. Survey and research methods	15
6. Bibliography	16

## LIST OF FIGURES

1. Location map, showing other sites mentioned in the text	1
2. Henderson's plan of Trencrom Hill c.1917	4
3. RCHME earthwork plan, surveyed at 1:1000 scale	7

## 1. INTRODUCTION

### Summary

*In 1996 the Royal Commission on the Historical Monuments of England (RCHME) undertook an archaeological survey of Trencrom Castle (National Monuments Record number SW 53 NW 18). Though inconclusive, the survey broadly supported the recent proposal that the site should be reclassified as a possible Neolithic 'tor enclosure' rather than a later prehistoric hillfort. However, the survey also suggested that the earthwork was probably extensively modified in the late Iron Age and that its present condition has been affected significantly by later stone quarrying.*

In January 1996, staff from RCHME's Cambridge and Exeter offices carried out an analytical earthwork survey of a prehistoric enclosure known as Trencrom Castle, as part of a national project to record Industry and Enclosure in the Neolithic Period. The enclosure occupies the summit of Trencrom Hill, which lies in the parish of Ludgvan in the Penwith district of Cornwall (National Grid Reference SW 5178 3620). Stray finds indicate Iron Age activity on the hilltop and the enclosure has frequently been classified as a later prehistoric 'hillfort'. However, following the excavation of the enclosures on Carn Brea in 1973 and Helman Tor in 1986, and the confirmation of their Neolithic origins, comparisons between the sites' morphology first raised in the early twentieth century have recently been revived. Trencrom

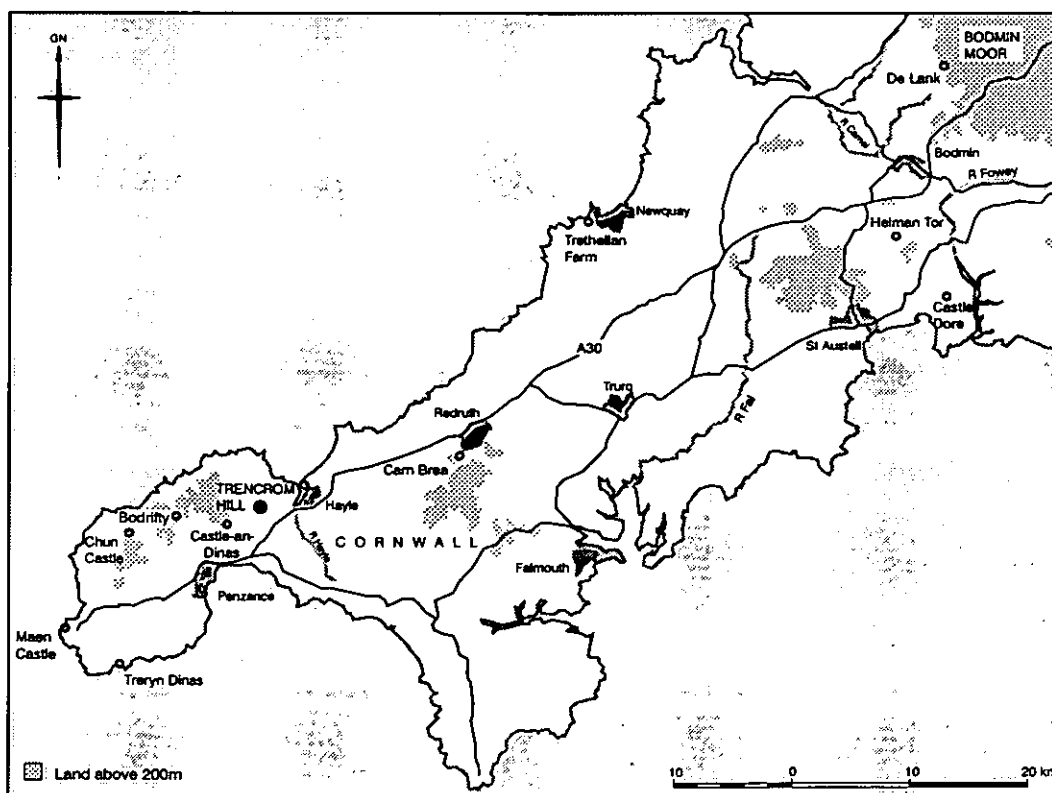


Figure 1:  
Location map  
showing sites  
mentioned in  
the text

Castle is irregular in plan, formed by an earth and stone wall linking a number of granite outcrops; in addition to the main enclosure, the RCHME survey has confirmed the possibility of one or more less substantial outer enclosures. Several hut circles, possibly of Iron Age date, and extensive evidence for stone quarrying, probably of Post-Medieval origin, were also recorded.

Trencrom Hill is an isolated granite boss whose summit stands at a height of 180m above OD, commanding panoramic views over the surrounding landscape. The hill, which is owned by the National Trust, is for the most part covered with dense gorse and bracken, which even in winter makes interpretation of much of the surface evidence very difficult. There are two main exceptions: the summit of the hill, which has mostly been cleared of clutter and is now covered in close cropped turf, and the south-western corner of the enclosure, where the vegetation was completely burnt off by a heath fire in 1995. The enclosure is protected as a Scheduled Ancient Monument (CORN 31); it is recorded in the Cornwall Sites and Monuments Record as PRN 31136 and the National Monuments Record as SW 53 NW 18.

## 2. ARCHAEOLOGICAL HISTORY

Trencrom Castle was mentioned by the antiquarian William Borlase, following a visit on December 18th 1750 (Borlase n.d., 13; 1754). It is unclear whether or not he considered the enclosure itself to be of prehistoric origin, since he commented that

*...three circles...with upright nearly contiguous stones erected...and the Basons are the only Druid monumts. remaining there.*

and added that stone quarrying for the Castle was doubtless the reason for this. The Tithe Map of 1839, and a mining map of 1853 derived from it, did not portray any remains on the hilltop (Cornwall CRO a and b), but the Ordnance Survey First Edition 25-inch map surveyed in 1875-6 (published 1878), depicted the enclosure, with three entrances. It also showed two hut circles in the interior, but the Second Edition, apparently following Borlase's interpretation, termed them 'Stones' (Ordnance Survey 1908). In 1882, the Penzance Natural History and Antiquarian Society made an excursion to Trencrom Castle, referring only to the 'pit dwellings' within the enclosure (Anon 1882).

The first major study of the site was the survey made between 1914 and 1917 by Charles Henderson, (Henderson c.1917, unpublished manuscript held by Royal Institution of Cornwall). Henderson identified and described in detail most of the features recently recorded by RCHME, though his interpretation differs significantly in several instances. In addition to a site plan at a scale of 100 feet:1 inch (Figure 2), his report contained larger scale plans and sketches of five of the hut circles, and views of the hilltop, stretches of the enclosure wall and all three gateways, and an alleged fallen standing stone. His site plan portrayed several major features not previously identified, including an outer rampart around the north and east sides of the enclosure, and 'covered ways' (ie abraded trackways) approaching the west and east gateways. In the interior he depicted a total of fifteen hut circles (also hinting at the presence of at least eight more) and several pits which he suggested in the accompanying text might be wells or 'modern excavations'. He also recorded a 'paved road' approaching through the northern entrance, believing it, almost certainly erroneously, to be prehistoric. Three standing stones which he identified on the north, east and south are certainly of natural origin; likewise the 'rock basins', which Henderson followed Borlase in interpreting as artificial, are natural solution hollows.

In his analysis of the enclosure, Henderson commented that '...though usually called a hill castle...in fact the whole of the hill was one large Neolithic city like Carn Brea'. This prescient suggestion was gradually revised as finds from the hilltop came to light over the next two decades.

Hencken's study of the region (1932, 130, 301) reported the recent discovery of Iron Age pottery on the site and in the 1940s further finds were reported to the Royal Institution of Cornwall (RIC) by three individuals. According to Dorothy Dudley, who visited the site in March 1949, one of the three - Mr James, Vice-President of the Royal Geographical Society - had some pottery and a bead found in a pit dug by a Mr Nance at some point in the previous

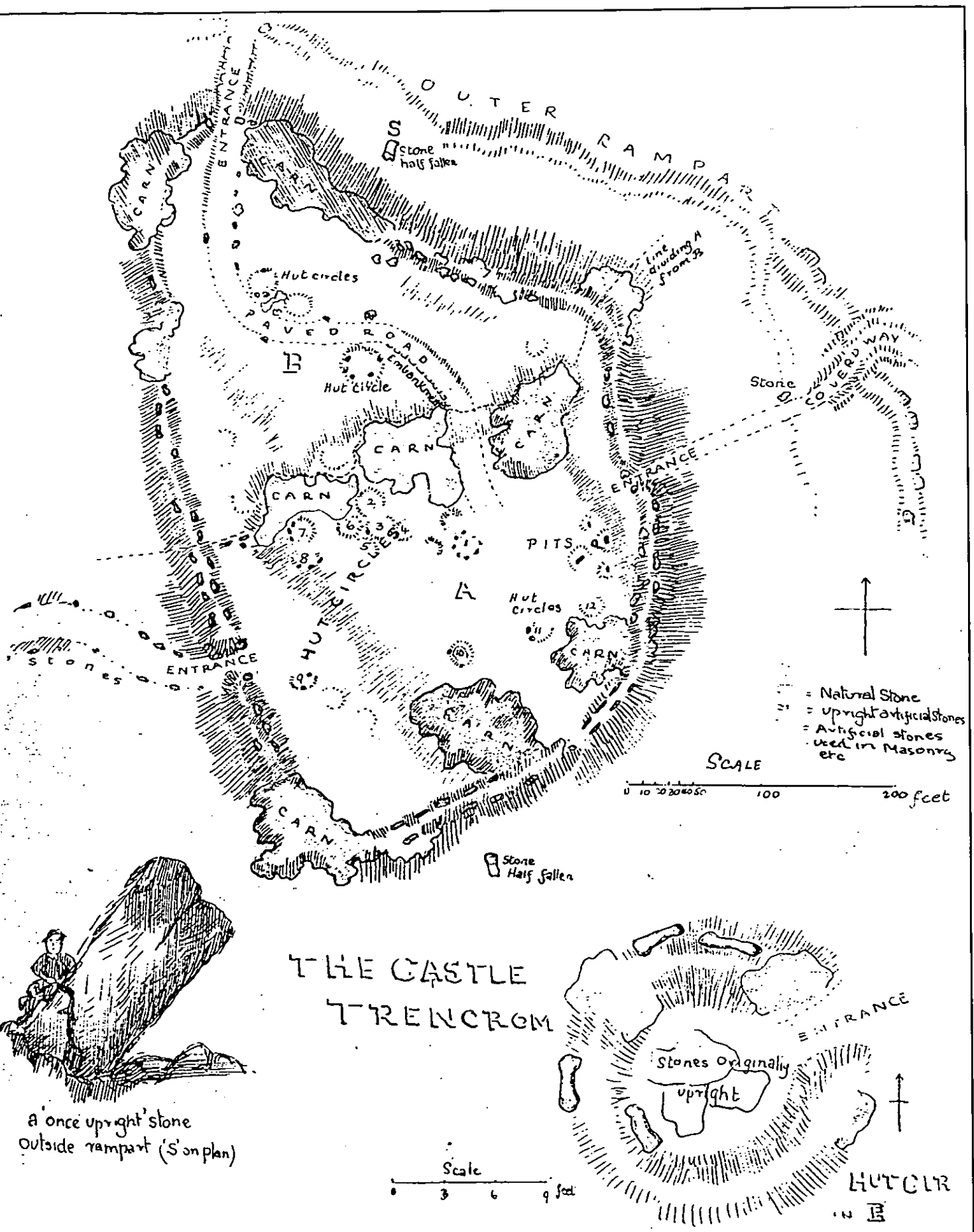


Figure 2: Henderson's plan of Trencrom Hill c. 1917

ten years (Dudley unpublished 1949). Following her visit, Dudley reported that one of the hut circles had been dug into on two occasions, revealing three sherds, including a pot base and one sherd decorated with applied cordons. There was some uncertainty as to whether the digging had been done by humans or badgers.

In his presidential address to the RIC, Raleigh-Radford likened the Trencrom ceramic style to pottery from Carn Brea, Castle-an-Dinas and Castle Canyke, dated to c.50BC (Raleigh-Radford 1953, 17). Aylwin Cotton classified the pottery as 'South-Western Second B' and the enclosure as a 'South-Western stone-walled hillfort' (Cotton 1958, 61-8). The Royal Cornwall Museum has been donated finds of Iron Age pottery and prehistoric flints from the site by RJ Noall, a St Ives antiquary, and a bronze bracelet by an unknown antiquary. The assemblage from the site also includes slag and an unidentified iron object. Weatherhill (1981, 57-8) suggests that the pottery could date to the second century BC and notes that occupation debris of eighth century AD date has also been found (evidence unknown).

In 1961, the Archaeology Division of the Ordnance Survey suggested that the northern gate identified by earlier surveys, together with the paved track passing through it, were likely to be modifications of comparatively modern date (NMR a). Seven possible hut circles were identified in the interior, of which one was regarded as relatively well-preserved and convincing, and one as perhaps being a modern pit; the wells or modern excavations referred to by Henderson were interpreted as recent stone extraction pits. The recent RCHME survey supports all these conclusions.

The enclosure was classified by the Ordnance Survey as a hillfort, and was subsequently widely accepted as of Iron Age date (Russell 1971; Hogg 1979). However, following the excavation of Carn Brea in 1970-3 and the conclusive demonstration of the Neolithic origin of that enclosure, RJ Silvester, in his influential re-consideration of the South-West in the first millennium BC, argued that at least six enclosures generally regarded as being Iron Age hillforts (Whittor, The Dewerstone, Stowe's Pound, Rough Tor, Berry Down and Helman Tor) differ significantly in that they do not appear to be defensive, and share a number of characteristics with Carn Brea. He suggested that these enclosures might also be of earlier prehistoric date, proposing the term 'tor enclosure' to distinguish them (Silvester 1979). Excavations at Helman Tor proved that this superficially similar site was also Neolithic in origin, prompting the addition of Trencrom Hill to the list (Mercer 1986). This possibility, first raised by Charles Henderson in 1917, is now cautiously accepted (Todd 1987, 76-7; Johnson and Rose 1994, 48).



### 3. DESCRIPTION OF THE EARTHWORKS

For terms and letters which appear in bold print in the text, see RCHME earthwork plan surveyed at 1:1000 scale (Figure 3). In some cases the terms correspond to those used by Henderson (Figure 2), while the capital letters referring to the hut circles correspond to those used by the Ordnance Survey in 1961. Aerial photographs of the site held in the National Monuments Record and Cornwall Sites and Monuments Record were examined, but did not reveal any new information.

#### Trencrom Castle

The 'hillfort' is an irregular, roughly trapezoidal enclosure, 0.92ha in area, with its longer western side extending for 140m south-south-east to north-north-west, and a width of 90m at its broadest point. The interior is crossed from west to east by a natural ridge of granite up to 4m high, which was probably much more massive prior to the extensive quarrying which has taken place on the hilltop. The part of the enclosure to the south of this ridge is slightly larger in area, some 3m higher on average and relatively level. There are two well-preserved gateways mid-way along the western and eastern sides of the southern part, and a third break at the northern end of the northern part, which has been identified as a possible entrance (Ordnance Survey 1878; Henderson *c.*1917). The rampart is of variable appearance, largely due to the effects of robbing and quarrying, but is generally characterised by a double line of orthostatic granite facing stones, between 1.2m and 2.0m apart, and up to 0.8m high. In some places the core of soil and smaller stones survives, while in others both the orthostats and the core have been robbed out. This wall generally follows the edge of the granite outcrop, linking a series of large tor-like outcrops and isolated smaller exposures. Where the naturally steep face created by the edge of the granite outcrop is intermittent, notably on the north-eastern and western sides, its line is continued artificially. In most places, only a scarp up to 2.6m high survives, but some 30m north of the western gateway, a well-preserved section of stonework is exposed, with at least four courses of walling surviving. There is no evidence for any external ditch.

On the southern side of the enclosure, the wall links the three massive granite outcrops which now form the highest part of Trencrom Hill, overlooking a very steep drop of 5m to 10m. For a distance of *c.*20m towards the south-western corner, the overlying vegetation has been completely burnt off by a heath fire which occurred in 1995, and subsequent erosion has exposed the structure of the wall very clearly. Although the exposed section is not extensive and robbing has taken place, two possible constructional phases may be evident. At the centre of the wall a double line of more massive stones, all heavily weathered and apparently unworked, appears to represent the initial phase. All stand on edge so as to abut and overlap each other and the two lines are closely set, forming a barrier 1.4m wide overall. The largest of these stones measures 2.0m long by 1.4m high and 0.5m thick. In the second phase, this central structure appears to have been widened by the addition on each side of a 'facade' of much smaller quarried (ie roughly squared and unweathered) stones up to 0.4m square. Only the lowest course survives intact, but the facades would have

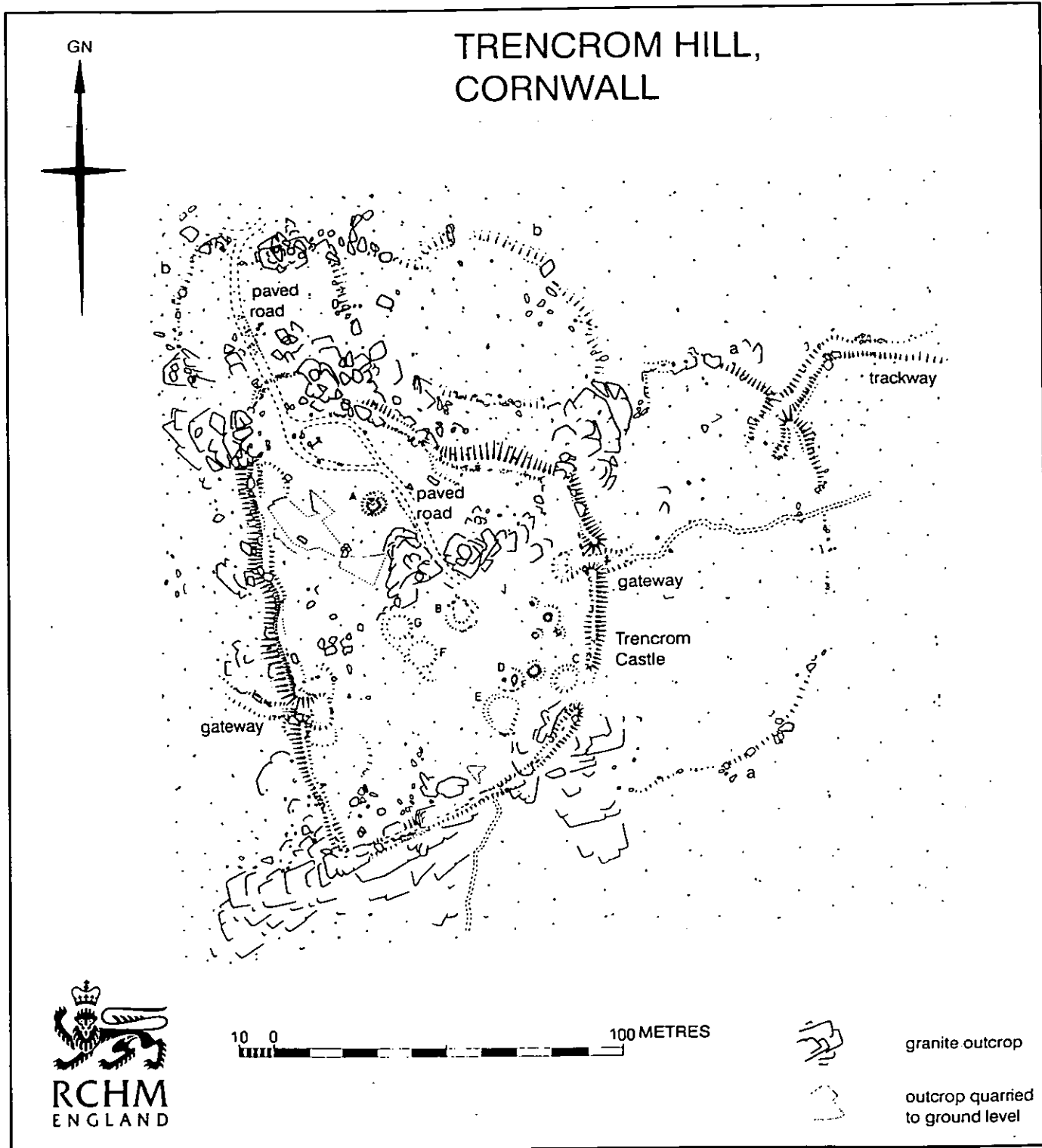


Figure 3: RCHME earthwork plan surveyed at 1:1000 scale

enlarged the wall to an average width of 3.0m. The interval between the larger central stones and the surviving course of stone walling is filled with soil and fist-sized stones. It is unclear whether these two markedly different techniques represent roughly contemporary stages in the construction of a single wall, or whether they result from two different phases more widely separated in time.

The gateways are very similar to each other in form and are both extremely well-preserved, with orthostats and post stones surviving. The terminals of the rampart on either side are bulbous, but are not strictly in-turned as suggested by Weatherhill (1981, 57-8). The western entrance lies 40m north of the south-western corner, giving access into the southern half of the enclosure, and the eastern one midway along the eastern side, not directly opposite but some 30m further north. The surviving orthostats suggest that the width of the cuttings through the rampart would originally have been c.3m. 'Gatepost' or 'door-jamb' stones up to 1.6m high stand at the inner end of the cutting, suggesting a gate at the outer end. The cuttings and the scoops immediately inside the rampart seem to have been at least partly deliberately created, as well as being eroded by use. Hollowed trackways extend down the hillside from the western gateway for at least 20m, and from the eastern gateway for 10m. The deliberate blocking of the eastern gateway suggested by the Ordnance Survey in 1961 (NMR a) is not convincing and may simply result from the tumbling of stones from the rampart.

At the northern end of the enclosure, the rampart links two large granite outcrops some 20m apart. A break midway along this section has been alleged to be an original entrance (Ordnance Survey 1878; Henderson c.1917), but seems very likely to have been a later breach resulting from the creation of the paved road, which probably gave access to the quarries (see below). As noted by the Ordnance Survey in 1961 (NMR a), a scarp crossing the track on the line of the rampart may be a remnant of the original earthwork. To the east of the track, a massive boulder 2.2m long by 1.4m wide and up to 0.5m thick was described by Henderson as a 'gatepost', and the natural solution hollows in its outer face erroneously described as artificial 'rock basins'. In fact, it is possible that this stone and one or two of those adjacent to it were erected at a much later date, since the easternmost of the alignment stands under an overhang apparently created by relatively recent quarrying.

An interruption near the south-eastern corner of the enclosure, alleged to be an original southern entrance by Henderson, almost certainly results from heavy robbing activity.

On the eastern side of Trencrom Hill, an outer enclosure (a), first identified by Henderson, describes an approximate semi-circle 120m in diameter. The feature is most substantial on either side of a hollowed trackway, which passes through the north-eastern side of the earthwork. At this point, it is formed by a scarp up to 0.8m high surmounted by minimal remnants of a bank, retained by several possible orthostats, but elsewhere it survives only as a slight and intermittent scarp. The earthwork runs between two major outcrops which are incorporated into the main enclosure, but is dis-similar in that elsewhere it does not deviate dramatically in order to incorporate smaller outcrops.

The hollowed trackway enters enclosure a from the north-east and appears to be contemporary with it. It is generally 6.0m wide and 1.2m deep and extends for 15m into the interior and 60m outside the enclosure earthwork, making an angle change to the east midway along its length. Water erosion appears to have contributed significantly to its depth and irregular profile.

Around the northern side of the hill, RCHME identified a second possible enclosure (b). Although Henderson's plan suggested some form of earthwork at this point, it does not appear to be a continuation of enclosure a as he suggested, but if anything another sub-rectangular annexe to the main enclosure. Although the appearance of the more convincing parts of the earthwork is similar to that of enclosure a, it is possible that the feature is partly or entirely geological, its more regular sections resulting from the natural linear fracturing in the underlying granite. Two scarps within enclosure a, one of which extends parallel to the north-eastern side of Trencrom Castle, appear to be sub-divisions of the area, but are also possibly of natural origin.

Henderson identified three isolated 'standing stones' around the eastern side of the hilltop. These were investigated by RCHME, but two were considered to be of probable natural origin, while one appears to have assumed its almost upright position having been dislodged by quarrying.

#### Hut circles

Henderson positively identified a total of fifteen hut circles and suggested the possibility of at least eight more. Of these, some are demonstrably not structures at all: for example, the stones of one of the pair of huts he depicted towards the northern end of the enclosure have been split by drilling and only thus has a roughly circular shape been produced. The evidence for many of the others is at best very tenuous. The most convincing prehistoric structures are the seven hut circles identified by the Ordnance Survey Archaeology Division in 1961 (NMR a), of which only the most doubtful example lies in the northern part of the enclosure.

The hut circles in the southern part of the enclosure lie around the fringes of the area of close cropped turf, which appears to have been created by the deliberate clearance of the clutter. The Ordnance Survey references have been used on Figure 4, while Henderson's numbering is given in brackets.

#### Hut circle A, (un-numbered by Henderson but portrayed on Figure 2, bottom right)

This was depicted on the Ordnance Survey First Edition (1878), but is far more irregular than Henderson's plan would suggest, and is in fact the most dubious of the seven hut circles, as noted in 1961 by the Ordnance Survey Archaeology Division (NMR a). It is formed by an annular bank 6.5m in overall diameter and up to 0.5m high with several large stones set upright at various angles around it. The bank surrounds a central depression, which is somewhat rectangular, with a maximum depth of 1.3m. Two of the stones within this pit which Henderson's plan describes as 'originally upright', appear to be natural stones embedded in the earth and still *in situ*; the earthwork as a whole has a 'fresh' appearance,

and even if prehistoric in origin has certainly been severely modified by more recent activity.  
**Hut circle B (Henderson's number 1)**

This was the second circle depicted on the Ordnance Survey First Edition (1878), and presumably one of those commented on by Borlase, since it is by far the best-preserved and most convincing of the seven, as noted by both Henderson and the Ordnance Survey in 1961 (NMR a). An annular bank 8.0m in overall diameter and up to 0.3m high retains several stones set on edge which would originally have formed a double wall; more lie flat having fallen from their original positions. The entrance may have been on the north-north-east as suggested by Henderson's plan (nb described in error in his text as north-north-west).

**Hut circle C (? Henderson's 12)**

An oval depression 6.5m in diameter, with minimal traces of a bank around part of the northern side; there are no associated stones.

**Hut circle D (Henderson's 11)**

A circle c.7m in overall diameter, defined by a slight scarp on its eastern side and a number of stones on the southern and western sides, of which two appear to be *in situ* set on edge. The centre of the hut circle has been disturbed by two small but steep-sided stone extraction pits, which are probably those referred to by Dorothy Dudley in 1949 (Dudley unpublished 1949).

**Hut circle E (? Henderson's 10)**

Slight traces of an annular bank 9.5m in overall diameter, backing onto a slope at the foot of one of the granite outcrops.

**Hut circles F and G (Henderson's 3 and 2)**

A pair of circular platforms 8.0m in diameter, scooped into the western slope of the hilltop, and embanked by a single terrace downhill.

#### **Stone quarrying**

Both Borlase and Henderson comment on the granite quarrying and robbing which has taken place on Trencrom Hill; however, it is likely that it continued long after Borlase's visit, and that much of the evidence was unrecognised by Henderson. It is probable that large numbers of the portable stones available in the enclosure walls have been removed. A few instances of the use of wedges to split stones were observed in the course of the RCHME survey. The weathered condition of the wedge marks suggests that this quarrying is of considerable antiquity. Drill holes, of Post-Medieval date, are present all across the hill, both on isolated smaller stones and more intensively on the larger outcrops. The greatest concentrations of activity appear to have been around the two northern outcrops, the three southern carns and the central ridge. The western end of the ridge is now levelled to the ground, but may originally have stood to a height of several metres, if similar to the central section. A double row of drill holes in the exposed surface at ground level suggests that it was intended to continue this quarrying.

The paved road, regarded by Henderson as a remarkably preserved Neolithic feature, is almost certainly associated with the most intensive period of quarrying. The road inclines gently and was probably intended to allow cart access to the working areas. In two places it is revetted on the downhill side by alignments of stones, one of which has been split by drilling. As mentioned above, the northern 'entrance' was probably created for the track and further modifications to that section of the rampart are suggested by the fact that the eastern end of the 'wall' stands under an overhang apparently created by relatively recent quarrying. Furthermore, the large stone covered with 'rock basins' is anomalous both in its appearance and setting and is probably a slab of poor quality removed from the top of one of the outcrops prior to quarrying, and re-erected on the line of the earlier wall. Likewise, the breach through the central granite ridge, which Henderson believed to be a deliberately constricted entrance into the higher end of the enclosure, is almost certainly contemporary with the later quarrying. Since drill holes are clearly evident on both sides of the passage, and it is difficult to believe that these could have entirely escaped Henderson's attention, it is possible that further quarrying took place after 1917.

There are a large number of stone extraction pits scattered around the hilltop, only the largest of which have been depicted on the RCHME plan. As mentioned above, it is probable that this is at least partly responsible for the appearance of hut A, while the 'modern excavations' or 'wells' referred to by Henderson in the vicinity of huts C and D are also extraction pits.

#### 4. INTERPRETATION AND DISCUSSION

Given the apparent discrepancy between the morphology of Trencrom Castle and the few artefacts found within it, the question of its date is unlikely to be resolved without excavation. There is evidence to support both the Neolithic and Iron age hypotheses, and it seems likely that the enclosure may have originated in the earlier period and been re-fashioned in later prehistory, without necessarily implying any continuity of use through the Bronze Age.

On one hand, there is good evidence for Iron Age activity on the site. The pottery and most other artefacts recovered from the interior point to a late Iron Age date in the second half of the first century BC. In addition, several aspects of the form of the enclosure are consistent with a later prehistoric date. The well-preserved coursed walling which survives exceptionally well on the western side of the enclosure, and the lower course of the 'facade' exposed near the south-western corner, would be exceptional amongst the Neolithic enclosures of south-west England. However, this construction technique is similar to the stone-built ramparts at many late Iron Age forts, such as nearby Castle-an-Dinas (SW 954 624). The form of the gateways is also closely comparable to later prehistoric entrances and at odds with the form of those known to date to the Neolithic period. Although the assumption that circular structures can all be assigned to the Bronze Age or Iron Age is increasingly insecure, the form of the best-preserved hut circles in the southern part of the enclosure is very similar to those associated with later prehistoric settlements throughout the south-west, for example those of Bronze Age date excavated at Trethellan Farm, Newquay (Nowakowski 1991), or of Iron Age date at Bodrifty, near Penzance (SW 485 350) (Dudley 1957).

On the other hand, there is some evidence to support the identification of Trencrom Castle as a Neolithic enclosure. The struck flints found within the enclosure may be of Neolithic date (though possibly later prehistoric), and a number of axes in the immediate vicinity (see Figure 1) indicate Neolithic activity in the area. However, given the high background of Neolithic material in the Cornish peninsular, this can only be regarded as circumstantial evidence.

More importantly, there are several morphological similarities between Trencrom Castle and the small group of enclosures in the South-West known and supposed to be of Neolithic date, which includes Carn Brea, Carn Galver, Whittor, The Dewerstone, Stowe's Pound, Rough Tor, Berry Down and Helman Tor. The single constant diagnostic feature of this group is 'abnormality' when compared to the majority of later prehistoric enclosures; a variable combination of a range of characteristics such as higher altitude and a defensible location, double walls, multiple entrances, and the incorporation of natural features is usually present. Trencrom Castle fulfils several of these criteria.

The situation and altitude of Trencrom Hill (180m OD) are comparable with other upland sites of potentially Neolithic date, which range from 210m above OD (Carn Brea) to 390m

(Roughtor). However, it should be noted that Chûn Castle Iron Age fort stands at 210m above OD, so that altitude cannot be regarded as a diagnostic characteristic. Even if Trencrom Castle is of Neolithic origin, Mercer has pointed out that similar altitude does not necessarily imply any common function (Mercer 1986, 51-53).

The existence of multiple entrances is regarded as a common characteristic of the group of potential Neolithic enclosures, but given that most of the Neolithic circuit may have been re-used in the Iron Age, it is unsurprising that only two entrances, both of probable Iron Age date, can be identified at Trencrom Castle.

The inclusion of large and small natural granite outcrops in the circuit of Trencrom Castle is the most obvious similarity with the group of sites termed 'tor enclosures' by Silvester (1979, 188). Although the distribution of outcrops on the hilltop makes such a technique logical and perhaps even unavoidable, the irregular plan of the enclosure and the fact that the rampart does not follow the natural contours, seem to reflect a deliberate intention to link all the exposures and to define an area around the central ridge. The acute angle formed by the utilisation of the outcrop in the south-western corner of the enclosure is particularly striking. The central ridge may have been the most impressive outcrop prior to post-medieval quarrying, and Sharpe (1992) has discussed the symbolic importance in the Neolithic period of such conspicuous landmarks. He has argued that in the early prehistoric period a range of natural features appear to have been artificially emphasised, perhaps due to their role as visual referents for the local community and 'signposts' for those moving through the landscape. Tilley has made similar observations concerning the comparably sited and constructed Neolithic enclosure at Clegyr Boia in South-West Wales (Tilley 1994, 87-90). It may be significant that Trencrom Hill is intervisible with Carn Brea; elsewhere in England visibility and intervisibility have for some years been regarded as an important factors in the siting of Neolithic enclosures (Drewett, Rudling and Gardiner 1988; Tilley 1994).

By contrast with the irregular plan of Trencrom Castle, many Iron Age forts in Cornwall, such as Castle-an-Dinas, Chûn Castle (SW 405 339), Caer Brân (SX 408 290) and Castle Dore (SX 103 548), seem to favour regular, usually near-circular plans, more or less following the natural contours. The fact that none of these sites has any natural rock outcrops is clearly linked to the regularity of their plans; consequently, it is debateable whether Trencrom Castle's plan represents an adaption to the natural environment or a deliberate choice to re-use an existing earthwork. A number of 'cliff castles', such as Treryn Dinas (SW 397 221) and Maen Castle (SW 348 258), which have been widely considered to be of Iron Age date, exhibit more irregular plans and a concern to incorporate and enclose natural granite outcrops. On the basis of these and other morphological similarities, the possibility of a Neolithic origin for this class of monument has been suggested (Sharpe 1992).

The exposed section of walling near the south-western corner of the enclosure perhaps provides the best evidence available at present for phasing in the construction of the enclosure. The two different walling techniques apparent may be more or less contemporary, but it seems more likely that they belong to episodes widely separated in



time. The coursed walling, as noted above is comparable to a number of Iron Age forts, but the inner wall of larger, unworked stones set on edge is most closely paralleled by Mercer's 'Type 1' rampart at Carn Brea, where orthostatic facing stones up to 2.5 tons were used intermittently torevet both front and rear of the wall (Mercer 1981, 89-90). The possible Neolithic enclosures at De Lank (SX 101 753; NMR b) and Stowe's Pound (Fletcher 1989), also have facing orthostats between 0.5m and 1.7m high. At Carn Brea, Mercer estimates that the best preserved section of wall, which has an average width of 2.0m, may have stood 2.0m high (Mercer 1981, 48). However, at Trencrom Hill, the narrow width of the best-preserved section of walling suggests that they could not have stood very high, and may never even have formed walls as such. They may however have held timber uprights. It remains uncertain whether or not such barriers would have had a defensive role, even though the natural topography makes the site potentially defensible (Silvester 1979, 188; Mercer 1981, 56). It may be significant that visibility within the enclosure is severely limited by the natural topography (and must have been more so prior to the levelling of large parts of the outcrops); in this respect many of the 'tor enclosures' are comparable, perhaps indicating that defence was not an important concern in their siting. In summary, the available evidence is insufficient to allow certainty, but suggests that Trencrom Castle may be of Neolithic origin, and was almost certainly re-used in the late Iron Age.

Of the two or three possible sections of earthwork on the eastern and northern sides of Trencrom Hill, enclosure a is most regular in plan and most convincing in form. The possible earthwork b and some of the shorter sections on the northern side of the hill are comparable in plan, though not in construction technique, to the outer enclosures at Whittor (SX 542 786) and Stowe's Pound (Fletcher 1989), which may date to the Neolithic period. However, these sections are so fragmentary, and so overgrown, that they cannot even be identified as artificial with certainty. Enclosure a appears closely comparable to what Fox termed 'annexed enclosures' (Fox 1961, 40-3). These are frequently semi-circular and usually sited on the easiest approach towards the main enclosure (the eastern side of Trencrom Hill being its most gentle slope). Fox suggested that annexed enclosures are, as the term implies, later additions to the original enclosure and are mostly of later Iron Age date. Stowe's Pound, on Bodmin Moor (Fletcher 1989) is also similar to enclosure a in being entered by an abraded trackway.

#### Stone quarrying

As noted in Section 3, the weathered condition of the few wedge split-marks on Trencrom Hill indicates that surface stone quarrying took place over a long period, and it is important that Borlase commented on the delapidated condition of the enclosure as early as 1750. It is also evident that there was at least one particularly intensive phase in the Post-Medieval period. This is evidenced by the numerous drill holes visible all over the hilltop, and the complete removal of parts of the larger outcrops. The paved road, which is almost certainly contemporary with this activity, and the almost industrial scale of the drilling in some places, suggests a relatively recent date. The fact that Borlase does not comment on the existence of the track almost certainly confirms that this most intensive phase of quarrying dates to later than 1750.

---

## 5. SURVEY AND RESEARCH METHODS

The archaeological survey was carried out by Alastair Oswald from RCHME's Cambridge office and Iain Sainsbury from the Exeter office. Control points, major rock outcrops and hard detail were surveyed using a Wild TC1610 Electronic Theodolite with integral EDM. Data was captured on a Wild GRM 10 Rec Module and plotted via computer on a Calcomp 3024 plotter. The details of the plan were supplied at 1:1000 scale with Fibron tapes using normal graphical methods. The report was researched and written by Alastair Oswald and edited by Martin Fletcher.

The site archive has been deposited in the National Monuments Record, Kemble Drive, Swindon SN2 2GZ (SW 53 NW 18).

Crown copyright: Royal Commission on the Historical Monuments of England.

## 6. BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Anon 1882 *Penzance Natural History and Antiquarian Society* (New Series) 1 (1880-4), 198-9
- Borlase W n.d. (c.1750) Parochial Memororandums of Cornwall (original held in British Museum Mss Add 2657, microfilm copy in the Royal Institution of Cornwall ADD 1)
- 1754 *Observations on the Antiquities of the County of Cornwall*, Oxford
- Cornwall CRO a 1839 Tithe map and apportionment 'Plan of the Parish of Uny Lelant' ref: IR30/6/20/sub 1
- b 1853 'Plan of Uny Lelant, Mining District, Cornwall' (No. 6 of series), published by R Symons & son ref: DD.WH 6623; 6624
- Cotton A 1958 'Observations on the classification of hillforts in Southern England' in Frere SS (ed) *Problems of the Iron Age in Southern Britain* London, Institute of Archaeology Occasional Paper 11, 61-8
- Drewett PL 1994 'Dr V. Seton-Williams' excavations at Combe Hill, 1962, and the role of Neolithic causewayed enclosures in Sussex' in *Sussex Archaeological Collections* 132, 7-24
- Drewett PL, Rudling D & Gardiner M 1988 *The South-East to AD 1000* London, Longman
- Dudley D 1949 Unpublished manuscript 'Daybook', held by the Royal Institution of Cornwall
- 1953 'Hillslope forts and related earthworks in south-west England and south Wales' *Archaeological Journal* 109 (1952), 1-22
- 1957 'An Excavation at Bodrifty, Mulfra Hill, near Penzance, Cornwall' *Archaeological Journal* 113 (1956), 1-32
- 1961 'South-Western hillforts' in Frere SS (ed) *Problems of the Iron Age in Southern Britain* London, Institute of Archaeology Occasional Paper 11, 35-60
- Fletcher M 1989 'Stowe's Pound' in Bowden M et al. eds *From Cornwall to Caithness* Oxford, BAR (British Series) 209
- Fox, A 1955 'Celtic fields and farms on Dartmoor, in the light of recent excavations at Kestor' *Proceedings of the Prehistoric Society* 20 (1954), 87-102
- 1973 *South-West England 3,500BC - AD600* Newton Abbot, David & Charles
- Hencken HON 1932 *The Archaeology of Cornwall and Scilly*, London, Methuen
- Henderson C 1914-17 unpublished manuscript 'Antiquities of Cornwall' held in Royal Institution of Cornwall



- Hogg AHA 1975 *Hillforts of Britain* London; Hart-Davis, MacGibbon
- Johnson N & Rose P 1994 *Bodmin Moor: an Archaeological Survey (Volume 1): the human landscape to c.1800* London, English Heritage and RCHME
- Mercer RJ 1981 'Excavations at Carn Brea, Illogan, Cornwall 1970-3' *Cornish Archaeology* 20, 1-204
- 1986 'The Neolithic in Cornwall' *Cornish Archaeology* 25, 35-80
- NMR (a) Ordnance Survey record card for NMR ref. SW 53 NW 18
- (b) Wilson-North R 1992 'De Lank: an Enclosure of Possible Neolithic Origin' RCHME Field Investigation NMR ref: SX 17 NW 95
- Nowakowski JA 1991 'Trethellan Farm, Newquay: the excavation of a Bronze Age settlement and Iron Age cemetery' *Cornish Archaeology* 30, 5-242
- Ordnance Survey
- 1878 First Edition 25-inch sheet LXVIII.8 surveyed 1875-6
- 1908 Second Edition 25-inch sheet LXVIII.8 revised 1906
- Raleigh-Radford CA 1953 'The Dumnonii' in *Journal of the Royal Institution of Cornwall* (new series) 2 (1953-6) Part I, 17
- Royal Cornwall Museum Box no.102
- Russell R 1971 *West Penwith Survey* Cornwall Archaeological Society Parochial Checklist Survey, Truro
- Sharpe A 1992 'Treryn Dinas: cliff castles reconsidered' *Cornish Archaeology* 31, 65-8
- Silvester RJ 1979 'The Relationship of First Millennium Settlement to the Upland Areas of the South-West' in *Transactions of the Devon Archaeological Association* (2nd series) 37, 176-90
- Tilley C 1994 *A Phenomenology of Landscape: Places, Paths and Monuments* Oxford, Berg
- Todd M 1987 *A Regional History of England: the South-West to AD 1000* Longman
- Weatherhill C 1981 *Belerion: Ancient Sites of Land's End* Penzance, Alison Hodge