

# **Volume 2: Gazetteer of sites**

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***Cover photograph:*** *The Titterstone Clee Quarries (copyright: CPAT, ref. 92-C-0913)*

## 1. Introduction to the gazetteer

1.1 In order to aid comprehension, the gazetteer has been divided into a series of chronologically themed sections beginning with the earliest occupation of the hill. The general character of the area is first described followed by descriptions of each individual archaeological site identified in the course of the study. Each such site is given a unique identifier, for example TCR101 (Titterstone Clee Reconnaissance 101) and where other unique identifiers exist these are also given. Where possible the ID, location and approximate extent of each site is depicted on the map at the end of each section. Also recorded is the type of source which led to the identification of the site. These include existing SMR (Sites and Monuments Record) data, aerial photographs, field name evidence, documentary and map research, and walkover survey.

1.2 The definition of ‘archaeological sites’ is here taken as including upstanding remains, earthworks, buried features, palaeoenvironmental evidence and artefact scatters. The definition of a historic landscape includes, ‘*all the physical remains of human interaction with nature through time, or the pattern of field and farm*’ (PPG15, taken from English Heritage Archaeological Division Research Agenda 1997, 25). Archaeological sites presently undated are considered to be of at least potential local importance and all sites are categorised according to potential importance, as follows:

- sites of national importance, usually Scheduled Monuments
- sites of regional importance
- sites of local importance
- sites of limited importance, including those sites so badly disturbed or poorly documented, that too little now remains to justify their inclusion at a higher grade

1.3 The Secretary of State for the Environment’s published Non-statutory Criteria for the Scheduling of Ancient Monuments (PPG16: Annex 4 1990) and the English Heritage Guidance on the New Approach to Appraisal (1998) have been used to determine these levels of significance. These criteria are as follows:

CRITERIA	HIGH	MEDIUM	LOW
Rarity			
Documentation			
Group value			
Survival/condition			
Fragility/vulnerability			
Diversity			
Potential			
Amenity value			

Recommendations for further archaeological fieldwork are proposed if considered to be appropriate, particularly where these can address specific limitations in our current knowledge.

## **Part 1: Prehistoric remains**

### **1. The Iron Age hillfort and associated features**

**Site ref.:** TCR101

**Grid Reference:** SO 59491 77956

**Mon UID** MSA321

Preferred Ref.00427

Name: Titterstone Clee Hill Camp

Map Sheet SO 57NE

Grid Reference Centroid: SO 59491 77956

Civil Parish: Stoke St Milborough, Bitterley,

#### **SITE TYPE:**

UNIVALLATE HILLFORT (Early Bronze Age to Late Iron Age - 2350 BC to 42 AD)

**SM 19139** Slight univallate hillfort

Other Statuses and ReferencesType/GradeReference/Title

Sites and Monuments Record 01182

Site of Special Scientific Interest1002341 Titterstone Clee  
Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, Shropshire Hills

#### **Location**

Summit of Titterstone Cle Hill

#### **Summary**

The monument includes the remains of a slight univallate hillfort which occupies a strong defensive position on the rounded summit of Titterstone Clee Hill. The hill itself is an imposing landmark formed by a basalt intrusion in the Carboniferous period. By the Early Iron Age it had become a centre for habitation and a system of defences encircling the hilltop had been constructed. These substantial stone walls continued to be developed and modified throughout the occupation of the site, the final phase being the construction of elaborate entrance gates. The hillfort has maximum dimensions of 770m east to west by some 450m north to south, enclosing an area of 28ha and making it one of the largest hillforts in Shropshire even though it has been damaged along its southern side by modern quarrying. Where the defences survive they follow the terrain and were designed to enhance the natural strategic advantages of the topography. The rampart today remains visible largely as a tumbled stone wall forming linear scree running around the north and east of the hill summit. [Detailed description of the site and visible excavation trenches is given]. The 1934 excavations identified four phases of construction. In the first period a timber-revetted earth rampart was constructed with timber entrances. During period two the defences fell into

disrepair and appeared to have been partly dismantled. Period three saw a rebuilding of the rampart in stone and a remodelling of the gateways, with the construction of two stone and timber guard chambers flanking the main south eastern entrance. There followed a period in which the fort continued to be inhabited but the defences fell into disrepair or were slighted. These phases can be dated by reference to dated features at other Marches hillforts to the period between the Late Bronze Age and the pre Roman Iron Age.

In 1991, archaeological investigations were carried out to the east of the Civil Aviation Authority and Meteorological Office radar installations which demonstrated that the remains of walls and other features related to the occupation of the hillfort survive in its interior.

The rampart is unusual in its method of construction, making extensive use of drystone walling to create what remains today an impressive perimeter defence. The large size of the enclosed area, one of the largest hillfort interiors in Shropshire, indicates that the site was of considerable importance during its life. Excavations have demonstrated that the monument still retains many internal features.

### **Major Finds**

SPEAR (Early Medieval/Dark Age - 410 AD to 1065 AD)

A spear head was found on Titterstone Clee while excavating the virgin ground to the left of no. 4 incline at 3.00 on November 28<sup>th</sup> 1926 at 1800 feet above OD. Photograph (B1974) in Shropshire Archive.

## 2. Results of walkover survey

2.1 The enclosure remains physically much as described, largely intact around its northern perimeter while destroyed by quarrying around the south. The Ordnance Survey First Edition One-Inch Series of 1832, sheet 50 'Leominster and Ludlow' shows the hill as still being intact at the time of this survey. The Titterstone Quarries are recorded as being first opened in March 1881 by the 'Brassey and Field' partnership indicating that it is in this late 19<sup>th</sup> century period of industrial activity that the southern part of the enclosure was destroyed.



*Fig. 1: Extract from the Ordnance Survey First Edition One-Inch Series of 1832*

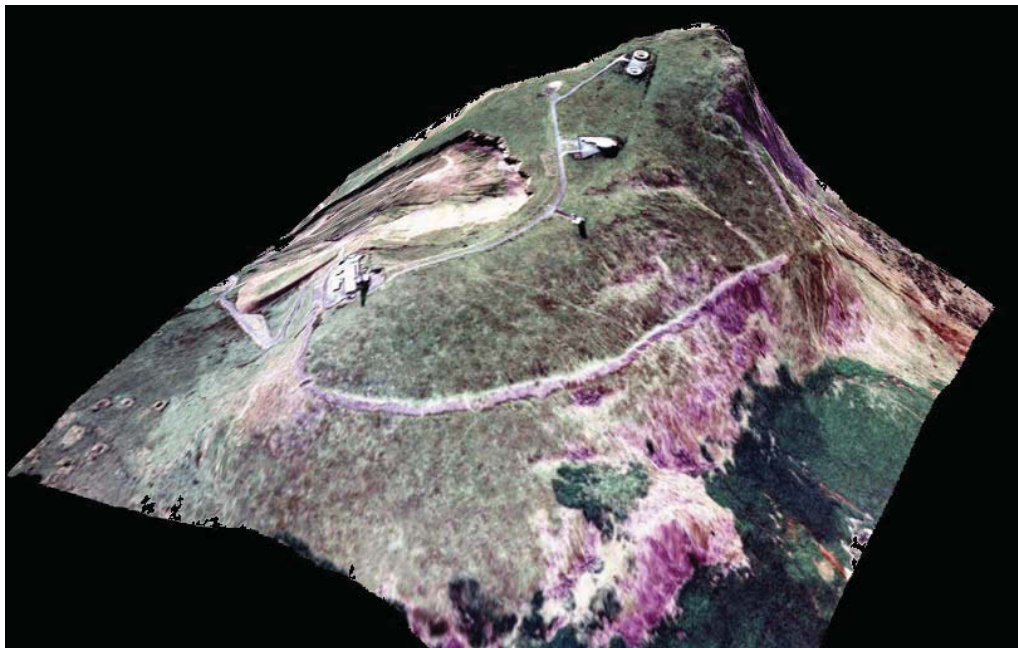
However, it is perhaps worth noting that the 1832 survey, while showing the hill summit as intact and annotated as 'Ancient Encampment', makes no attempt to depict the perimeter wall of the enclosure (see Fig. 1). This cartographic record does therefore not offer proof of a complete encircling of the hill summit.

2.2 Today, the surviving portion of the bounding rampart/wall commences at SO 59763 77793 to the immediate south of the CAA Control Centre building as a substantial stony scarp up to 2.5m high and some 10m wide, the boundary fence of the CAA compound running along its upper edge is cut at SO 59832 77834 by one of O'Neil's excavation trenches at right angles to the rampart, 12m long by 2.0m wide (Plates 1 and 2). From the corner of the compound, it continues in a north-easterly direction as a substantial stony bank with exposed stone on its outer face to a height of 2.1m and turf covered on its inner face averaging 1.0m high. Within the wall at SO 59892 77866 is a 3m diameter hollow excavated into the fabric of the rampart to a depth of 1.2m. This is probably a WWII foxhole, or 'sanger' associated with the war time radar installation (Plate 3). A second O'Neil trench is located at the south-eastern corner of the hillfort, SO 59936 77898, some 200m from the commencement of the rampart (Plate 4). This being is similarly cut at right angles across the rampart with dimensions of 25.0m by 3.0m, extending into the interior of the enclosure for

some 6m. Here the rampart has the form of a substantial stony bank with an average width of 9.0m and an outer height of 1.4m and inner height of 0.7m. From this point the rampart curves around the eastern flank of the hill summit turning towards the NNW. At SO 59920 77958 a cruciform trench up to 2m wide is cut from the inner face of the rampart at right angles to the rampart extending up to 10m into the interior of the enclosure with a cross trench 6m long towards its western end (Plate 5). In this area of the rampart centred at SO 5992 7796 are three circular hollows built into the fabric of the wall, up to 1m in depth and with an average diameter of 2m (Plate 6).

**2.3** From here the rampart continues to the NNE to a point at SO 5991 7799 where becomes suddenly reduced in size from 1.1m high to 0.5m on its inner face and from 1.6m to 1.0m on its outer face (Plate 7). A small trench 0.7m wide is cut through the rampart at SO 59905 78009 and a further exploratory section 1.0m wide is cut at right angles through the rampart at SO 59872 78038 at this location a second trench 10.0m long and 1.0m wide is excavated against the inner face of the rampart to the (Plates 8 and 9). From this point, the rampart continues around the northern flank of the hill for 495m as a broad spread, stony bank with an average width of 10.5m and internal height of 0.6m (Plate 10). The Ordnance Survey 1: 2500 depiction shows the scarp of an inner ditch running parallel to the wall between SO 59671 78123 and SO 59461 78175, which does survive on the ground with an inner scarp up 1.0m high (Plate 11). At SO 5979 7808 there is a pathway through the rampart (Plate 12) and at SO 5978 7809 the inner ground level and the rampart merge.

**2.4** At SO 5944 7819 the character of the enclosure bank changes from being exposed stone to a slighter and lower turf covered bank up to 0.6m high (Plate 13). The OS also show a simple, slightly inturned entrance at SO 59405 78188, some 6m wide at the north-west corner of the enclosure (Plate 14), this does have the appearance of an original entrance into the interior of the enclosure. At SO 5933 7817, on the hill-slope outside the enclosure wall is a bell pit 6m in diameter and 1.2m deep with a spoil crescent on its down-slope side (Plate 15).



*Fig. 2: AP drape of hilltop with intact rampart*

**2.5** The whole of the section of rampart described above runs roughly along the 489m contour, considerably below the hill top which climbs steadily from 499m in the east to 529m in the west (see Fig. 2). However from SO 59402 78187 the rampart wall turns sharply to the south-west climbing steeply towards the hill summit and becoming an exposed swathe of stone again at SO 5937 7818, rising from a height of 489m AOD to end on the outcropping rock of the hill summit at a height of 523m AOD a rise of 34m over a distance of 194m (Plate 16). From this point SO 59254 78046 the land rises to the summit of the hill at a height of 533m AOD, marked by the OS triangulation pillar. There is no trace of any artificial boundary feature around this western point of the hill, though the steep outcropping rock and its associated scree are such that no such boundary feature would be required in this quarter.

**2.6** As noted above the southern part of the hill has been extensively damaged by the two 19<sup>th</sup> century basalt quarries, which have removed a substantial portion of the hilltop. The relationship of these quarries to the enclosure can be seen in figure 2, a subset of a vertical aerial photograph of the hill. However on close inspection two sections of the southern perimeter wall of the enclosure do appear to survive. The first is recorded by the Ordnance Survey as a linear concentration of collected stone running roughly along the 491m contour between SO 59085 77852 and SO 59157 77779. Although slighter, and less well-defined than the northern section of the rampart, it remains fundamentally similar in construction with an average width of 7.5m and height of 0.5m (Plate 17). Further to the east on the spur of land which survives between the two quarries is a second short length of embankment. Much slighter than any of the previously described sections of the enclosure wall, it does however survive as a well defined earth and stone embankment, some 5.0m wide and up to 0.8m high, running at a height of 486m AOD between SO 59450 77664 and SO 59529 77669 (Plate 18).

**2.7** The interior of the enclosure shows no surface evidence of occupation, rising from the east at 492m AOD to the west at 529m AOD and with a domed north-south profile rising from 490m AOD to 518m AOD with overall dimensions of 809m east to west by 411m north-south. The north quarter of the hill, although not apparent in the OS contour plot shows some possible terracing in the area centred SO 5954 7808. This can be seen on the aerial photograph, bounded along its west and south-west sides by an apparent linear stone exposure running from a point adjacent to the main rampart at SO 59472 78173 south to SO 59455 78064, turning to the south-east to end at SO 59545 77995. On the ground the linearity of this feature is less apparent though it appears worthy of further examination. For example could this terracing represent the site of a quarry from which the stone for the ramparts was worked. In practical terms stone obtained here could have been readily transported down-slope to its desired position, rather than upslope from the more obvious stone exposures of the lower slopes, this is a speculative observation only.

**2.8** In the area centred SO 5919 7788 immediately south of a substantial ring cairn (TCR102) are a series of parallel scarps which run across the slope for approximately 100m (Fig. 3). They appear not to be of any purpose and most likely explanation for their origin is that they are land slip associated with the blasting of the old quarry face which lies below and to the south-east.





*Fig. 3: Sub-set of AP, linear explosive shake features lie between and south of the two circled ring-cairns*

### 3. Discussion

**3.1** By projecting from the two short southern sections of rampart to reconstruct the approximate southern extent of the enclosure an overall internal area of 275,760 sq m and total perimeter of 2,083m can be obtained. This unusually large overall extent of the enclosure in relation to its comparatively weak nature of the artificial ‘defences’ raise some questions about the origin and purpose of the site.

**3.2** In the past this class of monument has been regarded as the ‘type site’ of the Iron Age and as such sites were confidently attributed to this period, chronologically *c.*600 BC to 200 AD. However more recently it has been recognised that the origins of upland enclosures are more complex and that some such sites are more ancient. In the uplands of the Midlands and the Welsh Marches hilltop settlements developed considerably earlier, as at Mam Tor in Derbyshire, which has been dated to around 1000BC, though no dating evidence exists to associate the surrounding rampart with the dated occupation (Coombs and Thompson, 1979). Similarly three sites in the northern Welsh Marches, Breiddin, Moel-y-Gaer and Dinorben all show evidence of being occupied in the eighth century BC, with Breiddin having a C-14 date of 740 from a posthole in its primary rampart. Though here again none can be undisputedly proven as being enclosed in their earliest phases (Darvill, 1987). These monuments belong to a period of changing use of landscape which varies in timing from region to region. Earlier in the south of the country where it can be categorised as occurring towards the end of the

early Bronze Age and later in the Midlands where it occurs in the Late Bronze Age. This change is one of an increasing emphasis on land division with the formalisation of land boundaries and the creation of field systems, with more evidence of arable farming and an emergence in the archaeological record of substantial settlements. Such settlements are identified by the remains of timber houses, storage pits, and in some cases earthwork enclosures (Bradley, 3003). There is also evidence of conflict in relation to these property boundaries, for example at Tormarton, Avon the remains of two young male skeletons were found in a boundary ditch. Each showed evidence of injury from spear thrusts, one having the tip of a bronze spear embedded in its spine. A c14 date suggested that the incident took place at around 1000 BC (Darvill 1987).

**3.3** Returning to the enclosure which survives on the summit of Titterstone Clee, it must be said that there is at present no known dating evidence in which to confidently attribute the site to a particular time or culture. However some observations can be made. In terms of its size and the substantial nature of the surviving portion of the perimeter wall it clearly represents a considerable investment in terms of building effort. To construct the full length of the enclosing rampart would have required a substantial and well organised workforce. Stone is readily accessible on the hill in the scree slopes and also fractures naturally in exposures making quarrying comparatively easy. However the stone would still require moving and the wall constructing. Its position also demonstrates considerable engineering skill in terms of its uniform height, running close to the 490m contour throughout its extant length. However in terms of defence it cannot be said to represent a strong barrier to anyone wishing to gain access to the interior. The natural hillslopes themselves are a formidable but not insurmountable natural barrier while the 2km length of the rampart would make any organised defence of the total length difficult. It is also worthy of note that there is no evidence of an outer ditch, characteristic of Iron Age hillforts while there is, as shown by the OS a short c.215m length of inner ditch flanking the north rampart.

**3.4** Though its age and indeed function must remain uncertain its physical characteristics when viewed in respect to the predominance of other Bronze Age sites and finds upon the hill suggest a late Bronze Age date for the site. Similarly its function remains uncertain, while in the past such enclosures were regarded as defended settlements. Excavation in recent decades have demonstrated a more complex and varied use of such sites, Some were continuously occupied, some were only periodically occupied, some functioned as safe storage sites for grain or for stock management, while some may have had both practical and spiritual significance.

**3.5** What is certain is that while the enclosure upon its summit remains to some extent enigmatic the hill itself has been, as it remains today a significant landscape feature which has been and remains prominent within the landscape over a radius of perhaps some 70 miles. It stands at the geographical junction between the predominantly flat arable lands of the Midland plane to the east and the pastoral hill country of the Marches and Welsh Hills to the west. This juxtaposition of landscape and agricultural usage may be significant in both the siting and function of this enclosure. What is certain that humans have been drawn to Titterstone Clee Hill for as long as they have occupied the area. Indeed this landscape significance is eloquently exemplified by the inclusion of the hill on the 14<sup>th</sup> century *Mappa Mundi* as the only named high ground in the British Isles.

#### 4. Recommendations

4.1 The unusual nature of the site, high amenity value and uncertainty as to its function suggest potential for a full level four instrumental survey of the enclosure and its immediate surroundings, possibly including a systematic geophysical survey of the interior. In terms of research potential, its possible chronological position at a crucial point in the change from ‘a landscape of monuments’ to a more enclosed agricultural landscape of managed space make it a significant monument.

##### Status: National importance

CRITERIA	HIGH	MEDIUM	LOW
SITE ID: TCR101			
Rarity	*		
Documentation		*	
Group value	*		
Survival/condition	*		
Fragility/vulnerability		*	
Diversity		*	
Potential	*		
Amenity value	*		

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*Plate 1: Rampart below the CAA compound*



*Plate 2: O'Neil Trench SO 5983 7783*



*Plate 3: Possible WWII sanger SO 5989 77866*



*Plate 4: O'Neil Trench, SO 5994 7790*



*Plate 5: O'Neil cruciform trench SO 5992 7796*



*Plate 6: Example of small hollows in rampart, SO 5990 7796*



*Plate 7: Rampart reducing left to right SO 5991 7799*



*Plate 8: O'Neil trench, SO 5990 7801*



*Plate 9: O'Neil Trench, SO 5900 7801*



*Plate 10: The rampart running west*





*Plate 11: The ? inner ditch*



*Plate 12: Path through rampart SO 5979 7808*



*Plate 13: Turf-covered slight bank, SO 5944 7819*



*Plate 14: Possible entrance, SO 5946 7817*



*Plate 15: Bell pit, SO 5933 7817*



*Plate 16: Swathe of stone continuing SW towards summit*