

**YCCART 2010/28  
North Somerset 2010/118**

**Enclosure at Bickley, known as Bickley 3**

**YATTON, CONGRESBURY, CLAVERHAM & CLEEVE ARCHAEOLOGICAL  
RESEARCH TEAM (YCCART)**

*General Editor: Vince Russett*



*Pip (the dog) assists YCCART members to demonstrate the size of the enclosure.*

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## **Abstract**

*In the winter of 2009-10, members of the Yatton, Congresbury, Claverham and Cleeve Archaeological Research Team (YCCCART) completed an earthwork survey of an enclosure on the north-west side of Broadfield Down, at Bickley, near Cleeve, North Somerset. This enclosure, now known as Bickley 3, was found to have similarities to a group of earthwork enclosures on Broadfield Down, North Somerset which were described by Vince Russett in his article (2006) in the journal of the Council for British Archaeology South West, 18.*

## **Acknowledgements**

YCCCART are most grateful to the owner, Mrs Mary Campbell, for permission to survey and photograph this site, and for her warm hospitality every week, including particularly the home-made biscuits.

The authors are most grateful to Vince Russett for editing this report, and also for allowing us to use the table which appeared as the Appendix to the article described above.

## **Introduction**

YCCCART is one of a number of Community Archaeology teams across North Somerset, supported by the North Somerset Council Development Management Team.

The objective of the Community Archaeology in North Somerset (CANS) teams is to carry out archaeological fieldwork, for the purpose of recording, and better understanding, of the heritage of North Somerset.

For further information, see <http://cansnetwork.co.uk>

## Site location

This enclosure at Bickley is one of a number of similar earthworks situated on Broadfield Down, in North Somerset. Broadfield Down is bounded roughly on the north-west by the A370 between Congresbury and Barrow Gurney, on the north by Barrow Gurney village and the open valley in which Winford lies, on the east by Winford parish, and on the south by the Wrington vale and the Wrington-Congresbury road. To the north of Congresbury is an outlying hill which is the site of the internationally important hillfort of Cadbury (Rahtz *et al.* 1992) and the former site of the Roman temple at Henley Wood (Watts and Leach 1998). The relationship between the group of enclosures on Broadfield Down and the adjacent hillfort is much debated (Russett 2006). None of the enclosures has produced any datable evidence, in spite of close examination during surveys.



Fig1: Enclosures on Broadfield Down

The earthwork at Bickley is one of three similar sites situated on the same property; these are now referred to as Bickley 1, 2 and 3. All three lie in the south west part of the parish of Cleeve, in the District of North Somerset, some 12 km. south-west of

Bristol. Bickley 3 is situated about 200m. north of the boundary between Congresbury and Cleeve parishes and 200m east of the A370 Bristol to Weston-super-Mare road at NGR ST4523 6510. The site is close to the top of a steep slope at 55-65m. above Ordnance Datum.



*Fig2: Site of enclosure known as Bickley 3*

### **Land use and geology**

The site is thickly wooded. It lies on the north-west slope of Broadfield Down, a prominent limestone feature of the area. The enclosure is situated on a small outcrop of Oxwich Head limestone which overlies the Clifton Down limestone formation. The junction of these two formations appears to result in a steeper slope in some places, and at Bickley 3 the top of this steep slope is within 10m. of the enclosure bank. A similar situation is seen at Cadbury Congresbury hillfort and at the enclosure at Chelvey Batch, where steep slopes coincide with the boundary between the same two formations.

## **Historical and archaeological context**

The Bickley 3 enclosure has several features which suggest that it forms a part of the group shown in figure 1 and discussed by Vince Russett (2006). It is D-shaped in form; it falls into the smaller size group of enclosures as identified in the Appendix; it is situated in woodland and on a hill-slope above a minor cliff; and finally, like several of the other sites, it has received no attention from archaeologists in the past. While none of the enclosures has produced any positive proof of date, evidence for an early date might be seen at the enclosure known as Bickley 1. Here the earthwork lies exactly against the parish boundary, suggesting that the very visible bank of the enclosure was used as a marker for, and thus must pre-date, the formalisation of parish boundaries in the early mediaeval period.

Other relationships with landscape features do not assist with dating these structures, although several of the sites appear to relate to ancient field boundaries within the woodland, where banks seem to approach the enclosures and fill the ditches, implying that the enclosures are earlier. At present, the banks cannot be closely dated either, so probably only excavation could give more information.

Several possible periods could be suggested for these structures:

1. They might belong to the pre-Roman Iron Age, with associated field systems dividing up the un-wooded uplands for agriculture. The relationship to Cadbury-Congresbury hillfort at this period must then be seen as an important and perhaps determining factor in the history of the enclosures.

2. Another possibility that must be considered is a connection to the landscape of 5-6<sup>th</sup> century Cadbury. It is very possible that the enclosures formed a part of the vibrant economy of the hillfort in that period.

3. Also, of course, they could have been built in any later period as aids to animal husbandry on the hill slopes.

4. Finally, there is the possibility that the sites may have been founded in the late prehistoric or Roman periods and simply went on being used into the 6<sup>th</sup> or 7<sup>th</sup> centuries CE (or even later), as in Trethurgy in Cornwall (Quinnell, 2004).

But whatever the age of these structures, they must certainly be taken into account in future management strategies for the whole area. They need protection as an important if not fully understood part of our heritage.

## **Survey objectives**

The survey had the following objectives:

- 1) to record the previously unsurveyed earthwork
- 2) to examine the site for any possible dating evidence
- 3) to use the survey to train YCCCART members in the techniques of manual survey

## **Methodology**

A simple tape survey was completed and drawn at a scale of 1:100. All areas of bare soil were inspected for finds and evidence of structures etc., but most of the site was covered in vegetation, which prevented a more rigorous examination.

Current photographs were taken by members of YCCCART, and remain the copyright of YCCCART.

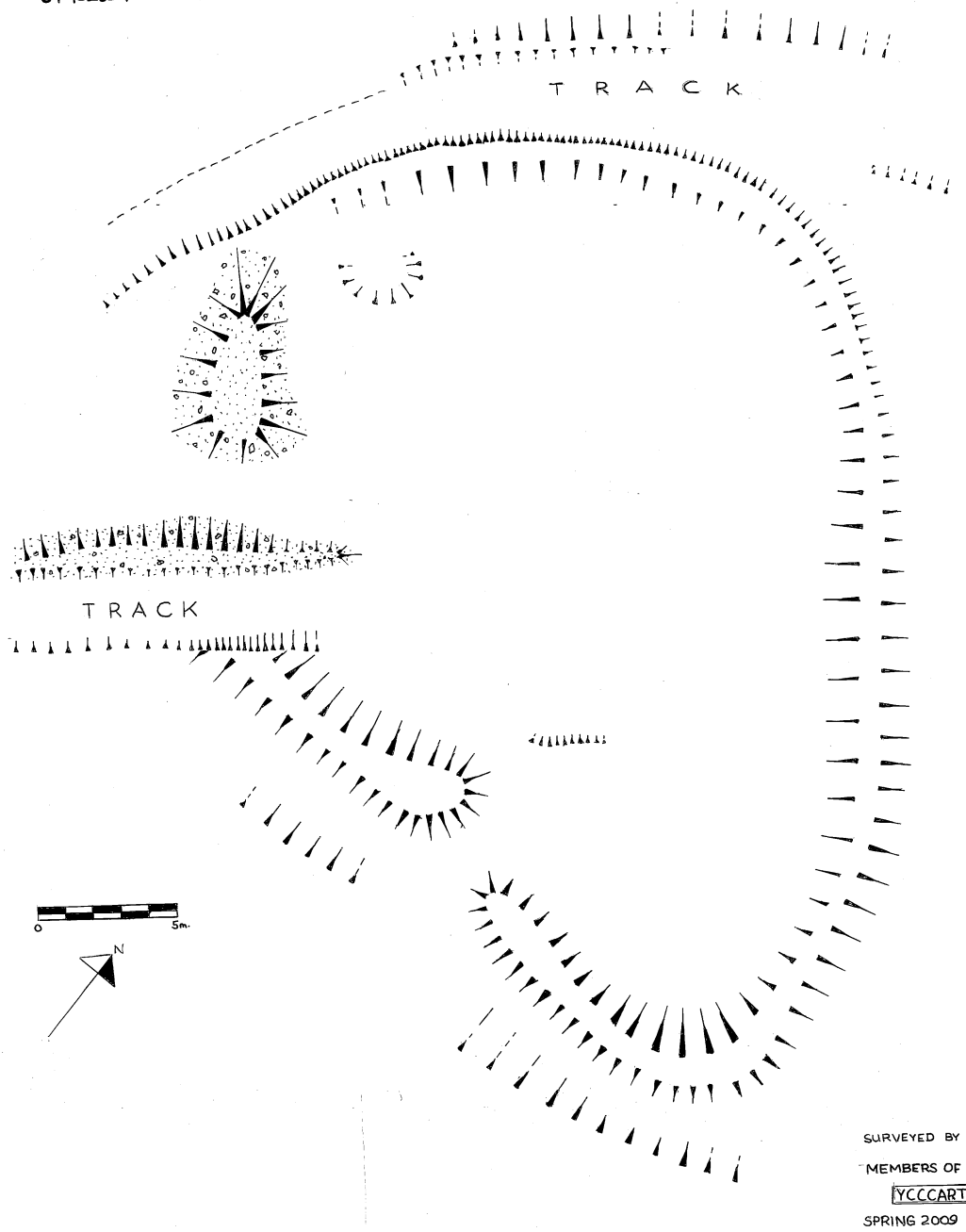
The report was written in Microsoft Word 2003.

## **Results**

The enclosure, shown in figure 3, below, is approximately 45m x 35m (0.18) hectares) in size. Like several of its comparative enclosures (see Appendix), it is roughly D-shaped, with the straight arm of the 'D' on the southern side. There is an entrance in the centre of the south side, and the terminals of the banks to either side of the entrance are slightly in-turned. The slight remains of an outer ditch are also seen on either side of the entrance. Later, a trackway was cut through the bank at the south west side, and the resulting spoil has been piled up on the north side of the track. Beyond this track, the enclosure bank to the north-west has been largely destroyed for a distance of about 15 metres, leaving only a pile of loose stones. A second trackway has been made cutting into and narrowing the north-west to north part of the enclosure bank, leaving a steep slope to its outer side. A short distance from the outer side of this second trackway is the top of the minor cliff which appears to coincide with the junction of the Oxwich Head and the Clifton Down limestone formations, as discussed under Geology above.

Vegetation obscured much of the interior, and the only features that were observed were a hollow at the north which was thought to be a tree hole, and what appeared to be a short strip dug out recently, about 4m. from the entrance.

ENCLOSURE NO.3AT  
**BICKLEY**  
NR. CLEEVE, NORTH SOMERSET  
ST452651



*Fig 3: Manual survey result*



## Recommendations for further work

As none of the enclosures so far surveyed has produced any evidence of dating, it is suggested that excavation at one of the sites might be the only way to obtain further information. Bickley 3 might not be the preferred location for an excavation, due to the thickness of tree cover; Bickley 1, for example, has been cleared of trees and other vegetation, and might be both convenient and suitable.

## References

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Members of YCCART,  
March, 2011

## Appendix 1

### Enclosures at the western end of Broadfield Down (so far known).

HER	Name	NGR	Size (m) EW x NS	Area (Ha)	Height above OD	Aspect	Shape	Current land use	Notes
00339	Cleeve Toot	ST46266570	160 x 120	1.54	65-90	N	Penannular D-shaped above cliff	Wood	Contains 'round houses'
00342	Tap's Coombe	ST47806709	170 x 105	1.36	70-80	SSE	Penannular D-shaped above cliff	Pasture	Interior apparently featureless
47146	Kings Wood 1*	ST45686518	c80 x c90	0.63	65-75	NE	Closed; circular above cliff	Wood	Contains 'round houses' and large rectangular platform
0338	Cleeve Coombe	ST46296589	70 x 70	0.38	75-80	?	Closed; sub-rectangular	Wood	?Outwork to north; contains 'round houses'.
47131	Bickley 1*	ST44986495	60 x 60	0.28	70	W	Penannular Circular above cliff	Wood	Contains 'round houses'
47132	Bickley 2*	ST45316500	50 x 40	0.21	80	N	Penannular D-shaped above cliff	Wood	Contains 'round houses'
47147	King's Wood 2*	ST45846515	c40 x c50	0.2	75-80	?	Closed; sub rectangular above cliff	Wood	Inturned entrance; contains 'round houses' and large rectangular platform.
47331	Chelvey Batch*	ST47636709	c50 x c50	0.20	55-70	W	Penannular Circular above cliff	Wood	Bank largely earthen, not stone.
42928	Woodlands*	ST44836432	50m long	?0.2	55-60	NW-SW	?circular on hill spur	Wood	Severely damaged by WW2 activity; bank stone.
2010/118	Bickley 3*	ST45236510	45 x c40	0.18	55-65	?	Closed; D-shaped above cliff.	Wood	Damaged by recent activity; inturned entrance on S.
00392	Rhodyate Lodge	ST44756465	?	?	55-60	NW-SW	?Circular on hill spur	Wood	Stone banks, no interior features seen
00303	Rhodyate South	ST44736479	Almost certainly spurious; detail in Avon SMR clearly describes 47131						
00393	Rhodyate North	ST44746481	Almost certainly spurious; detail in Avon SMR clearly describes 00339						

\* New record in archaeological literature