

**YCCCART 2010/Y21
North Somerset HER 2010/115
Enclosure at Chelvey Batch, Broadfield Down**

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RESEARCH TEAM (YCCCART)**

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Enclosure bank in woods at Chelvey Batch

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Abstract

In the winter of 2006-7, 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 Chelvey Batch, Brockley, North Somerset. This enclosure was included in the appendix to Vince Russett's article (2006) describing a group of earthwork enclosures on the Down which share a number of similar features.

Acknowledgements

YCCCART are most grateful to the owner, Mr. B. I. Swift, for permission to survey and photograph this site.

The authors are most grateful to Vince Russett for editing this report, and also for allowing us to use the table which appears as the Appendix, and was previously published in Russett (2006).

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, better understanding and management of the heritage of North Somerset.

Site Location

The enclosure at Chelvey Batch 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 Chelvey is situated in the south east part of the parish of Brockley, in the District of North Somerset, some 10 km. south-west of Bristol. It lies in woodland, immediately adjacent to the small lane called Chelvey Batch, at NGR ST4763 6709. The site is steeply sloping and lies between 55 – 70m. above Ordnance Datum.



Fig2: Site of enclosure at Chelvey Batch

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 Chelvey Batch this steep slope has been utilised as part of the outer defences. A similar effect is seen at Cadbury Congresbury hillfort and at the enclosure known as Bickley 3, where a steep slope coincides with the boundary between the same two formations.

Historical and archaeological context

The Chelvey Batch 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 sub-circular in form, and might be penannular; 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 evidence 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 dates might 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 5-6th 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 6th or 7th centuries AD (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 YCCART members in the techniques of manual survey

Methodology

A simple tape survey was completed and drawn at a scale of 200:1. 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 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 is approximately 50m. x 50m. (0.2 hectares) in size. Like several of its comparative enclosures (see Appendix), it is roughly D-shaped, with the straight arm of the 'D' formed by a steep, probably natural slope on the west side. It appears that this slope coincides with the junction of the Oxwich Head and the Clifton Down limestone formations, as mentioned under Geology above. A curved, largely earthen bank with a shallow external ditch forms the north, east and south sides. Dividing the western slope from the interior is a slight secondary slope, which appears to be an extension of the outer slope of the eastern enclosure bank, and might indicate that the bank was originally continuous around the whole enclosure rather than being penannular in form. There is no obvious entrance, and no features were observed within or around the site.

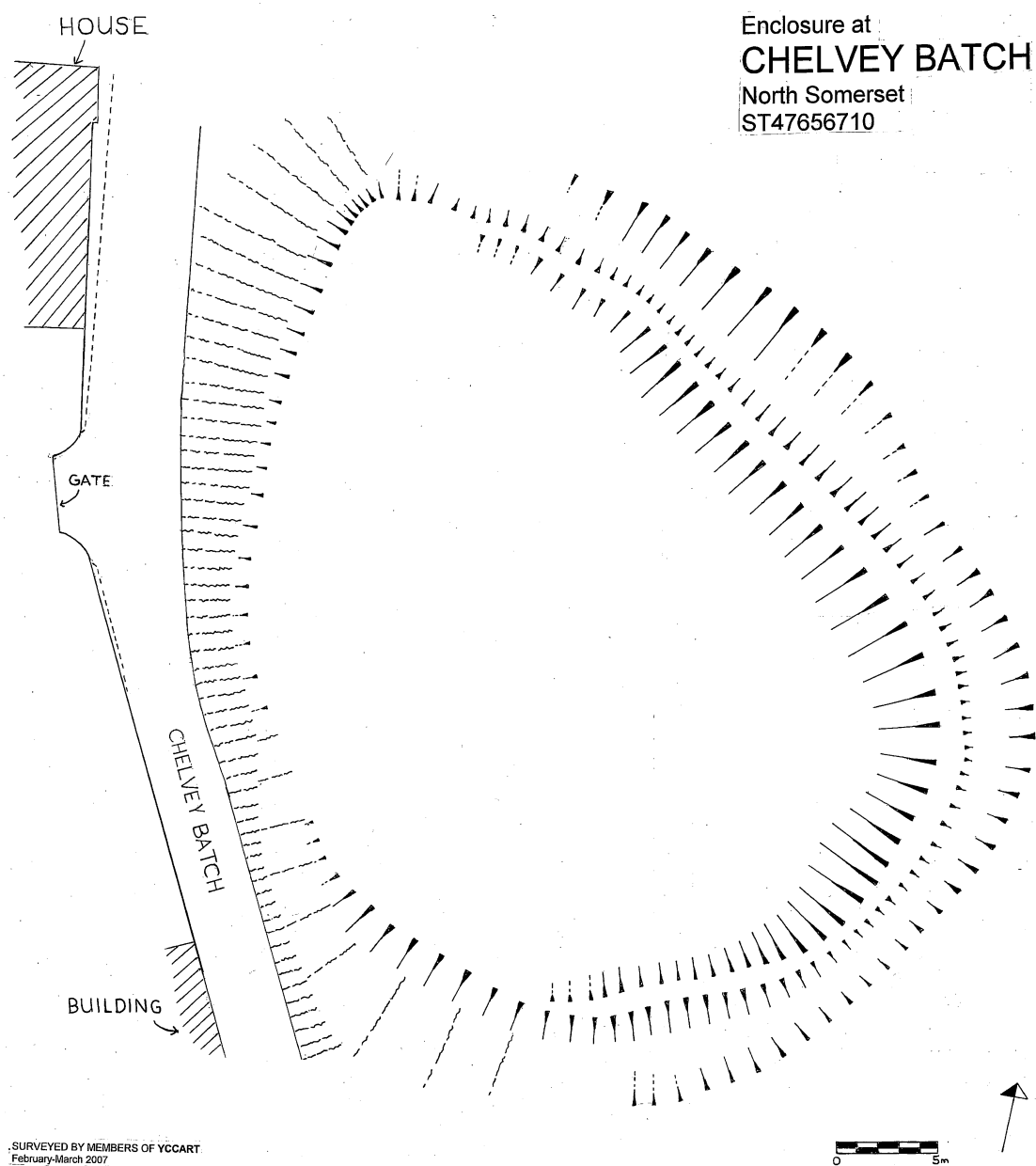


Fig 3: Manual survey result

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. Chelvey Batch 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 YCCCART,
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Appendix 1:

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

HER	Name	NGR	Size (m) (‘E-W’ first)	Area (Ha)	Height over 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 Combe	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
00338	Cleeve Combe	ST46296589	70 x 70	0.38	75-80	?	Closed; Subrectangular	Wood	?Outwork to N 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	Kings Wood 2*	ST45846515	c40 x c50	0.2	75-80	?	Closed; Subrectangular 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	Badly damaged by WW2 activity; bank stone
00392	Rhodyate Lodge	ST44756465	?	?	55-60	NW-SW	?Circular on hill spur	Wood	Stone banks, no interior features seen
00303	Rhodyate S	ST44736479	Almost certainly spurious; detail in Avon SMR clearly describes 47131						
00393	Rhodyate N	ST44746481	Almost certainly spurious; detail in Avon SMR clearly describes 00339						

* New record in the archaeological literature