

NINE STONES MONUMENT,
THIMBLEBY MOOR, THIMBLEBY,
NORTH YORKSHIRE

ARCHAEOLOGICAL SURVEY

Ed Dennison Archaeological Services Ltd
18 Springdale Way
Beverley
East Yorkshire
HU17 8NU

NINE STONES MONUMENT, THIMBLEBY MOOR,
THIMBLEBY, NORTH YORKSHIRE

ARCHAEOLOGICAL SURVEY

Report no: 2011/392.R02
Version: Final
Date: December 2011
Author: Shaun Richardson & Ed Dennison

Ed Dennison Archaeological Services Ltd
18 Springdale Way
Beverley
East Yorkshire
HU17 8NU

On behalf of

Thimbleby Estate
Thimbleby Estate Office
Thimbleby Hall
Thimbleby
North Yorkshire DL6 3PY

North York Moors National Park Authority
The Old Vicarage
Bondgate
Helmsley
North Yorkshire YO62 5BP

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL SURVEY,
NINE STONES MONUMENT, THIMBLEBY MOOR, THIMBLEBY, NORTH YORKSHIRE**

CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1	INTRODUCTION.....	1
2	ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND	4
3	DESCRIPTION OF THE NINE STONES MONUMENT	11
4	DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS.....	17
5	BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	20
6	ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	22

Appendices

1	Photographic Record	
---	---------------------	--

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In July and December 2011, Ed Dennison Archaeological Services Ltd (EDAS) undertook an archaeological survey of the monument known as Nine Stones on Thimbleby Moor, North Yorkshire (NGR SE 4707 9529 centred). The project involved a detailed measured earthwork survey of the archaeological remains, together with a detailed descriptive record and report. The work was required to provide information and details of the archaeological landscape of this part of Thimbleby Moor, to increase knowledge and to assist with future management strategies. It was undertaken to augment a larger detailed measured survey of an area of Thimbleby Moor to the immediate north, carried out by EDAS in January/February 2011.

Nine Stones is unlikely to represent the remains of a single stone circle of relatively large diameter. It might form a linear setting of paired stones, but on balance, and based on current evidence, it is considered more likely that the monument represents two distinct groupings of stones comprising a small stone circle to the north and another possible similar feature to the south, with two standing stones between them acting as a possible link. These two groupings are likely to have been contemporary and associated with each other. The small northern stone circle shares some characteristics with similar monuments recorded in the Yorkshire Dales and also perhaps with what are known as 'four poster' stone circles. The placing of Nine Stones on this part of Thimbleby Moor is unlikely to be accidental or random, and there seem to be significant relationships between the monument, prominent hills and long distance views.

Nine Stones is most likely to have been erected during the Bronze Age, and may be associated with the settlement recently recorded on Thimbleby Moor to the north, but it may also have been important to a wider community as well as the local one. Given that Nine Stones was being used to define a boundary in the early 17th century, parallels can be drawn with the role of Bronze Age round barrows which formed boundary markers of contemporary territorial units or 'estates' that then influenced later medieval township boundaries.

1 INTRODUCTION

Reasons and Circumstances for the Project

- 1.1 In July 2011, Ed Dennison Archaeological Services Ltd (EDAS) undertook an archaeological survey of the monument known as Nine Stones on Thimbleby Moor, North Yorkshire (NGR SE 4707 9529 centred). Additional survey work was carried out in December 2011. Support for the survey was provided by the North York Moors National Park Authority (NYMNP). The project involved a detailed measured earthwork survey of the archaeological remains, together with a detailed descriptive record and report. The work was required to provide background information and details of the archaeological and historical landscape of this part of Thimbleby Moor, to increase knowledge and to assist with future management strategies. It was undertaken to augment a larger detailed measured survey of an area of Thimbleby Moor to the immediate north, carried out by EDAS in January/February 2011 (Richardson & Dennison 2011).
- 1.2 The survey area, which measured c.94m north-south by a maximum of c.32m east-west, was believed to contain the remains of a prehistoric monument known as 'Nine Stones', traditionally thought to represent a stone circle.

Site Location and Description

- 1.3 Nine Stones lies on Thimbleby Moor, a north facing area of heather moorland overlooking the valley of the Oakdale Beck, c.2km east of the village of Thimbleby and 2.5km south-east of Osmotherley (see figure 1). Thimbleby Moor lies to the north-west of Black Hambleton, a prominent hill at the very northern edge of the Hambleton Hills, which rises to just over 400m AOD in height. To the immediate north of Nine Stones, there are extensive remains of a prehistoric landscape, the core of which is probably the remains of a Bronze Age settlement (see below) and part of which was subject to an earlier detailed measured survey (Richardson & Dennison 2011). The underlying solid geology comprises Middle Jurassic Sandstones overlying soft Lias Shales (Cowley 1993, 8).
- 1.4 Nine Stones occupies an elevated position on the southern edge of Thimbleby Moor at c.295m AOD (see figure 2). The monument is formed by a group of standing and prostrate stones, together with associated earthworks, covering an area measuring at least 94m north-south by a maximum of 32m east-west. It is effectively bisected by a drystone wall; to the north of the wall, the monument lies within open moorland, and to the south, within a recently felled coniferous plantation. Access to Nine Stones is by foot only. To the south-east of Nine Stones, the north-west slope of Hambleton End, the part of Black Hambleton which is so prominent from Thimbleby Moor, is named 'Black Hill'.
- 1.5 Both the NYMNP HER, the modern Ordnance Survey maps (see figure 2) and some on-line accounts (see below) show the area of Nine Stones as extending for an equal distance to the north-west and south-east of the drystone field wall.
- 1.6 The majority of the monument to the north of the drystone wall was covered with heather moorland at the time of the survey (July 2011), parts of which had been subject to periodic burning in the past, as part of a grouse management regime. This had resulted in a mixed vegetation cover across and around the monument; in some areas, the vegetation cover was relatively short grass, but in others, the heather was over 0.50m high. Although all parts of the survey area were inspected

thoroughly, the varying depth of the vegetation has almost certainly influenced the results of the survey.

- 1.7 At the time of the later survey (December 2011), the area to the south of the drystone wall was a recently felled plantation, formed by a tangled mass of tree stumps, self-seeded conifer saplings, brash and surface stone spreads. Although all of this part of the survey area was inspected thoroughly, the nature of the ground conditions made the recognition of low or fallen stones difficult, and the identification of prostrate examples in particular must be treated with caution.

Survey Methodology

- 1.8 The aim of the project was to produce an archaeological survey of Nine Stones, to aid any future land management and understanding. The scope of the work was defined in conversations between EDAS and Graham Lee of the NYMNP.
- 1.9 Information relating to Nine Stones and Thimbleby Moor had been obtained previously from the North York Moors National Park Authority (NYMNP) and English Heritage's National Monuments Record as part of the earlier survey work (Richardson & Dennison 2011). This comprised records of previous historic research and archaeological activity, aerial photographs, past management and land ownership records, and historic maps and plans. No other historic, cartographic or documentary research (for example at the North Yorkshire Record Office) was undertaken, but relevant published secondary and on-line sources were consulted. A full list of the sources consulted, together with their references, is given in the bibliography below.
- 1.10 A detailed Level 3 survey (as defined by English Heritage (2007, 23-29)) of Nine Stones and its immediate surroundings was undertaken to record the position and form of all features considered to be of archaeological and/or historic interest. During the earlier survey work (Richardson & Dennison 2011) sufficient information had been gathered using EDM total station equipment to allow some of the standing stones to the north of the drystone wall to be readily located and plotted; this survey was integrated into the Ordnance Survey national grid and heights AOD were obtained by reference to the nearest OS benchmark (set at 269.09m AOD and located on a gate stoop close to the public car park on the Osmotherley to Hawnby road). The EDM field survey data was plotted at a scale of 1:100 and enhanced in the field as a separate operation. This enhancement was undertaken using traditional tape and offset measuring techniques, from a baseline set out using points captured during the EDM survey. The original EDM field survey was undertaken at the end of January 2011, while the field enhancement was carried out on the 13th July 2011, in good weather conditions.
- 1.11 The area of Nine Stones to the south of the drystone wall, within the recently felled plantation, was surveyed at a scale of 1:100 on the 6th December 2011, under light snow. A baseline running approximately parallel to the drystone wall was established, and traditional tape and offset measuring techniques were used to plan the identified stones. The two stones on the north side of the wall were also planned, allowing both elements to be brought together. Finally, a drawing showing the full extent of the monument at 1:200 scale was produced, together with selected elevations of individual standing stones at a scale of 1:10, based on photographs and measurements taken in the field. The drawings are presented as interpretative hachure plans or similar, using conventions analogous to those used by English Heritage (1999; 2007, 31-35).

- 1.12 For the purposes of description, each major standing or prostrate stone identified by the survey was assigned a unique identifier. The vegetation on the site meant that the photographic recording concentrated on the major standing or prostrate stones, although care was taken to illustrate the landscape setting of the monument as a whole from different angles. Photographs were taken using a Panasonic Lumix digital camera with 10 megapixel resolution; English Heritage photographic guidelines were followed (English Heritage 2007, 14) and each photograph was normally provided with a scale, where appropriate. A total of 57 photographs were taken, and all were clearly numbered and labelled with the subject, orientation, date taken and photographer's name, and cross referenced to digital files etc (see Appendix 1).

Report and Archive

- 1.13 This report represents the archive report for the survey, based on the information gathered during the fieldwork. It assembles and summarises the available evidence for the survey area in an ordered form, synthesises the data, comments on the quality and reliability of the evidence, and how it might need to be supplemented by further field work or desk-based research. The survey report also contains various appendices, including photographic registers and catalogues.
- 1.14 The full archive, comprising paper, magnetic and plastic media, relating to the project has been ordered and indexed according to the standards set by the National Archaeological Record (EDAS site code NSM 11). It was deposited with the NYMNP A on the completion of the project. Details of the project, and an uploaded pdf copy of the report, have also been added to English Heritage's OASIS (Online Access to Index of Archaeological Investigations) project.

2 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Introduction

- 2.1 No new primary research was undertaken as part of the survey work. However, relevant published secondary material was consulted, together with available material relevant to previous work undertaken in or around the survey area. The following chapter discusses how the interpretation and understanding of relevant prehistoric landscapes and component parts such as cairnfields in this part of the North York Moors has developed during the 20th century, to place the Nine Stones survey into context; the information is primarily taken from previous EDAS survey reports on Thimbleby Moor (Richardson & Dennison 2011) and at Scotland Farm cairnfield, near Hawnby (Dennison & Richardson 2011).

The Prehistory of the North York Moors

- 2.2 Manby, King and Vyner (2003, 82-91) provides the most recent overview of the prehistory of the North York Moors, and the following section is taken entirely from this, with particular emphasis on the Hambleton Hills.
- 2.3 In terms of their prehistory, the North York Moors are both the most intensively published and palaeo-environmentally researched area of Yorkshire. In c.4000 BC a forested environment prevailed across the whole of the North York Moors, apart from the higher parts of the Central Watershed above the 300m contour. Neolithic activity, as evidenced by flint and stone axe finds, has a wide distribution across the Moors, with the greatest density from the Corallian areas of the Tabular and Hambleton Hills. This distribution of axes complements that of Neolithic long barrows. However, Neolithic round barrows and cairns are less well investigated, but their siting may be significant, with locations on the edge of slopes and dales preferred and favoured over summit and crest positions. Archaeological field walking over cultivated land in the southern half of the Hambleton Hills indicates intensive 4th to mid 2nd millennia BC activity across these uplands. Again, the earliest surviving monuments here are long barrows. Round barrows have a primary burial association with early 2nd millennium BC ceramic types found in this area.
- 2.4 Major cultural changes in the mid 2nd millennium BC marked the end of barrow construction, and visual evidence of human activity becomes difficult to recognise, although it is possible that the major linear earthwork systems of the Tabular and Hambleton Hills developed from this time up to the end of the 1st millennium BC. The western escarpment of the Hambleton Hills contains several hillforts which command extensive views over the Cleveland Plain and the Vale of York. At least two of these are likely to have been earlier structures perhaps dating to the Bronze Age which had been modified during the Iron Age.

Bronze Age Cairnfields and Settlements in North-East Yorkshire

- 2.5 In his pioneering work *Early Man in North East Yorkshire*, Frank Elgee (1930, 120) noted that the region's moorland might well have been called the 'Land of Barrows', with over 3,500 being shown on the mid 19th century Ordnance Survey maps and perhaps more than 10,000 having existed originally. What Elgee describe as 'clustered barrows' would now be termed cairns or cairnfields; Elgee thought that these 'smaller mounds' were piled over bodies rather than cremations, and that they formed the burial places of the people rather than the chiefs and leaders, who were buried in the larger round barrows (Elgee 1930, 121-122). The

majority of the 'clustered barrows' described by Elgee were situated in dry moorland at heights of between c.150m and 300m, on gentle slopes facing directions placed between east, south and west, and adjoining settlement sites. Some of the larger barrows formed alignments which are still followed by modern parish boundaries (Elgee 1930, 122- 130).

- 2.6 In 1971, Fleming provided a useful summary of the then state of knowledge about cairnfields in north-east Yorkshire, noting that cairnfields normally occur at heights of between about 183m to 305m AOD (Fleming 1971, 20-24). Sometimes they comprised only one or two cairns but elsewhere, as on Danby Rigg or at Iron Howe, there could be hundreds. At Iron Howe, there were irregular walls, sometimes enclosing small fields within which cairns were located, sometimes being built into the walling. The cairns themselves were described as being usually ovoid, but they could also be round or long, measuring between 3m-5m long and 2m-3m wide. The associated 'walling' led Fleming to believe that the cairns were connected with the growing of cereals in small plots, many of which had first to be cleared of stones, and that the primary purpose of the walls was too to dispose of unwanted stones at the field's edge; it is now generally thought that these walls are really irregular lines of stones, which could have been cleared from the fields and then placed against or at the bottoms of existing hedges or other boundaries (Graham Lee, NYMNPA archaeologist *pers. comm.*). Fleming also noted that Elgee had demonstrated that most slopes on which the cairns were positioned faced south, south-west, or south-east, but that they were also common on virtually flat ground, with both slopes and levels being dry. Dating was hampered by a paucity of finds from excavated cairns, with the Bronze Age being tentatively suggested, but one feature that was commonly reported from excavated examples in north-east Yorkshire was the presence of charcoal and traces of burning in and under them, suggesting that scrub had been burnt off before clearance took place. There was sometimes an association between cairnfields and ring cairns, noted elsewhere such as in the Derbyshire Peak District.
- 2.7 Fleming concluded by suggesting that the north-east Yorkshire cairnfields had developed during the Bronze Age, following the exhaustion of the poorer soils at higher levels by the immediate ancestors of those responsible for the cairnfields. This was perhaps because the fertility of lower slopes could be maintained for rather longer than that of higher ground, possibly due to the folding of animals on stubble to provide manure, and thereby continuing cereal farming for some time after the reduction of much of the higher land to heather moor. The barrows occurring within some cairnfields may have been a remnant of earlier occupation, or could be the cemeteries of those who made the cairnfields. The cereal farming practiced in these cairnfields may have continued to decline and to have been replaced by a greater pastoralism during the Iron Age. However, caution was advised against the development of too broad conclusions from the then available evidence, as there must have been the same considerable local variation in the economies of the Bronze Age as there was during the medieval period.
- 2.8 Fleming's conclusions were broadly followed by Spratt and Simmons (1976, 201-204), who noted that independent dating evidence for cairnfields was still lacking but neither was there any convincing evidence that they were other than Bronze Age, and probably early Bronze Age (1700-1300 BC). Cairnfields were noted to have attendant walling, sometimes associated with collared urns and occasionally with ring cairns. The very large numbers of monuments usually ascribed to the Bronze Age indicated widespread activity across lower and higher ground, with evidence for both pastoral and cereal farming, and perhaps also for some hunting on higher ground.

- 2.9 By the late 1980s, further, more intensive fieldwork had begun to place the cairnfields within their wider landscape setting (e.g. Spratt 1989, 31-37; Spratt 1993b). It was suggested that many Bronze Age round barrows had been placed in conspicuous positions on watersheds or in long lines spaced out along ridges because they formed boundary markers between territorial units or 'estates', and that these units had been long-lasting, influencing later medieval and modern township boundaries. The remains of about 70 cairnfields had been recognised in the North York Moors, formed by a mixture of stone cairns up to 5m in diameter and the remains of walls, but also sometimes with lynchets and roundhouses, with access frequently via hollow ways. It was stated that the cairns were most likely to be field clearance cairns, 'with funerary activity an infrequent event', possibly connected with pastoral farming and commanding the view of the valley below them. In the 1990s, surveys of the cairnfields on Great Ayton Moor (Vyner 1994, 7-11) and Danby Rigg (Harding & Ostoja-Zagorski 1994, 16-97) have emphasised the complexity of these multi-period landscapes.
- 2.10 The survey area at Danby Rigg was very large, over 2km in length, and by far the largest category of monuments recorded was cairns (820 recorded with a further 60 possible examples), concentrated between 240m and 295m AOD (Harding & Ostoja-Zagorski 1994, 16-61). The majority measured less than c.5m across and c.1m in height, and they appeared to be scattered haphazardly across the survey area, with a distance of between 10m to 20m between cairns. The cairns occurred in the largest numbers on the northern slopes of the Rigg, becoming scarcer on the plateau. Interspersed with these cairns were stretches of bank, although only in the northern central part of the survey area did they resemble anything close to the systematic placing of banks to create defined stone-free areas. Even here, the impression was of roughly rectangular chunks of land separated off, rather than a specific field system. Six or seven ring cairns were also recorded, and a single large barrow-mound, with a section excavated across the prominent Triple Dykes at the southern end of the survey area. Surface examination and excavation of a sample of the small cairns showed that they usually consisted of unsorted tumbled stone, without kerbs or other features.
- 2.11 The valuable general discussion of cairnfields given by the authors of the Danby Rigg survey included a number of important observations (Harding & Ostoja-Zagorski 1994, 61-66). It was noted that few such sites in the North York Moors lay below 200m or above 300m AOD, and that all were on gently sloping land above water courses, with the latter being more important than the direction of the slope. More recent research suggests that cairnfields lie up to c.315m AOD (Graham Lee, NYMNP archaeologist, *pers. comm.*). It was also thought to be no coincidence that the lower limit of cairnfield distribution coincided with the upper limit of present-day agriculture, and that it was highly likely that cairnfields had once extended further down valley sides, although not onto the valley bottoms themselves. The earliest phase of the Danby Rigg cairnfield was proposed to have occurred when large naturally-occurring earthfast boulders were augmented by smaller, moveable, stones as a result of human activity, so that the initial siting of the cairns was essentially random. When this first phase had occurred was not certain, with any early Bronze Age date by association with the ring cairns and barrows being described as speculative. However, given that there is no clear association between cairnfields and Neolithic monuments, that post-Iron Age occupation of the higher moorlands is generally taken to be an exception (not necessarily correctly), and that a medieval date seems highly unlikely, a Bronze Age date was thought most likely. This was not necessarily the same for the ruined walls and banks recorded, which could possibly have ranged in date from coaxial field systems to post-medieval enclosure. Although there is some evidence

from Danby Rigg that irregularly-shaped areas of land had been deliberately cleared of stone, there was little positive evidence that arable farming had taken place.

- 2.12 Alternative suggestions were therefore made. Firstly, cairnfields may actually have been used for grass production to support an animal population, perhaps cattle, either for grazing or making hay; cattle require more and higher quality grass than sheep, and so stone clearance was necessary to create grazing areas. Secondly, the stone clearance had come about through soil deterioration caused by environmental stress. Soil deterioration was initially due to woodland clearance during the Neolithic and Bronze Age, creating exposure which was exacerbated by grazing and arable cultivation. Stone clearance was undertaken in response to declining crop yields as soil deterioration continued (Harding & Ostoja-Zagorski 1994, 61-66).
- 2.13 It was furthermore noted that cairnfield creation was a selective process, and that not every 'suitable' location had been utilised in this way, possibly indicating a pattern of land holding and exploitation requiring the clearance of a defined area only large enough for particular production needs. In Derbyshire, for example, it has been suggested that discrete cairnfields might represent the clearance activities of small settlement groups, each with its own area of land to farm. On the North York Moors, environmental evidence suggests that, rather than one massive episode of woodland clearance during the Bronze Age, there were numerous and repeated small-scale clearances followed by regeneration, with woodland surviving between. It was also possible that utilitarian activities such as stone clearance were not separated from ritual ones, and the two aspects might well be represented in a 'complex' cairnfield such as Danby (an idea developed in more theoretical detail, but using field evidence, by Johnston (2000, 57-70) on Northumbrian cairnfields), as opposed to 'simple' examples where only the smaller stone cairns were present. Finally, the dating through excavation of the triple dykes at the southern end of the Danby Rigg survey area to the early medieval period, rather than the previous assumption that they were Bronze Age by association with the other features on the Rigg, raised the possibility that the cairnfield had been exploited for grazing and then perhaps modified during the same period (Harding & Ostoja-Zagorski 1994, 66-69 & 79-82).
- 2.14 The most recent summary of current understanding of the North York Moors cairnfields and the landscapes of which they are a part was given in 2003 (Manby, King & Vyner 2003, 69-70 & 83-91), as part of a more comprehensive overview of research into the Neolithic and Bronze Age periods in Yorkshire. This follows an earlier discussion by Spratt (1993b). The recent summary rightly stresses that, within Yorkshire's three major geophysical divisions (Eastern Yorkshire, the central Yorkshire lowlands and the upland Pennine range), there is a complexity of geological and environmental factors determining the past potential for human settlement. Furthermore, there are also local variations in the historical processes of monument survival and the development of archaeological research. Therefore, while the North York Moors is one of the most intensively published and palaeo-environmentally researched areas of Yorkshire for these periods, the interpretation and dating of some landscape features such as cairnfields remains problematic. Generally, apart from the higher parts of the Central Watershed area above the 300m contour, a forested environment prevailed across the whole of the North York Moors block in c.4000 BC. These forest conditions, together with a postulated climactic improvement during the early 2nd millennium BC, provide the environmental setting for round barrow construction on the Central Watershed. Although there were earlier localised clearing events, a widespread reduction of

the prevailing woodland did not take place until late in the 1st millennium BC when moorland vegetation spread, leading to an environment with a reduced subsistence potential. This also had the effect of limiting agricultural exploitation in the medieval period and later, thus increasing the rate of survival of cairns, walls, dykes and barrows on higher moorland, compared to the deep dales and valleys.

- 2.15 Manby, King and Vyner describe a spread of small stoney cairns as being one of the characteristic site types of the Cleveland Hills. Excavations of such features, such as those undertaken on Danby Rigg, have been unable to confirm the date and purpose of the cairnfield but, in a reversal of earlier ideas, it was thought that field clearance was doubtful, along with the agricultural value of such stoney soils. At Iron Howe, in Hawnby, a major concentration of small cairns occurs in conjunction with an extensive system of walling. This walling is in some cases so fragmentary as to suggest that the two are associated, with the cairns perhaps representing 'the continuation of ritual cultivation activity after local denudation of soil', i.e. that the cairns post-date the walls and are constructed by partly dismantling them. It may be possible to differentiate these types of cairns from others by size; on Great Ayton Moor for example, 'clearance' cairns ranged from 1.5m to 5.0m in diameter, whereas burial mounds were usually in excess of 6.0m. More recently, the excavation of a small clearance cairn on Fylingdales Moor by Blaise Vyner has produced a radiocarbon date of around 1300 BC (NYMNP Historic Environment Newsletter 2010, 5).

Previous Archaeological Investigations and Research: Thimbleby Moor

- 2.16 In 1989 and 1993, based on the distribution of surviving Bronze Age round barrows and cairnfields, Spratt proposed that the Jurassic sandstone area of the North York Moors had been divided into a number of Bronze Age territories or 'estates'. Each estate comprised a cairnfield, a stretch of grazing land on the hills, meadows in the dale, and access to a water supply. The influence of these estates may have been extremely long lasting, as they are very similar to medieval townships which had similar requirements for their mixed farms. The 2011 EDAS survey area at Thimbleby Moor lay outside an estate which included Osmotherley, the southern boundary of which was suggested to be the Oakdale Beck. Spratt marked cairnfields on an accompanying figure to the south of the Oakdale Beck but apparently to the west of the area of the Moor surveyed by EDAS (Spratt 1989; Spratt 1993a).
- 2.17 A number of prehistoric sites are listed on the NYMNP Historic Environment Record (HER) and English Heritage's National Monument Record (NMR) in the vicinity of the area of the Moor surveyed by EDAS in 2011, including Nine Stones itself (see below). Several earthfast boulders exhibiting prehistoric cup marks have been noted just to the west and north of the 2011 survey area (HER 7141.01-03 & 7142; Brown & Chappell 2005, 264), while a small cairnfield has been noted just to the west (HER 14881). In contrast to other prehistoric cairnfields, no 'Tumuli' or 'Stone Folds' are marked on the Ordnance Survey 1857 6" to 1 mile map of the moor.
- 2.18 However, the features recorded by the EDAS 2011 survey are noted on the HER and the NMR (sites 12455 and SE49NE27 respectively). For example, D R Brown and D A Spratt noted an extensive system of small irregular fields, tumbled stone walls and cairns covering the northern slopes of the moor after heather burning on aerial photographs in 1976 (Moorhouse 1977, 4). This complex, centred on SE 4700 9550, was sketch-mapped by P Brown and his plan also includes a small enclosure. A visit to the site identified a large cup marked boulder as well as

several other smaller examples while a further visit by Barbara Brown identified an impressive cup-and-ring boulder adjacent to a modern farm track which is arguably one of the most impressive of its type (Brown & Chappell 2005, 124-127); these marked stones all lay outside the 2011 EDAS survey area. A subsequent visit to Thimbleby Moor by NYMNP archaeologists noted many cairns between 1m-2m in diameter, with others up to 3m-5m, and up to 0.7m high, extending along the contours between the breaks of slope. Aerial photographs taken in January 2001 and January 2002 show that Thimbleby Moor was a patchwork of standing heather and mown ground, but not recently burnt, while a later photograph taken in May 2009 shows a combination of revegetated and old heather (www.googleearth.com); it is clear that the area has been subject to periodic burning as part of the usual heather management regime for grouse moorland.

- 2.19 The EDAS survey recorded a complex and almost certainly multi-period archaeological landscape on Thimbleby Moor, with a prehistoric settlement at the core (Richardson & Dennison 2011). This settlement covered an area measuring c.160m long (east-west) by a maximum of 100m wide (north-south), and appeared to comprise a central enclosure, which has distinct clusters of smaller features at the east and west ends, and from which banks radiated outwards, perhaps defining smaller enclosures, particularly along the north side. A small cairnfield extended principally to the north-east of the settlement. The local natural topography was an important factor in the location and organisation of the settlement, which made use of a terrace with a north-facing scarp as a boundary to some of the smaller enclosures radiating out from the north side of the central enclosure. The apparent distinct division between the area of the settlement and the cairnfield to north-east must be significant. If the two were contemporary, then the placing of the cairns away from the settlement may represent the division of the landscape into different zones, and these zones may have been imbued with ritual and religious meanings as well as agricultural significance. Alternatively, if the two were not contemporary, then it is possible that cairns were cleared to either build or make way for the settlement.
- 2.20 Although it is difficult to find published parallels for this form of settlement in the North York Moors, that on Thimbleby Moor does appear similar (in part) to that recorded on the south side of Wheat Beck, on Locker Low Moor some 3km to the south-east of Thimbleby Moor (Spratt 1993b, 115-116 & 118; Browarska 1997). The latter perhaps comprised a Bronze Age mixed farming settlement with a round hut, enclosures, long field walls, fields, lynchets and tumuli. Both it and the Thimbleby Moor example represent characteristic 'valley settlements' which usually lie in the extreme heads of the dales, and which are very common in the Snilesworth/Hawnby area (Spratt 1993b, 115). The EDAS survey also recorded holloways to the north and south of the terrace on which the prehistoric settlement was located. It is possible that some of these were associated with the settlement, but it was thought that most were more likely to be post-medieval in date, perhaps representing former routes striking out across the moor to the south-east from Osmotherley - some broadly east-west tracks are depicted across the moor on Jefferys' 1771 map of the area.

Previous Archaeological Investigations and Research: Nine Stones

- 2.21 As far as can be established, the monument known as Nine Stones has not been subject to any previous detailed archaeological survey; indeed, it is difficult to find any published information on the site at all. Nine Stones is listed on the NYMNP HER and English Heritage's National Monument Record NMR (HER 4768; NMR

SE49NE27), and it is also briefly mentioned by Stanhope White (1987) as part of his wider survey of standing stones on the North York Moors.

- 2.22 An intriguing reference in an early 17th century document very probably makes reference to the stones. An 1627 perambulation describes the boundaries of Mr Thomas Lepton's common, belonging to the town of Upper Silton; at this time he held the manors of Over Silton and Kepwick (Morewood 1923). The boundary is described as proceeding by way of the Thrushe pool, Sherwood Leape, a round hill called the North end of the Hoppings, a hill near the Beare pool, a rigg called Wood Howe, a long stone near Motherdale Head, the nine boundary stones upon the 'granid' moor and a place called the Pottikeld. In the same document, it was testified that two men had reported that the nine stones mentioned above divided the boundaries of three lords, three stones belonging to the Bishop of Durham, three belonging to the lord of Thimbleby and three to the lord of Over Silton (Historical Manuscripts Commission 1908, 114). Some of the locations described in the 1627 perambulation are clearly marked on the Ordnance Survey 1857 6" to 1 mile maps (sheet 56 and 57); 'The Hoppings' lies c.5km to the west-south-west, 'Mother Dale' appears to the south-west, 'Potter Keld Sike' is to the east, and the 'granid moor' is most likely represented by High Grain Moor. The map marks nine boundary stones ('B.S.') on the moorland section of the Thimbleby/Over Silton township boundary, which runs from south-west of the Hoppings to Potter Keld Sike, where it meets the Hawnbly township boundary (see figure 8). 'Nine Stones' (as recorded by the current survey) is effectively bisected by the township boundary, with one of the boundary stones indicated at its approximate location.
- 2.23 The only location where Nine Stones appears to have been given any previous description or consideration is on 'The Modern Antiquarian' website (www.themodernantiquarian.com). Various contributors have given their opinion on the monument and exactly what can be seen. One noted the numerous large stones exposed in the former plantation to the south since it had been cut down, some looking as if they might have stood upright or formed a distinct circle; Nine Stones was thought to resemble more of a gateway rather than a stone circle. A second contributor described it as two pairs of standing stones aligned on the cardinal points, and that a circle might have been constructed around these but that other stones had been removed. Again, reference is made to large stones within the plantation that showed evidence that they might once have been upright. Accompanying photographs of the plantation area, both before and after felling, do indeed show large stones that resemble the prostrate examples seen on the moor side of the drystone wall, include one recorded as part of the current survey. The importance of the setting was raised, particularly the presence of Black Hambleton and also Hambleton Street. Finally, a third contributor stated that the circle was formerly about 35m in diameter, that there was evidence for half-buried stones at about 8.5m intervals around the perimeter, and that there might have been 12 stones originally. What were described as prostrate 'outliers' were said to be visible between but just beyond the northern and southern pairs of standing stones.

3 DESCRIPTION OF THE NINE STONES MONUMENT

Introduction

- 3.1 A description of the identified features at Nine Stones is given below, based on information gathered in the field. To the north of the drystone wall, all the stones visible above the ground surface within the survey area are marked on the survey plans. However, to the south, the rather disturbed and chaotic nature of the ground surface, together with the presence of more surface stone, meant that this was not feasible, and so only standing stones or those prostrate examples that might reasonably be supposed to have once stood upright were recorded.
- 3.2 For ease of description, the stones have been grouped into several basic categories. Standing *in situ* stones are shaded black and planned at ground level, with any upper overhang indicated by a dashed line. Prostrate stones that appear once to have stood but are now fallen are cross-hatched, and all other stones are shown as blank. The standing and prostrate stones have been given specific unique letter identifiers, namely A to G on the north side of the wall and H to M on the south side. However, it should be noted that these identifiers and groupings are for descriptive purposes only, and a discussion of Nine Stones as part of a wider, complex, multi-period landscape is given in Chapter 4 below.
- 3.3 Reference should also be made to the various plans and elevations and the copies of the photographs appended to this report. Appendix 1 provides a catalogue of all the photographs taken as part of this project; these photographs are referenced in the following text in bold type and square brackets, the numbers before the stroke representing the film number and the number after indicating the frame e.g. [5/32].

Location and Topography

- 3.4 The Nine Stones monument lies in a north facing area of heather moorland overlooking (but with a limited view into the base of) the valley of the Oakdale Beck, c.2km east of the village of Thimbleby and 2.5km south-east of Osmotherley (see figure 1). It is effectively bisected by a drystone wall; to the north of the wall, the monument lies within open moorland, while to the south, it is within a recently felled coniferous plantation. The monument occupies an elevated position on the southern edge of Thimbleby Moor, at an elevation of c.295m AOD (see figure 2); within the area that was surveyed, the ground surface slopes very gently down from south to north. Nine Stones is located c.320m south of the central enclosure of the settlement on Thimbleby Moor surveyed by EDAS in 2011 (Richardson & Dennison 2011).
- 3.5 On clear days, there are extensive views to the west, north and east [1/181, 1/182, 1/184 to 1/186] (see figure 5). To the west, beyond the edge of the moor, an c.90 degree arc across the Cleveland Plain is visible as far as the eastern edge of the Yorkshire Dales, some 20 miles distant on the horizon, including the entrance to Swaledale [2/748 and 2/750]. Much of this is framed by the valley of the Oakdale Beck, which provides an opening in the land to the north-west through which the Cleveland Plain can be seen. To the north, the horizon is much closer, the view encompassing part of Whorlton Moor and also Scarth Wood Moor; a low gap beyond Scarth Wood Moor, almost due north of Nine Stones and framed by Scarth Wood to the west and Clain Wood to the east, allows a view to distant hills beyond Middlesborough [2/746 and 2/747] (see plate 1). To the north-east and east, there are again views across Whorlton Moor to Cold Moor, which has a distinctive angled shape on the horizon when seen from Nine Stones.

- 3.6 The views to the south are not as extensive as those to the north, east or west, principally because the horizon is much closer, but they are not necessarily less significant. To the south and south-west, the ground surface of Thimbleby Moor rises gently, obscuring any longer distance views in this direction across the Cleveland Plain, for example. However, to the south-east, Hambleton End, the north-west promontory of Black Hambleton, rises to just over 400m AOD in height, and is an extremely prominent, indeed the dominant, feature of the horizon here [2/744] (see plate 2).

Nine Stones Monument

- 3.7 The survey area at Nine Stones measured 94m north-south by a maximum of 32m east-west. Within this area, the monument itself is at least 62m long by up to 16m wide, although it is highly likely that it was not continuous across these total dimensions. As it was recorded by the survey, the apparent long axis of that part of the monument to the north of the drystone wall may be set on a very slight north-north-east/south-south-west alignment [2/745] (see plate 12). However, the alignment of that part to the south of the wall is less clear, largely due to the difficulty of identifying prostrate stones with confidence. Unless otherwise stated, all stones recorded within the survey area appear to be of gritstone.
- 3.8 The results of the survey are described below, either side of the drystone wall. Figure 3 provides a plan of the recorded stones with and without associated earthworks.

Features on the north side of the wall (see figures 3 and 4)

Stones A and B

- 3.9 There are two standing stones (A and B) at the south end of that part of the survey area to the north of the drystone wall, set c.2.90m apart and both located close to a drystone field wall. The west stone (A) is aligned north-west/south-east, and it is possible that it is aligned on the northern limit of Hambleton End to the south-east [2/717]. The stone stands a maximum of just over 1m in height and is wider at the centre than at the base or top, giving an angled profile; the upper surface of the top has weathered to give a cupped appearance (see figure 4) [2/721]. It has a maximum width of 0.95m across the north face at c.0.60m above ground level; the depth or thickness is 0.76m. Apart from a c.0.20m long strip along the eastern edge, the north face may bear evidence for tooling, represented by slight circular 'pecked' or 'hammered' marks [2/715 and 2/716]. There is also possible evidence for similar tooling on the south face [2/719] and on the bottom of the west face [2/718] (see plates 3 and 4); the east face is relatively plain [2/720]. The north face also has three prominent natural planes or lines which slope sharply downwards from east to west.
- 3.10 The east stone (B) is also aligned north-west/south-east. The stone now leans markedly to the south but when upright it would have stood 1.30m high. The east and west sides rise approximately vertically, and remain approximately parallel, maintaining an average width of 0.75m; the depth is 0.44m [2/723] (see plate 5). The top of the stone has a roughly semi-circular profile (see figure 4). The south face may retain evidence for tooling as described above, and has a major weathered natural plane or line running two-thirds of the way across. The north face has a prominent natural plane or line set about a third of its height above ground level and rising to the west [2/722]. It has been suggested that this stone might be more modern than the others forming the monument

(www.themodernantiquarian.com), although it is markedly different to the township boundary stones visible further east that have been incorporated into the existing drystone wall.

Earthworks and other stones

- 3.11 Both these stones are set within a linear depression, measuring 5.50m across the top and up to 0.75m deep; the south-facing scarp forming the north side is steeply sloping. The depression is somewhat irregular in form, but runs broadly parallel to the existing drystone field wall (see figure 3). It has a spread bank running approximately parallel to its north side, again somewhat irregular in form, but measuring a maximum of 7m wide. Both the depression and bank become less prominent as they move west from Nine Stones, fading out altogether for a short distance before re-appearing, whereas to the east, the bank becomes more prominent. The antiquity of this earthwork is uncertain. It might, along with the boundary stones, have partly defined the township boundary between Thimbleby and Over Silton. Alternatively, it could represent the remnants of a trackway running parallel to the boundary across the moor, or a more modern access route perhaps associated with plantation activity to the south.
- 3.12 Within the bank, and in the area to the immediate north, there are at least eight smaller angular stones visible within the ground surface (see figure 3). These are generally 0.60m to 0.80m in length, but project only a very limited amount above the ground surface. Although some may have been thrown up when the linear depression and bank described above were formed, or perhaps comprise a natural surface stone scatter, it is noticeable that when their positions are plotted, they form a broadly oval arrangement in plan; if one includes the two stones to the south, the oval would measure c.15m long by 9m wide.
- 3.13 There is a marked c.15m wide gap between this scatter of stones and the next group of prostrate and standing stones. Within this gap, the ground surface is slightly depressed compared with that to the east and west. To the immediate north of the surface scatter, there is a small sub-oval depression, 0.35m deep. Many similar depressions can be seen beyond the survey area (see below), and it is thought unlikely that the depression marks the position of a standing stone that has been removed.
- 3.14 Located approximately halfway between the surface scatter and the north group of standing and prostrate stones, there appears to be a low sub-oval mound, measuring c.4.5m by 3m, with at least two stones visible in the surface. Deep heather cover here makes interpretation difficult, but it is possible that the mound represents a small cairn; the majority of the cairns recorded to the north-east of the prehistoric settlement on Thimbleby Moor were also sub-oval in plan, rather low and between 4m to 5m across (Richardson & Dennison 2011).

Northern group of stones (C to G)

- 3.15 The northern group of stones comprises two standing stones and at least three prostrate stones, set in a broadly sub-circular arrangement measuring a maximum of 10m across, and with between 3.5m to 5.0m between them. Commencing at the south-west corner, the first prostrate stone (C) is aligned east-west [2/724]. It appears that the west end was once the base, and the east end was the top. By probing with a surveying arrow to establish the extent of the buried portion, it is estimated to have stood at least 1.20m high, and to have been at least 0.44m

wide; the depth is 0.28m. There is a very slight sub-circular mound around the stone.

- 3.16 To the north, a standing stone (D) is aligned slightly north-east/south-west. The stone stands a maximum of 1.28m high and lengthens from the base to the west as it rises, giving an angled profile (see figure 4). It has a maximum width of 0.60m across the north face at c.0.30m above ground level; the depth is 0.55m. The eastern side of the lower half of the north face may preserve evidence for tooling as described above [2/725], while the south face appears to have similar marks up to 0.60m above ground level [2/727]. The west face is noticeably smooth, apart from a line of three sub-rectangular holes set 0.45m below the top of the face [2/726] (see plate 6). These holes are a maximum of 0.05m deep, and while they are probably natural in origin, they are nevertheless distinctive features. The east face [2/728] is relatively plain. Interestingly, a small stone adjacent to the south-east corner of the stone has been used to prop it. This could have been done originally, in which case it is the only such visible example, or might have been done later in response to the stone either leaning or perhaps having fallen over altogether and been re-erected. There is a small sub-circular depression around the base of the stone, together with a shallow outer curvilinear scarp. Again, these may be early features relating to the original erection of the stone, but they could equally have been created by stock rubbing against and around it, as has been noted at a stone circle in Craven, North Yorkshire (Martlew 2010, 62).
- 3.17 To the north-east, the second prostrate stone (E) is aligned north-east/south-west [2/729 and 2/731] (see plates 7 and 11), and may be the northern 'outlier' referred to in on-line accounts (www.themodernantiquarian.com). It appears that the north-east end was once the base, and there are suggestions of a shallow socket here. Almost the whole surviving part of the stone appears to be visible, and it is estimated to have stood 1.70m high, perhaps tapering slightly towards the top. The width is on average 0.60m and the depth or thickness c.0.55m. The former eastern and western faces appear to be tooled, while the former northern face carries prominent grooves, probably water solution grooves created when it stood upright. The former south face is hidden.
- 3.18 To the south-east, the third prostrate stone (F) is aligned on a shallow north-west/south-east angle [2/732 and 2/733] (see plate 8). It appears that the northern end was once the base, and the southern end was the top. By probing with a surveying arrow to establish the extent of the buried portion, it is estimated to have stood at least 1.65m high, and to have been at least 0.65m wide, perhaps tapering slightly towards the top; the thickness or depth is at least 0.40m. The former west face carries many natural grooves or striations. Further probing with a surveying arrow revealed the possible truncated base of another stone of similar dimensions immediately to the south-east, although this cannot be certain.
- 3.19 To the south lies the second standing stone (G) in the northern group. It is aligned north-east/south-west, and it is possible that it is aligned on the northern limit of Cold Moor to the north-east [2/736] (see plate 10). The stone stands a maximum of 1.36m high and both the east and west faces taper towards the top, the latter quite regularly (see figure 4). It has a maximum width of 0.88m across the base of the west face, tapering to 0.29m at the top of the same; the thickness is 0.45m. The north face [2/741] has a very deep water solution groove running down its approximate centre, from a 0.09m oval depression of cupped appearance in the upper surface of the stone [2/742 and 2/743]. The lower half of the east face [2/739 and 2/740] may preserve evidence for tooling as described above, while the upper part of the south face [2/737 and 2/738] has two prominent water solution

grooves, with a curvilinear depression to the base of the east side. The west face, in many ways, presents the most regular and well-formed appearance of any of the surviving stones at Nine Stones [2/734 and 2/735] (see plate 9). It too may possibly have been tooled. There is a sub-circular depression around the base of the stone, together with a shallow outer curvilinear scarp. As with Stone D, these may be early features relating to the original erection of the stone, but they could equally have been created by stock rubbing against and around it.

- 3.20 To the immediate north-west of prostrate stone E, there is a shallow pit and adjacent mound. The pit is sub-oval in plan, 2.50m long and 0.50m deep. It has a spread curvilinear bank snaking around the northern and eastern sides, and to the west, a low oval mound containing some visible smaller angular stones. This is the closest example to Nine Stones of a feature which characterises the ground surface to the north-east and east of the monument; others begin to appear only 5m to 7m to the east of Nine Stones. Numerous pits and associated mounds are visible across these areas, extending as far north as the edge of the previous 2011 survey area on Thimbleby Moor. Some of the pits are over 1m deep and water-filled, and have large (up to 1m across) pieces of stone adjacent. They resemble shallow surface quarrying features and, where larger stones are visible, many have the same c.0.50m thickness recorded from the surviving stones at Nine Stones, suggesting that this may have been the depth of the natural bedding planes in the outcropping rock in this area.

Features on the south side of the wall (see figures 6 and 7)

Southern group of stones (H to M)

- 3.21 The southern group of stones comprises two definite standing stones (K and L), one possible standing stone (M), and two possible prostrate stones (I and J), all set in a broadly sub-circular arrangement measuring a maximum of 13m across, and with between 7m to 10m between them. In addition, there is a possible prostrate outlier (H) some 14m to the north-west of the main group (see figure 6).
- 3.22 Commencing with the latter, the possible prostrate stone (H) is aligned north-east/south-west [3/878 to 3/881]. It appears that the south-west end was once the base, and there is a shallow sub-circular depression to the immediate west that may form the socket. Almost the whole surviving part of the stone appears to be visible, and it is estimated to have stood 1.70m high, tapering from 0.80m in width at the base to 0.40m towards the top; the depth or thickness is on average 0.66m (see plate 13). The former north-west face carries prominent grooves, probably water solution grooves created when it was stood upright.
- 3.23 Turning to the main group of stones, the most prominent and convincing of the standing stones (Stone K) is set on a shallow north-east/south-west alignment. It is possible that it is aligned to mimic Hambleton End, and indeed it may have been selected for the same purpose because of its shape [3/877, 3/882, 3/885 to 3/889] (see plate 14). The stone stands a maximum of 0.63m high and has a maximum width of 1.50m, with a slight overhang at the north-east end; the depth or thickness is 0.42m. The northern face [3/883] may preserve evidence for very worn circular 'pecked' or 'hammered' marks but is otherwise quite plain (see figure 7), while the surface of the western half of the southern face [3/884] is slightly recessed from that of the eastern half. Moving in an anti-clockwise direction, the second standing stone (Stone L) is set on an approximate east-west alignment. The stone stands a maximum of 0.51m high and has a maximum width of 0.75m, with a slight overhang at the south-east corner; the thickness is 0.44m. The top of the stone

has a slight rounded profile, but neither the north nor south face [3/890 and 3/891] bears any marked or obviously significant features. The possible standing stone (Stone M) is smaller still, aligned north-west/south-east, standing 0.30m high and measuring 0.70m wide by 0.30m thick; it leans markedly to the north.

- 3.24 Of the two possible prostrate stones, the long axis of the eastern stone (Stone J) is now aligned north-south. It is estimated to have stood c.1.0m in height, with a width of 1.60m and a depth of 0.25m; if it ever did stand upright, it may have resembled standing stone (K). The visible face [3/894] does not bear any marked or obviously significant features. The western stone (Stone I) is now aligned north-east/south-west. It appears that the south-west end was once the base, and almost the whole surviving part of the stone appears to be visible. It is estimated to have stood 1.10m high, tapering from 0.80m wide at the base to 0.50m towards the top; the thickness is on average 0.30m. The visible face does not carry any markings or obviously significant features, but there are further, smaller, stones to the immediate north-west and south-east.

Other stones

- 3.25 There were a number of other stones recorded within this part of the survey area. There is a sub-rectangular stone, 1.10m long, and 0.60m wide by 0.30m high, to the north-east of the prostrate stone (J). There are also four further stones to the south. Of these, two of a similar size are placed approximately opposite one another, and further to the south-east is the largest stone recorded within this part of the survey area. It measures c.1.50m square and stands 1.0m high [3/893]. The top is relatively level and appears worn/eroded in comparison to the other faces. The stone was probably deposited here naturally. Just to the north-west of this stone, there is a sub-circular pit, of similar form to those described in more detail to the north of the drystone wall (see above). Although the extensive brash to the south of the drystone wall makes the recognition of earthworks difficult, the pits appear to continue at least as far as standing stone (K) and indeed there is a particularly prominent example to the immediate north-east of the stone.

4 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

- 4.1 Inevitably, the survey work at the Nine Stones monument has raised a number of issues meriting further discussion, which are outlined below.
- 4.2 Perhaps the most obvious question to ask is what *is* Nine Stones? Much depends on how the extant remains are interpreted and even following detailed survey, many uncertainties persist, aggravated by a lack of comparative examples on the North York Moors (Manby, King & Vyner 2003, 87-88). In the northern group, the survey has recorded four standing stones (A, B D and G) and three major prostrate stones (C, E and F) which appear to have fallen, accidentally or deliberately, in the past; it is not considered that they were laid flat originally. In the southern group, there are two definite standing stones (K and L), one possible standing stone (M), and three possible prostrate stones (H, I and M). This makes a total of thirteen stones, four more than the number that the name of 'Nine Stones' suggests should be here (see figure 9). The number 'Nine' occurs not infrequently in the names of stone circles or alignments, sometimes as the 'Nine Maidens' or 'Nine Ladies'. It is possible, as has already been noted above, that some of the stones to the south of the drystone wall may not have been erected or moved here by human activity, which may partly explain the discrepancy in the number. However, from the way in which the early 17th century perambulation description is organised, coupled with the evidence from the mid 19th century maps, it seems that there were nine stones spread out across the moor marking the Over Silton/Thimbleby boundary (see figure 8). One of these boundary stones was sited at the Nine Stones monument, and the name 'Nine Stones' appears to have been later transferred to the collection of stones here.
- 4.3 What appears more certain is that the previous accounts are not correct, and Nine Stones is unlikely to represent the remains of a single stone circle of relatively large diameter. On the basis of the current survey, it is suggested that Nine Stones comprises either the remains of a linear alignment/setting of stones, or two distinct but associated groupings, perhaps something akin to two small stone circles (see figure 9). Considering the first, that part of the monument lying to the north of the drystone wall could be interpreted as the remains of a linear alignment of stones, laid out with the long axis just slightly off north-south, measuring at least 40m long (perhaps more if it did continue into the plantation area to the south) by c.8m wide. The stones might be considered to be arranged in pairs, Stone A grouped with Stone B, and perhaps C with G and D with F, in a setting resembling two intermittent rows. The prostrate stone (E), at the very north end of the alignment, might be considered to be 'blocking' the rows, in a similar manner to that sometimes seen in stone rows on Dartmoor, at Merrivale for example (Newman 2011, 57-59). Alternatively, Stones A and B might be argued to resemble paired stones seen in the Lake District, some of which were once part of more extensive arrangements (Clare 2007, 36 & 86).
- 4.4 Turning to the second suggestion, the five standing and fallen stones (Stones C to G) at the north end of the survey area could be considered to be a distinct group on their own, arranged in a sub-oval plan measuring c.10m north-east/south-west by 8m north-west/south-east, and resembling a small stone circle. There are good reasons to consider these stones as a distinct group. Firstly, both standing stones, and at least two of the prostrate stones, taper inwards towards their tops, in contrast to those standing stones (Stones A and B) to the south. Of course, it is impossible to know if they were deliberately chosen because of this shape, but in the Lake District stone circles, the colour and texture of stones may have been a factor in their selection and arrangement (Clare 2007, 48); this remains a possibility

at Nine Stones. Secondly, the size and arrangement of the stones is not dissimilar to other small stone circles or rings recorded in the Yorkshire Dales, and their landscape setting also shares some similarities with the latter (Laurie 2003, 248-249).

- 4.5 It could also be argued that the northern collection of stones have some intriguing shared characteristics with what are known as 'Four Poster' stone circles, a type concentrated in Perthshire, Scotland, but with southern outliers in Northumberland, Yorkshire and the Peak District (Martlew 2010, 66-67). Martlew argues convincingly that a monument known as the Druids' Altar in the limestone uplands of Craven in North Yorkshire should be considered as an example of such, and states that "others, such as the 'uncertain' or 'dubious' settings on the North York Moors may be variants" but gives no further references (Martlew 2010, 71).
- 4.6 The second, southern, group of stones within the felled plantation area (Stones I to M) could be considered to form part of a second sub-circular feature resembling a small stone circle, measuring c.13m across. However, if this is the case, then the stones do not display the same apparent selection of similar shapes as for the proposed northern grouping. In this scenario, the two standing stones (A and B) close to the north side of the drystone wall might form a link or 'pivot' between the two sub-circular groupings; they are placed 28m south of the northern grouping and 34m north-west of the southern grouping, approximately midway between the two. The two apparent groupings are set at an angle to the pair of standing stones, rather than forming part of a structure that could be considered to have a single principal axis of alignment.
- 4.7 On balance, and based on current evidence, it is considered most likely that what has been recorded at Nine Stones represents two distinct groupings, a small stone circle to the north and possibly another similar feature to the south, with two standing stones between them acting as some form of link. These two groupings are likely to have been contemporary and associated, but how? Various suggestions can be made, all highly speculative. For example, were the groupings gendered in some way, with one perhaps considered male and the other female, or did one relate to the sun and the other the moon, or to the summer and the winter? Whatever their purpose, work on other prehistoric monuments suggests that their placing here was not accidental or random. For example, at the aforementioned Druids' Altar in Craven, based on observation and viewshed modelling, it was noted that the stone circle was placed within a very restricted local area from which, in c.2000 BC, both the southernmost setting position of the midwinter sun and the moon at its lowest in the southern sky could be seen (Martlew 2010, 64-66).
- 4.8 It has not been possible, yet, to make these kinds of observations at Nine Stones, but the relationship of the monument to near and distant landscape features is interesting (see figure 5 for the survey area to the north of the drystone wall). The possible orientation of Stones A and G to the ends of prominent hills on the horizon to the south-east and north-east has already been noted. However, the possible use of the stones as indicators of viewing positions towards prominent peaks and long distance views, rather than just alignments, may also be significant (Martlew 2010, 64-69), assuming an absence of contemporary vegetation that would restrict such viewing. At Nine Stones, one could argue that the northward view through the gap between Scarth Moor Wood and Clain Wood is important to the setting, as is the opening created by the valley of the Oakdale Beck across the Cleveland Plain. One should also not dismiss the possibility that the monument makes reference to wider landscape features not only by pointing towards them, but by

running 'alongside' or approximately parallel to them, as may be the case with examples of possible Neolithic long cairns and mounds in the Yorkshire Dales (Luke 2011 forthcoming); here, the relationship between the long axis of Nine Stones and Hambleton End as viewed from Thimbleby Moor may be significant. One might also argue that Stone K of the southern grouping has been deliberately selected for its form and then additionally positioned to mimic Hambleton End itself. Finally, there could have been a visual relationship between Nine Stones and some of the numerous other prehistoric cairns, barrows and tumuli scattered across the wider moorland to the north and north-east.

- 4.9 This last point leads onto the question of who may have built Nine Stones? Manby, King and Vynner (2003, 57) note that there is no convincing evidence for attributing any of the stone circles of the North York Moors or Pennines to the late Neolithic period. If this is the case, then was Nine Stones erected during the Bronze Age, and might it be associated with the settlement recorded on the moor just to the north (Richardson & Dennison 2011)? Nine Stones is placed far enough away from the visible core of the settlement to be considered physically separate, yet is close enough for easy access. Several possible standing stones, smaller than those at Nine Stones, were recorded closer to the settlement, as well as one possible cup-marked rock, and the relationship between the two needs further thought, particular in relation to the spread of small pits and mounds that partly separates them.
- 4.10 Thimbleby Moor also lies immediately to the west of Hambleton Street, still a modern track and footpath forming part of the Cleveland Way. It has previously been suggested that this was a major prehistoric trade route, as well as being an important road in the medieval period (Hayes 1988, 48-51; Spratt 1982, 35-36). Nine Stones may therefore also have had an importance to a wider community than the local one. Given that it is apparently bisected by a township boundary established by at least the early 17th century (see figure 8), and probably by the medieval period, one could draw contrasts with Spratt's work on the role of Bronze Age round barrows which formed boundary markers for contemporary territorial units or 'estates' that had a significant influence on the alignment of later medieval township boundaries (Spratt 1989, 36-37).
- 4.11 It was also noted during the survey work that several self-seeded conifer saplings are becoming established either on or immediately around the Nine Stones monument. Whilst they are currently only small in size, it is recommended that they are removed before they become any larger, and that the monument is periodically inspected to ensure that re-growth does not occur.

5 BIBLIOGRAPHY

Primary sources

- 1771 Jefferys' map of Yorkshire (plate 3)
- 1857 Ordnance Survey 6" to 1 mile map sheet 57 (surveyed 1854)
- 1857 Ordnance Survey 6" to 1 mile map sheet 56 (surveyed 1854)

Secondary sources

- Browarska, P 1997 'Wheatbeck, North Yorkshire: A survey of a Bronze Age field system on the North York Moors'. *Durham Archaeological Journal* vol 13, 35-42
- Brown, P & Chappell, G 2005 *Prehistoric Rock Art in the North York Moors*
- Clare, T 2007 *Prehistoric Monuments of the Lake District*
- Cowley, B 1993 *Old Stones, Old Fields, Old Farms: A History of the Snilesworth Area*
- Dennison, E & Richardson, S 2011 *Scotland Farm Cairnfield, Hawnby, North Yorkshire: Archaeological Survey* (unpublished EDAS archive report 2010/373R.01 for Mr K M Sayer)
- Elgee, F 1930 *Early Man in North East Yorkshire*
- English Heritage 1999 *Recording Archaeological Field Monuments: A Descriptive Specification*
- English Heritage 2007 *Understanding the Archaeology of Landscapes: A Guide to Good Recording Practice*
- Fleming, A 1971 'Bronze Age Agriculture on the Marginal Lands of North-East Yorkshire'. *Agricultural History Review* vol 19, 1-24
- Harding, A & Ostojka-Zagorski, J 1994 'Prehistoric and Early Medieval Activity on Danby Rigg, North Yorkshire'. *The Archaeological Journal* vol 151, 16-97
- Hayes, R 1988 *Old Roads and Pannierways in North East Yorkshire*
- Historical Manuscripts Commission 1908 *Report on Manuscripts in Various Collections vol 2*
- Johnston, R 2000 'Dying, Becoming, and Being the Field; Prehistoric Cairnfields in Northumberland'. In Harding, J & Johnston, R (eds) *Northern Pasts: Interpretations of the Later Prehistory of Northern England and Southern Scotland*, 57-70
- Laurie, T 2003 'Researching the Prehistory of Wensleydale, Swaledale and Teesdale'. In Manby, T, Moorhouse, S & Ottaway, P (eds) *The Archaeology of Yorkshire: An Assessment at the Beginning of the 21st Century*, 223-254
- Luke, Y 2011 'Uncharted Territories: Neolithic Long Cairns and Barrows of the Yorkshire Dales'. *CBA Forum 2011: the Annual Newsletter of CBA Group 4*, 11-22

Manby, T, King, A & Vyner, B 2003 'The Neolithic and Bronze Ages: a Time of Early Agriculture'. In Manby, T, Moorhouse, S & Ottaway, P (eds) *The Archaeology of Yorkshire: An Assessment at the Beginning of the 21st Century*, 35-124

Martlew, R 2010 'The Druids' Altar: A 'Scottish' Stone Circle in Craven, North Yorkshire'. *Yorkshire Archaeological Journal* vol 82, 59-72

Morewood, C C 1923 'Over Silton'. In Page, W (ed) *The Victoria History of the County of York North Riding* vol 2, 51-55

Moorhouse, S 1977 'The Yorkshire Archaeological Register 1976'. *Yorkshire Archaeological Journal* vol 49, 1-18

Newman, P 2011 *The Field Archaeology of Dartmoor*

NYMNPA 2010 *Historic Environment Newsletter (issue 2)* (available at <http://www.northyorkmoors.org.uk/uploads/publication/11055.pdf>)

Richardson, S & Dennison, E 2011 *Thimbleby Moor, Thimbleby, North Yorkshire: Archaeological Survey* (unpublished EDAS archive report 2011/392.R01 for the Thimbleby Estate and the North York Moors National Park Authority)

Royal Commission on Historical Monuments 1908 *Volume 2 of Report on Manuscripts in Various Collections*

Spratt, D A 1982 'The Cleave Dyke System'. *Yorkshire Archaeological Journal* vol 54, 33-52

Spratt, D 1989 'The Prehistoric Remains'. In Spratt, D & Harrison, B (eds) *The North York Moors Landscape Heritage*, 28-44

Spratt, D 1993a 'Prehistoric and Medieval Boundaries on the North York Moors'. In Le Patourel, H J, Long, M & Pickles, M (eds) *Yorkshire Boundaries*, 85-94

Spratt, D 1993b 'The Bronze Age'. In Spratt, D (ed) *Prehistoric and Roman Archaeology of North-East Yorkshire*, 92-141 (CBA Research Report 87)

Spratt, D & Simmons, I 1976 'Prehistoric Activity and Environment on the North York Moors'. *Journal of Archaeological Science* vol 3, 193-209

Vyner, B 1994 'Field Survey of Great Ayton Moor, North Yorkshire'. *Yorkshire Archaeological Society: Prehistory Research Section Bulletin* no 31, 7-11

White, S 1987 *Standing Stones and Earthworks of the North Yorkshire Moors*

Electronic sources

www.themodernantiquarian.com (accessed 12th July 2011)

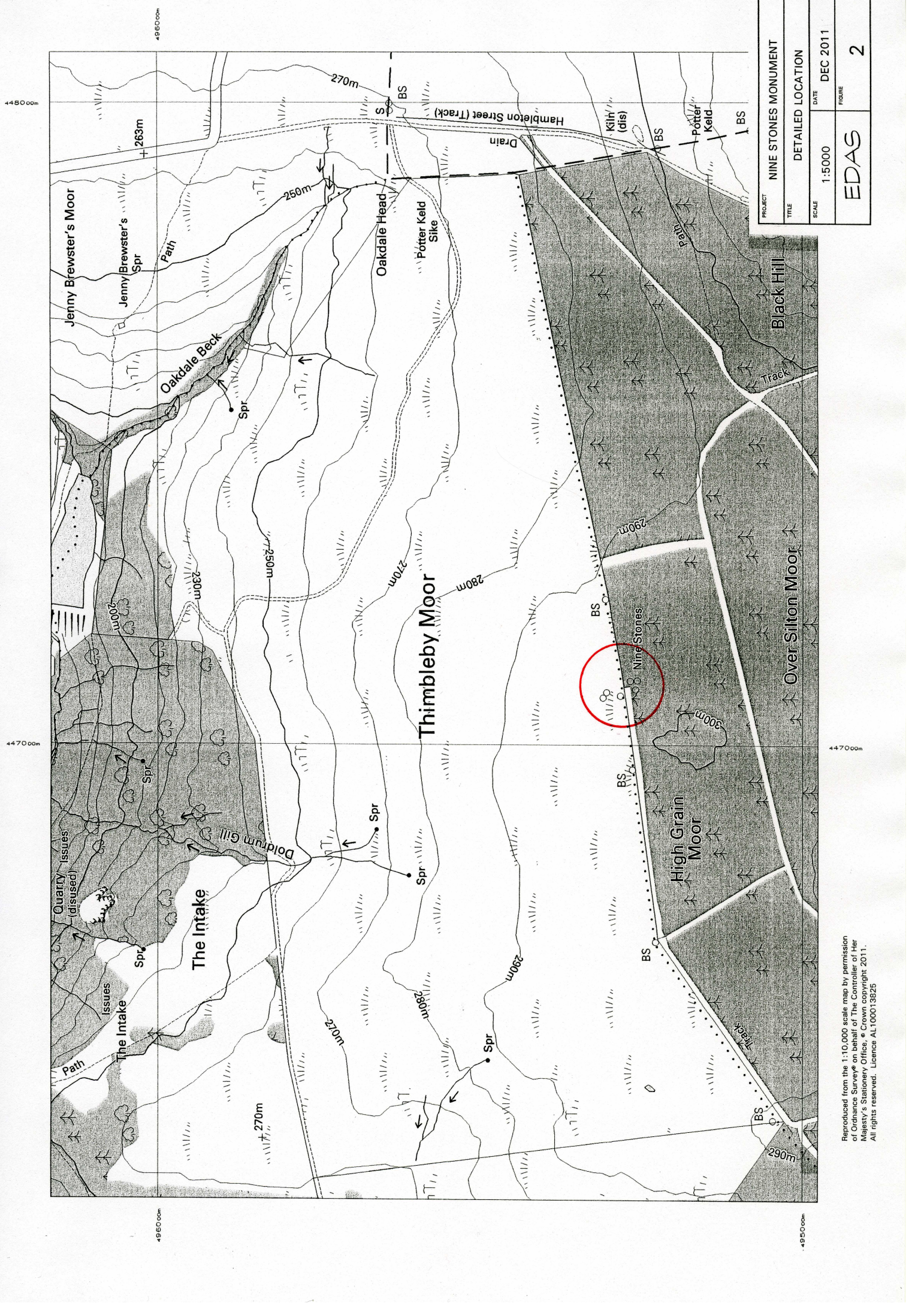
6 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

- 6.1 The archaeological survey at Nine Stones was partly funded by the North York Moors National Park Authority. EDAS would like to thank Mr A Shelley (Thimbleby Estate Manager) and David Dickinson (Gamekeeper for the Thimbleby Estate) for securing access to the northern part of the site, and to Paul Cody and Ian Blair (Forestry Commission) for allowing access to the southern part. Graham Lee and Mags Waughman (NYMNP) are also thanked for their assistance and co-operation in carrying out the survey work.
- 6.2 The initial topographical survey was undertaken by Shaun Richardson (EDAS) and Dave Kempsey (Benchmark Surveys). The field enhancement was undertaken by Shaun Richardson, assisted by Yvonne Luke of English Heritage (in a private research capacity) and Dave Kempsey; EDAS are most grateful to Yvonne Luke for her time and expertise in discussing the findings. Shaun Richardson took the photographs and produced a draft report, and Ed Dennison completed the survey drawings. The draft report benefited greatly from comments made by the NYMNP archaeological staff. The final report was produced by Ed Dennison, with whom the responsibility for any errors remains.



Reproduced from the 1:25,000 scale map by permission of Ordnance Survey® on behalf of The Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office. © Crown copyright 1983. All rights reserved. Licence AL100013825

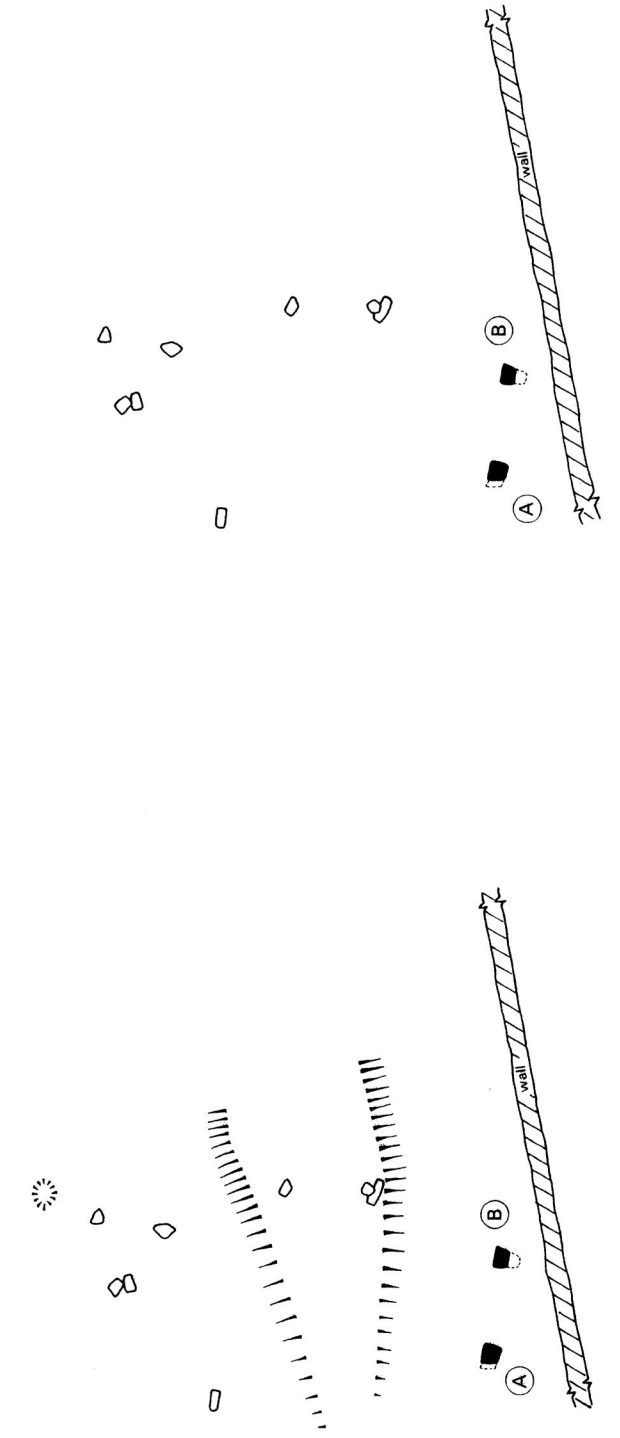
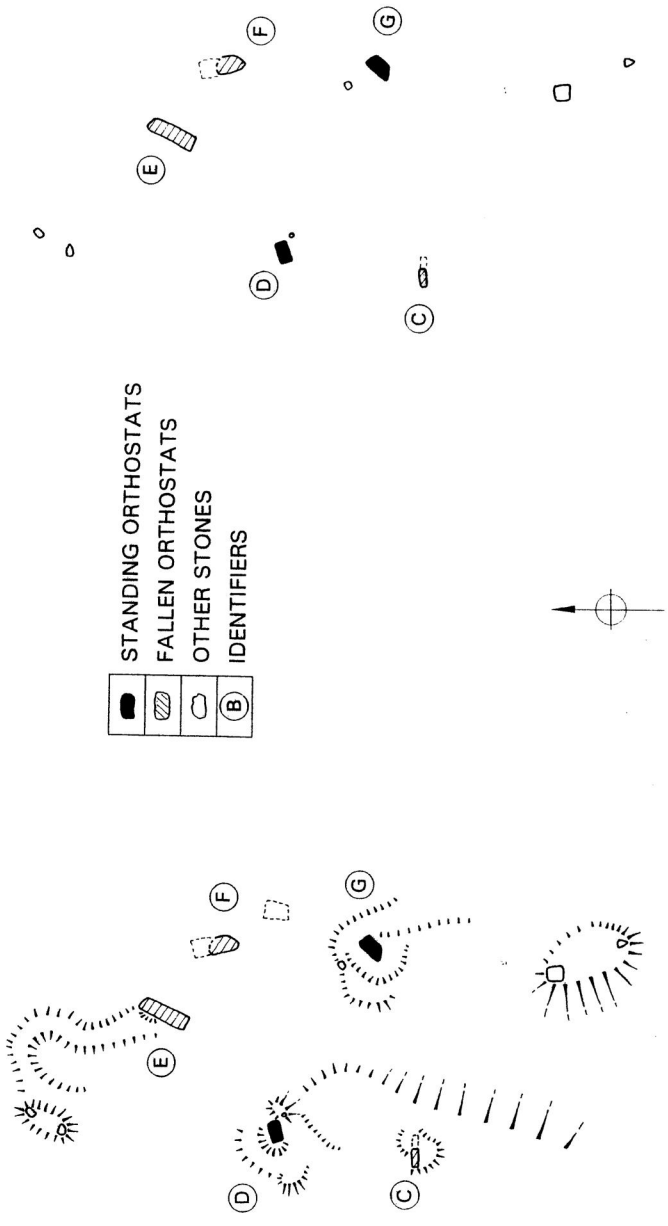
PROJECT		NINE STONES MONUMENT	
TITLE		GENERAL LOCATION	
SCALE	NTS	DATE	DEC 2011
EDAS		FIGURE	1



PROJECT	NINE STONES MONUMENT		
TITLE	DETAILED LOCATION		
SCALE	1:5000	DATE	DEC 2011
	EDAS	FIGURE	2

Reproduced from the 1:10,000 scale map by permission of Ordnance Survey® on behalf of The Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office, © Crown copyright, 2011. All rights reserved. Licence AL100013825

PROJECT	NINE STONES MONUMENT		
TITLE	NINE STONES NORTH - PLANS		
SCALE	AS SHOWN	DATE	DEC 2011
	EDAS	FIGURE	3

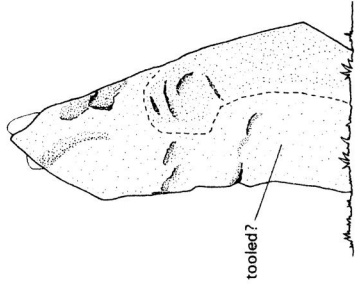


Plan with stones and earthworks

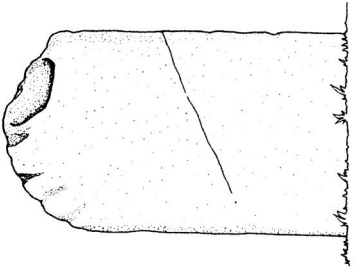
Plan of stones only



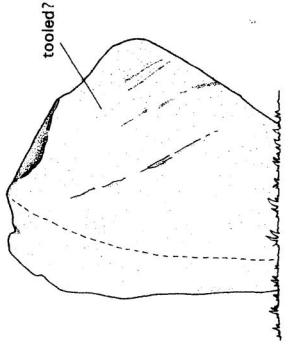
PROJECT	NINE STONES MONUMENT		
TITLE	NINE STONES NORTH - STONES		
SCALE	AS SHOWN	DATE	DEC 2011
	EDAS	FIGURE	4



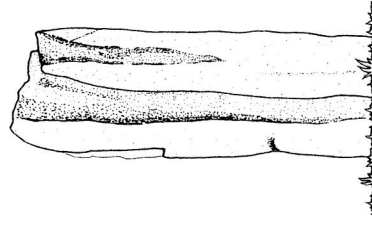
Stone D
north face



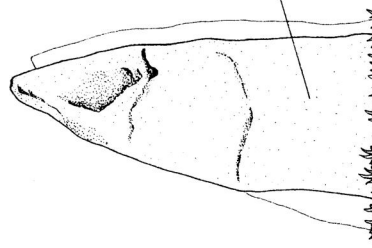
Stone B
north face
(drawn as if fully upright)



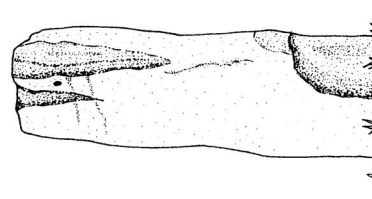
Stone A
north face



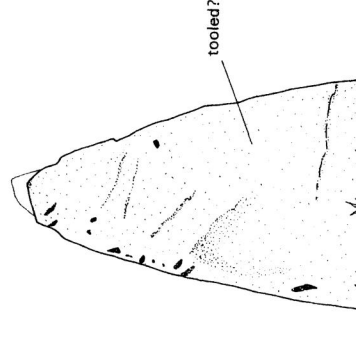
Stone G
north face



Stone G
east face

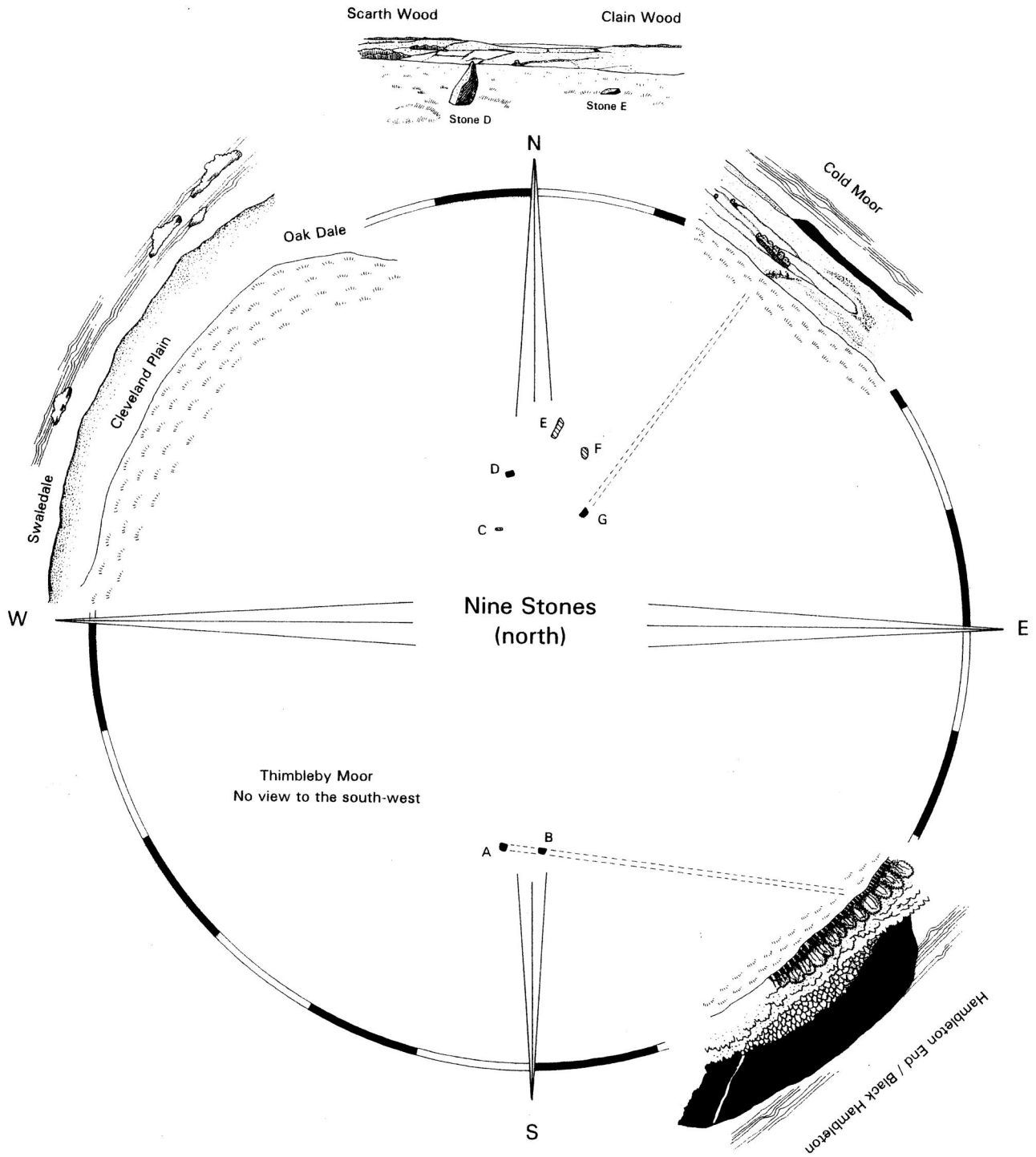


Stone G
south face



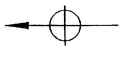
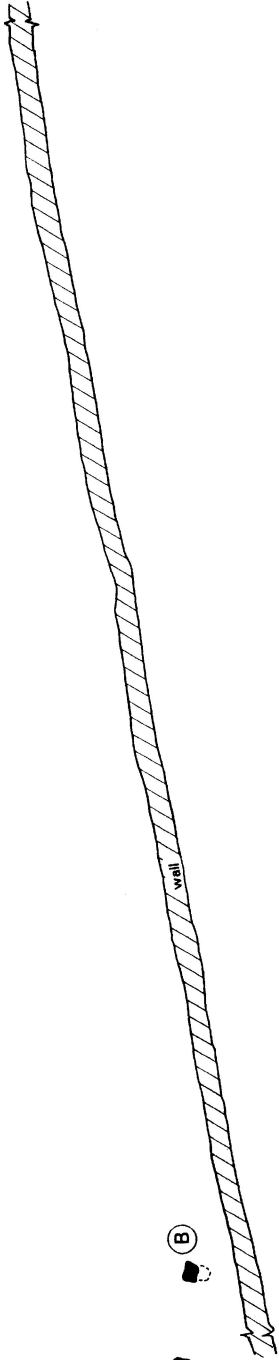
Stone G
west face









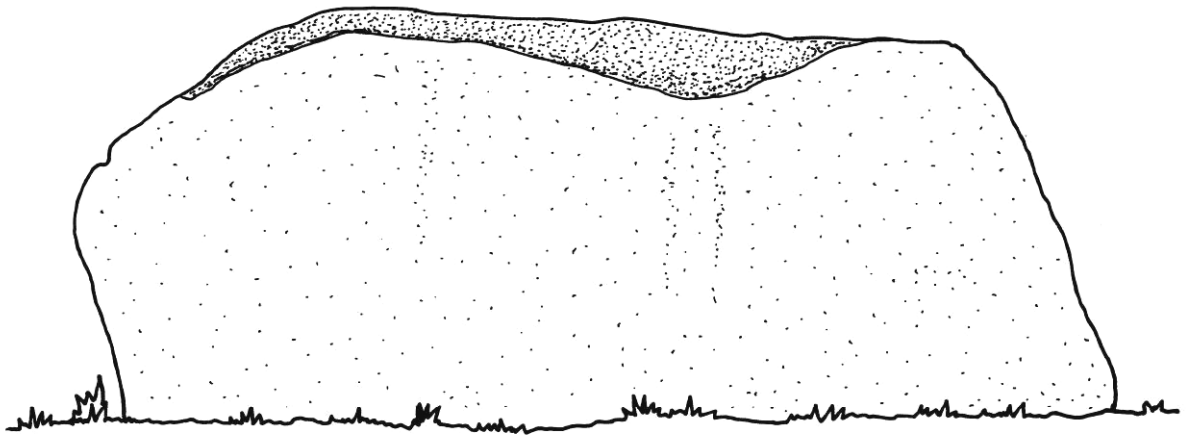
PROJECT		NINE STONES MONUMENT	
TITLE		NINE STONES NORTH - VIEWS	
SCALE	NTS	DATE	DEC 2011
EDAS		FIGURE	5

PROJECT	NINE STONES MONUMENT		
TITLE	NINE STONES SOUTH - PLAN		
SCALE	AS SHOWN	DATE	DEC 2011
	EDAS	FIGURE	6

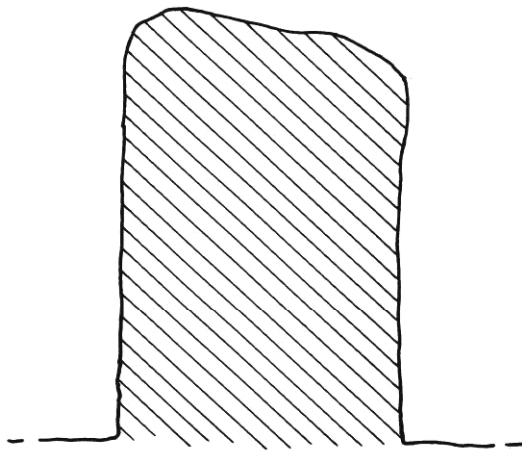


	STANDING ORTHOSTATS
	FALLEN ORTHOSTATS
	OTHER STONES
	IDENTIFIERS





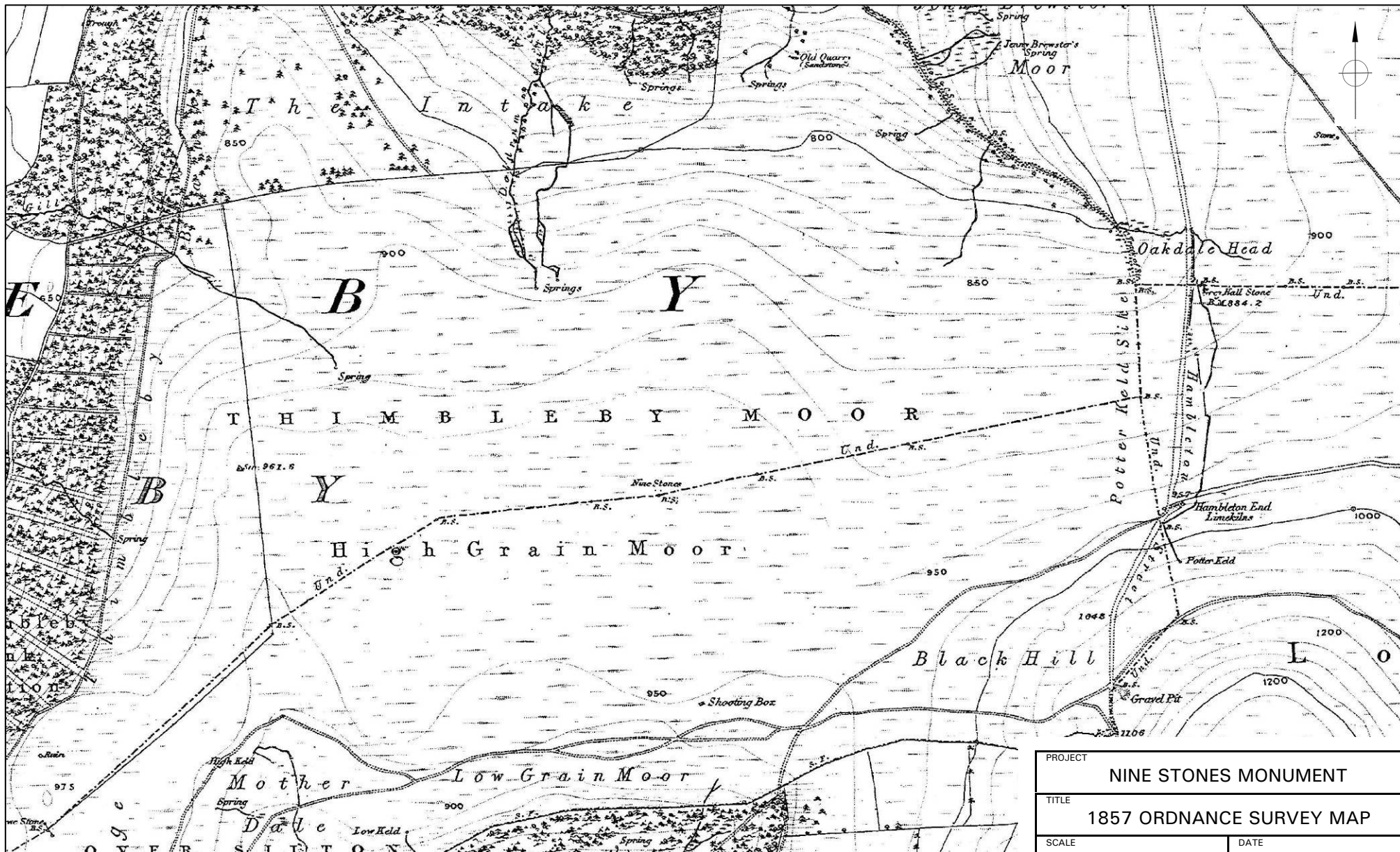
Northern face



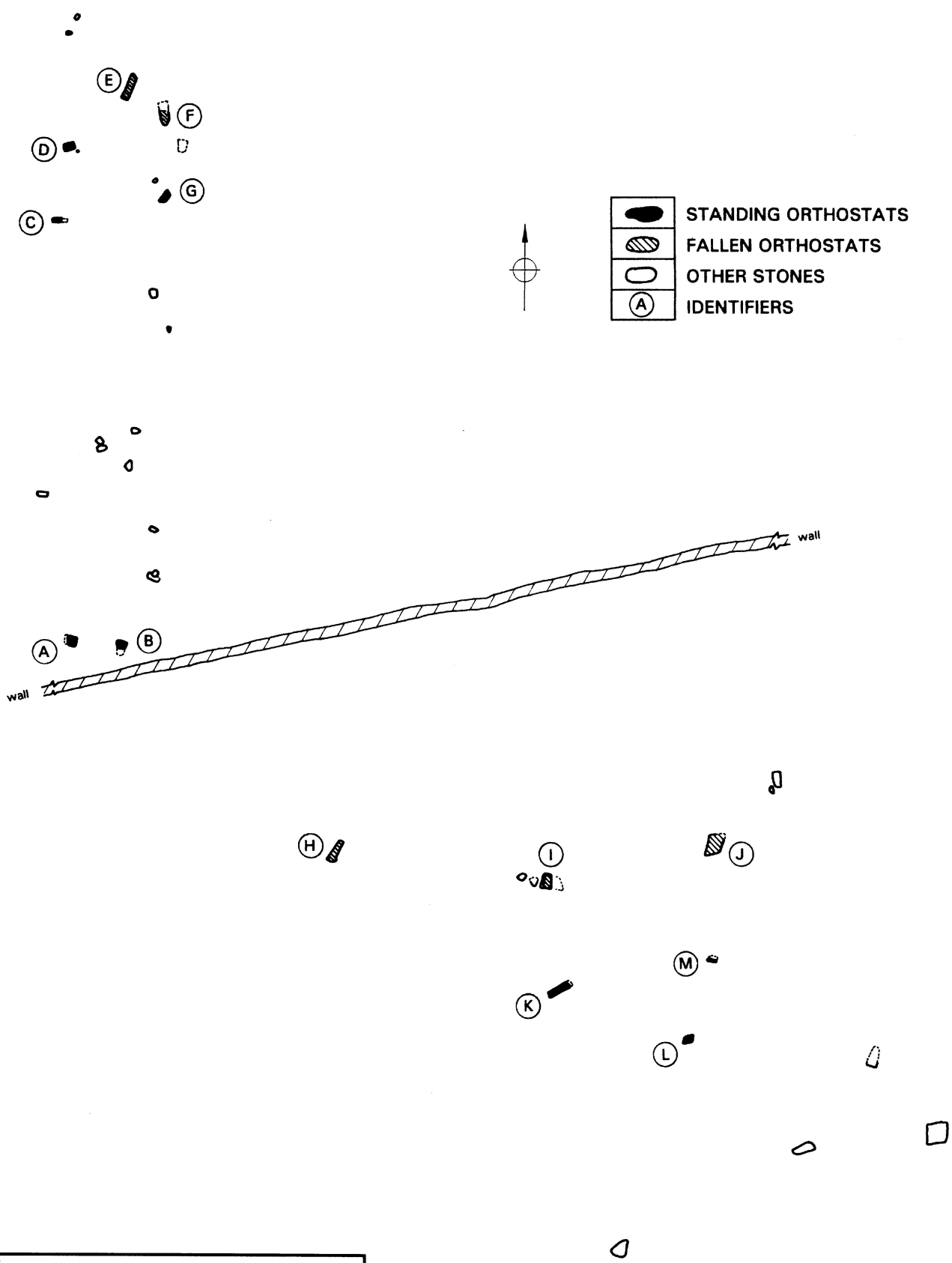
Profile



PROJECT		NINE STONES MONUMENT	
TITLE		NINE STONES SOUTH - STONE K	
SCALE	AS SHOWN	DATE	DEC 2011
EDAS		FIGURE	7



PROJECT		NINE STONES MONUMENT	
TITLE		1857 ORDNANCE SURVEY MAP	
SCALE	NTS	DATE	DEC 2011
EDAS		FIGURE	8



PROJECT		NINE STONES MONUMENT	
TITLE		OVERALL PLAN	
SCALE	AS SHOWN	DATE	DEC 2011
	EDAS	FIGURE	9





Plate 1: Stones D and G, looking N to gap between Scarth Wood and Clain Wood (photo 2/747).



Plate 2: Stones D and G looking SE to Hambleton End (photo 2/744).



Plate 3: Stone A, south face
(photo 2/719).



Plate 4: Stone A, west face
(photo 2/717).



Plate 5: Stone B, east face, looking
towards Stone A (photo 2/723).



Plate 6: Stone D, west face
(photo 2/726).



Plate 7: Stone E, looking NE
(photo 2/731).



Plate 8: Stone F, looking N
(photo 2/732).



Plate 9: Stone G, west face
(photo 2/735).



Plate 10: Stone G, south face
(photo 2/736).



Plate 11: Stone E, looking SE (photo 2/729).



Plate 12: General view of Nine Stones, looking SSW along axis of stones (photo 2/745).



Plate 13: North-west face of Stone H, looking SE (photo 3/878).



Plate 14: North face of Stone K, looking S (photo 3/882).

APPENDIX 1

APPENDIX 1: PHOTOGRAPHIC CATALOGUE

Film 1: Digital colour photographs taken January 2011

Film 2: Digital colour photographs taken 13th July 2011

Film 3: Digital colour photographs taken 6th December 2011

Film	Frame	Subject	Scale
1	182	Nine Stones north (G & D), looking NW across Cleveland Plain	-
1	184	Nine Stones north (G & D, fallen E to centre), looking NE to Clain Wood and Cold Moor	-
1	185	Nine Stones north (G & D, fallen E to centre), looking NE to Clain Wood	-
1	186	Nine Stones north, looking NNE along long axis of monument, Stone A in foreground	-
2	715	N face of Stone A, looking S	1m
2	716	N face of Stone A, looking S	1m
2	717	W face of Stone A, looking SE, showing possible alignment on Hambleton End	1m
2	718	W face of Stone A, looking SE	1m
2	719	S face of Stone A, looking N	1m
2	720	E face of Stone A, looking W	1m
2	721	Upper surface of Stone A	-
2	722	N face of Stone B, looking S	1m
2	723	E face of Stone B, looking NW to Stone A	1m
2	724	Stone C, looking S	1m
2	725	N face of Stone D, looking S	1m
2	726	W face of Stone D, looking E	1m
2	727	S face of Stone D, looking N	1m
2	728	E face of Stone D, looking W	1m
2	729	Stone E, looking SE	1m
2	731	Stone E, looking NE	1m
2	732	Stone F, looking N	1m
2	733	Stone F, looking N	1m
2	734	W face of Stone G, looking SE, Hambleton End in background	1m
2	735	W face of Stone G, looking SE	1m
2	736	S face of Stone G, showing possible alignment on Cold Moor, looking NE	1m
2	737	S face of Stone G, looking N	1m
2	738	S face of Stone G, looking N	1m
2	739	E face of Stone G, looking NW	1m
2	740	E face of Stone G, looking NW	1m
2	741	N face of Stone G, looking S	1m
2	742	N face of Stone G, showing cupping to upper surface, looking S	-
2	743	Upper surface of Stone G	-
2	744	Stone D and G, looking SE to Hambleton End	-
2	745	Nine Stones north, Stone D & G to foreground, looking SW along long axis of monument	-
2	746	Stones D and G, looking NE	-
2	747	Stones D and G, looking N to gap between Scarth Wood and Clain Wood	-
2	748	Stones G and D looking NW to Oakdale Beck valley and Cleveland Plain	-
2	750	Stones G and D looking NW to Cleveland Plain	-
3	869	Stone A, looking NW, with Vale of York and snow capped Dales in distance	-
3	871	Stone A, looking NW, with Vale of York and snow capped Dales in distance	-
3	872	Stones A, D and F, looking NE	-
3	877	Stone K with Hambleton End, looking S	-
3	878	Stone H, NW face, looking SE	1m
3	879	Stone H, NW face, looking SE	1m
3	880	Stone H, NW face, looking SE	1m
3	881	Stone H, NW face, looking SE	1m
3	882	Stone K, N face, looking S	1m
3	883	Stone K, N face, looking S	1m
3	884	Stone K, S face, looking N	1m
3	885	Stone K with Hambleton End, looking S	1m
3	887	Stone K with Hambleton End, looking S	1m

3	889	Stone K with Hambleton End, looking S	1m
3	890	Stone L, N face, looking S	1m
3	891	Stone L, S face, looking N	1m
3	893	Large stone to SE of southern grouping, looking SE	1m
3	894	Stone J, looking N	1m
3	897	Stone A, looking NW, with Vale of York and snow capped Dales in distance	-



1-182.JPG



1-184.JPG



1-185.JPG



1-186.JPG



2-715.JPG



2-716.JPG



2-717.JPG



2-718.JPG



2-719.JPG



2-720.JPG



2-721.JPG



2-722.JPG



2-723.JPG



2-724.JPG



2-725.JPG



2-726.JPG



2-727.JPG



2-728.JPG



2-729.JPG



2-731.JPG



2-732.JPG



2-733.JPG



2-734.JPG



2-735.JPG



2-736.JPG



2-737.JPG



2-738.JPG



2-739.JPG



2-740.JPG



2-741.JPG



2-742.JPG



2-743.JPG



2-744.JPG



2-745.JPG



2-746.JPG



2-747.JPG



2-748.JPG



2-750.JPG



3-869.JPG



3-871.JPG



3-872.JPG



3-877.JPG



3-878.JPG



3-879.JPG



3-880.JPG



3-881.JPG



3-882.JPG



3-883.JPG



3-884.JPG



3-885.JPG



3-887.JPG



3-889.JPG



3-890.JPG



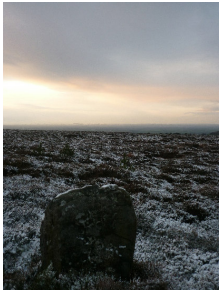
3-891.JPG



3-893.JPG



3-894.JPG



3-897.JPG