

METRIC SURVEY OF AN EMBANKED PLATFORM
CAIRN ON MONKHAM HILL, LUXBOROUGH,
EXMOOR NATIONAL PARK
HE List Entry 1021231
PROJECT REPORT

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OASIS PROJECT NO 283941

ABBREVIATIONS

ENPA Exmoor National Park Authority

ETRS89 European Terrestrial Reference System 1989

FC Forestry Commission

GPS Global Positioning System

HE Historic England

HER Historic Environment Record

OS Ordnance Survey

OSAD Ordnance Survey Archaeology Division

OSGM15 Ordnance Survey Geoid Model 2015

OSTN15 Ordnance Survey Transformation 2015

RICS Royal Institution Chartered Surveyors

SM Scheduled Monument

ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION

HE List Entry number: 1021231

HE NMR number: SS 93 NE 2

Exmoor HER number: MSO 7442

County: Somerset

District: West Somerset

Parish: Luxborough

NGR: SS 99357 39016

Exmoor National Park

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Nick Salter facilitated access for the survey work.

FIGURE LIST AND IMAGE ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Front cover Looking NE across the cairn (Hazel Riley)

Figure 1 Location map

Fig 2 Survey location and topography (© Crown copyright and database rights 2017 Ordnance Survey 0100031673)

Figure 3 Cairn and barrow on open moorland of Rodhuish Common, 1889 (OS 1st edition map) (© Crown copyright and database rights 2017 Ordnance Survey 100024878)

Figure 4 Plan (1:200) and profiles (1:200; vertical x2)

Figure 5 The east side of the bank (1m scale) (Hazel Riley)

Figure 6 A disused, deep vehicle track cuts into the western side of the mound (1m scale) (Hazel Riley)

Figure 7 The stony mound (1m scale) (Hazel Riley)

Figure 8 The newly discovered cairn to the NW of SM1021231 (1m scale) (Hazel Riley)

Figure 9 The large barrow SM1021227 (1m scale) (Hazel Riley)



Fig 1 Location map

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 A large scale survey of a cairn, SM1021231, on Monkham Hill was undertaken for HE and the FC, following clearance of scrub across the site. The survey has suggested that this monument is an embanked platform cairn rather than a robbed barrow as previously suggested; a large round barrow and a newly discovered platform cairn to the NW make this a group of three distinct types of Bronze Age funerary monuments, repeated elsewhere on the uplands of the South West peninsula.

2.0 INTRODUCTION

2.1 This report sets out the results of a large scale, metric survey of a cairn on the east side of Monkham Hill, following clearance of the site by the FC as part of ongoing management of this Scheduled Monument, commissioned by HE and the FC (Riley 2017). The survey was required to understand the extent, morphology and location of the monument, which had previously been difficult to locate and interpret due to the scrub which obscured much of the site. The cairn forms part of a group of three Bronze Age funerary monuments on this part of Monkham Hill and these are also briefly considered as part of this report.

2.2 The cairn lies at the NE side of Exmoor National Park, on the eastern side of Monkham Hill, north of Luxborough, at an altitude of 356m OD and at NGR SS 99357 39016 (Figs 1 and 2).

2.3 The underlying geology of the survey area comprises sandstones of the Devonian Hangman Sandstone Formation (bgs.ac.uk).

2.4 The cairn lies in a clearing on the edge of a mature conifer plantation, managed by the FC (Front cover), on land which was formerly open moorland and part of Rodhuish Common (OS 1st edition map 1889; Fig 3).

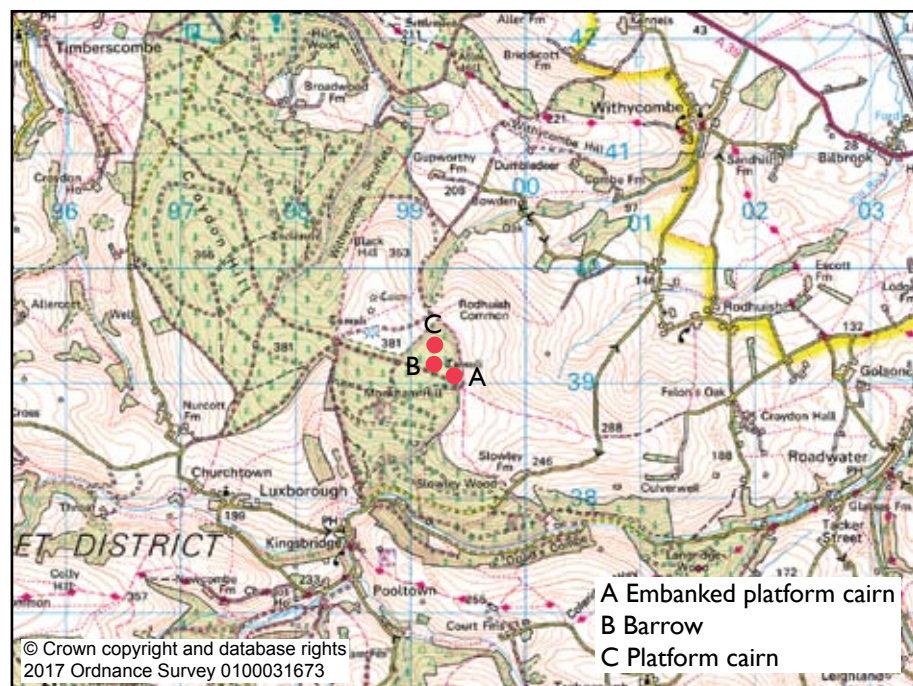


Fig 2 Location of the cairns and barrow on Monkham Hill

2.5 The cairn was surveyed on the OS 1st edition map, published in 1889. It is depicted as a low, stony mound, quite different to the large earthwork mound making up the neighbouring round barrow (Fig 3). Leslie Grinsell visited the site in the 1960s and described it as a bowl barrow, 14 paces in diameter and one foot high with a hollow in the centre (Grinsell 1969, 35, Luxborough No. 3). The OSAD surveyor described the cairn as 'the rim of a bowl barrow 0.3m high' (NMR SS 93 NE 2). The RCHME's archaeological survey of Exmoor noted that the monument was 'a round barrow occupying a striking position on the crest of the Exmoor escarpment. It comprises a circular spread of stone 0.4m high and 13.2m in diameter' (NMR SS 93 NE 2).

3.0 OBJECTIVES

3.1 The principal aim of the survey was to determine the location, extent and morphology of the Scheduled Monument 1021231.

4.0 METHODOLOGY

4.1 A Level 3 analytical earthwork survey of the monument was carried out on 9th and 14th March 2017. Some detail was surveyed and control points were established at the north, south, east and west sides of the cairn. The survey was carried out using survey grade differential GPS. The resulting ETRS89 data was transformed to OSGB36 using OSTN15 and OSGM15 (www.ordnancesurvey.co.uk/gps/transformation; Greaves *et al* 2016). Observation times were based on those recommended by the OS and RICS in order to obtain accurate heighting information (OS 2010; RICS 2010). The earthwork survey was completed at a scale of 1:200 using tape and offsets from the control point network. Two profiles were surveyed N/S and E/W across the cairn using GPS (Fig 4).

4.2 Photographs of representative areas of the monument were taken and these form part of the project archive which is deposited at the Exmoor HER, ENPA.

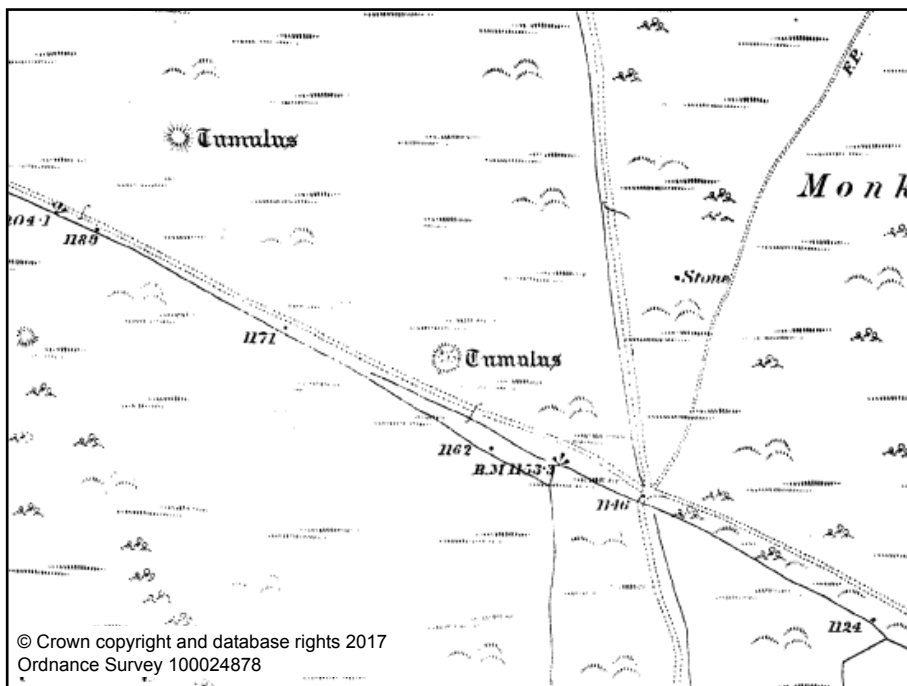


Fig 3 Cairn and barrow on open moorland of Rodhuish Common, 1889 (OS 1st edition map)

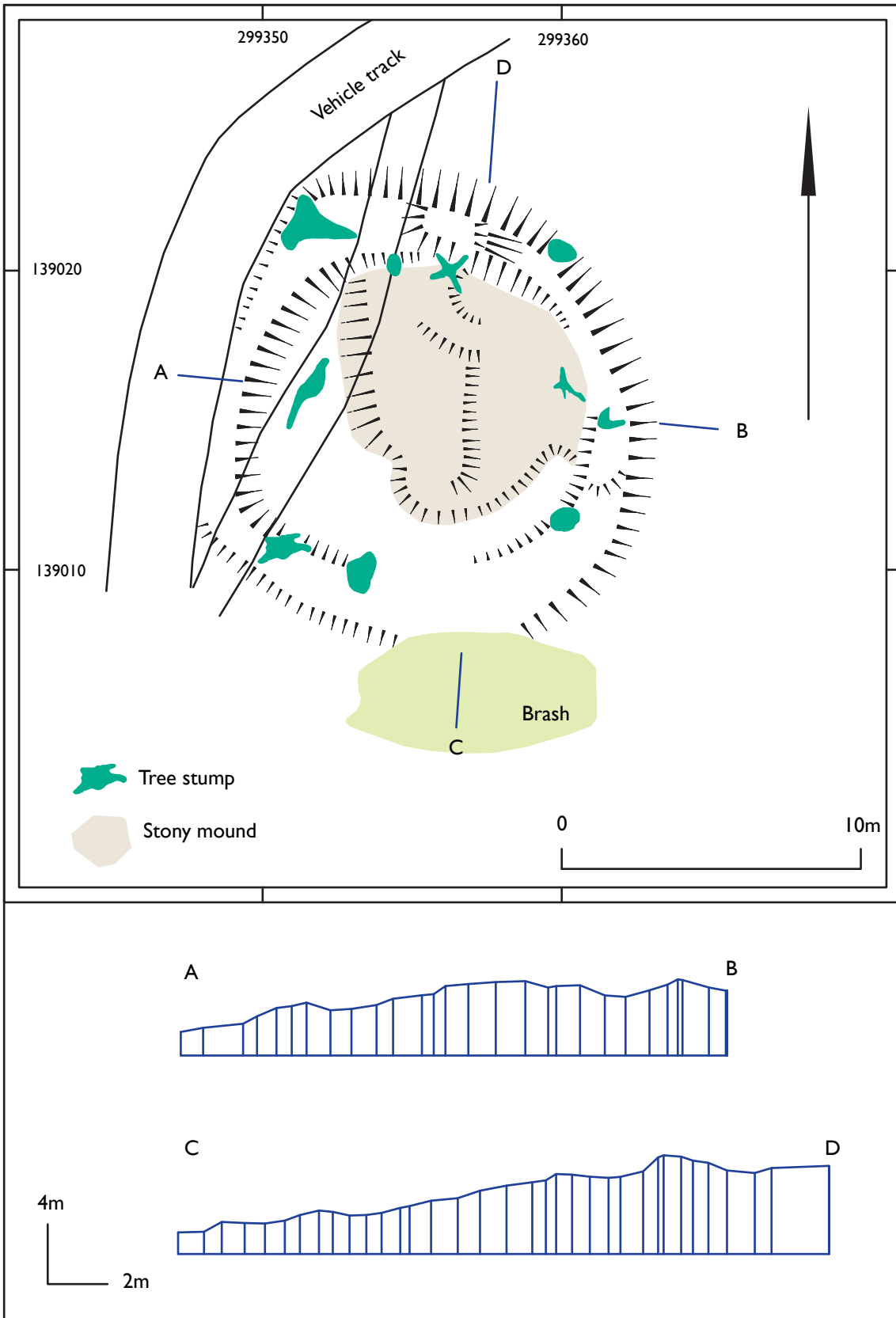


Fig 4 Plan (1:200) and profiles (1:200, vertical x2)

4.3 The extent of the monument was marked out by flagged survey pins along its perimeter. A buffer zone 15m wide around the monument was marked by canes, measured with a tape out from the monument, as accurately as the tree cover and scrub allowed.

4.4 Nick Salter located a previously unknown cairn in a mature conifer plot to the NW of the site SM 1021231. This site was recorded using hand held GPS, photography and a written description. The extent of the monument was marked out by flagged survey pins along its perimeter.

4.5 The survey archive has been deposited with the Exmoor HER, ENPA.

5.0 RESULTS

5.1 The site comprises a low, very stony, circular bank, 3m wide and up to 0.7m high (Fig 5). The west side has been destroyed by a disused, deep vehicle track (Fig 6) but the plan shows that the bank was originally circular and 16m in diameter (Fig 4). The NE part of the centre of the interior is occupied by a spread mound of stones 0.5-0.7 m high (Fig 7). Two hollows to the north and east may be the remains of stone robbing; it has been disturbed and probably spread by vehicle tracks.



Fig 5 (left) The east side of the ring bank (1m scale) (Hazel Riley)

Fig 6 (bottom left) A disused, deep vehicle track cuts into the western side of the mound (1m scale) (Hazel Riley)

Fig 7 (below) The stone mound (1m scale) (Hazel Riley)



5.2 A second cairn in a plot of mature conifers was discovered to the NW of this site by Nick Salter, at SS 99226 39293 (Site C, Fig 2). This is a flat-topped, very stony mound, 11m N/S, 9.5m E/W and up to 1m high (Fig 8). Damage to the west side by a vehicle has exposed some of the stone making up the mound.

6.0 DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 The cairn, previously thought to be a robbed barrow, is probably a ring cairn with a mound in the interior. Similar sites, comprising a ring bank with mound material inside, have been described as embanked platform cairns on the Quantock Hills and rimmed platform cairns on Bodmin Moor (Riley 2006, 37, fig 2.19; Johnson and Rose 1994, 40, fig 37).

6.2 This cairn, together with the large round barrow SM 1021227 (Fig 9) and the newly discovered platform cairn to the NW form a group of three distinct types of funerary monuments in a prominent location on the NE edge of the Exmoor escarpment,

Fig 8 (right) The newly discovered cairn to the NW of SM1021231 (1m scale) (Hazel Riley)



Fig 9 (below) The large round barrow SM1021227 (1m scale) (Hazel Riley)



looking out north across the Bristol Channel and east towards the Quantock Hills. These structural differences may well relate to the different way that the sites were used: cremation, perhaps on the site of the platform cairn, followed by the interment of the ashes in the barrow, and the disposal of the cremation pyre within the embanked platform cairn (Riley 2006, 38-43).

6.3 The newly discovered platform cairn should be put forward to HE for Scheduling.

7.0 REFERENCES

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