

Chirgwidden Vean, Sancreed, Cornwall

Archaeological Assessment and Management Survey



Historic Environment Service (Projects)

Cornwall County Council

A Report for English Heritage

**Chirgwidden Vean,
Sancreed,
Cornwall**

**Archaeological Assessment and
Management Survey**

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Within the Historic Environment Service, the Project Manager was Ann Preston-Jones.

The views and recommendations expressed in this report are those of the Historic Environment Service projects team and are presented in good faith on the basis of professional judgement and on information currently available.

Cover illustration

Looking eastwards to the western rampart of the enclosure

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Abbreviations

CRO	Cornwall County Record Office
EH	English Heritage
ESA	Environmentally sensitive Area
HER	Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly Historic Environment Record
HES	Historic Environment Service, Cornwall County Council
NGR	National Grid Reference
RIC	Royal Institution of Cornwall
PRN	Primary Record Number in Cornwall HER
OS	Ordnance Survey

1 Summary

This archaeological assessment and management survey of the scheduled enclosure at Chirgwidden Vean, Sancreed (Scheduled Monument Cornwall No 95, centred SW 4153 3102) was commissioned by the English Heritage Field Monument Warden, Ann Preston-Jones in March 2004.

The monument is an interesting, but nowadays little known, later prehistoric enclosure or round within which one or more courtyard houses were built in the Roman period. Extensive remains of this were discovered by Borlase in the 18th century but by the 19th, the construction of a small holding had removed or re-arranged a good deal.

This report describes the results of fieldwork and survey on the site and outlines the recommendations for its future management.

2 Introduction

2.1 Project background

The Projects team of Cornwall County Council's Historic Environment Service was commissioned by the English Heritage Field Monument Warden, Ann Preston-Jones, to produce an archaeological assessment and management survey of Chirgwidden Vean (centred SW 4153 3102, see Figure 1), Sancreed; Scheduled Monument Cornwall No 95, known to EH as 'Chirgwidden Vean hut cluster' and covered in the Cornwall County Council's HER as PRN 16174. The monument comprises of a prehistoric sub-rectangular enclosure, ditch and counterscarp, and the remains of a 19th century small holding. The enclosure lies within the corner of a field on the enclosed slopes of Hewes Common and is currently covered by a West Penwith Environmentally Sensitive Area (ESA) agreement. This assessment and survey was carried out to inform an ESA conservation plan to guide the future management of the monument.

2.2 Aims and Methods

The aims of the project were to collate and re-assess the existing documentary material for the site, and to undertake a full survey to aid interpretation of the remains on the ground in order to produce guidelines for its future management.

A brief desk-based study of known historical sources was followed by a measured survey at 1:200 covering approximately 0.18 hectares (0.45 acres; see Figure 1). Further field notes covered the extant ditch and a possible earthwork in the field to the south.

2.2.1 Desk-based assessment

During the desk-based assessment historical databases and archives were consulted in order to obtain information about the history of the site and the structures and features that were likely to survive. The main sources consulted were as follows:

- Cornwall HER
- Early maps and antiquarian notes (see Section 8.1)
- Published histories (see Section 8.2)

2.2.2 Fieldwork

Fieldwork involved a plane table survey with an alidade to produce a detailed plan at 1:200 of the enclosure interior and 19th century settlement. The work was undertaken in overcast, blustery conditions on the 17th and 18th March 2004 to make the most of the low

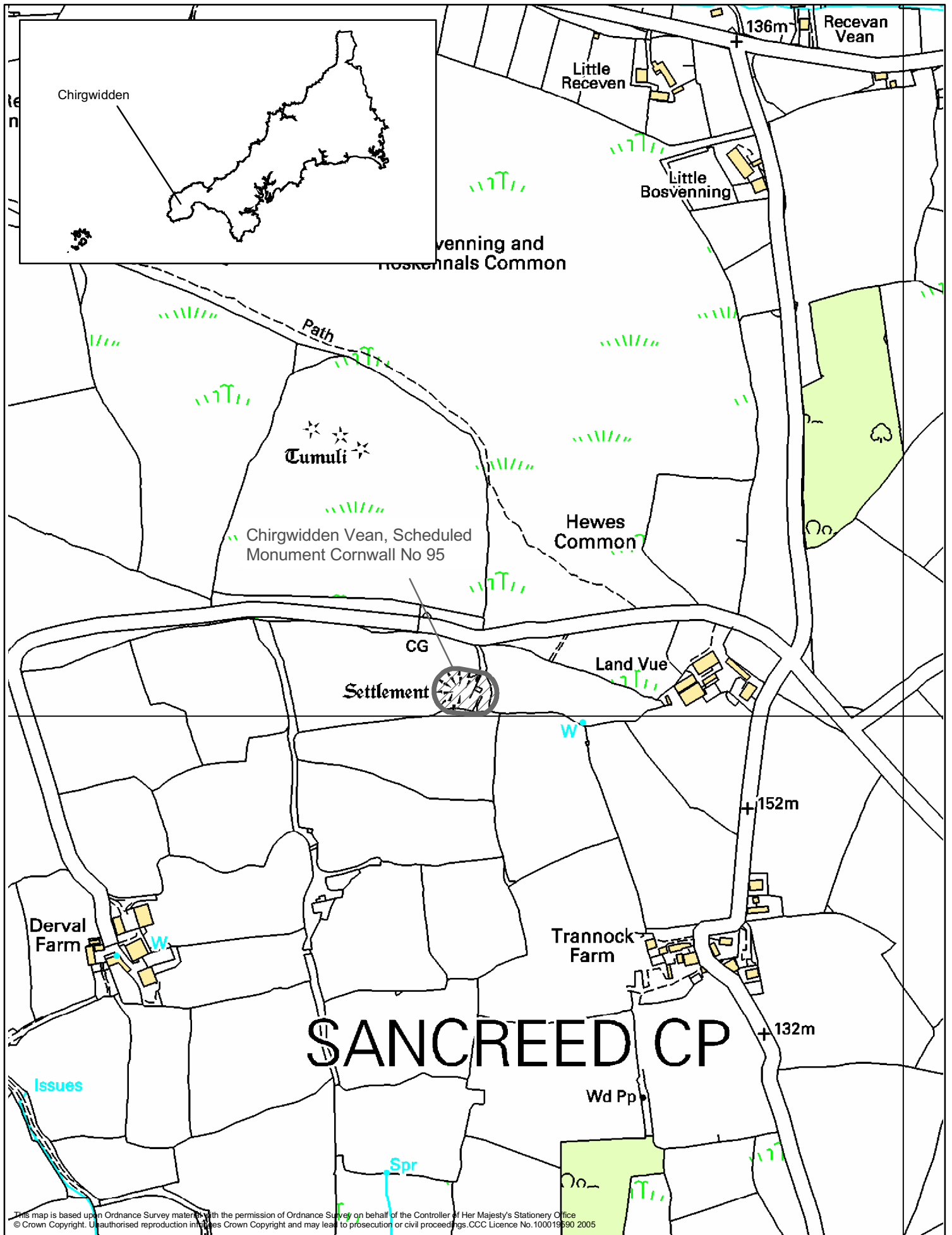
vegetation cover of winter. Unfortunately, thick thorn covering the eastern side of the site hampered fieldwork and limited the accuracy of the measured survey.

Features identified were described, and where appropriate, a photographic record taken. Notes included a brief but thorough description of the site or feature, its interpretation and management requirements, and any need for future archaeological work. Details of the ditch and its remaining counterscarp, and the earthwork in the field to the south of the settlement, were noted but not covered by the measured survey (see Figure 1).

3 Background

3.1 Location and setting

The massive banks of the enclosure stand on the northernmost margin of the improved ground as it rises to Hewes Common; the summit of which lies hidden, its mass blocking any views to the north. The site though, lies on the gentle southern flank of the hill at 180m OD (590 feet) as it falls gradually to the wide valley of Ennestreven, and offers incredible views: To the west the eye follows the valley across Deveral to the high, rough ground of Bartinney Downs, which gradually falls eastwards to Caer Bran and then again to Sancreed Beacon. Here the valley opens to the east, exposing the southern margins of the Penwith peninsula (from Lamorna to Penzance) and on to Mounts Bay as it arcs across to the Lizard. North of the Lizard promontory the views extend to Tregonning Hill, and beyond to the lump of the Carnmenellis granite as far as Carn Brea.



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Figure 1 Site location with the scheduled area highlighted (based on EH GIS dataset)

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4 Historical Summary

The Chirgwidden place name was first recorded in 1324 as 'Chirgurgwyn' (see ICS place name index). It is Cornish and contains the elements *chy*, meaning 'house', and *gour guyn*. *Guyn* generally means 'white' although in some instances it could be a personal name equivalent to the Welsh Gwen (Padel 1985, 120). *Gour* means 'man' (Padel 1985, 120) and it appears that *gour guyn* can either refer to a personal name or a description (Padel 1985, 112).



Figure 2, an extract from the Martyn map of 1745 showing Chirgwidden enclosure (Copyright reserved)

The enclosure itself was first recorded on the Martyn map of 1745 as 'An Old Castle' (see Figure 2). Farther to the north Martyn also records 'Choon Castle'. Chirgwidden settlement was not recorded although Trannack and Bosence were.

The enclosure was visited and recorded by the antiquarian Dr W Borlase in the mid-18th century. His field notes and illustrations (see Excursions 1751-1758 and Figures 17 and 19) are difficult to read but he describes the site in considerable detail recording a five foot (1.51m) thick outermost bank, a 36 feet 6 inch (11.09m) wide ditch, with a 'secondary wall' 16 foot (4.84m) thick upon which a 4 ft (1.21m) wide wall was constructed creating a 'parapet'. The two illustrations in the notebook seem to relate to Chirgwidden and offer slightly confusing details; the first illustration (p79, see Figure 18) noted the 'inner circle' as 159 ft (48.18m) wide, the second (p80, see Figure 19) recording an internal measurement of 131ft or 39.6m (NW-SE) and 100 ft or 30.3m (N-S) and an 8ft wide entrance way on the south eastern side of the inner parapet and wall. Four circular ruins were recorded in the interior. Further notes were written up in Parochial

Memoranda c1740-1770 (p22); here Dr W Borlase adds a description of the entrance where he noted a large flat stone 9 foot long, formerly a lintel, fallen in to the passage. To the left of the entrance Borlase noted several 'stones sett on edge in a row parallel to the Circumference [sic]' and in the inner area a 'large heaps of ruins'.

William Copeland Borlase in the late-19th century used the two accounts of the site by Dr W Borlase, together with the 'account of an old man (Dennis) who destroyed it' to attempt a clearer illustration of the site prior to the construction of the 19th century small holding. He annotated several features including an entrance gate with the lintel thrown down (A); the inner wall (B); the parapet (4 foot thick) the whole faced with strong masonry; a ditch (16 foot wide D); an outer wall (5 foot wide E); an area in which were 'large heaps of ruins and fallen walls of houses' (F).

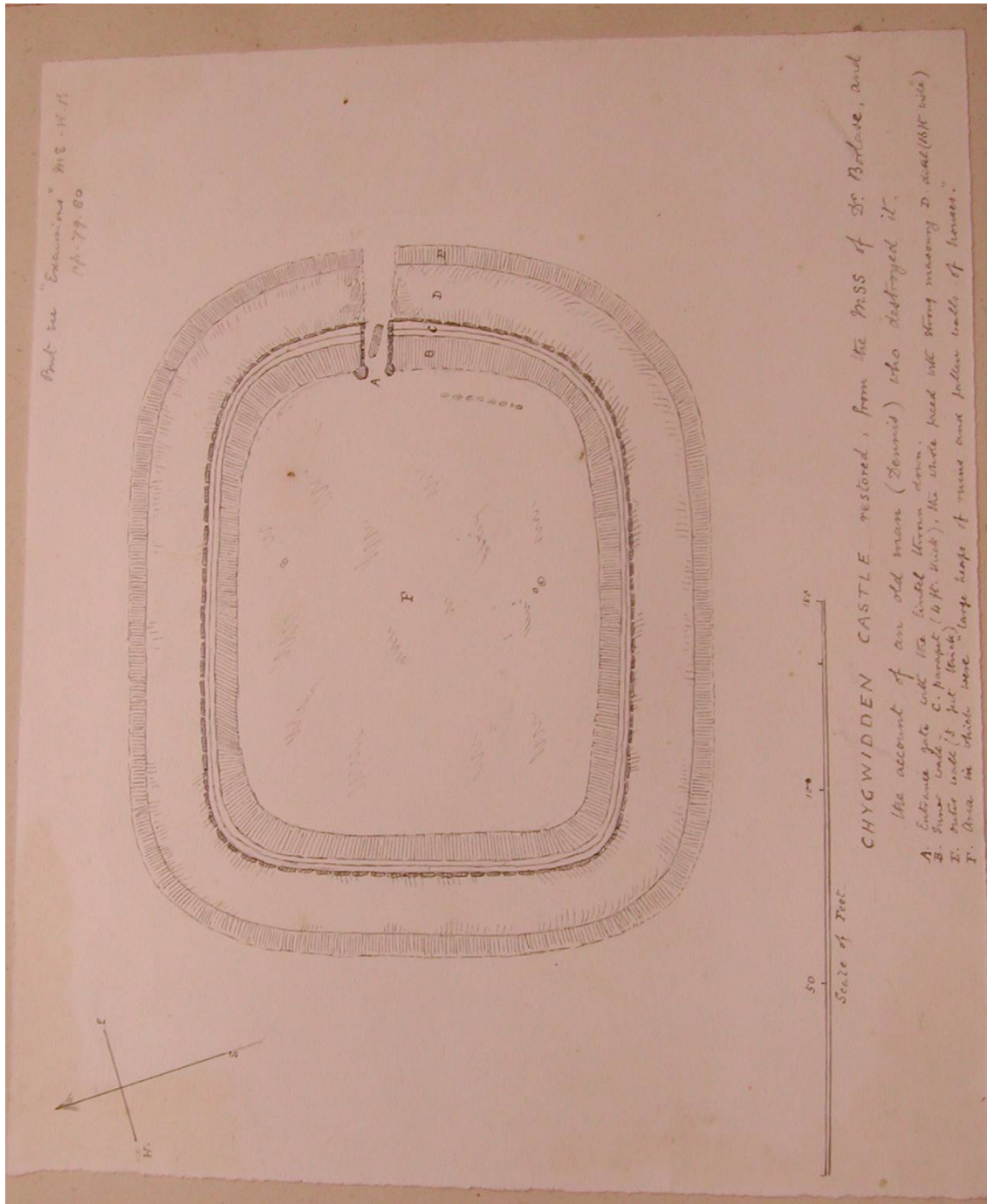


Figure 3, WC Borlase's 1871 reconstruction of Chirgwidan using Dr W Borlase's two accounts and the information supplied to him by a man called 'Dennis' who built the 19th century small holding (©Royal Institution of Cornwall)

The OS surveyors' drawings of 1809 (Figure 4) and map of 1813 (Figure 5) record Chirgwidan as an 'Old Castle' on the seemingly unenclosed slopes of 'Trannack Down' (both maps recording an entire sub-rectangular enclosure).

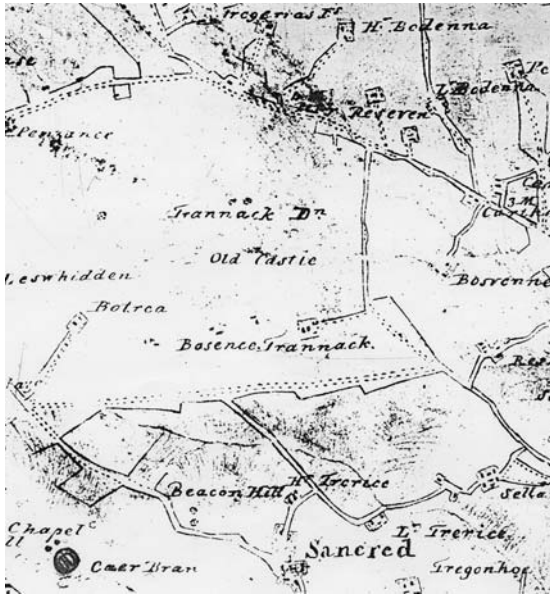


Figure 4, extract from the 1809 OS surveyors drawings (Copyright reserved)



Figure 5, Extract from the 1813 OS map (Copyright reserved)

However, by the c1840 Tithe map a small holding had been built within the enclosure splitting it in to three compartments (see Figure 6); TA 1407 recorded as 'Garden', TA 1406 as 'Homestead' and TA 1405 as 'Garden'. The field to the south, TA 1415, was recorded as 'Castle field', and under 'Arable and Pasture'; TA 1404 and TA 1408 to the north and west both recorded as 'No Name' and under 'Arable and Pasture'. The Apportionment records the small holding as part of a 'Tenement in Chirgwiddden Veau' owned by Richard Harvey Sen, Representatives of Sir John St Aubyn, and John Scobell Esq, and occupied by a Samuel Harvey.

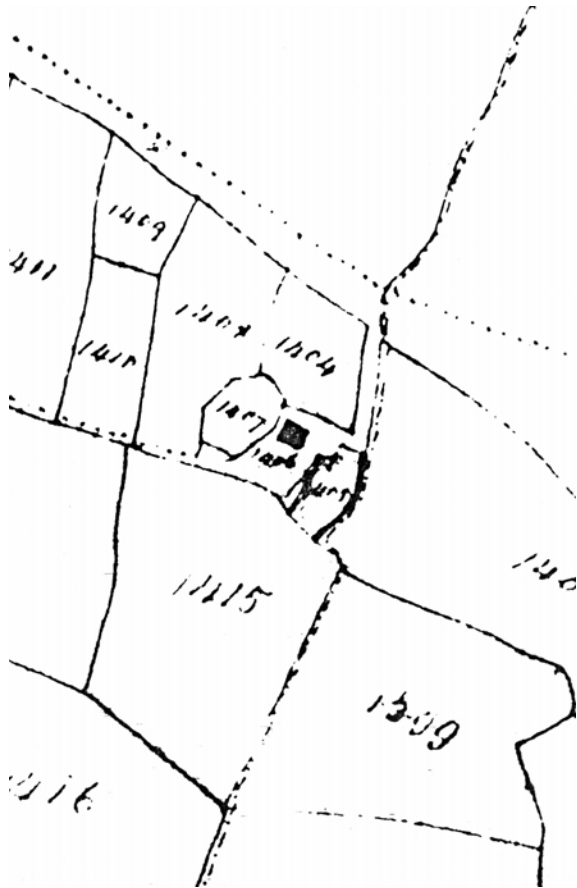


Figure 6, Extract from the c1840 Tithe map of Sancreed. TA 1407 was recorded as 'Garden', TA 1406 as 'Homestead' and TA 1405 as 'Garden' (Copyright reserved)

William Copeland Borlase visited the site in 1871 and noted that the inner wall on its northern side survived up to 12 foot (3.63m) high. He also drew a plan of the small holding and remains of the enclosure. The plan records the inner wall (the rampart which survives today) in detail (as by this time the outer wall had been completely removed; see WC Borlase 1871) noting traces of the exterior outer facing and the remains of the parapet wall on the northern and western sides. Two rectilinear buildings and two crows were recorded (EE), the buildings filling the gap where the inner wall and parapet once stood; a line of 'modern' stones (H) marking the western boundary of the central compartment noted as a 'waste place for pigs'; the two flanking compartments recorded as 'Garden' (the western side) and 'Little garden' (to the east). He also recorded a number of other details; noting the site of a buried large granite boulder (B); a stone with an artificial hollow 7 inches wide and 2 to 3 inches deep (C); the position of two sea 'bowls' (presumably rounded boulders) 1^{1/2} ft and 2 ft in diameter (D); a gate post 9 foot long (F); and 'ditto' [F] in its original position (G).

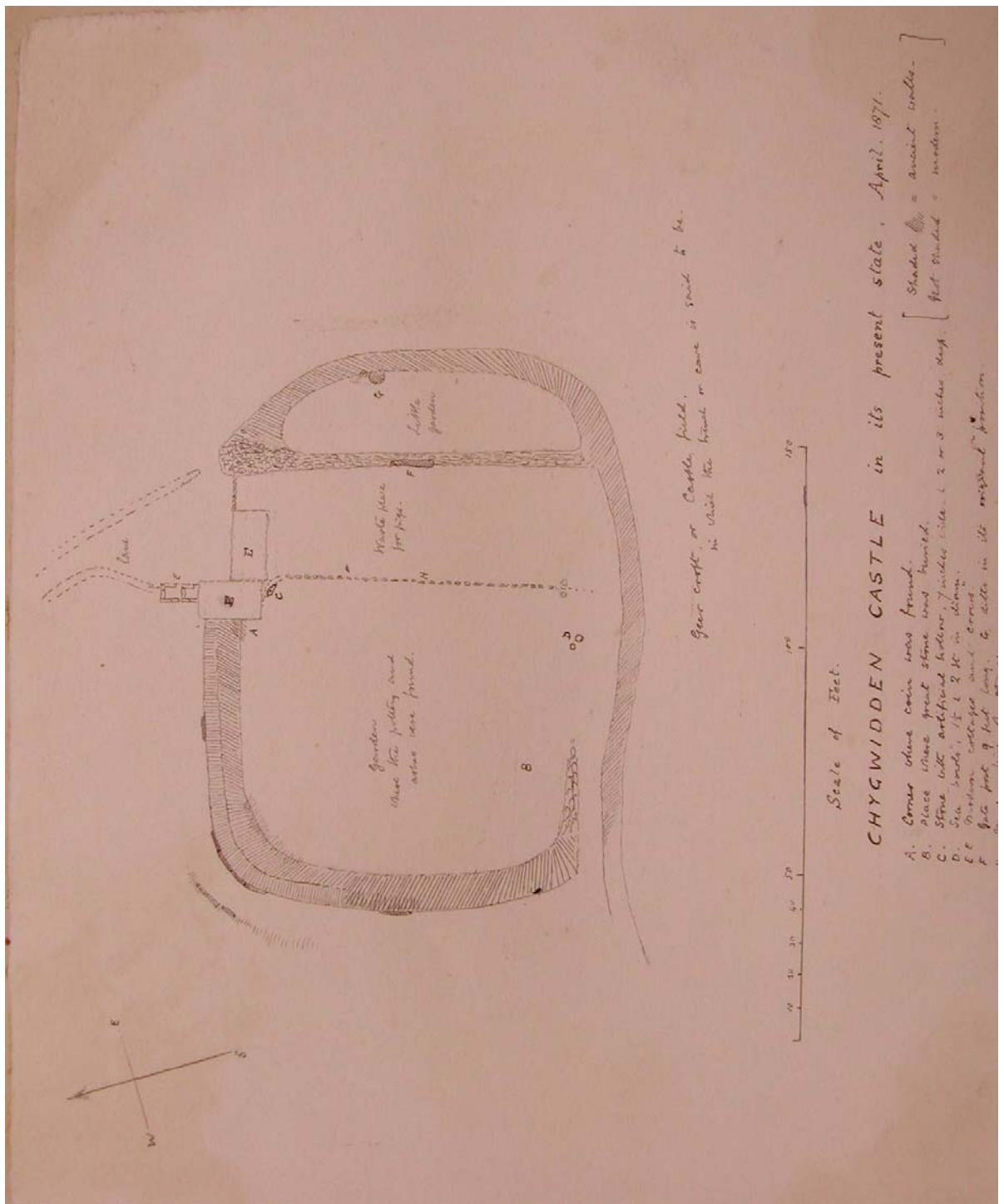


Figure 7, WC Borlase's 1871 illustration of the Chygywidden enclosure and the 19th century small holding (©Royal Institution of Cornwall)

The 1880 OS map labels the site 'Ancient British Village' (see Figure 20), clearly recording the enclosure boundary on the northern and western sides with an external ditch, the internal sub-divisions of the 19th century small holding also marked; the buildings (note building *4 was not recorded) by this time roofless and derelict. Behind the southernmost crow recorded by WC Borlase in 1871 another small square was recorded (perhaps incorrectly?). The site appears unchanged by the OS map of 1908 (see Figure 21) where it is recorded as 'Hut Cluster (Remains of)'.

Charles Henderson (1914-17, 75) who noted the enclosure and small holding in the early 20th century wrote;

'on the southern slopes of the Trannack Hill where moor and fields most meet is a very small black cottage known as Caergwidden. It stands quite alone with a few low trees in front of it' adding, 'the camp is situated a little to the west of the cottage and is in very good preservation. Close to it are the ruins of an old farm-the out houses of which are constructed in the side of the rampart and look ridiculously like Ancient British huts! The camp is 78 feet in diameter and circular. The rampart reaches a height of 10 feet in several places but has been partially demolished on the southern side. The ditch has been considerably filled but is traceable all around'.

The settlement was noted by Hencken (1932, 139) as the possible site of a fogou while Hirst (1937, 97) considered Chirgwidden settlement the possible site of a courtyard house settlement although 'nothing remains except a dry-stone constructed fortification' associating features such as terraces, a destroyed fogou and the site of a fortification under the site.

The possible site of the fogou at Chirgwidden has been the focus for later writers who have suggested that the site may have been similar to the fogous at Halliggye and Treveneague (see Clark 1961, 121 and Cooke 1993, 172).

5 Results

This section outlines the main components of the monument as identified from the field survey and historical assessment.

*1 Ditch and counterscarp

The ditch surrounding the rampart is visible on the ground as a subtle dip in the hillside $\approx 0.5\text{m}$ deep and $\approx 4\text{m}$ to 5m wide (from the base of the rampart). It is clearly visible on the northern and western sides of the site; the feature not evident on the southern side (as on the 1878 and 1908 OS maps). The feature is visible on aerial photographs and has been plotted by the NMP.

The 5 foot thick (1.5m) counterscarp recorded by Dr W Borlase in the 18th century and destroyed with the creation of the 19th century small holding (see WC Borlase 1871) is traceable as an ephemeral $\approx 0.2\text{m}$ high low earthwork on the western section of the ditch.



Figure 8, looking east to the western rampart of the enclosure. Note the slight dip of the ditch in front of the rampart

Condition and Recommendations

The ditch and remains of the counterscarp are currently under pasture and are occasionally ploughed as part of the field. The features would be best preserved under permanent pasture or a 10m arable margin.

*2 Rampart

The most conspicuous feature of the Chirgwithden enclosure is its sizeable rampart which survives to between 2m to 3m high externally (see Figure 8 above), and 1m to 1.6m high internally. On its north and western sides the rampart is a steep sided ($>60^\circ$) stone and earth bank, except where recent erosion has spread the bank (see Figure 22). The odd moorstone block removed during modern field clearance and improvement has been placed at the base of the external rampart (see Figure 15). Internally, short sections of internal walling faced with granite rubble survive up to 1.2m high (see Figure 9).



Figure 9, a better preserved section of the interior wall facing on the northern rampart

While a large breach in the south western corner of the rampart has been affected by modern rabbit activity, the original damage here appears to date to the creation of the entranceway *8 (as part of the creation of the 19th century small holding). Here a short length of drystone walling up to 0.4m high (externally, see Figure 10) has been built to block the gap. This overlies the internal rab fill of the rampart and was probably built to make the garden to the west of the buildings *3 and *4 stockproof.



Figure 10, looking eastwards to the damage to the rampart on the south western corner of the enclosure. Note the low walling which may date to the 19th century and the exposed rab infill of the rampart.

A second length of later drystone walling measuring 19m long, 0.4m high and 0.5m wide sits on the top of the northern rampart above building *4 (see Figure 22). This feature was not recorded on any historical maps and may relate to the construction of the building in the late 19th century.

This survey suggests that the southern side of the inner rampart still survives fossilised in the hedge line. Differences in the facing together with the curvature of the boundary and the difference in thickness and vegetation, help to distinguish it from the later lengths of Cornish hedging to its east and west. The OS landline doesn't pick up the difference in curvature of the boundary well and is more obvious from aerial photographs and ground photos (see below).



Figure 11, looking westwards across the remains of the southern rampart.

The eastern section of the 'inner wall' is the most difficult to distinguish although this survey suggests that the boundary may survive as an arm of heavily constructed dry stone wall standing 1m high on its western face, and up to 1.6m high on its eastern face, and 1.8m wide in places. This boundary terminates to the south east of building *3 with a substantial block of granite approximately 2m long and 1.2m high and 1m wide (see also *10). This stone may be the fallen lintel noted by Dr W Borlase; its present position was noted by WC Borlase in 1871. If this is the remains of the eastern wall then the internal dimensions of the enclosure recorded by the present survey match those of 131ft or 39.6m (NW-SE) and 100 ft or 30.3m (N-S) recorded by Dr W Borlase (see Figure 19, Excursion 1751-1758, 80). This would suggest that the fallen lintel was not moved as WC Borlase records in 1871 (see Appendix and Figure 7) and that the easternmost modern boundary may have been built on the remains of the counterscarp.

A bench or walk inside of the 'parapet' may survive on the western interior side of the site. Here a ragged bank much disturbed by rabbit activity survives to a height of c0.5m; however it could just be a section of collapsed walling or the remains of the 'inner wall' as recorded by WC Borlase.

Condition and Recommendations

Although the vast majority of the rampart survives in good condition there are three areas of active erosion by livestock (see Figure 22). These areas could be cleaned up under archaeological supervision so that any remaining walling or features can be recorded. A few mature thorn trees cover the banks but appear to be causing little damage (and probably dissuade stock from climbing certain sections of the rampart). In other areas the bank is covered by brambles and bracken but appears to be kept under control by the grazing and movement of livestock. An electric fence running around the base of the exterior and interior side of the rampart would help to prevent animals running over the bank. Any developing scrub on the top of the ramparts could then occasionally be cleared as part of the maintenance of the electric fence.

The eastern side of the site was not accurately measured and recorded during the survey due to dense thorn (see Figure 22).

***3 Building**

The footings of this building are clearly visible on its southern and northern sides, with returns visible on its southwest, northwest and northeast corners. The walling is made of a two skin granite rubble construction which survives between 0.1m to 0.7m high and approximately 0.6m wide. The easternmost wall survives as a stone and earth bank c1m high and c2m wide, the western wall a jumbled earth and stone bank c1.1m high. Internally

the building measures 6.4m long and 3.9m wide with a possible internal sub-division visible as a line of stones \approx 0.1m high. On the western side of the building is an *in situ* granite orthostat 0.8m high with a 0.07m deep drill hole towards its top, behind which is a second granite orthostat, with two recumbent stones close by; the stones perhaps marking the remains of the fireplace.



Figure 12, showing the possible fireplace and niche to the left (occupied by the tree) perhaps for a cloam oven

Close to the south western return of the wall the facing of an internal niche is visible perhaps marking the site of a cloam oven. On the southern wall of the building a 1m wide doorway is marked by a granite door jamb and a large granite boulder (which was incorporated in to the wall fabric)

Condition and Recommendations

The interior of the building has a number of hoof prints and has been churned up in the past presumably by cattle seeking shelter under the thorn trees which surround the site. The eastern wall (collapsed bank) of the building is covered by dense young thorn growth whilst the interior is open and easily accessible, low branches of the mature thorn trees hang down. The walls are grass covered with some patches of encroaching brambles.

***4 Building**

All that survives of this building is a return of walling \approx 0.6m high of two skin granite rubble construction. The building was recorded on WC Borlase's 1871 survey of Chirgwidde and was cut in to the enclosure bank, the building opening up to the compartment recorded as a waste place for pigs; the structure presumably a small shelter for livestock.

Condition and Recommendations

The remaining walling survives in good condition and is covered by brambles and ivy; the interior of the building covered by brambles and bracken (although quite clear in late winter) could be occasionally cleared using hand tools.



*Figure 13, showing the remaining walling of building *4*

***5 Crows**

The remains of the two conjoined 'crows' recorded by WC Borlase in 1871 and the OS maps of 1878 and 1908 survive in a dilapidated but reasonable condition. The features are cut in to the hillslope (possibly within the original curve of ditch), their granite rubble walling surviving between 0.3m and 0.6m high. A 0.9m high granite orthostat with a drill hole on its exterior side, and a corresponding drill hole on the walling on the northern side, clearly mark the entrance of the southernmost crow. The doorway of the northernmost crow is marked and blocked by a fallen granite orthostat.

The interior of the crows are filled by loose granite rubble, the probable remains of their corbelled roofs.



Figure 14, the bramble choked interior of the crows viewed from the south

Extending from the southern end of the conjoined crows to building*3 is a fine 1.6m high revetment wall faced with granite.

Condition and Recommendations

The features are clearly visible and have been recorded on modern OS landline data. Their interiors are covered with brambles and any future management should seek to reduce the present cover of brambles and prevent any thorn trees from establishing within the interior or on the walls of these interesting features.

If any boundary works are required these should be limited to as short lengths as possible, with repairs maintaining the existing boundary style and constructive materials in order to retain the historic character of the boundary. Materials should, if possible, come from the immediate locality but not from other boundaries and archaeological features. By using the traditional methods the historic character and ecological interest of the boundaries should be retained and make any repairs subtle and less visually obtrusive.

***6 Lane**

Extending down from the enclosed edge of Hewes Common southward towards the crows is a narrow lane cut down in to the hillslope between 0.4m and 0.8m. A number of large granite, moorstone boulders mark the western edge of the trackway. Some of these jut out in to the lane and may represent later modern stone clearance.

The lane was first recorded on the 1840 Tithe map (see Figure 6) and was recorded on subsequent maps and surveys.

Condition and Recommendations

The lane is blocked by heavy bramble growth and in future could be cleared to try and create a formal access point for livestock to the monument (see also entranceway *8). This could, if required, also form a route for any visitor access.

***7 Clearance stones**

A number of large granite stones in the field margin lie above the crows and close to the exterior edge of the northern rampart. Those that are not covered by lichen and moss may represent stones dumped from modern stone clearance whilst others may have been dumped during the creation of the 19th century small holding.

Condition and Recommendations

The stones are an interesting landscape feature demonstrating the clearance of former moorstone to create easier ground to cultivate and could be used to provide stone for boundary repairs. If not, these could be left in place.



Figure 15, the northern rampart of the enclosure looking eastwards towards the cleared stone

***8 Entranceway**

A narrow entranceway measuring approximately 11m long and 1.8m wide cuts through the south westernmost corner of the enclosure rampart (see Figure 22); the entranceway opening up in to the interior of the enclosure. Its southern boundary at first (on its western side) is a length of 19th century drystone wall which thickens to become the fossilised southern rampart. The northern edge of the entranceway is c0.5m high and faced with the occasional large granite block. Towards its western end the entranceway narrows due to a number of dumped moorland blocks which may be modern in origin.

The entranceway appears to be recorded as a gap on the c1840 Tithe map (see Figure 6) and was more clearly recorded on WC Borlase's survey of 1871 (see Figure 8).

Condition and Recommendations

The entranceway is choked with brambles which could be cleared to open up the entranceway as an access point for livestock in to the interior of the enclosure to reduce weathering and damage to the rampart.

***9 Middle compartment**

To the south of building *4 is an area of reduced ground which narrows towards the southern side of the enclosure interior. The area was recorded on the c1940 Tithe map as part of TA 1406 (see Figure 6) and was recorded by WC Borlase in 1871 as a 'waste place

for pigs'; its western boundary recorded on both the 1878 and 1908 OS maps. The western boundary drops $\approx 0.5\text{m}$ from the interior of the enclosure to the west and is lined with large granite orthostats set end-to-end on edge. The stones apparently taken from the ramparts of the enclosure (see H, Figure 8).



Figure 16, looking northwards along the granite orthostats marking the western boundary of the reduced ground.

At its northern end, towards building *4, the compartment slopes and narrows to $\approx 2\text{m}$ wide. To the south of building *3 the reduced ground drops by $\approx 0.3\text{m}$ and is again marked with a series of granite orthostats. The eastern edge of the compartment measures between $\approx 0.3\text{m} - 0.5\text{m}$ deep and runs roughly parallel to the possible length of eastern rampart (see *2); the reduced ground flattening out to the south and possibly curving around to meet the entranceway *8.

Condition and Recommendations

The eastern edge of the feature was very difficult to accurately survey due to the dense thorn cover but overall the feature is clearly visible. The removal of the thorn trees here would make the site more visible and encourage the movement of stock across the site and in to the interior of the enclosure.

***10 Garden enclosure**

On the eastern side of the monument is a garden enclosure; the feature recorded on the ≈ 1840 Tithe map (see Figure 6) as TA 1405, 'Garden' and as 'Little garden' on WC Borlase's map of 1871 (see Figure 8), and unaltered by the 1878 and 1908 OS maps. The garden stands higher than the level of 'Castle field' to the south; the southernmost boundary of the garden a drystone wall standing 0.4m high internally and 1.4m high externally. The western boundary of the garden is a substantial drystone wall constructed of large granite blocks which terminates in the large granite block (see also *2, the possible eastern rampart). Onwards from here it narrows to single granite orthostat construction which accommodates the south eastern corner of building *3, and runs up to a short length of sizeable boundary which stands 1m high, and measures 1.6m wide at its western end, and 3.6m wide at its eastern end. WC Borlase in 1871 recorded the westernmost section of this substantial walling as part of the original wall of the enclosure (for further discussion see *11).

Condition and Recommendations

At the time of the survey the garden enclosure was quite open, with patches of daffodils, and small pockets of encroaching bracken and brambles. The area should be kept free of encroaching scrub by occasional clearance and the free movement of livestock in to the area.

***11 Enclosure Interior (western side)**

This area covers the remaining interior to the west of the middle compartment; the area noted as 'Garden' on WC Borlase's survey of 1871 'where the pottery and ashes were found'. This area of the enclosure was also recorded on the c1840 Tithe map as TA 1407, 'Garden'; and was clearly defined on the 1878 and 1908 OS maps. A number of large granite boulders remain within the interior of the enclosure. Most of these seem to lie on the surface.

Condition and Recommendations

The area covers the largest part of the Chirgwiddden enclosure site and is the most open. On its western side the area is open grass with encroaching brambles close to the rampart. On its eastern side there is a scatter of mature thorn trees and patches of brambles and bracken. The encroaching scrub and majority of the thorn trees could be removed by hand and the area seasonally grazed. The mature thorn tree on the northern side of the area should not be removed. A number of piles of recently cleared thorn trees should be removed and disposed of or burnt away from the interior of the site.



Figure 17, looking southwestwards to Sancreed Beacon across the interior of the enclosure. Note the brambles in the foreground and the pile of thorn cuttings in the mid ground.

***12 Break in slope**

In the field to the south of the enclosure is a clearly defined curvilinear break in slope. This may mark the remains of a field boundary but may also be a natural break in the slope of the underlying granite bedrock.

As it is not certainly a feature, it was not surveyed and does not appear on the plan.

Condition and Recommendations

None

6 Summary of Recommendations

This report has drawn together the diverse material relating to this interesting, but nowadays little known, site in relation to a detailed modern plan. In summary, the site may be interpreted as a later prehistoric enclosure or round within which one or more courtyard houses were built in the Roman period. Extensive remains of this were discovered by Borlase in the 18th century but by the 19th, the construction of a small holding had removed or re-arranged a good deal, leaving two thirds of the rampart as the principal surviving feature with other fragmentary remains.

This report has described these remains in detail and produced recommendations for their future management:

- Repair the three main areas of cattle and rabbit erosion to the rampart. This may require the careful removal of collapse under archaeological supervision.
- The survival of the ditch and counterscarp on the north and western sides of the enclosure would be best ensured under permanent pasture or an arable margin.
- Clear back the brambles choking the lane *6 and entranceway *8 to allow for easier livestock access to the interior of the enclosure.
- Clear the thorn bushes from the eastern side of the interior of the enclosure.
- Build up the drystone wall blocking the south western corner of the enclosure to prevent cattle and pedestrian access.
- An electric fence (held up by stakes and not permanent posts) running along the rampart will help to prevent livestock clambering over the features. The fence could be positioned at the foot of the rampart to stop stock weathering the bank.
- Any encroaching scrub on top of the ramparts could be cleared occasionally using hand tools and the vegetation burnt away from the interior of the site.
- Any encroaching scrub should be removed in the winter using hand tools such as a strimmer.
- Any thorn bushes cut down shown be removed from the site and any cut vegetation burnt off site.
- Stock should not be allowed to graze the interior of the site in winter as this will encourage poaching, but would be beneficial on helping to control bracken and scrub in the late spring and summer.

7 References

7.1 Primary sources

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Ordnance Survey, 2003. *LandLine Digital Mapping at 1:2500*

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7.2 Publications and Sources

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Borlase, Rev W. *Excursions 1751-1758* (MS at RIC)

Borlase, WC, 1872. *Naenia Cornubiae* London

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Hencken, H O'N, 1932. *The Archaeology of Cornwall and Scilly*, Methuen, London

Hirst FC, 1937. Courtyard House Sites in West Cornwall in **JBritArchaeoloAss Vol II**

8 Project archive

The HES project number is **200301618**

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. Field plans and copies of historic maps stored in an A2-size plastic envelope (GRE 561).
3. Electronic drawings stored in the directory `.\\CAD ARCHIVE\\SITESC\\CHIRGWIDDEN,SANCREED (200301618)`
4. Black and white photographs archived under the following index numbers: GBP1640 and 1641

5. Digital photographs stored in the directory R:\Images\HESImages\SitesA-D\Chirgwidden,Sancreed(200301618)
6. This report held in digital form as: G:\CAU\DOCUMENT\THE PROJECTS\SITES\SITES C\CHIRGWIDDEN VEAN PR200317\CHIRGWIDDEN VEAN REPORT (200301618).DOC

9 Appendix of Antiquarian Descriptions

Borlase W, 1751-1758 *Excursions* (MS volume; Courtney Library ref 41)

The notes are very difficult to read.

Page 79 is not titled but appears to describe the enclosure at Chirgwididen. The descriptions annotate an illustration (see Figure 18). The left hand text reads;

'the outermost Wall 5ft through. The ditch 36 "6. 2^d. wall 8"6 diam. Below y^l 2^d wall and the inner circle of stones 30ft -. The Inner circle is 159 [corrected from 89] ft diam-. 1 compartment 15/ft-. 2^d comp. 24. 3^d. 12 1/2-. 4. 12 " barracks a very high wall'

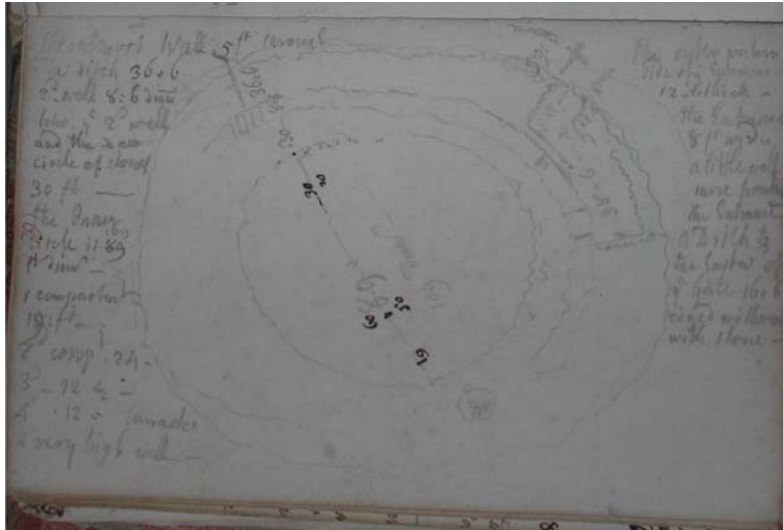


Figure 18, Photograph of page 79 of Dr W Borlase's 1751-1758 *Excursions* (©Royal Institution of Cornwall)

The right hand text reads;

'The outer western side of y entrance 12"6 thick- The Entrance 8ft in da [sic] a little wall more fronting [hard to read] the Entrance a Ditch to the [?] of y Gate 16"6 edged without with 1 house [hard to read]'

Page 80 is entitled 'Chigwididen [unreadable]'

The descriptions annotate an illustration (see Figure 19) of the enclosure made by Dr Borlase, the right hand text reads

'The wall 16ft 6i but in the North the Parapet wall app[sic] but 4ft thick ref [can't read] of r'q [sic] Ruins is 16fy of which the parapet called a Rai [sic] ...unreadable section - in a circular plan most of y [sic]- Partitions- the ditch from out to out 24 ft of which the outer wall is 5ft-'

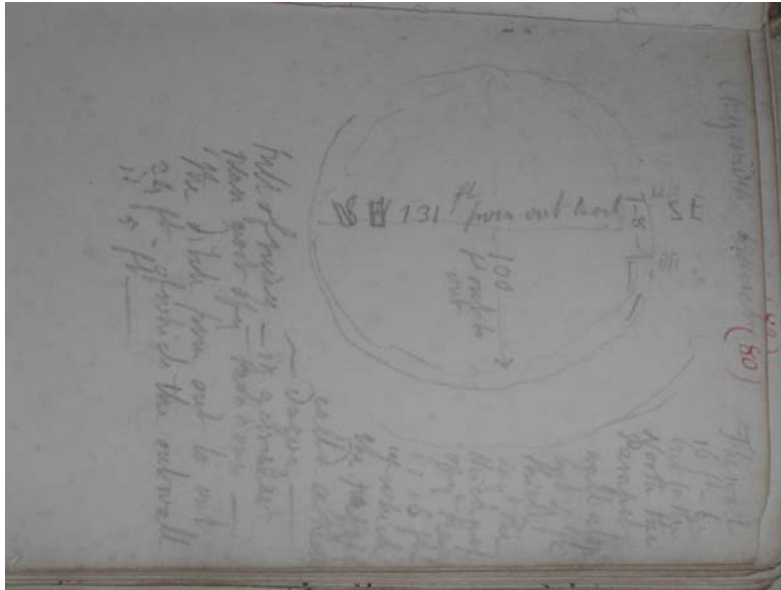


Figure 19, Photograph of page 80 of Dr W Borlase's 1751-1758 Excursions (©Royal Institution of Cornwall)

Borlase W, c1740 – 1770 *Parochial Memoranda* (Microfilm at Courtney Library ref Add 1)

On p22 it reads ‘3. Kaergwide. In the side of a hill near Chygwidden stands an ancient Circular fortification. The rampart of which is faced with strong mason-work of large stones of which in several places it has been pillagd [sic]. Beyond the Rampart is a ditch quite round with a small Vallum or something like to serve instead of a counterscarp beyond the ditch. The Entrance in to the Fort is to the South East. Thro a large portal cross[?] which as a lintel lay formerly a large flat stone of 9 foot long, now fallen in the passage. On the left hand you perceive several stones sett [sic] on edge in a rowe [sic] parallel to the Circumference [sic] and in the Area (which is near half an acre) you see large heaps of Ruins. The falln [sic] walls of houses which formerly stood here, and do currently show that this was not a sudden work raisd [sic] only to secure a party of forces for a whole (as most other Castles in this neighbourhood seem to be) but a work of time in which were houses for inhabitants to reside in, and live as well free from the Injuries of the Heavens, as secure from the Incursions of an Enemy... One thing more is remarkable here which is, that this fort was not placed in the Ven [? sic] summit but on the declivity of an hill; which circumstance together with that of the Dwelling houses on the inside, give room to conjecture that this Fort was built by some considerable man or Prince among the Britons.’

Borlase considers the placing of the enclosure and then writes,

‘I don't know whether I need to add that the Place where this fort stands is calld [sic] the Geer croft, and yett [sic] Geer in Cornish signifies a Castle’.

The passage finishes with Borlase making comments on the original meaning of the place name.

Borlase WC, 1871 *Memoranda of Antiquities in Antiquarian Notes on Cornwall* (original in RIC)

It reads (p148-150) '*Chygnidden Castle*'.

'On the 22nd of April 1871, I visited the remains of Chygnidden Castle, and drew the plans, as see my Ancient Cornwall Vol 2, p15. The first plan represents the present state of the place, since its destruction by a man named Dennis, from whom I had the good fortune to hear of its former condition. He told me that before the cottages EE were built, the wall extended across the space now occupied by them and joined the south-western hedge which latter formed a portion of the old enclosure. At G was a gate way off the side five [hard to read] stones of which one removed to F and the other he partially buried. The hedge in which F is, as well as the line of stones at H were placed there by him from stones taken from the walls. He remembers removing an outer wall, extending all the way round, he remembers finding a copper or brass piece of money at A, with a figure of a person on one side, [...] much like a button; he also found a vessel of considerable dimensions and more than half an inch thick under a flat stone somewhere within the area. This contained ashes, like white wood ashes. He found great quantities of thick pottery; and at B he buried a great stone which tradition said could never be drawn out of the enclosure. At D are two very large 'bowls' and at C is a stone with an artificial concavity, used perhaps for grinding'

'The height of the wall at the northern corner is now 12 feet, and shows distinct traces of the parapet mentioned by Dr Borlase. There are also traces of the outer ditch, and of the large stones with which the inner rampart was faced. Dennis informed me also of a deep trench, covered with flat stones like a 'bolt' feeding up through the 'Geer' or 'Castle field', to the gate-way which he fancied was a secret way to the Castle. In some places in this field the soil is extremely deep, as if a trench had been formerly dug there. Adding the account to the one in the MSS of Dr Borlase (vid Par Mem p22) I was able to draw the second or restored plan. Dr B's measurements correspond exactly with my measurements of the Castle, ie the higher L inner ramparts. Dennis remembers the ruins of houses within the area of which Dr Borlase speaks.'

Borlase WC, 1872 *Naenia Cornubiae; A Descriptive Essay Illustrative of the Sepulchres and Funeral Customs of the Early Inhabitants of the County of Cornwall*

In the chapter entitled 'The Age of Monuments' Borlase comments on Chirgwiddden and writes,

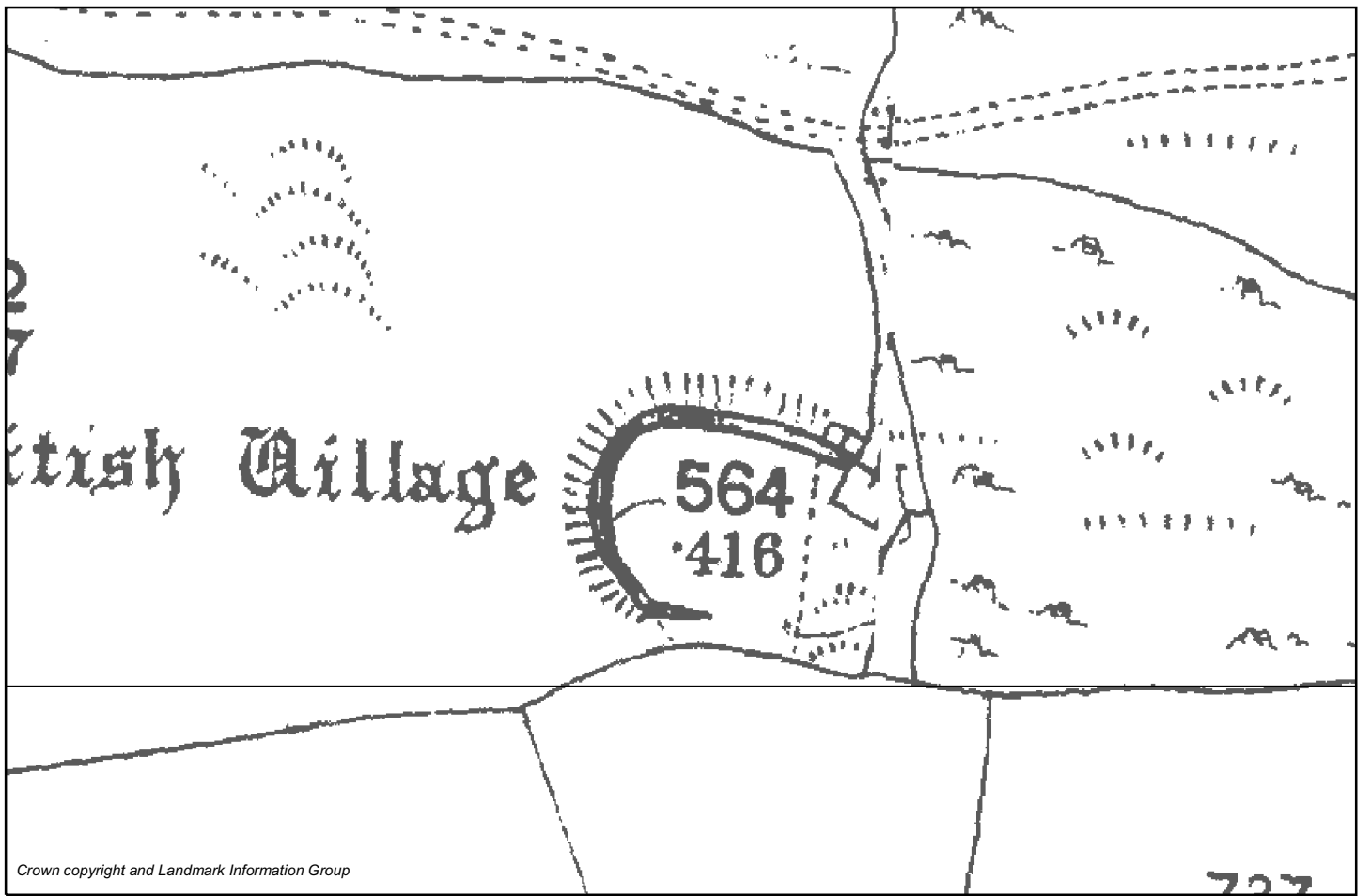
'At Chygnidden. The fortified enclosure which bears this name is situated, like the last mentioned places [Carn Euny and Bodinar Crellas], in the parish of Sancreed. Immediately inside the rampart, an old man named Dennis found several small copper coins, which, from the account he gave of them to the author, were undoubtedly Roman third brass. Pottery ashes, and mullars were also dug up in the same place. Within the memory of persons now living, there were small houses of the beehive kind in the centre of this enclosure; and a cave is said to have been discovered, roofed in with large slabs, in the next field.'

Borlase WC, 1874 *Vestiges of Early Habitation in Cornwall (Being an attempt to elucidate the age and origin of certain hut settlements in the West of England, from observations and discoveries made among the ruins themselves), Archaeol Jour 325-348*

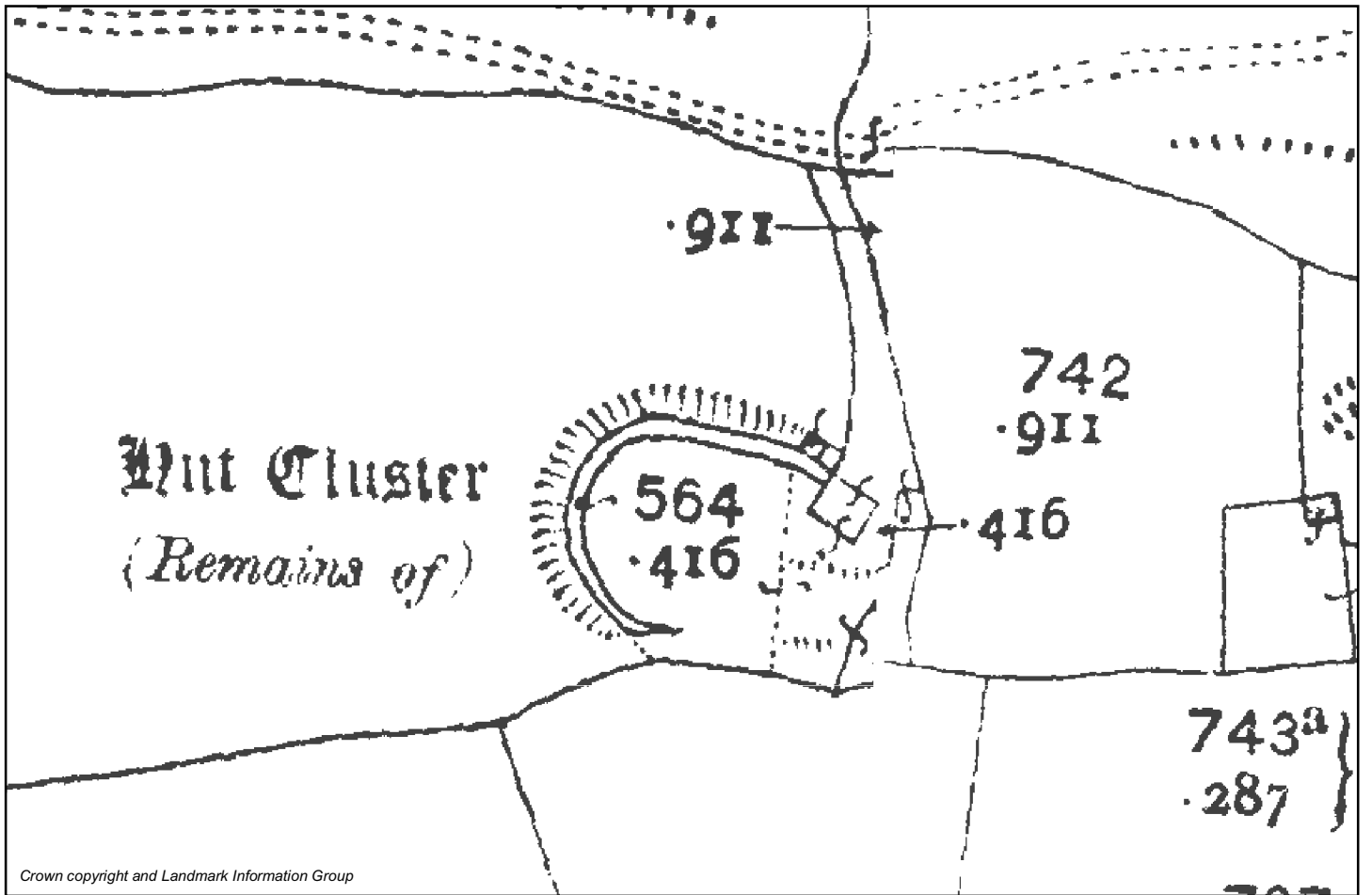
When commenting on the hut circles of western Cornwall he writes

'On the other hand, where no hill fortress was near by, the enclosing walls of the villages sometimes rose to a considerable height. Thus, at Chy-gnidden, in the parish of Sancreed, they measured from 12 to 15 foot high, including a parapet on the top. This place, though now almost demolished, was tolerably perfect when Dr Borlase visited in 1752. From his MS notes made on the spot it appears to have measured from out to out 150 ft in length, by 120 ft in breadth. Outside was a ditch 19ft broad, and beyond it a small vallum or counterscarp 5ft thick. The inner wall was 16ft wide and the courtyard about 90 ft in diameter. The

entrance which faced the SE was 'through a large portal 8ft wide, across which, as a lintel, lay formerly a large flat stone', then , 'fallen in to the passage'. The 'barracks' as the Doctor terms the side chambers, were placed round the court 'in a circular plan' and measured respectively in diameter 15ft, 24ft, 12^{1/2}-ft and 12 ft. Altogether this must have been , when the Doctor wrote, a larger more perfect but cluster than any in the neighbourhood at the present day. At present nothing remains of it but a portion of the northern wall, with two large granite boulders, as at Chysoister, lying in the area. The spot where it stands is known as the 'geer' or Castle Croft. In clearing away the ruins an, an old man informed me that ashes and pottery were found, and with them several thick copper farthings with the figure of a man upon them. These I have reason to suspect, were third brass Roman coins, like those at Bodinar'.

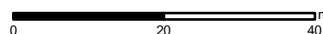
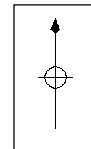


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Figure 20 1878 OS map (Top)
Figure 21 1908 OS map (Bottom)

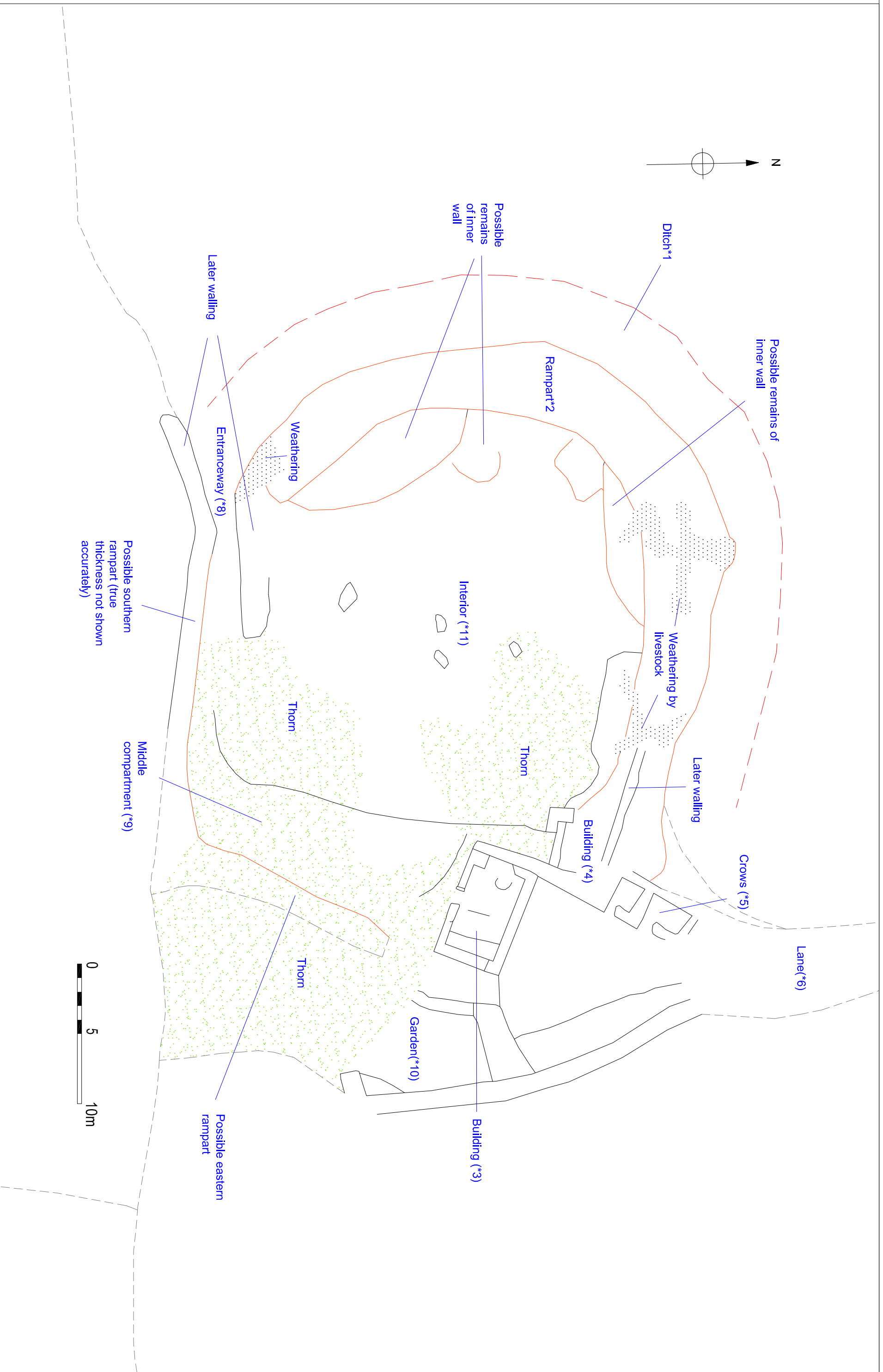


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- Prehistoric rampart
- Edge of Prehistoric ditch
- Weathering
- Thorn
- OS Multimap
- Survey data

Figure 22: Chirgwidan Vean enclosure and smallholding