

METRIC SURVEY OF WINTERSHEAD
Exmoor Mires Project

PROJECT REPORT

By Hazel Riley



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OASIS PROJECT NO: 133203

EXMOOR MIRES PROJECT CODE: EDPI2

ABBREVIATIONS

EH English Heritage

EMP Exmoor Mires Project

ENPA Exmoor National Park Authority

GPS Global Positioning System

NMP National Mapping Programme

NMR National Monuments Record

OSGB36 Ordnance Survey National Grid

OSTN02 Ordnance Survey transformation parameters for conversion of WGS84 coordinates to the Ordnance Survey National Grid coordinates

RCHME Royal Commission on the Historical Monuments of England

RICS Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors

LIST OF FIGURES AND IMAGE ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Front cover Wintershead from the west. The ranging pole (left) marks the prehistoric burial mound (Hazel Riley)

Figure 1 Location map

Figure 2 Earthwork and topographic survey reproduced at 1:1000 scale (A3 plan page 8)

Figure 3 Earthwork plan of the prehistoric burial mound

EDP12 100 Prehistoric burial mound from W (Hazel Riley)

EDP12 101 Trial trench (Hazel Riley)

EDP12 102 Prospecting pit (Hazel Riley)

EDP12 103 Linear feature of uncertain date and function (Hazel Riley)

EDP12 104 Small area of peat cutting on east edge of survey area (Hazel Riley)

EDP12 105 Drainage channel (Hazel Riley)

EDP12 106 Early 19th-century ditch and bank marking south corner of survey area (Hazel Riley)

EDP12 107 Erosion around track near the prehistoric burial mound (Hazel Riley)

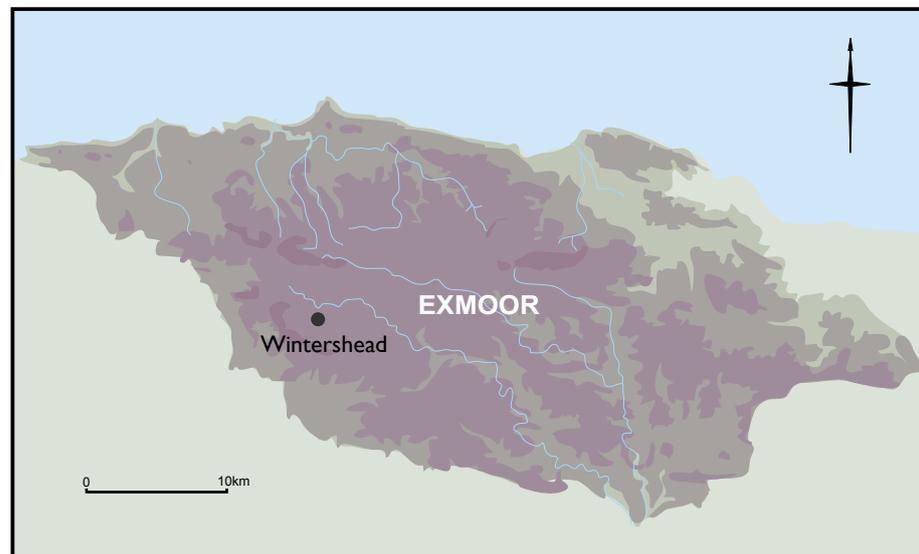
INTRODUCTION

This survey of Wintershead was undertaken for the Exmoor Mires Project on behalf of the Exmoor National Park Authority, following the discovery of a probable prehistoric burial mound close to an area of erosion where prehistoric worked flint has been recovered. The aims of the survey were twofold: to identify, locate, record and interpret extant archaeological features, and to record the topography of the area.

Location and topography

The survey area lies on the SW edge of a large block of enclosed land known as 'Deer Park', at SS 766 373, within the parish of Exmoor Forest and the Exmoor National Park (Fig 1). The ground slopes south from a ridge at over 440m OD down to a small tributary stream of Kinsford Water at 425m OD. A large mire has developed around the headwaters of the stream. The vegetation of the area is dominated by reeds and *Mollinia*. The underlying geology consists of Morte Slates of the Devonian period (www.bgs.ac.uk).

Fig 1 Location map



Numbering of the sites

Each archaeological feature has been given a unique number with the prefix EDPI2, the EMP site code, and these numbers are used throughout this report (numbers EDPI2 100-107). In the Site Gazetteer entries, where appropriate, the sites are cross-referenced with the EH NMR numbers and the EMP walkover survey numbers.

PREVIOUS WORK

The RCHME carried out archaeological fieldwork across the area in the early 1990s (Riley and Wilson-North 2001; EH NMR records); the NMP project for Exmoor mapped the archaeological and historic landscape features of the whole of the National Park from air photographs (Hegarty and Toms 2009); the area was included in a walkover survey in advance of EMP mire restoration work.

THE SURVEY

The fieldwork was carried out during August 2012. All of the features recorded in the EH NMR and in the Mire walkover survey were located, photographed and recorded. Prospection for new sites was undertaken. New sites were recorded in the same way. These detailed descriptions and photographs make up the Site Gazetteer. Topographic detail and all of the extant archaeological features were surveyed at a scale of 1:500 using survey grade differential GPS. A detailed earthwork survey of the probable prehistoric burial mound was undertaken at a scale of 1:100. A contour survey was carried out based on points recorded at 5m intervals across the survey area. The area of the mire could not be surveyed due to ground conditions, but its edge was recorded.

The GPS-derived geodetic WGS84 coordinates were transformed to the Ordnance Survey National Grid (OSGB36) using the Ordnance Survey's grid transformation (OSTN02) in Leica's GPS post-processing software. Observation times were based on those recommended by the OS and the RICS in order to obtain accurate heighting information (OS 2010; RICS 2010). Figure 2 reproduces the survey plan at 1:1000 scale and shows the surveyed features with their site numbers.

LANDSCAPE CONTEXT

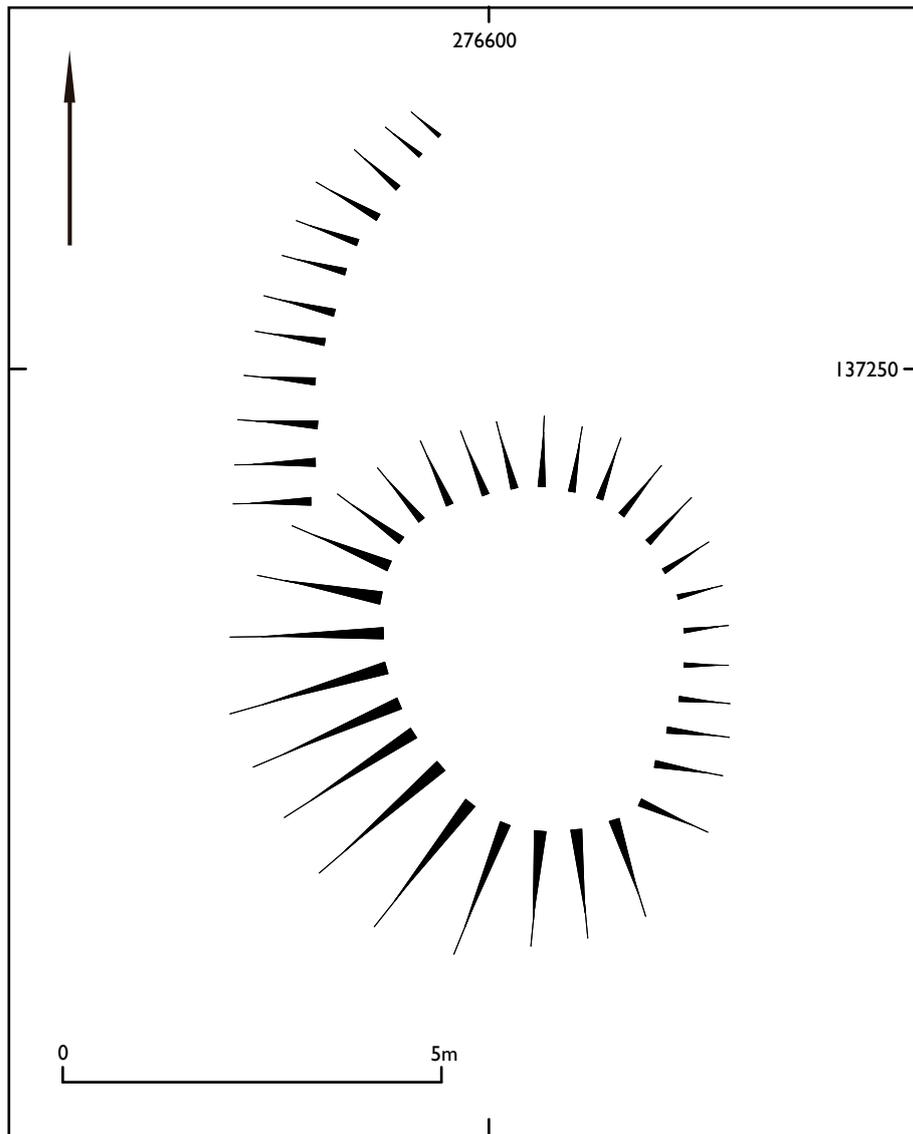
Several prehistoric cairns and barrows lie in the environs of Wintershead: on the NW of Deer Park, SW of Blue Gate, on Two Barrows and on Long Holcombe, and a prehistoric stone setting lies to the east on Horsen (EH NMR SS 73 NE 11). A worked flint, identified as a Neolithic flint implement, was found in July 1919 'on Wintershead Farm, south of Simonsbath'. It is described as:

'A well-patinated flake 3" in length of triangular cross-section, with dorsal ridge; secondary chipping along one edge'
Proc Som Arch Nat Hist Soc 1919, lx

The morphology of the mound EDPI2 100, together with its location by the spring head indicate that it is a small prehistoric burial mound, this is supported by the distribution of prehistoric sites in the environs of Wintershead (Fig 3).

Given the prehistoric associations of the area, the linear feature, EDPI2 103, should be also be considered as a potential prehistoric site. Although it is most likely to be of more recent date (Site Gazetteer EDPI2 103), the morphology and size of the feature indicate it could have similarities with sites often recorded as crop marks and classified as 'oblong ditches' (Loveday and Petchey 1982, fig 32). These sites are generally considered as Neolithic in date and to be long mortuary enclosures (Loveday and Petchey 1982) or cursus-related enclosures (Jones 1998). The location of the feature at Wintershead, close to the spring head, concurs with the association of cursus monuments with watercourses noted by Bradley (2007, 67-8). Oblong ditches have recently been recorded as cropmark sites in mid-Devon at North Tawton, south of Exmoor (Griffith 1985).

Fig 3 Earthwork plan of the prehistoric burial mound



Deer Park was enclosed in the early 19th century following the sale of the former Royal Forest to John Knight. Its name is derived from the large deer park which John Knight enclosed and stocked with fallow deer (Orwin 1929, 31). His son, Frederic, prospected for ironstone across his Exmoor estate and an iron mine was worked on the SW edge of Deer Park, close to Blue Gate in the 1850s (Orwin 1929, 121, 135).

The earthwork remains of surface features associated with this 19th-century mining are evident on Deer Park by Blue Gate (EH NMR SS 73 NE 23); to the east of the site at Wintershead, earthworks have been interpreted as 19th-century prospecting trenches together with surface workings which may pre-date Frederic Knight's explorations (EH NMR SS 73 NE 20) (Burton 1989, 143). The trench and pit (EDP12 101, 102) are most likely to be the result of the mid 19th-century prospecting for ironstone. Extensive areas of peat cutting occur across Deer Park; these probably date from the post-medieval period (EH NMR SS 73 NE 135). Small areas of peat cutting have been recorded in the survey area (EDP12 104).

SITE GAZETTEER

EDPI2 100 Location: 276600, 137246 Type: BARROW Period: BRONZE AGE



Description and interpretation:

A small circular mound lies on the SW edge of a mire which has developed around a tributary stream of Kinsford Water. It measures 7m NS, 6.6m EW and is a maximum of 0.75m high. There is no sign of a ditch and the mound is composed primarily of earth and turf. A small scarp, 5.5m long and 0.5m high lies on the SW edge of the mound. The mound could be associated with post medieval activity in the area, such as peat

extraction or mineral prospection, but its uniformity, size and location by the spring head suggest that it is most likely to be a prehistoric burial mound.

References: PHOTO EDPI2 100

EDPI2 101 Location: 276571, 137239 Type: EXTRACTIVE PIT Period: POST MEDIEVAL



Description and interpretation:

A linear hollow with associated mound on its west edge lies between the track and the mire, close to the gate, at Wintershead. The hollow is 8m NE/SW, 2m NW/SE and 0.5m deep. The mound is 6m NE/SW, 2m NW/SE and 0.5m high. The feature could be associated with draining the gateway and access track but is most likely to be a small trial trench, prospecting for ironstone, dating from the mid 19th-century.

References: PHOTO EDPI2 101

EDPI2 102 Location: 276578, 137224 Type: EXTRACTIVE PIT Period: POST MEDIEVAL



Description and interpretation:

A reed-filled circular hollow, 1.8m diameter, 0.7m deep, with a mound on its west side, 1.7m long, 1m wide and 0.6m high, is probably a mid 19th-century prospecting pit for ironstone.

References: PHOTO EDPI2 102

EDPI2 103 Location: 276646, 137307 to 276737, 137325 Type: LINEAR FEATURE
Period: UNCERTAIN

Description and interpretation:

A linear feature runs W/E across the east side of the study area. It is defined by two rather indistinct but substantial scarps, marking a hollow, 95m W/E and 17m N/S. The scarp on the south side is the better defined and is 1m high; the north side is defined by a scarp 0.5m high at the east end of the feature.

The feature is defined by a single scarp on the south at its west end. The area around the middle of the feature has been disturbed by peat cutting. This feature is difficult to interpret by the earthwork evidence only. It could be an access track to the areas of peat cutting to the north and east on Deer Park, but as it leads into the spring head mire this is unlikely. It is more likely to mark an area of uncut peat between two areas which have been worked over. The feature has also been recognised by the geophysical survey of the area, which interpreted anomalies over the west end of the feature as probable geological features (Carey and Ventre 2012). Its form may suggest a prehistoric date and consideration should be given to an interpretation as related to the class of monument identified as Neolithic long mortuary or cursus-related enclosures.

References: PHOTO EDPI2 103



EDPI2 104 Location: 276655, 137224 Type: PEAT CUTTING Period: POST MEDIEVAL

Description and interpretation:

The survey area lies on the edge of an extensive area of peat cutting on Deer Park, recorded from air photographs as part of the NMP for Exmoor (EH NMR SS 73 NE 135). There is evidence of shallow peat cutting across the east edge of the survey area. Two small, well-defined areas lie at 276694, 137285 (20m N/S, 3m E/W and 0.3m deep) and 276655, 137224 (10m N/S, 3m EW and 0.3m deep). On the west edge of the hollow is a slight, amorphous mound, 2.5m N/S, 2m E/W and 0.25m high.

References: PHOTO EDPI2 104



EDPI2 105 Location: 276571, 137239 Type: DRAIN Period: POST MEDIEVAL



Description and interpretation:

A linear hollow on the west side of the spring head, close to the gate, is 15m E/W, 2m N/S and 0.8m deep. It is a recent drainage ditch.

References: PHOTO EDPI2 105

EDPI2 106 Location: 276635, 137200 to 276604, 137172 and 276570, 137193 to 276569, 137149 Type: DITCH Period: POST MEDIEVAL



Description and interpretation:

Ditches lie along the enclosure banks in the south corner of the survey area. They are 40m long, 2m wide and 0.7m deep. The ditches are part of the early 19th-century enclosure of Deer Park by John Knight.

References: PHOTO EDPI2 106

EDPI2 107 Location: 276572, 137230 to 276640, 137278 and 276572, 137230 to 276619, 137209 Type: TRACKWAY Period: POST MEDIEVAL



Description and interpretation:

The survey area is crossed by two main tracks. One runs for 90m SW/NE, the other runs for 80m NW/SE. The remains of smaller tracks lie to the NE. These now provide vehicle and horse access to Deer Park. Prehistoric flint flakes and implements have been found in the erosion associated with the tracks.

References: PHOTO EDPI2 107

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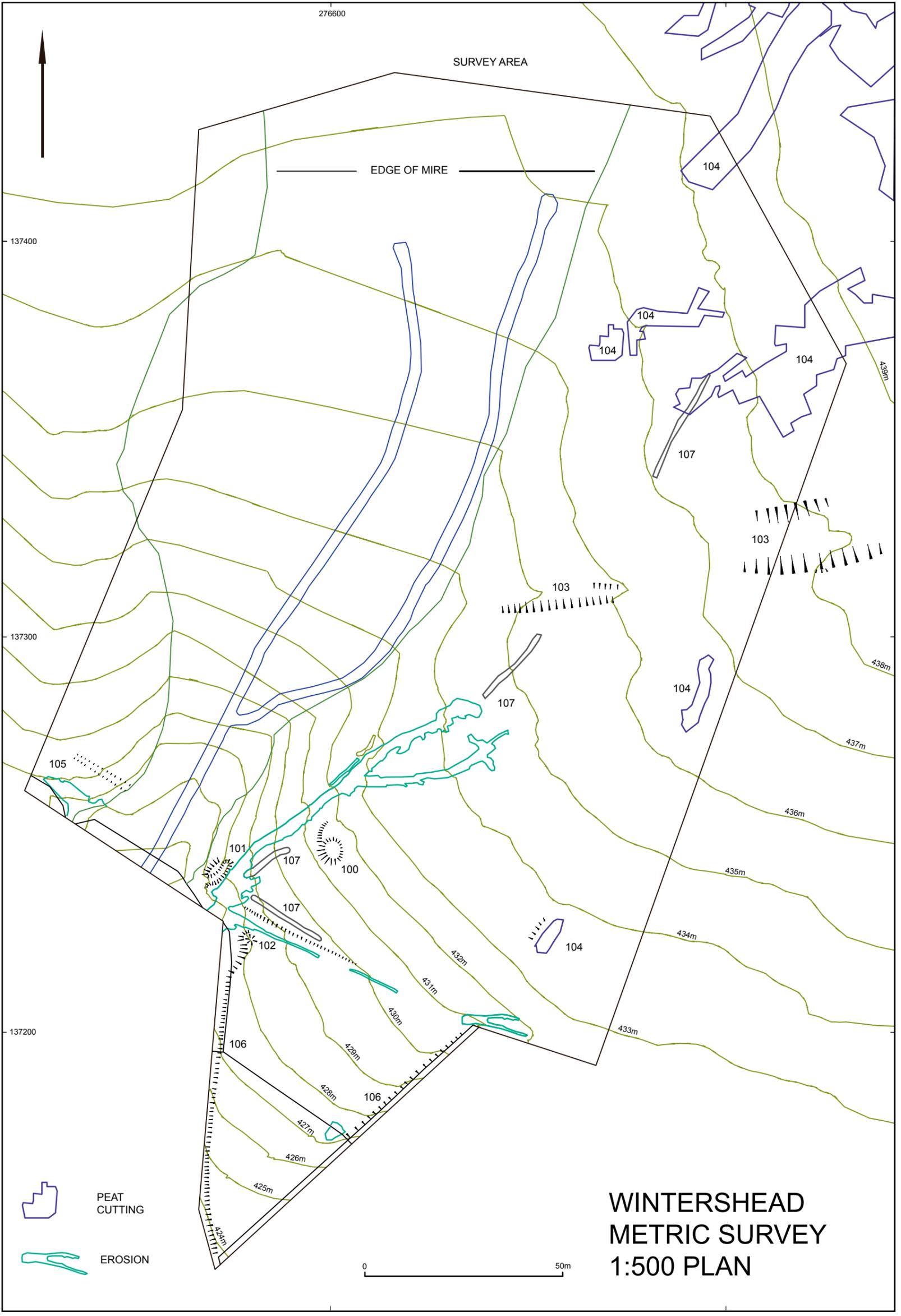


Fig 2 Earthwork and topographic survey reproduced at 1:1 000 scale

