

ENCLOSURE AT CHELVEY BATCH, BROADFIELD DOWN

EARTHWORK SURVEY

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Summary

In the winter of 2007, Yatton, Congresbury, Cleeve and Claverham Archaeological Research Team (YCCCART) commenced a survey of an enclosure on the north-west slope of Broadfield Down, at Chelvey Batch, Brockley. This enclosure was included in the appendix to Vince Russett's article (2006) describing a group of earthwork enclosures on the Down, all of which share some similar features.

YCCCART is a community archaeology team, part of the Community Archaeology in North Somerset project, initiated and guided by Vince Russett, County Archaeologist for North Somerset.

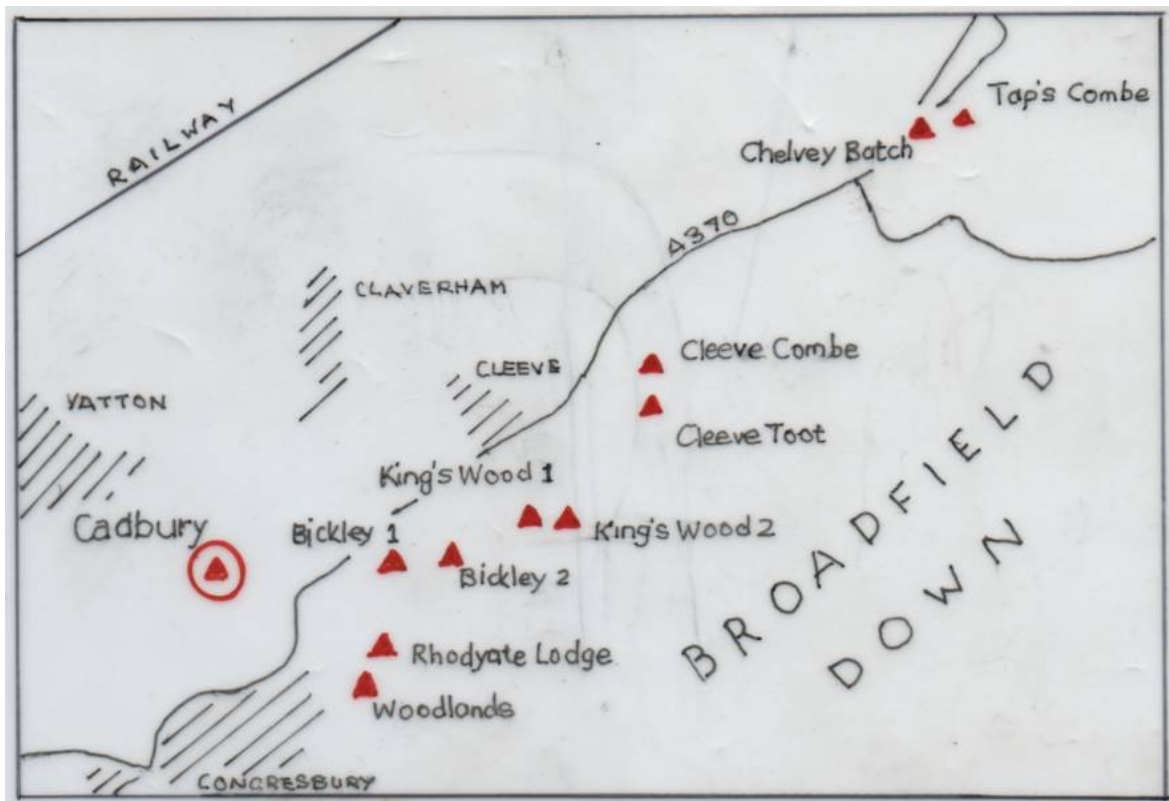


Fig.1. Distribution of earthworks on north-west flanks of Broadfield Down

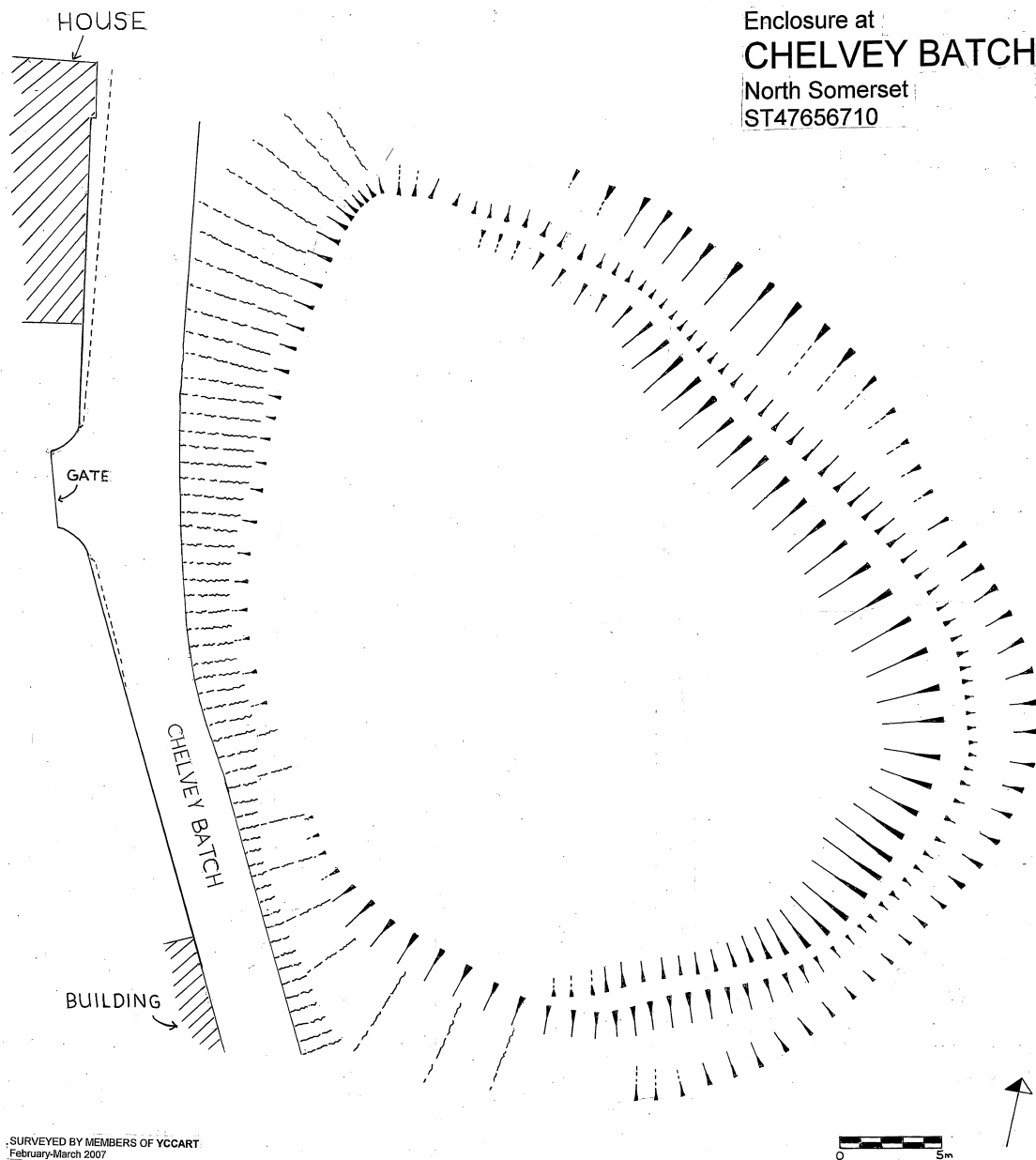
Introduction

Broadfield Down is bounded roughly 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 to the south by the Wrington Vale and the Wrington-Congresbury Road. To the west of Congresbury is an outlying hill which is the site of the internationally important hill fort of Cadbury (Rahtz et al. 1992) and the former site of the Roman Temple at Henley Wood (Watts and Leach 1998).

The relationship between this group of enclosures and the adjacent hill fort is much debated (Russett 2006). None of the enclosures has produced any datable evidence, in spite of close examination during surveys.

The earthwork survey

The enclosure is situated in woodland immediately adjacent to the small lane called Chelvey Batch. It is approximately 50m x 50m. (0.2 hectares) in size, and it lies between 55-70 m. above Ordnance Datum at NGR ST47636709. Like several of its comparative enclosures, it is roughly D-shaped, with the straight arm of the 'D' formed by a steep, probably natural slope on the west side, and a curved bank and ditch forming the north, east and south sides. Dividing the steep western slope from the interior is a slight secondary slope, which appears to form an extension of the outer face of the enclosure bank, and might indicate that the bank was originally continuous around the whole enclosure rather than penannular in form. There is no obvious entrance, and no features were observed inside the ditch and bank.



Discussion

This earthwork has several factors 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 the other enclosures; 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. Like all the others, no dating evidence has been found within the earthwork. However, evidence for an early date might be seen at Bickley 1, where the earthwork lies exactly against the parish boundary. This suggests that the very visible bank of the enclosure was used as a marker for the boundary, and thus must pre-date the formalisation of parish boundaries in the early medieval period.

Other relationships with landscape features do not assist with dating these structures, although several of these sites appear to relate to ancient field boundaries within the woodland, where banks seem to approach the enclosure 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.

So several possible dates might be suggested for these structures. It is possible that they belong to the pre-Roman iron age, with associated field systems dividing up the unwooded uplands for farming.

A second possibility that must be considered is the relationship to the landscape of 5th-6th century Cadbury. It is strange that there are so many of these enclosures close to Cadbury but as yet, none have been found on the rest of Broadfield Down. This might suggest that they were a part of the vibrant economy of the hill fort in that period.

Finally, there is of course 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, as in Trethurgy in Cornwall (see Quinnell, 2004). But whatever the age of these structures, they must certainly be taken into account in the future management strategies for the whole area. They need protection as an important, if not fully understood part of our heritage.

NOTE: This earthwork is in private woodland, and there is no public access to the site

We extend our very grateful thanks to the owners for their permission to survey and photograph this site.

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