

Trevelgue Head, Newquay, Cornwall

Erection of Interpretation Boards and Education Day



Historic Environment Service (Projects)

Cornwall County Council

A Report for the Scheduled Monument
Management Programme 2005-2007

Trevelgue Head, Newquay, Cornwall

Erection of Interpretation Boards and Education Day

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The interpretation boards were designed by Dave Taylor of Cornwall County Council's Technical Services team, based on material supplied by the Historic Environment Service. The reconstruction painting of the site was produced by Rosemary Robertson and the historic photographs were supplied by the Royal Institution of Cornwall.

We would like to thank Jane Marley, Suhashini Sinha, Jane Richardson and Susanna Webster from the Royal Cornwall Museum for their assistance on the Education Day; Linnea Glynne-Rule, Bill Robinson and Jacqui Wood for the display of Iron Age cooking techniques during the Education Day; Gerry Brain from SERCO and John Penfold, Brian Osborne and Malcolm Rowe from Restormel Borough Council for the erection of the interpretation boards; Colin Ransley, Debbie Osborne and other staff from Restormel Borough Council for sorting out the necessary permissions for the Education Day to go ahead and helping to promote the event and local Restormel councillors Harry Heywood, Patrick Lamshead and Gary Redmond for also helping to publicise the event.

Cover illustration

Suhashini Sinha (Royal Cornwall Museum) showing artefacts to Harry Heywood (local councillor and Deputy Leader of Restormel Borough Council) and his wife Pam.

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Abbreviations

- HER Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly Historic Environment Record
- HES Historic Environment Service, Cornwall County Council
- NGR National Grid Reference
- PRN Primary Record Number in Cornwall HER

1 Introduction

Trevelgue Head is located on the north Cornish coast on the outskirts of Newquay (NGR SW 8050 6300) and contains an impressive Iron Age cliff-castle and the remains of two Bronze Age burial mounds (Fig. 1).

This project, organised through the Scheduled Monument Management Programme 2005-2007, involved the erection of two interpretation boards on the site and an Education Day for local residents and holiday-makers.

This was the second occasion in which the Scheduled Monument Management Programme has co-ordinated works on Trevelgue Head. The monument has suffered considerable erosion due its exposed position and visitor pressure, and between 2001-2004, the Historic Environment Service carried out a series of conservation works which included the infilling of a number of scars and hollows in the ramparts of the cliff castle, repair work to the westernmost of the two barrows and the construction of new paths and steps.

2 Background

The information in this section is reprinted from Cole 2005.

Trevelgue Head is a Scheduled Ancient Monument (Cornwall 88). It is also listed in the Cornwall and Isles of Scilly Historic Environment Record (PRN 4127).

The cliff castle or promontory fort is defined by a spectacular series of large earth and stone ramparts which cut off the headland and embrace the remains of an extensive Late Iron Age settlement and contemporary field system. It defended an east-west headland 700m long and protects, on its south side, the excellent natural harbour of St Columb Porth. Two Bronze Age barrows also survive on the headland. The archaeological importance of this promontory fort has long been recognised and Jacquetta Hawkes described it as “perhaps the best example of a type of fortification very common round the Cornish coasts” (Hawkes 1951, 163).

The earliest documented archaeological explorations of Trevelgue Head took place at the beginning of the nineteenth century when sections across a number of the prominent barrows in the Newquay area were opened up by Canon Rogers in 1840. This was apparently followed by further antiquarian ventures reported in the local press in the 1870s. A more thorough examination of two barrows was undertaken by William Copeland Borlase around this time and in 1872, a detailed account of his discoveries was presented in the book *Naenia Cornubiae*.

Interest in the significance of later prehistoric activity on the headland was ignited by the discovery of what was described in the 1890s as a small “prehistoric bronze foundry” (Reid 1891, 133). During one of H. O'Neill Hencken's visits to the cliff castle in the early 1930s a surface scatter of “numerous pieces of Iron Age pottery ... and quantities of flint chips” was collected (Hencken 1932, 124-125). Erosion of midden deposits, containing metallic ores and slags, which appeared, in part, to form the make-up of the extensive defensive ramparts, threatened the stability of these impressive earthworks and provisional arrangements for an archaeological excavation to be directed by Col. F. C. Hirst were made in 1934. Site investigations were delayed however in favour of the excavation of Castle Dore and five years passed by before the Cornwall Excavations Committee (on behalf of the Royal Institution of Cornwall) invited C. K. Croft Andrew to carry out some limited archaeological excavations on the island. Croft Andrew had been C. A. Raleigh Radford's

assistant on a number of excavations in Cornwall (e.g. The Hurlers and Castle Dore) as well as being responsible for a number of successful excavations such as The Doniert Stone, Lammana, Chysauster and Carthamartha. He came highly recommended by members of the Cornwall Excavations Committee as well as by Radford himself who acted as a consultant during the works at Trevelgue Head.

Trevelgue Head cliff castle proved to be an exceptional site and is the most complex site of its class in the South West. Once underway, it was clear that archaeological excavations at Trevelgue would provide significant information contributing to both regional and national research agendas. Evidence for occupation dating from the 3rd century BC to the post-Roman period (c. 5th or 6th centuries AD) was uncovered. Work was halted by the outbreak of war in September 1939 and never recommenced.

Croft Andrew's excavation took place solely on the Island (see Fig. 2). Two trenches (61 and 62) were excavated into rampart 7 and two (71 and 72) into rampart 8. Two further trenches (63 and 64) were recorded in the open area to the west of rampart 7 where there was an open area excavation of a large round house.

In 1982 Croft Andrew died and the excavation archive for Trevelgue Head was collected from his home in Yorkshire and deposited in the offices of English Heritage in Fortress House, London. In February 1997, the Cornwall Archaeological Unit (now known as the Historic Environment Service) was invited by English Heritage to provide an appraisal of the post excavation analysis which had taken place, to date, on the material excavated during his 1939 excavations. This work was carried out by Jacky Nowakowski who is now coordinating further analysis of the archive and its publication.

Prior to this, CAU undertook a detailed survey (at 1:500) of the site and this was followed by a programme of geophysical survey and limited soil sampling carried out by staff of the Ancient Monument laboratory on behalf of English Heritage.

3 The interpretation boards and Education Day

Despite the presence of outstandingly well-preserved earthworks on Trevelgue Head and the wealth of material uncovered by the excavation, many visitors are completely unaware of the site's importance. The continuing involvement of the Historic Environment Service with the site and the availability of funding specifically for education and outreach, through the Scheduled Monument Management Programme's Heritage Lottery Fund grant, made this an opportune moment to improve the interpretation of the monument.

This was done in August 2007 through the provision of two interpretation boards and an Education Day.

3.1 The interpretation boards

The content of the two interpretation boards was agreed by HES staff with considerable input from Jacky Nowakowski.

It was decided that the first board should be positioned at the main entry point onto the headland and this features a general introduction to the site and information on the extent of the archaeological remains (Figs. 4 and 10). The second board (Fig. 11) was positioned close to the most concentrated section of ramparts (nos. 3-6) and features a reconstruction painting of how the Iron Age cliff castle may have looked in around 400-100BC, based upon finds from the 1939 excavation and the 1983 CAU survey. The painting was produced by Rosemary Robertson, who has also produced paintings of other Cornish prehistoric sites including Kynance Gate.

The boards were designed by Dave Taylor of the Council's Technical Services Team and include images of artefacts recovered from the site and a number of historic photographs supplied by the Royal Institution of Cornwall.

3.2 The Education Day

The Education Day took place on Saturday 11th August and was centred around a series of guided tours of the site with Jacky Nowakowski and a number of displays (Figs. 5-9).

The displays were organised by Jane Marley and staff and volunteers from the Royal Cornwall Museum in Truro and included artefacts from the 1939 excavation, organised activities for children and their families, and pamphlets and leaflets.

Well-known experimental archaeologist Jacqui Wood (Saveock Water Archaeology) was also on site and gave a display of Iron Age cooking techniques and many visitors took the opportunity to sample the oatcakes, smoked fish stew and marinated beef that were produced during the day.

Overall the event was a considerable success with over 150 people taking part, of whom 100 went on the guided tours.

4 References

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5 Project archive

The HES project number is **2005048**

The project's documentary, photographic and drawn archive is housed at the offices of the Historic Environment Service, Cornwall County Council, Kennall Building, Old County Hall, Station Road, Truro, TR1 3AY. The contents of this archive are as listed below:

1. A project file containing site records and notes, project correspondence and administration.
2. Digital photographs stored in the directory `..\IMAGES\SITES Q-T\TREVELGUE HEAD INTERPRETATION BOARDS`
3. This report held in digital form as: `G:\CAU\HE PROJECTS\SITES\SITES T\TREVELGUE HEAD INTERPRETATION BOARDS\TREVELGUE HEAD INTERPRETATION BOARD REPORT.DOC`

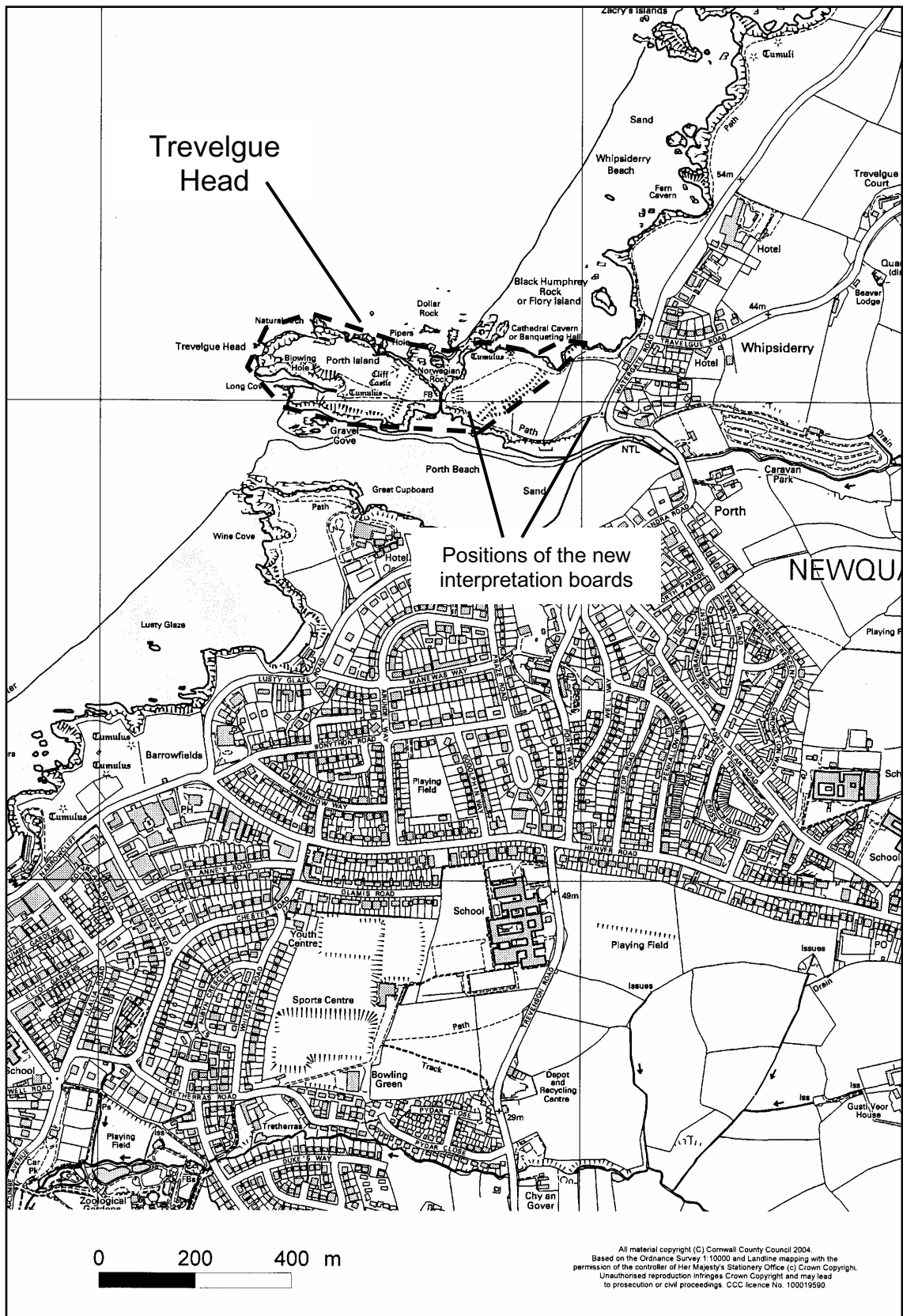


Fig. 1 Location of Trelvelge Head in relation to Newquay.

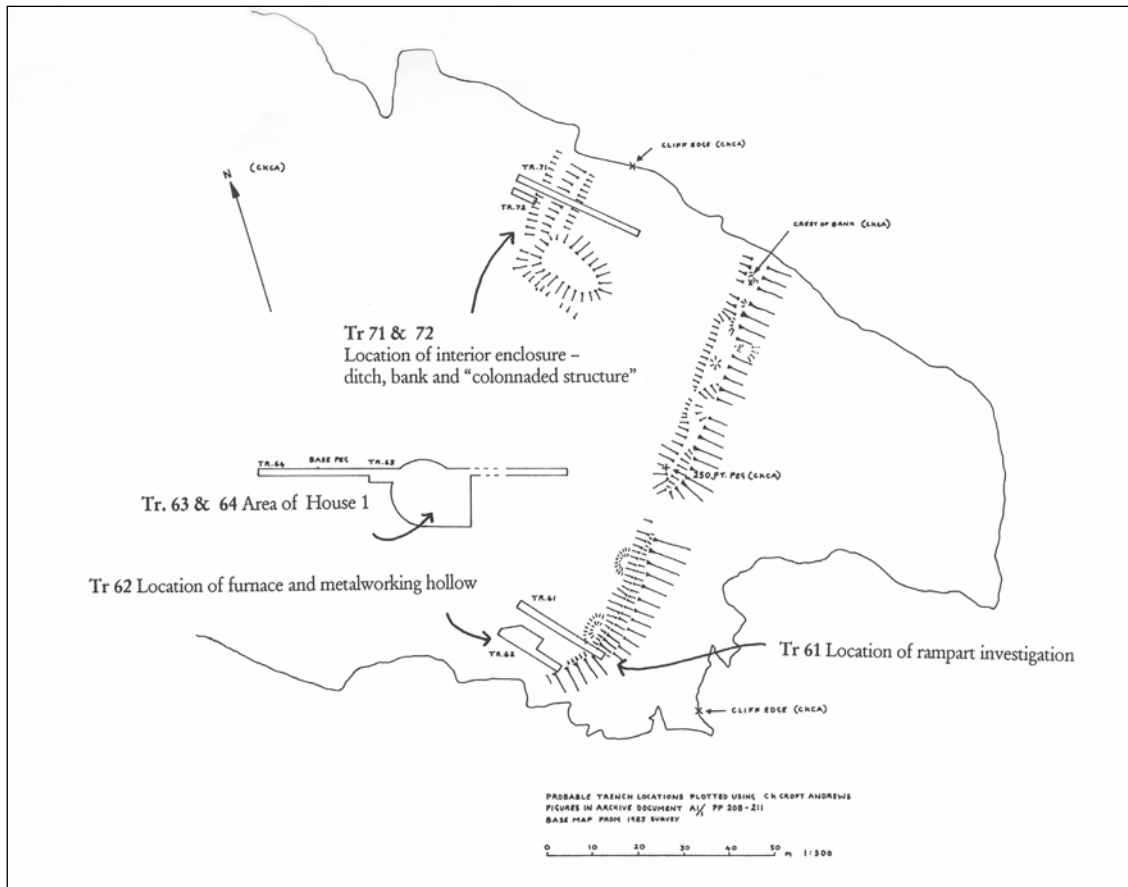


Fig. 2 *Croft Andrew's excavation on Porth Island in 1939 (probable trench locations plotted on 1983 survey base)*

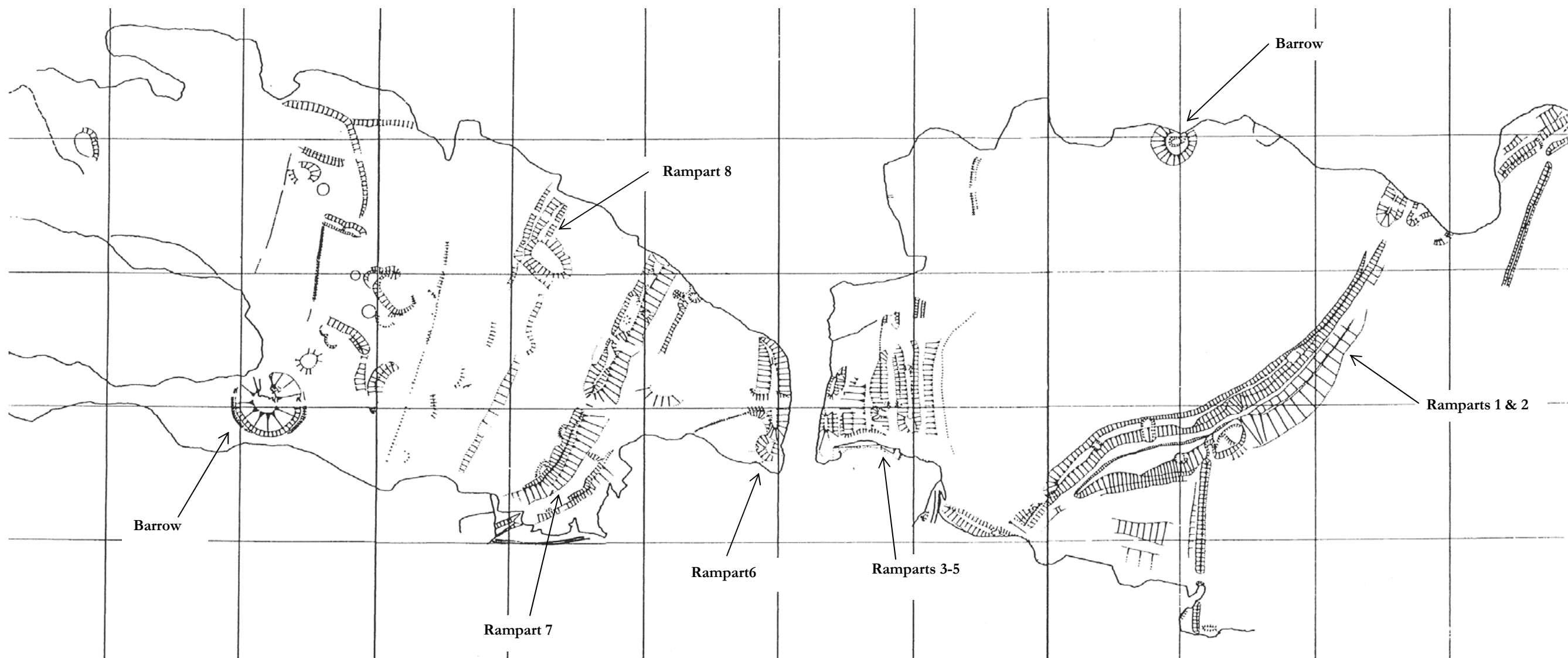


Fig. 3 Extant ramparts and barrows on Trelvogue Head as surveyed in 1983. Each box equates to 50 square metres.



Fig. 4 The author with one of the new interpretation boards.



Fig. 5 Jacky Nowakowski leading one of the Education Day tours.



Fig. 6 Jane Marley (Royal Cornwall Museum) with artefacts from the 1939 excavation.



*Fig. 7
Local councillors Gary Redman and
Patrick Lambshead joining in the fun.*



Fig. 8 Jacqui Wood and her Iron Age cooking.



*Fig. 9
'Drilling holes in slate.'*

Fig. 10 (right) Interpretation board 1
Fig. 11 (overleaf) Interpretation board 2