

METRIC SURVEY OF CHAPMAN BARROW
EXMOOR HER 1061(11)
Longstone Landscape Community Archaeology Project

PROJECT REPORT

By Hazel Riley



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OASIS PROJECT NO I77725

ABBREVIATIONS

EH English Heritage

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

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ABSTRACT

A large prehistoric burial mound, one of the Chapman Barrows on the west side of Exmoor National Park, has been surveyed at a scale of 1:200 as part of the Longstone Landscape Community Archaeology Project. The survey has shown the extent of the excavations carried out in 1905 by Rev J Chanter, and demonstrated how the mound was constructed on ground which slopes down to the south. A small mound to the east of the barrow has also been surveyed and interpreted as a probable prehistoric embanked platform cairn.

ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION

COUNTY: Devon DISTRICT: North Devon PARISH: Challacombe

EXMOOR HER: MDE 1061(11)

SCHEDULED MONUMENT: EH National Heritage List for England 1004580

INTRODUCTION

A large scale, analytical earthwork survey of one of the Chapman Barrows was required in advance of further survey and investigation of the barrow as part of the Longstone Landscape Community Archaeology Project. This is a project which aims to research, record and more fully understand the moorland archaeology of Challacombe Common and is being undertaken by Parracombe Archaeology and History Society, the residents of Challacombe and Parracombe, North Devon Archaeological Society, the Exmoor Moorland Landscape Partnership Scheme and Exmoor National Park (www.heartofexmoor.org.uk).

Location, topography and geology

The Chapman Barrows are a linear group of prehistoric burial mounds which lie on a spur, part of the high ridge of moorland between the settlements of Parracombe and Challacombe on the western side of Exmoor National Park (Fig 1). The underlying bedrock consists of Combe Martin Slates of the Devonian period (www.bgs.ac.uk). The barrow considered here lies to the south of the linear cemetery, on the south side of the spur, at SS 7000 4320 and at a height of 475m OD. The barrow lies in a false crest position above Radworthy (Front Cover; Fig 2).

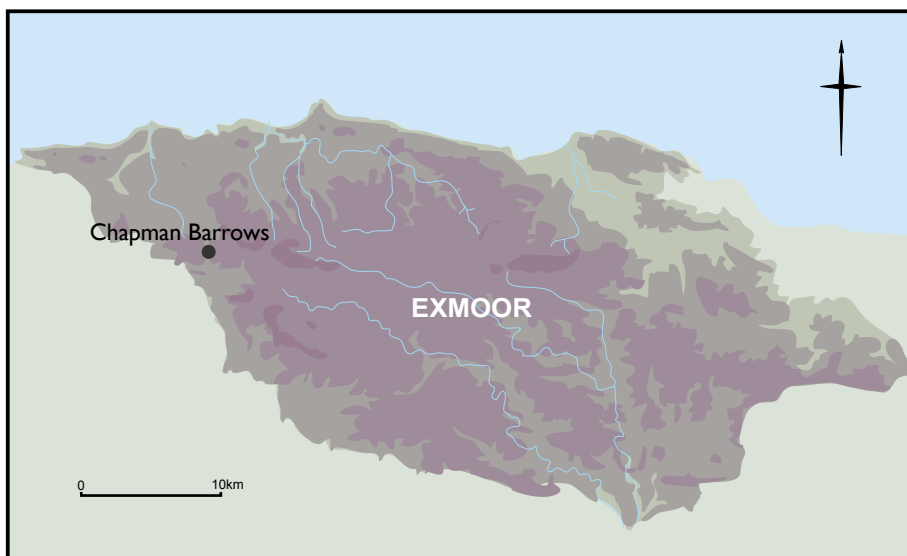


Fig 1 Location map

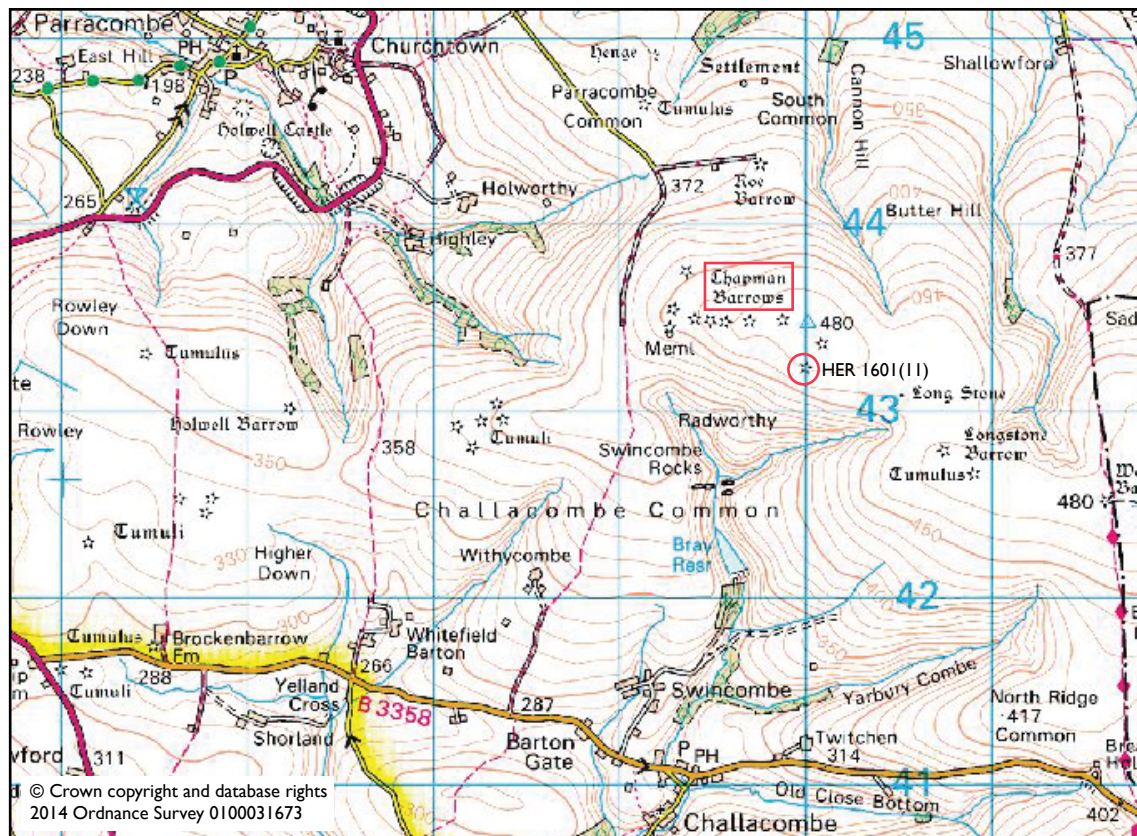
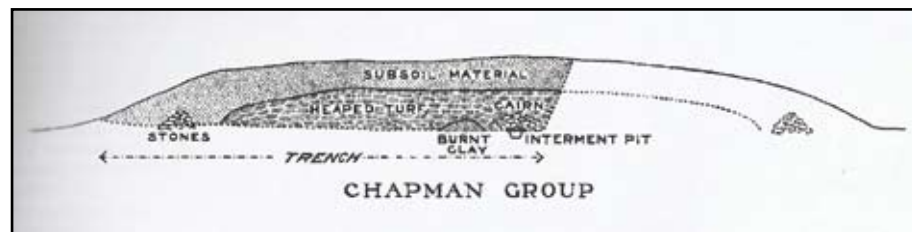
PREVIOUS WORK

The barrow was excavated by Rev J Chanter in 1905. A linear trench was dug into the SE section of the mound and the section obtained by this method showed a central, primary cremation, covered with a small cairn of stones. A mound of turf, inside a stone retaining wall, covered this and the whole structure was capped with subsoil material (Worth 1905, plate IV, reproduced in Fig 3). Chanter also investigated a group of 10 small mounds; two contained pits and others charcoal (EH NMR SS 64 SE 19).

The barrow was included in Grinsell's survey of the barrows of Devon (Grinsell 1970, number 28). Ordnance Survey and RCHME investigators noted a small mound to the SE of this barrow which was identified as either a spoil mound from Chanter's excavations or one of the small mounds in the vicinity also dug by Chanter in 1905 (EH NMR SS 64 SE 19). The RCHME carried out archaeological fieldwork across the area in the early 1990s (Riley and Wilson-North 2001; EH NMR records). The EH 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).

Fig 2 (below)
Location and
topography

Fig 3 (right)
section from
1905 excavation



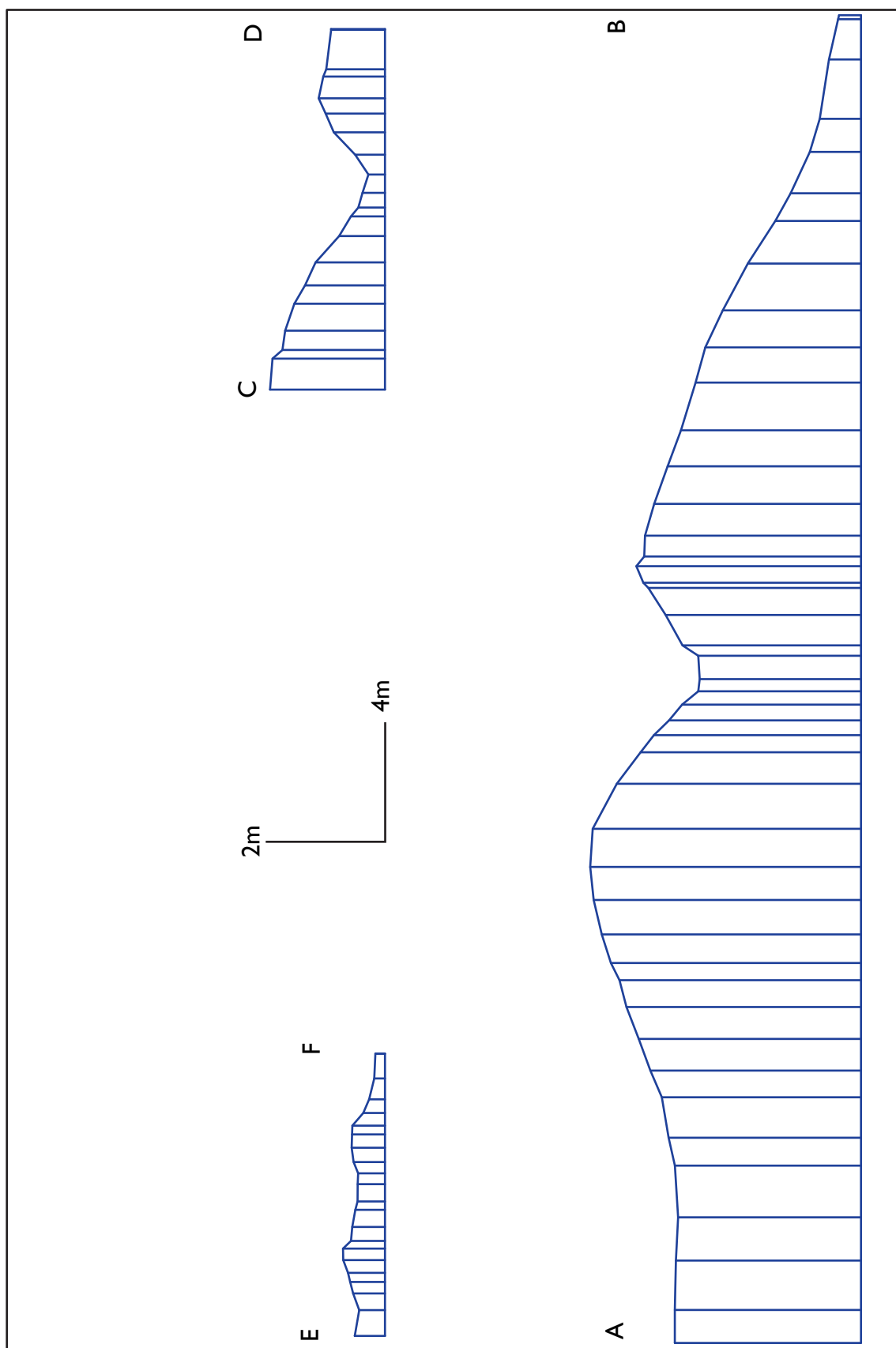


Fig 5 Profiles of the barrow (AB), excavation trench (CD) and embanked platform cairn (EF)

THE SURVEY

The fieldwork was carried out during February 2014. The barrow and the small mound to the SE were surveyed at a scale of 1:200 using survey grade differential GPS. Two profiles were surveyed across the barrow and the excavation trench, one profile was surveyed across the small mound. 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 4 reproduces the survey plan at 1:200 scale; Figure 5 shows the profiles with the vertical scale exaggerated by a factor of 2. Four survey markers were located (Fig 10).

DESCRIPTION AND INTERPRETATION

The barrow mound is circular and measures 33m in diameter. It is constructed on ground which slopes down from north to south (Figs 5 and 6): the mound is 1.5m high on the north side and 2.5m high on the south side. A linear trench has been cut into the SE section of the mound. The trench is 17m long, 4-5m wide and up to 1.8m deep (Fig 7). It represents the remains of the excavations carried out by Rev J Chanter in 1905 (Worth 1905; above). A low bank lies along the SW edge of the trench. This, together with a small mound on the west edge of the trench and a scarp on the north side of the trench, are probably associated with this excavation. A second linear cutting in the NE edge of the mound, 4m long, 1-1.5m wide and up to 0.2m deep could also be associated with Chanter's excavations.

Fig 6 The barrow from the east showing how it was constructed on sloping ground (Hazel Riley)



A second mound lies 16m to the east of the barrow at SS 70029 43199. It measures 7m EW, 6m NS and is 0.2-0.4m high. The hollow in the centre could be the result of Chanter's excavations, but the presence of two small upright stones on the east side suggest that this could be a prehistoric ceremonial monument, comprising a small embanked platform cairn with upright stones (Figs 8 and 9). This is very similar in size and form to the small mounds associated with barrow groups at Hurley Beacon, Wilmot's Pool, Lydeard Hill and Beacon Hill on the Quantock Hills which have been interpreted as prehistoric burial cairns or ceremonial monuments (Riley, H 2006, figs 2.14, 2.18, 2.21).



Fig 7 The remains of Chanter's 1905 excavation trench in the SE side of the barrow (Hazel Riley)

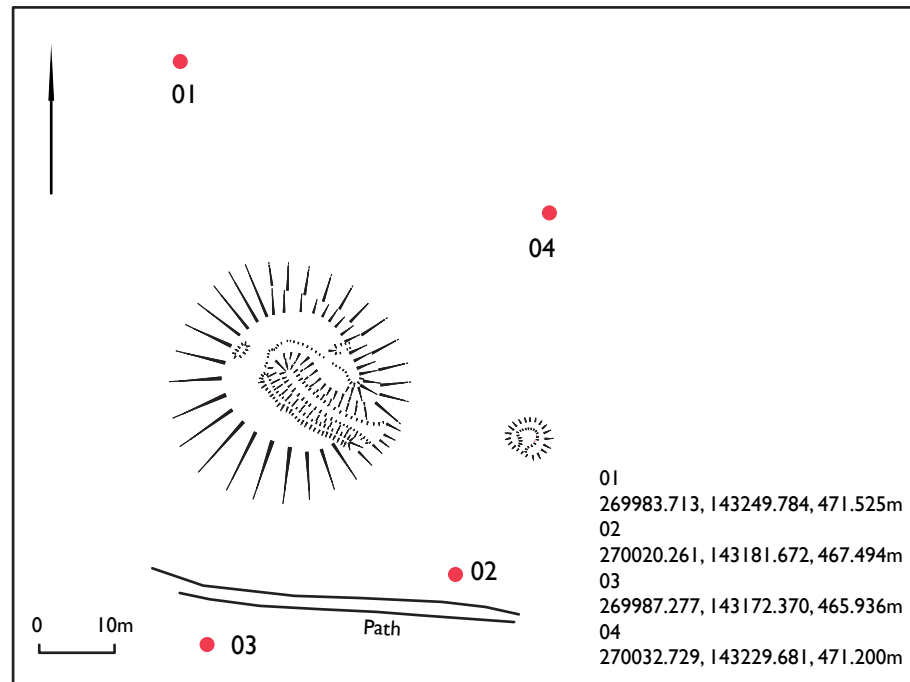


Figure 8 The prehistoric embanked platform cairn to the east of the barrow (Hazel Riley)



Fig 9 Upright stone on the small embanked platform cairn (Hazel Riley)

Fig 10 Location
of survey markers



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Rob Wilson-North organised access.

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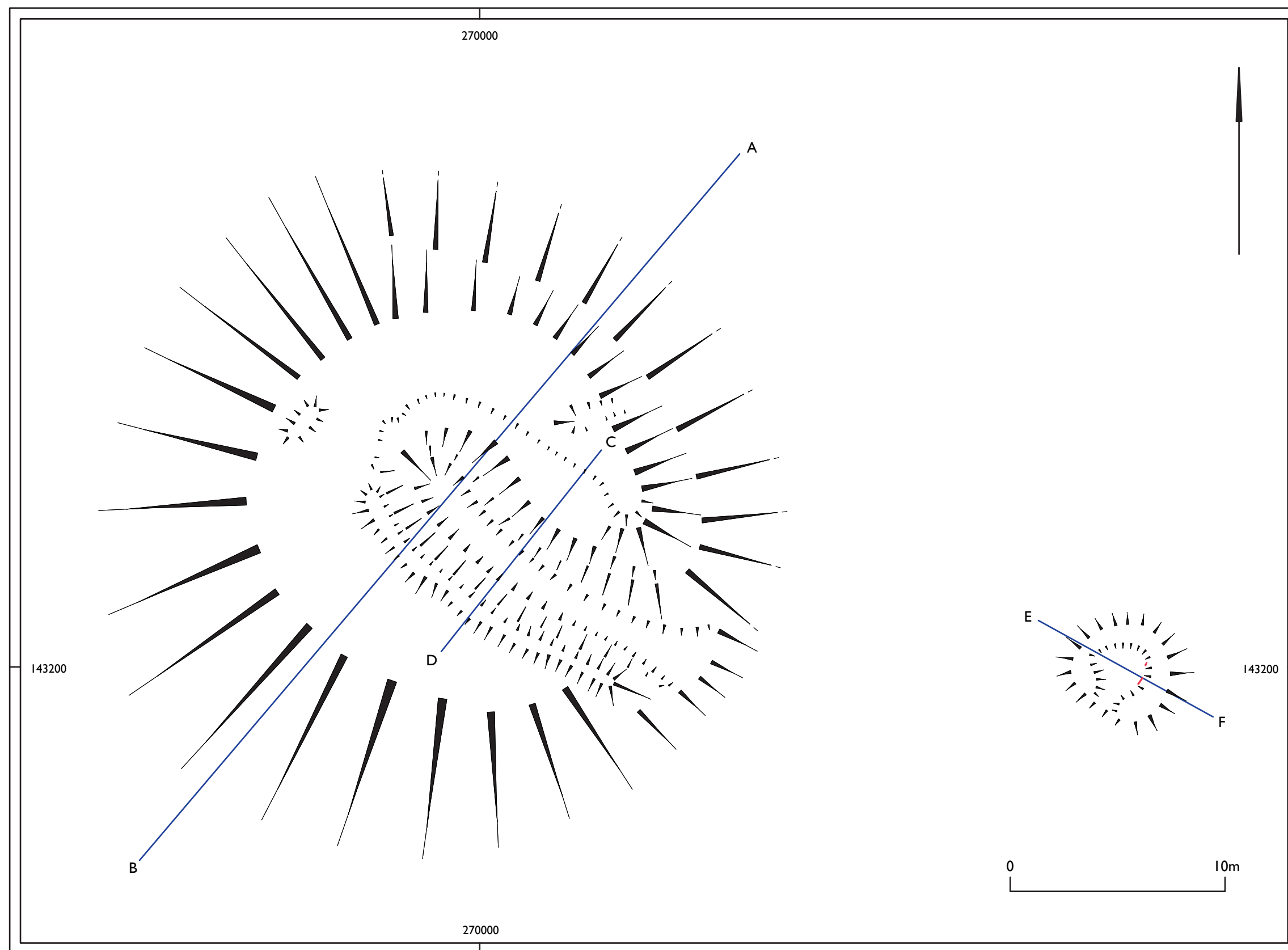


Fig 4 Survey plan (1:200 scale)



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