



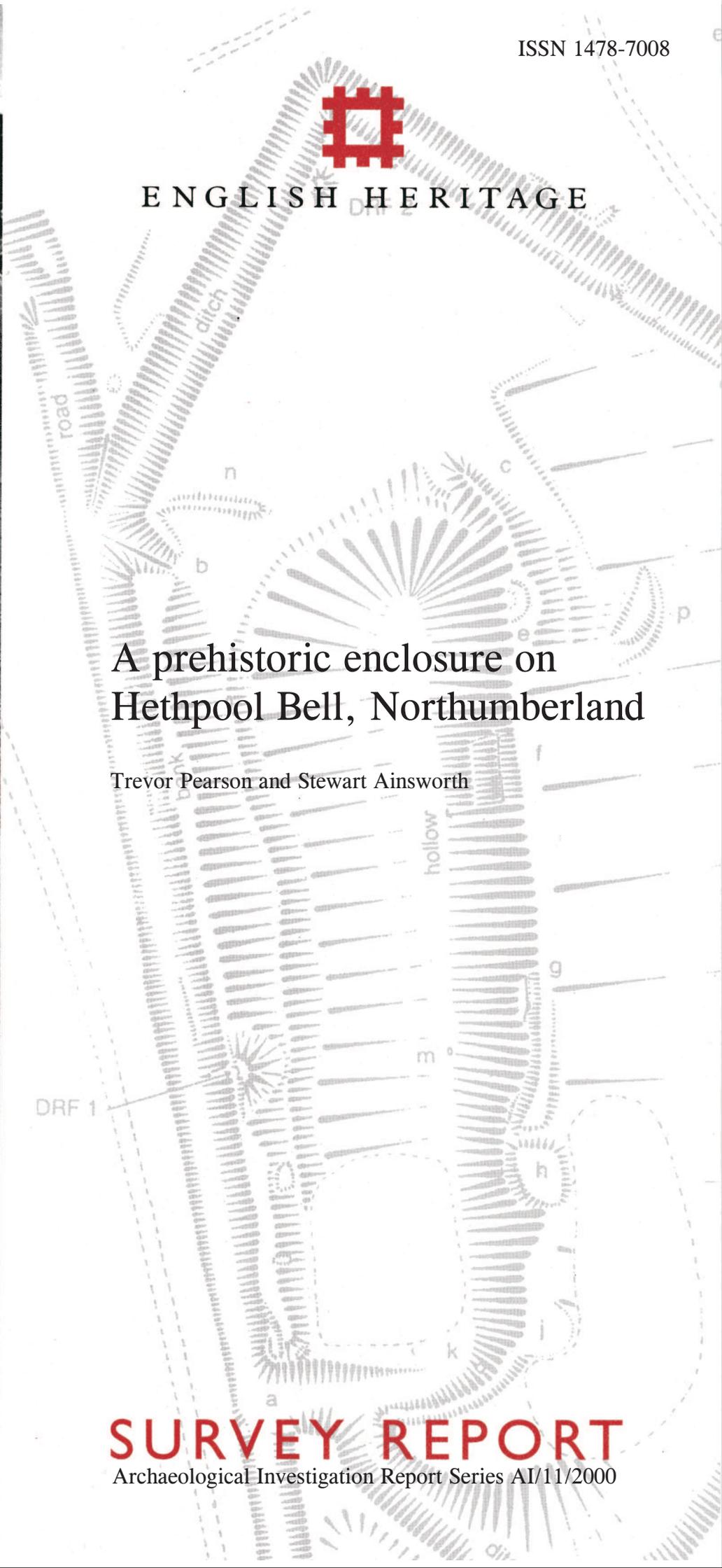
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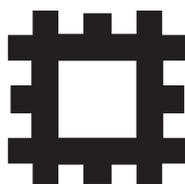
A prehistoric enclosure on Hethpool Bell, Northumberland

Trevor Pearson and Stewart Ainsworth

SURVEY REPORT

Archaeological Investigation Report Series AI/11/2000





A PREHISTORIC ENCLOSURE ON HETHPOOL BELL NORTHUMBERLAND

Archaeological Investigation Report Series AI/11/2000

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1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND TO THE SURVEY

Between the middle of December 1999 and the end of January 2000, English Heritage carried out a 1:500 scale survey of an enclosure on a hill named Hethpool Bell in Northumberland. The field investigation formed part of the Northumberland National Park Authority's project entitled 'Discovering our hillfort heritage', funded jointly by the European Union through the European Agricultural Guidance and Guarantee Fund, the Heritage Lottery Fund through the Tweed Forum initiative, English Heritage and the Northumberland National Park Authority. Hethpool Bell lies 1.5km south-west of the village of Kirknewton, in the parish of the same name, in the district of Berwick upon Tweed (National Grid Reference NT 9020 2881). The earthwork survey was one of a number intended to improve understanding of the archaeological remains and to inform the conservation and management of supposed Iron Age hillforts within the National Park (Frodsham 2000). The enclosure is protected as a Scheduled Ancient Monument (ND 463). It is recorded in the Sites and Monuments

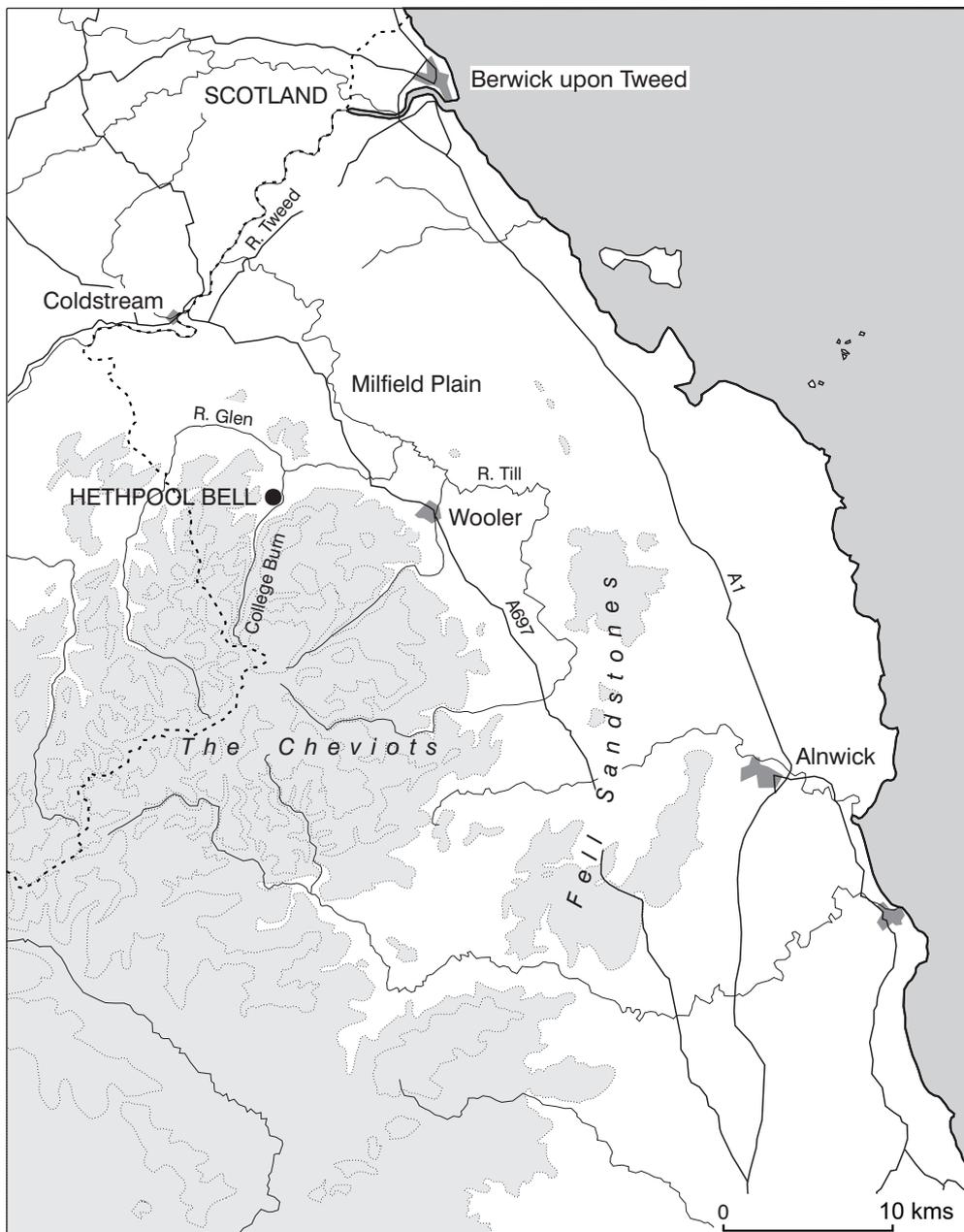


Figure 1.
Location
map

Record for Northumberland as 209/11, and in the National Monuments Record (NMR) as NT 92 NW 11.

The enclosure is situated on a shelf on the south side of the hill at 220m above OD, some 26m below the summit. It is 'egg-shaped' in plan, orientated almost due north-south and mostly defined by a turf-covered stony bank. No evidence for occupation was found. Later activity on the site consists of an animal pen and possible shelter overlying the north end of the enclosure (NMR No. NT 92 NW 111) and a small windbreak built on top of the bank on the south-west side. The field investigation concluded that although there is a degree of confidence that the enclosure is likely to be prehistoric, there is insufficient evidence to classify it as a hillfort.

2. GEOLOGY, TOPOGRAPHY AND LAND USE.

Hethpool Bell is a prominent hill on the north edge of the Cheviot Hills overlooking the valley of the River Glen (Glendale) on the north and that of its tributary, the College Burn, on the east and south (Figure 1). The hill is formed from andesite, a hard volcanic rock that changes from a deep pink colour to pale grey when weathered. It fractures readily and several outcrops within the surveyed area show signs of having been quarried for stone. The valley bottoms and the base of Hethpool Bell are covered by a mantle of glacial deposits and overlying colluvium (hillwash) but on the upper slopes and summit of the hill there is only a thin covering of topsoil.

The north side of Hethpool Bell rises gently from Glendale and the hill is relatively unprepossessing when viewed from this valley compared to the neighbouring steep-sided peaks of West Hill and Yeavinger Bell to the east. In contrast, the hill dominates the lower reaches of the College Valley which stretches 10kms southwards from Glendale, past Hethpool Bell and into the heart of the Cheviot massif. The south and east sides of Hethpool Bell rise steeply from the floor of the College Valley and the enclosure is situated on a south-east facing shelf, immediately above a bend where the valley is at its narrowest. This position gives the enclosure an open view to the south-east for several kilometres down the College Valley, whilst the south and east sides look out across the valley to the summits of Easter Tor and West Hill



*Figure 2.
Oblique aerial
photograph of the
site from
the north.
(Photograph
Tim Gates*

respectively. However, the view north is restricted by the slope up to the summit of Hethpool Bell.

When viewed from the College Valley to the south, the shelf stands out as a distinct step in the profile of the hill, its slightly raised top giving the impression of a second peak below the main summit, whilst viewed from the north and east, rock outcrops below the crest further accentuate the feature. Visually the hill appears to block access into the valley from the north as it sits across the direct line of sight down the College Valley towards Glendale. The enclosure is not visible from the floor of the College Valley though with the original perimeter wall standing to its full height, it would probably have stood out against the skyline when viewed from the valley to the south, and from the confluence of the College Valley and Glendale to the north. Indeed, when viewed from the north, the shelf on which the enclosure is located topographically dominates the 'entrance' to the College Valley in a way that the higher summit of Hethpool Bell does not. This raises the possibility that the siting of the enclosure may have been dictated less by defence than by fact that it appeared to symbolically guard the entry into the College Valley.

The highest part of the shelf occupied by the enclosure is roughly triangular in shape and is defined on two sides, the east and south, by steep natural slopes and rock outcrops. However, on the third side, to the north-west, the ground shelves to a saddle separating the peak from the main slope of Hethpool Bell. The saddle continues around the east side of Hethpool Bell and is the natural route onto the shelf from the north from the confluence of the College Valley and Glendale. The enclosure encompasses all of the triangular summit of the shelf and also drops down beyond the southern outcrop to include part of a lower terrace.

The area surveyed is under rough pasture and is grazed by sheep. Hethpoolbell Wood, which is a long-established plantation of deciduous trees, covers the slope immediately below the south-west side of the enclosure whilst a drystone wall crosses the east side of the site. There is a 1.5m wide gate in the drystone wall close to where the wall crosses the west side of the enclosure but there is no evidence of a track or path leading to this point, suggesting the gate is little used. A post and wire fence joins the east side of the stone wall just to the south of the enclosure. The land is privately owned and there is no public access to the site.

3.HISTORY OF RESEARCH

The earliest large-scale depiction of the site is from 1860 when both HH MacLauchlan and the Ordnance Survey mapped the site (MacLauchlan 1860; Ordnance Survey 1861). MacLauchlan's plan (at a scale of 8 chains to the inch -1:6336) shows a gap in the south bank close to the point where it is crossed by the drystone wall (Figure 3). He presumably considered this gap to be the entrance into the enclosure. No huts or other settlement remains are shown on the plan; this is significant because MacLauchlan was a skilled observer and would have shown such remains if he had encountered them. He depicted the change in ground level across the interior of the enclosure and despite the absence of settlement remains, labelled the enclosure as a camp. His plan shows a track crossing the hilltop following the saddle separating the shelf on which the enclosure is located from the main slope of Hethpool Bell. The existing gate through the drystone wall is on the line of this track. In his description of the site, which was published posthumously, MacLauchlan refers to the enclosure as a triangular-shaped camp noting also the ruined condition of the bank (MacLauchlan 1919-22, 469). The Ordnance Survey plan - published at 1:2500 scale - shows the outline of the enclosure as a continuous circuit with the drystone wall traversing the east side of the site. The second edition revised in 1896 adds nothing further to the depiction (Ordnance Survey 1897).

The site has received little attention from later fieldworkers in the Cheviots. AHA Hogg, who conducted an extensive survey of prehistoric sites in Northumberland, simply referred to Hethpool Bell as an oval-shaped earthwork with a single rampart (Hogg 1947, 155). In 1955, E Geary of the Ordnance Survey Archaeology Division described the site (NMR No. NT 92 NW 11 – Authority 4) and, in contrast to MacLauchlan, placed the entrance on the north-west side and described the enclosure bank as being up to 6.0m wide and a maximum of 0.5m high. He raised doubts over the defensive nature of the enclosure, drawing attention to the slight remains of the

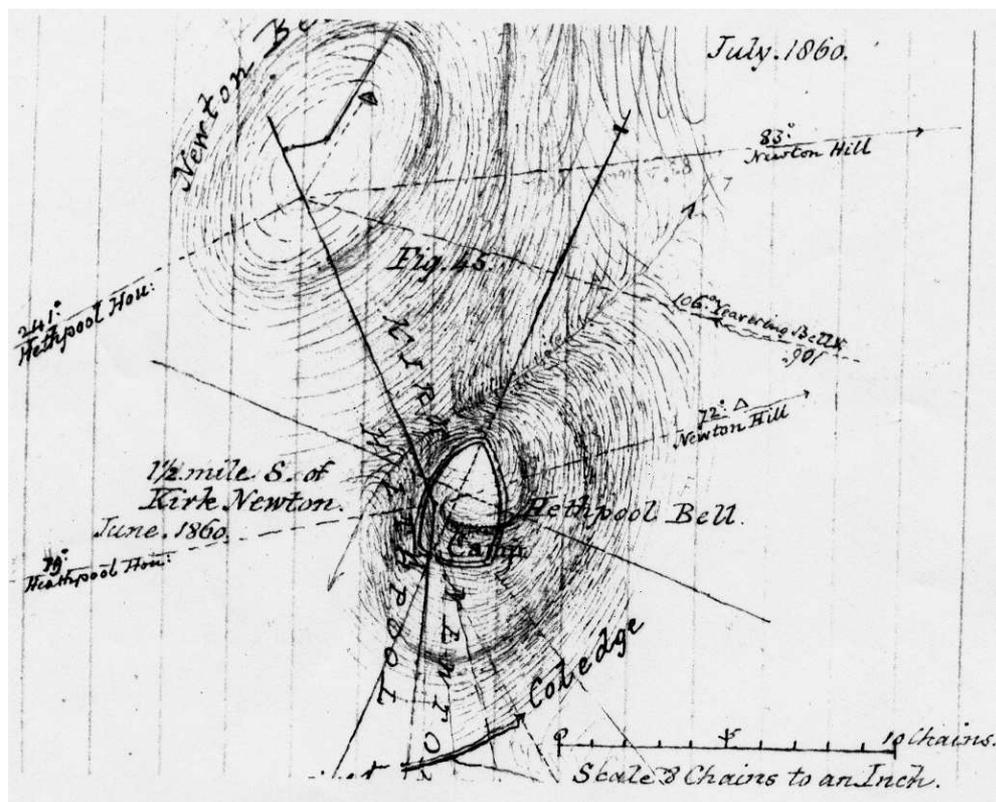


Figure 3.
MacLauchlan's
survey of 1860
(reproduced by
permission of His
Grace the Duke of
Northumberland)

bank and the poor defensive situation of the site. G Jobey, who had extensive knowledge of Cheviot archaeology, likewise seems to have been unconvinced by the site as a hillfort, only tentatively including it in his published list of pre-Roman Iron Age univallate forts (Jobey 1965, 62). In 1976, D Lowry of the Ordnance Survey Archaeology Division visited the site (NMR No. NT 92 NW 11 – Authority 6) and was left with a stronger impression of the site's defensive capabilities than the previous two authorities, remarking on the strength of the enclosure bank and the site's excellent strategic position. There has therefore not been unanimous acceptance of the site as a hillfort.

4. DESCRIPTION AND INTERPRETATION OF THE EARTHWORKS (Figures 5 and 6)

4.1 The Enclosure

The enclosure is a strikingly symmetrical 'egg-shape' with the long axis aligned almost due north-south with the broad end on the south, tapering almost to a sharp point at the north. Its maximum internal dimensions are 64m north-south and 40m east-west and it covers an area of 0.2ha. It is bisected by the east-west rock outcrop (up to 3m high) which defines the south side of the shelf summit. Thus the enclosure is on two levels; the north part occupies the triangular shaped summit of the shelf whilst the south end encircles part of the terrace below (Figure 5).



*Figure 4.
Ground
photograph
looking north
from the lower
terrace showing
the outcrop on the
south of the
summit*

Around the north, the enclosure follows two sides of the triangular summit of the shelf. On the north-east it runs along the top of a rock outcrop situated just below the crest, and on the north-west it follows the top of a slight rise above the saddle linking with the main slope of Hethpool Bell. On the south-east side the bank takes a straight line down the face of the outcrop, and at the bottom curves sharply round to the west, dropping down the hillside for a short distance. The south-west side of the enclosure is virtually a mirror image of the south-east, the bank running directly down the steep slope onto the lower terrace, dropping a further 2-3m down the hillside to match the curve of the south-east side. Despite the difficulty of the terrain and the fact that the south and north ends of the enclosure are not intervisible, the plan of the enclosure is almost perfectly symmetrical about its north-south axis.

The enclosure is formed by a turf-covered, stony bank of variable character. The best preserved portion of the bank is on the south-west of enclosure on the west side of the drystone wall, where it survives up to 6.0m wide and the outside of the bank attains a maximum height of 1.5m. The bank here is not as extensively covered with turf as the rest of the perimeter and therefore some constructional details are exposed. The surviving core of the bank is made up almost entirely of small, fist-sized stones though it is possible that larger stones may have been lost due to later robbing. A line of larger angular boulders up to 0.5m in length near the top outside edge of the bank probably represents the base of an exterior wall face and the 2-3m spread beyond this line is therefore tumble from the outward collapse of the wall and its rubble core (Figure 7).

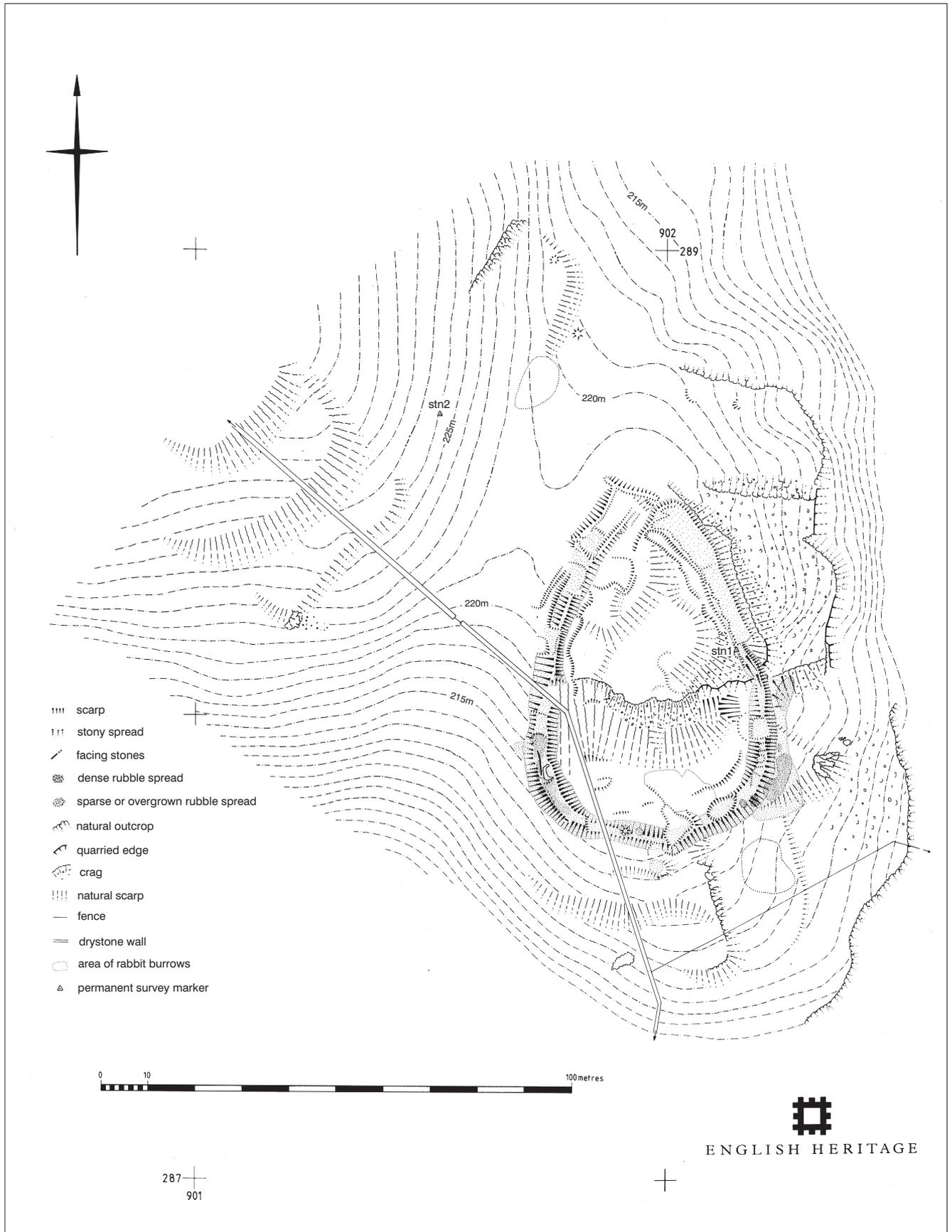


Figure 5. English Heritage survey (reduced from 1:500 scale original)

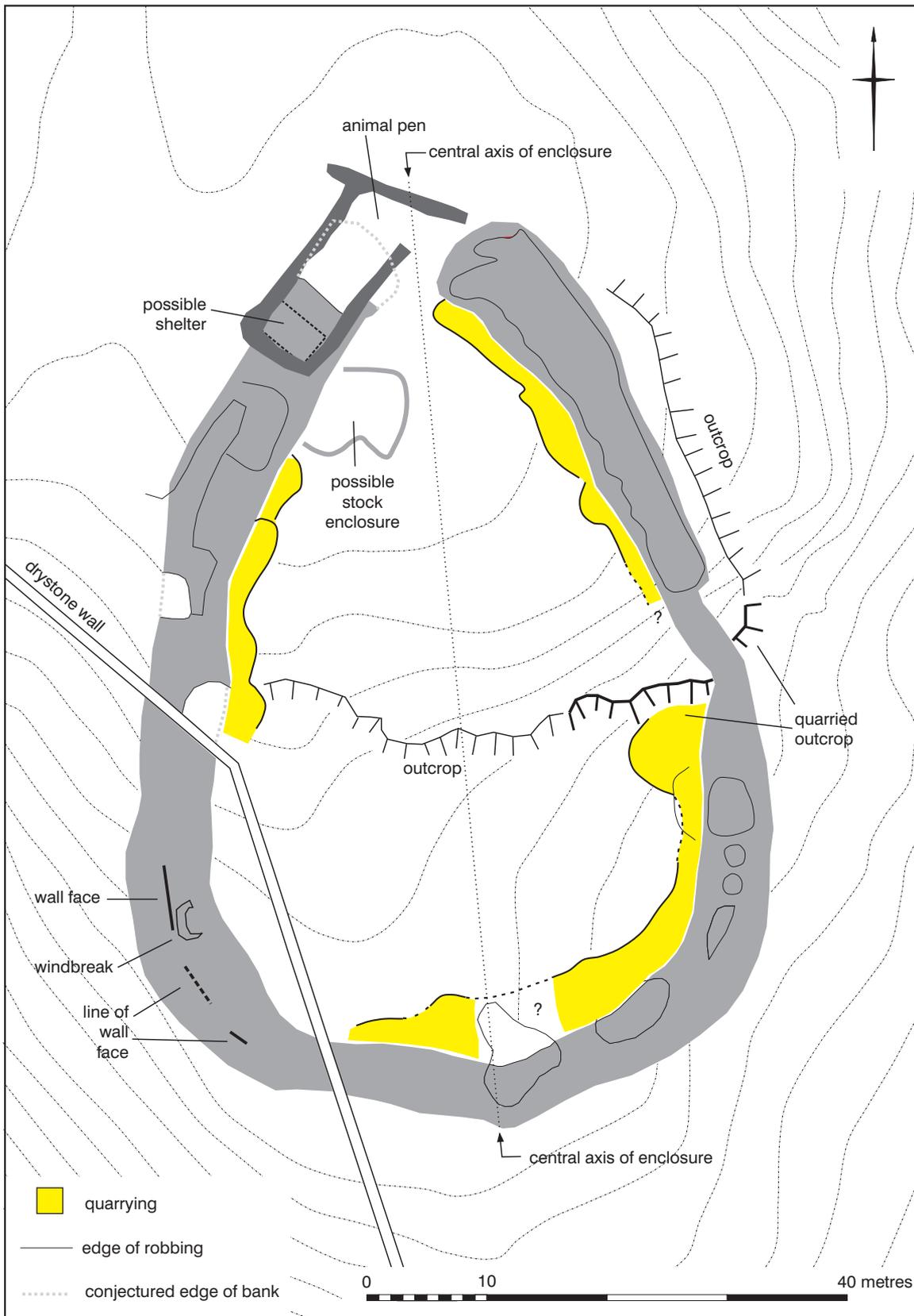


Figure 6. Schematic plan showing the main features of the site



*Figure 7.
Ground
photograph of
the south-west
side of the
enclosure
showing the
possible wall
face within the
bank*

The line of the wall face is picked out further south by a straight edge among the otherwise random spread of stones perhaps indicating where boulders have been removed. Further south several isolated, well-set boulders mark the continued line of the wall face. With no evidence for an inside wall face, it is difficult to estimate the original width of the bank but allowing for some collapse on the inside, the evidence suggests the it was probably no more than 2.5m wide. There is no evidence for the original height of the wall but the fact that the bank is at its most massive in this sector suggests it was probably higher here than elsewhere around the circuit. This may have been to compensate for the fact that the enclosure drops down the shoulder of the hill at this point, or it may simply reflect less robbing has taken place west of the drystone wall (see below).

The evidence thus points to the enclosure wall probably having consisted of a rubble core, faced on the outside with larger, unworked boulders. The bank is consistently 5-6m wide around most of the circuit, except on the north-west side where the bank has been extensively modified by later robbing and the construction of an animal pen (see below) and on the middle of the east side where it ascends the outcrop. Here the

bank narrows to less than 2m wide and the volume of stone in the bank is the least of anywhere around the circuit (Figure 8). This could indicate that the wall was never built up to the same extent as the rest of the enclosure because of the difficulty of the terrain at this point or alternatively that it has suffered badly from erosion on the steep slope. Immediately to the south, stone rubble from the bank has spread up to 7m down the slope. This build up could be partly the result of erosion but may indicate the bank was founded on a rubble revetment.

On all but the south-west side of the enclosure there is evidence of a shallow, internal quarry ditch on the inside of the bank. This is generally no more than 5m wide and 0.3m deep and consists of a series of conjoined scoops. Along the north-east, this ditch is more regular and well-formed than elsewhere and its rounded northern end looks like the original terminal. The fact that no quarry pits were observed at the south-west side of the enclosure may be due to the longer grass growing here at the time of the survey.

There is evidence that the main rock outcrop on the south side of the shelf summit was quarried prior to the construction of the enclosure wall. The outcrop's vertical and relatively unweathered faces contrast markedly with the rounded appearance of naturally weathered exposures elsewhere, indicating it has been quarried; importantly, the bank on the east side of the enclosure clearly overlies the quarry face. This clearly demonstrates that this exposure was worked prior to the construction of this stretch of wall. The relationship could indicate this sector has been rebuilt but there is no evidence to support this. An alternative possibility is that the outcrop was worked to supply stone for the construction of another site in the vicinity pre-dating the enclosure but no such site is known to exist. It seems probable therefore that the outcrop was worked to provide stone for the enclosure wall, possibly early on in the construction, to provide some of the larger blocks needed for wall facings. Other quarried outcrops were noted to the east of the enclosure but there is no conclusive



*Figure 8.
Ground
photograph of
the east side of
the enclosure
showing the
bank ascending
the quarried
face of the
outcrop*

evidence that they are connected with the construction of the wall as they could equally be connected with the building of later field walls.

No obvious entrance survives, but the field remains suggests it was at the north apex of the enclosure which is the highest part of the shelf and where an entrance would have faced directly towards the natural line of approach from below. Here the probable east side of the entrance is defined by the curved terminal of the levelled bank and the termination of the quarry ditch. The bank also gets slightly wider towards the terminal, which could indicate the entrance was originally flanked by a higher and more imposing wall to give it visual impact or that it widened to incorporate a 'guard-chamber' although there are no physical remains to support this latter suggestion. A scarp running from the end of the bank into the interior may represent erosion at the entrance, but this feature is not necessarily contemporary with the enclosure as livestock could have used this same entry at a later period (discussed below). The west side of the entrance is not clearly defined because of disturbance caused by the construction of a later animal pen (see below), although part of the bank terminal possibly survives as a slight mound projecting from beneath the east side of the animal pen. If this identification is correct, then the original width of the entrance can be estimated at around 4m. No evidence was found for an entrance on the south in the position indicated by MacLauchlan's 1860 plan, nor on the north-west side as suggested by E Geary. It is likely that both have mistaken later disturbance and robbing for the entrance (see below).

The manner in which the bank follows the top of the summit could indicate a defensive function for the enclosure were it not for the fact that around the rest of the circuit the perimeter has been laid out with little regard to the defensive possibilities of the site. The near perfect symmetry of the enclosure contrasts with the underlying topography and the enclosure takes no tactical advantage of the rock outcrop defining the south side of the summit. The east-west outcrop, and the strong slope above it, bisects the enclosure at its widest point and therefore restricts the area available for occupation. However, it does create a strong physical division within the enclosure approximately at right angles to the long axis. The long axis is defined at the north end of the enclosure by the probable site of the entrance whilst on the south the apex is picked out by a slight outward bulge in the bank which may be an original feature, though it could equally be the result of later disturbance. However, the fact that this point is also picked out by the junction of two straight, 15m long, sections of an otherwise gently curving bank suggests the plan did originally emphasise the south apex of the enclosure. The field evidence suggests this symmetry was gained at the expense of providing a strong defence.

4.2 Interior

No evidence of occupation was noted on either of the two levels in the interior of the enclosure. The higher part is crossed by several slight natural ridges which define a level, habitable area up to 20m x 20m at the centre of the enclosure, whilst ground suitable for habitation on the lower part is restricted to an area up to 10m wide around the inside of the bank. The fact that there are no surface traces of occupation on either level is not conclusive proof that the enclosure was uninhabited as building remains, particularly of timber, may be too ephemeral to produce earthworks. It is possible that the extensive area of rabbit disturbance has obliterated surface traces of occupation at the south end of the enclosure. Almost a third of the interior is taken up by the outcrop and the steep slope behind it. Had huts been situated on this terrain they would have stood on platforms levelled into the slope. However, as no evidence of platforms was found it is reasonable to assume that a significant portion of the interior was never occupied by huts.

4.3 Later Activity

The bank shows clear evidence of having been extensively robbed following the collapse of the enclosure wall, the most obvious reason for this being the construction of the drystone wall which crosses the west side of the site. The robbing most closely associated with the drystone wall has created distinct depressions in the top of the bank at the two points where it is crossed by the wall.

Further east, the top of the bank around the south-east side of the enclosure is pitted with several sub-circular scoops up to 0.3m in depth which are evidence for relatively small-scale robbing of the bank. The scoop at the south apex of the enclosure extends several metres beyond the bank into the interior, presumably in order to extract stones from the subsoil. It may be this depression and the denuded character of the bank immediately to the west which MacLauchlan mistook for an entrance (MacLauchlan 1860). On the north-east side of the enclosure, the bank has been almost levelled by robbing to a height of no more than 0.2m. Material has been pushed outwards for a short distance down the slope, whilst a sinuous scarp (0.1m high) reveals the limit of robbing towards the inside edge of the bank. On the north-west, a trench and several curvilinear scoops have severely damaged the exterior of the bank for a distance of 20m. It may be this damage which Geary considered to be an entrance (NMR No. NT 92 NW 11 – Authority 4). Some of this disturbance may be connected with the construction of a possible shelter and associated animal pens immediately to the north (see below) as well as with the building of the drystone wall. The trench may have been dug to remove facing stones on the outside of the bank, although it is much further forward than the wall face recorded on the south-west side of the enclosure. The bank on the west side of the drystone wall has been less intensively robbed than the rest of the enclosure. The explanation is probably that the land either side of the wall was in different ownership at the time the wall was built and it was the landowner on the east side that was responsible for its construction.

The north end of the enclosure bank is overlain along its line by the remains of a rectilinear animal pen measuring 15m x 5m. The south side has been created by cutting back the enclosure bank, the base of which partially survives as a stony spread in the interior of the pen, whilst the north end has been extended across the enclosure entrance. The material from levelling the main enclosure bank has probably been used to create the narrow 0.3m high banks which define all but the south side of the pen but to have been of any use for controlling stock, these banks must have been surmounted by a fence. The east and west banks defining the south end of the animal pen have been slightly hollowed out, suggesting a small shelter may have been added to this end of the pen using the truncated base of the enclosure bank as a foundation. Several large stones set into the ground across the line of the bank at the south end of the pen could mark the line of one of the shelter's walls. The absence of a bank on the north-east side points to this being the access to the pen. It faces onto the suggested original enclosure entrance, which was almost entirely blocked by extending the bank on the north side of the animal pen, leaving only a 1m wide gap on the east. The same bank projects several metres beyond the west side of the pen, presumably this extension helped in guiding stock towards the entrance. There is some slight evidence of robbing within the area of the pen and putative shelter, indicating these structures pre-dated the main episode of robbing the enclosure bank, although the precise relationship between the two is unclear.

The fact that the outer entrance gives direct access to both the animal pen and the interior of the main enclosure suggests both were used for coralling stock. As

evidence of this, an irregular hollow on the inside of the main enclosure immediately to the south-east of the animal pen may have been created by livestock puddling the surface. The east side of the hollow is partially defined by a slight bank, perhaps indicating the existence of a fence around the area, and the grass inside the hollow is much greener than elsewhere in the vicinity, hinting that the ground here has been enriched by animal manure. On the south-west side of the enclosure, a small stone-walled windbreak no more than 4m long and 1m high has been built on the top of the bank, presumably by hikers or by those engaged on building the adjacent drystone wall.

There is no evidence for the date of the animal pen on the north of the enclosure and the suggested use of part of the interior of the monument for a similar purpose. The fact that neither the Ordnance Survey nor MacLauchlan show the animal pen is not convincing evidence that it was not in existence by 1860 as the earthworks were probably too ephemeral to have attracted the interest of these surveyors.

4.4 The exterior of the enclosure

The immediate vicinity of the site is devoid of archaeological features apart from two 0.3m high mounds situated on the saddle to the north of the enclosure. They may be small clearance cairns though this seems unlikely as there are no others in the vicinity. Several small terraces can be seen on the side of the hill opposite the enclosure, but these appear to be natural in origin. There are extensive areas of disturbed ground on the saddle and immediately south of the enclosure, both of which contain small mound-like features. These are the result of rabbit burrowing over a long period of time.

5. DISCUSSION

The visible remains of the enclosure give no conclusive proof as to the date or purpose of the site. The classification of the site as an Iron Age hillfort probably owes much to the fact that many of the neighbouring hills down the west side of the College Valley and along the south edge of Glendale are occupied by univallate and multivallate hillforts. However, at Hethpool Bell there are a number of reasons why such a classification would be insecure. The most obvious is that the site is not located in a strong position, as it is dominated on the north by the main slope of Hethpool Bell, the summit of which offers a position of far greater strength than the shelf occupied by the enclosure. The remains of the bank do not indicate a perimeter of any great strength and the survey has highlighted the fact that the course of the bank does not maximise the natural defensive possibilities of the site. Also, the entrance is in a vulnerable location facing directly onto the saddle and the natural line of approach. The survey found no evidence that this weak point was ever strengthened by the addition of outworks. The best field evidence for the date of the enclosure is the method of construction of the perimeter bank. The existence of an internal quarry ditch flanked by a faced stone wall with a rubble core has been observed at Iron Age hillforts nearby at Yeavinger Bell and West (RCHME 1998; Oswald 2000). However, the maximum estimated width of the wall at around 2.5m is narrower compared to these hillforts.

As well as raising doubts over the defensive role of the enclosure, the survey also found no proof that the site was ever permanently settled since there are no remains of huts in the interior. The absence of occupation evidence is not an uncommon occurrence on many upland sites, especially where structures were timber-built (Jobey 1965, 29). However, at the site presently being discussed, the absence of any platforms on the steeply sloping ground associated with the outcrop argues against widespread occupation of the interior, further suggesting the enclosure was unlikely to have been a settlement. The enclosure is dissimilar to other known types of settlement in the area. Probable Roman period occupation is attested in the vicinity on the east facing slope of Hethpool Bell and on the sides and summit of the neighbouring West Hill but these are 'scooped' settlements bearing no resemblance to the present site. The ovoid plan of the enclosure resembles a type of sub-oval enclosed settlement in Northumberland described in some detail by Jobey and which he tentatively dated to the Roman period (Jobey 1964, 42-45). However the isolation of the Hethpool Bell enclosure, the lack of associated fields and the morphology of the perimeter bank all indicate it is unlikely to belong to this category of site.

The most striking aspect of this site is the symmetry of the enclosure. This feature, together with its plan relationship to an underlying outcrop and the way the south apex is emphasised in the layout of the bank, are characteristics of the site which have been highlighted by the survey but which have no obvious practical explanation. To achieve this symmetry around the slopes and outcrops of the shelf testifies to a purposeful setting out rather than being obviously dictated by natural contours. These observations, and the fact that the site did not clearly function as a defence or a settlement means that a possible ritual or symbolic purpose for the enclosure should also be considered.

The orientation of the long axis of symmetry on the natural route from the north end of the College Valley seems unlikely to be accidental. Straddling the highest part of the shelf, the entrance would have dominated the uphill view of anyone using this route to approach the site yet they would not have seen anything of the interior beyond the portals of the entrance, because the ground falls away. Once inside, the perimeter wall

may have been high enough to shield the surroundings of the site from view except the high hilltops to the south and on the north side where the site is dominated by the rise up to the summit of Hethpool Bell. The visual isolation might have been intended to engender a feeling of detachment or disorientation in anyone standing within the enclosure, a feeling that would have been heightened on the lower terrace since here the viewer loses sight of Hethpool Bell which disappears behind the rock outcrop on the north of the terrace. The isolation of the lower terrace from its surroundings points to this as the possible ritual focus of the site. The creation of this 'inner sanctum' may explain the reason for siting the enclosure over the outcrop.

It is also possible to explain the siting of the enclosure on a dominant shelf overlooking the College Valley as one of symbolic importance. That the location of prehistoric monuments in the Cheviots was influenced by topographic symbolism has been examined in a wider context (Topping 1999). In the College Valley, Topping suggests that a Neolithic stone circle in the valley bottom 1km to the south-west of Hethpool Bell may have acted as a marker signifying the head of the valley, ownership of which he postulates was later expressed by the dominant position of the chain of Iron Age hillforts fringing the west side of the valley. The Hethpool Bell enclosure overlooks a point in the College Valley where a significant change occurs in the character of the scenery from the relatively open landscape of the Glendale confluence to the more enclosed vistas of the upper valley, and at the exact point where the valley is at its narrowest. This point could also be regarded as the 'entrance' to the valley from the north and it is from the north where the shelf occupied by the enclosure is at its most dominant topographically. Thus the site may have been positioned to 'guard' access into the valley, though from the evidence of the survey this would have been more through symbolism than actual defensive strength.

The conclusion to be drawn from the surface remains of the Hethpool Bell enclosure is that it probably had a symbolic or ritual purpose more than a practical role as a settlement. This is supported by the fact that no evidence has been found for any associated agricultural remains in the surrounding landscape or any indication that the site evolved as might be anticipated if it had been occupied for a length of time. At present there is nothing other than the similarity of construction with other nearby Iron Age hillforts to support the dating of this enclosure to this same period. However, a body of evidence is emerging that neighbouring hillforts may have their origins earlier than the Iron Age (RCHME 1997), and it is possible that this site may have similar earlier origins.

The survey has established that apart from the enclosure the only other activity on the site relates to the robbing of the enclosure bank and the probable use of the site as a stock enclosure. The majority of the robbing is likely to be associated with the construction and maintenance of the adjacent drystone wall, which itself is probably of some antiquity as it divides the parishes of Kirknewton on the east from Hethpool on the west. However, all that can be said about its date for certain is that it is earlier than 1860 as it is shown on both the Ordnance Survey and MacLauchlan's maps of that year. That the enclosure had been robbed by this date to provide construction material for the wall is supported by the fact that MacLauchlan seems to have mistaken a stretch of robbed bank on the south of the enclosure as an entrance.

6. METHODOLOGY

The field investigation was carried out by Trevor Pearson and Stewart Ainsworth with assistance from Alastair Oswald, Marcus Jecock and Bernard Thomason. In addition, a number of digital photographs taken by Trevor Pearson are held on disk as part of the project archive. The measured survey of the enclosure was based upon points laid out using a Leica TC1610 Electronic Theodolite with integral Electromagnetic Distance Measurement (Total Station), from a baseline traverse of two stations. From these stations, observations were logged to fix a network of additional temporary control points, from which the earthworks were plotted using hand tapes by conventional graphical techniques. Using a Trimble 4800 dual frequency Global Positioning Satellite (GPS) system, the stations of the traverse were subsequently related to the National Grid (OSGB36), through a transformation programme based on their positions relative to three Ordnance Survey trigonometrical pillars. These were located respectively on the summit of Gains Law, 5kms to the east at NGR NT 95588 28164, Whitton Hill, 6.5kms to the north-east at NGR NT 92809 34584, and Linton Hill, 11.5kms to the west at NGR NT 78735 27954. Both the stations of the baseline traverse were permanently marked using a brass rivet, and their National Grid references were calculated on the basis of the GPS data. Their positions are indicated on the 1:500 plans and witness diagrams in Appendix 1. Sufficient GPS data was gathered to contour the immediate vicinity of the enclosure. The resulting plan was plotted at 1:500 scale via Key Terrafirma and AutoCAD software.

The hand drawn archive plan and CAD-based drawings were prepared using CorelDraw 8 software by Trevor Pearson. The report was researched and written by Trevor Pearson, and edited by Stewart Ainsworth.

The site archive has been deposited in English Heritage's National Monuments Record, Great Western Village, Kemble Drive, Swindon SN2 2GZ, to where applications for copyright should be made (reference number NT 92 NW 11).

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7. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Tim Gates gave permission to reproduce his aerial photographs, and the Duke of Northumberland gave permission to reproduce MacLauchlan's plan of the earthworks.

English Heritage is especially indebted to the landowner of West Kirknewton Farm, Mr Colin Martin, for allowing access to the site, for providing useful comment in the field, and for showing a keen interest in the results of the fieldwork.

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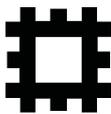
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APPENDIX 1: Table of NMR numbers linked to this site

Enclosure	NT 9020 2881	NT 92 NW 11
Animal pen	NT 9018 2884	NT 92 NW 111

APPENDIX 2: Locations of permanent survey stations

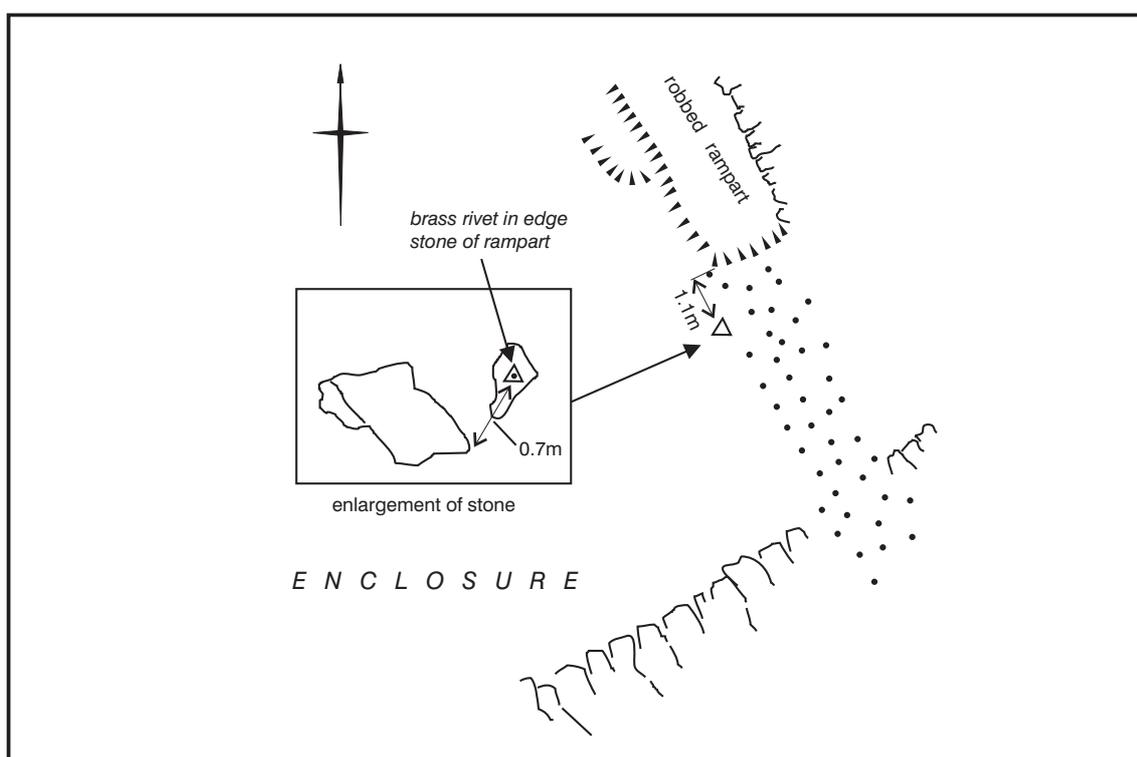


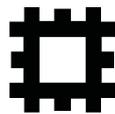
ENGLISH HERITAGE

SURVEY STATION INFORMATION

SITE NAME	Hethpool Bell, Northumberland		
Station number	Station Number 1	Status	Permanent
Type of Mark	Brass Rivet	NMR number	NT 92 NW 11
Date of Survey	Dec. 1999-Jan 2000	Sam number	Northumberland 463
Office of origin	York	RSM number	_____
Surveyor(s)	TP, SA, MJ, AO, BT	Neg number	_____

Co-ordinate Scheme	Eastings	Northings	Height
OS National Grid	390214.538	628814.361	217.781
Divorced Site Grid	_____	_____	_____





ENGLISH HERITAGE

SURVEY STATION INFORMATION

SITE NAME	Hethpool Bell, Northumberland		
Station number	Station Number 2	Status	Permanent
Type of Mark	Brass Rivet	NMR number	NT 92 NW 11
Date of Survey	Dec. 1999-Jan 2000	Sam number	Northumberland 463
Office of origin	York	RSM number	_____
Surveyor(s)	TP, SA, MJ, AO, BT	Neg number	_____

Co-ordinate Scheme	Eastings	Northings	Height
OS National Grid	390151.580	628864.775	225.800
Divorced Site Grid	_____	_____	_____

