

Cornwall Archaeological Unit Monumental Improvement in the Cornwall AONB

Castle Dore Hillfort, Cornwall



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Report author(s)	James Gossip, with contributions by Callum Booker and Ryan Gilkes
Checked by	Andy Jones
Approved by	Andy Jones
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Cornwall Archaeological Unit

Cornwall Council

Fal Building, County Hall, Treyew Road, Truro, Cornwall, TR1 3AY

Tel: (01872) 323603

Email: enquiries@cau.org.uk Web: www.cau.org.uk

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The Project Manager was James Gossip. Ryan Gilkes and Callum Booker assisted with the historical research.

The views and recommendations expressed in this report are those of Cornwall Archaeological Unit and are presented in good faith on the basis of professional judgement and on information currently available.

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Cover photo: The transhumance hut, looking north-west across Langstone Downs

Contents

1	Summary	5
2	Site details	5
2.1	Site Description and history	6
2.1.1	Site management	7
2.2	Land use – recent history	8
3	Designations	8
3.1	Consents needed for the proposed work	9
4	Main threats	9
5	Drone surveys	18
6	Management Recommendations	18
6.1	Introduction and objectives of proposed management work	18
6.2	Management Proposal	18
6.3	Guidelines for erosion repair	18
6.4	Interpretation	19
6.5	Outreach and training opportunities	19
6.6	Volunteer programme	19
6.7	Action plan	20
6.8	Outline Costs for conservation	20
7	References	20
7.1	Primary sources	20
7.2	Publications	21
7.3	Websites	21

List of Figures

- Fig 1 Location map of Castle Dore, project area highlighted (Crown Copyright. All rights reserved. Cornwall Council 100049047).
- Fig 2 Castle Dore, with National Mapping Project overlay in red showing the annex enclosures to the south and east as cropmarks (Crown Copyright. All rights reserved. Cornwall Council 100049047).
- Fig 3 Lidar imagery showing continuation of the southern boundary further east into the field south of Lawhibbet.
- Fig 4 2021 survey plan showing surviving earthworks and principal threats.
- Fig 5 Priority erosion area P1.
- Fig 6 Priority erosion area P1.
- Fig 7 Panorama of priority erosion area P2, with field gate and trough visible on the left.
- Fig 8 Priority erosion area P2 facing upslope over the outer rampart, showing exposure of tree roots.
- Fig 9 Priority erosion area P2 facing south showing the extent of damage.
- Fig 10 Priority erosion area P2 facing east towards the field gate.
- Fig 11 Priority erosion area P2 facing downslope over the outer rampart, field gate and trough on the right.
- Fig 12 Priority erosion area P3, showing the undermined information panel.
- Fig 13 Priority erosion area P3, illustrating the precarious situation of the stone plinth and a recent attempt to support with stones.
- Fig 14 Priority erosion area P4, facing south-east over the inner rampart, commonly used as a visitor entrance.
- Fig 15 Priority erosion area P4 facing south-west, showing the exposed core of the rampart.
- Fig 16 Priority erosion area P4 facing south-west, showing the exposed core of the rampart.
- Fig 17 Erosion of a desire-line running around the west side of the monument from the informal stile in the hedge and out onto the main road.
- Fig 18 Erosion of the south side of the inner rampart, with revetment walling exposed.
- Fig 19 Panoramic view of the south side of the inner rampart showing extent of erosion on the very steep slopes.
- Fig 20 Erosion of the south side of the outer rampart, showing burrowing by badgers.

Abbreviations

CAU	Cornwall Archaeological Unit
HER	Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly Historic Environment Record
SMC	Scheduled Monument Consent

1 Summary

As part of the Development Stage of Monumental Improvement, CAU carried out a programme of work to help assess the condition of, and develop management proposals for, Castle Dore Iron Age hillfort near Tywardreath, Cornwall.

2 Site details

Monumental Improvement site number	37
Scheduled Monument List Entry	1006691
Grid ref	SX1035254831
What 3 words	flown.spirit.equipment
Parish	Tywardreath and Par
Landowner	Lawhibbet Farm
Development stage tasks	Detailed earthwork survey and desktop assessment (both with volunteer involvement), development of Management Plan
Main risks	Stock erosion - extensive
Trend	Declining



Fig 1 Location map of Castle Dore, project area highlighted (Crown Copyright. All rights reserved. Cornwall Council 100049047).

2.1 Site Description and history

With contribution by Ryan Gilkes.

Castle Dore is a small multivallate hillfort, situated on a prominent ridge overlooking at least two tributaries to the River Fowey. The hillfort survives as a roughly circular central area defined by a well-constructed inner rampart and ditch with a further, mainly concentric, outer rampart and partially-buried outer ditch which diverge from the inner rampart only on the east to form a more complex entrance annexe. The inner ditch is extant whilst that associated with the outer rampart can be traced, although it is now infilled on the west side of the earthwork. In the 19th century, McLauchlan illustrated Castle Dore with three banks and a possible obliterated outwork on the east side called 'Castle Meadow' (McLauchlan 1849) and aerial mapping analysis suggests further earthworks existed to the south and east, forming annexed outer enclosures (Fig 2). This feature partly shows on Lidar imagery, which also shows a former boundary further to the east in the field south of Lawhibbet Farm which appears to be a continuation of the main boundary to the south (Fig 3). It is possible that this is part of one very large outer enclosure or field system contemporary with the main hillfort.

Parts of the interior and defences were excavated by Radford in 1936-37, indicating that the two ramparts were of glacial construction and originally of equal size. During the occupation of the hillfort, the inner bank was raised to 2.5m high and revetted with stone, and at the same time the inner entrance was re-designed with an in-turned entrance passage. The outer entrance was not excavated. A ditched and banked roadway appeared to link the two entrances, with entrances into enclosures on either side, although these features do not survive today. So-called 'lazy beds' on the western side, modified from the outer rampart are recorded by Radford as having belonged to a former cottage standing on this side of the site (Radford 1951), although there is no direct evidence for this. The site is frequently entered from the north but this, along with other breaches in the ramparts, is modern.

Castle Dore was recorded as early as 1470 by William of Worcester who described it as "a delapidated castle by the name of Dirford, near Golant" and John Leland in 1535 as 'Castledour'. The site has been linked to 'Lancien', the palace of King Mark (Mark Cynawr or Marcus Cunomorus) who appears in Arthurian tales, and whose son Drustans, (Tristan) is commemorated on a nearby pillar (the Tristan Stone, near Fowey; HER).

Radford's findings suggested that Castle Dore originated as a multivallate site and that the entrance was altered during its occupation. Some twenty Iron Age huts were located in the interior and Radford attributed lines of post holes, amphorae and a bead to a post-Roman phase, consisting of a hall with an attached kitchen which he interpreted as the palace of King Mark. However, the archaeological evidence for this phase was extremely scant due to plough damage which had removed much of the stratigraphy and more recent re-examination of the evidence (Quinnell and Harris 1985) has re-dated Radford's post-Roman phase to the Iron Age, with all structural phases falling between the fourth and first centuries BC and the rectangular structures are now interpreted as granaries. The earliest ceramic sherds sealed beneath the inner rampart are dated by Quinnell and Harris to the 5th or 4th centuries BC. The majority of pottery from the interior of the fort comprises fully developed south-west decorated Iron Age pottery, dated to 4th to 3rd centuries BC. Cordoned ware is also represented in later contexts at Castle Dore which Quinnell and Harris suggest has a date range of 80-50 BC to AD 100 (Ibid). Two oval structures might suggest Romano-British or later occupation, although pottery assemblage seems to indicate abandonment before the Roman period as no Roman or post-Roman finds have come from the site.

The site was the scene of a day long civil war battle on 31st August 1644 when Parliamentary forces retreated into the earthworks as a culmination of the Battle of Lostwithiel. Under the command of Major-General Philip Skippon, Parliamentary forces retreated into Castle Dore following a skirmish at Trebathevy to the north, holding the position into the night. The Earl of Essex fled to Plymouth from Fowey, leaving Skippon with no clear instructions and in command of five regiments of Foot spread along a line to the west and east of Castle Dore. The morale of the Parliamentary Foot was sinking fast and during the night many of the troops deserted their posts. King Charles I spent the night in nearby fields among his men and although Parliamentary guns were fired in the King's direction, these had no effect. The Royalists knew it was simply a matter of time before the trapped Parliamentary force requested terms and on 2nd September 1644, Skippon's Parliamentary Army surrendered and were allowed to march away after handing over 42 guns, 100 barrels of gunpowder and 5,000 muskets and pikes.

Civil war finds were made during Radford's excavations and cannon balls have been found in various parts of the area. The HER notes that some of these remain with their finder, Mrs Watts of Trees Mill. In 2008 a large number of musket balls found by metal detector in fields south of Tywardreath may represent a late phase of this battle (MCO53839).

2.1.1 Site management

The monument sits within a field grazed by cattle for some of the year. Grazing keeps scrub vegetation at bay, but this has led to large areas of erosion (see 2.2 Land use – recent history).

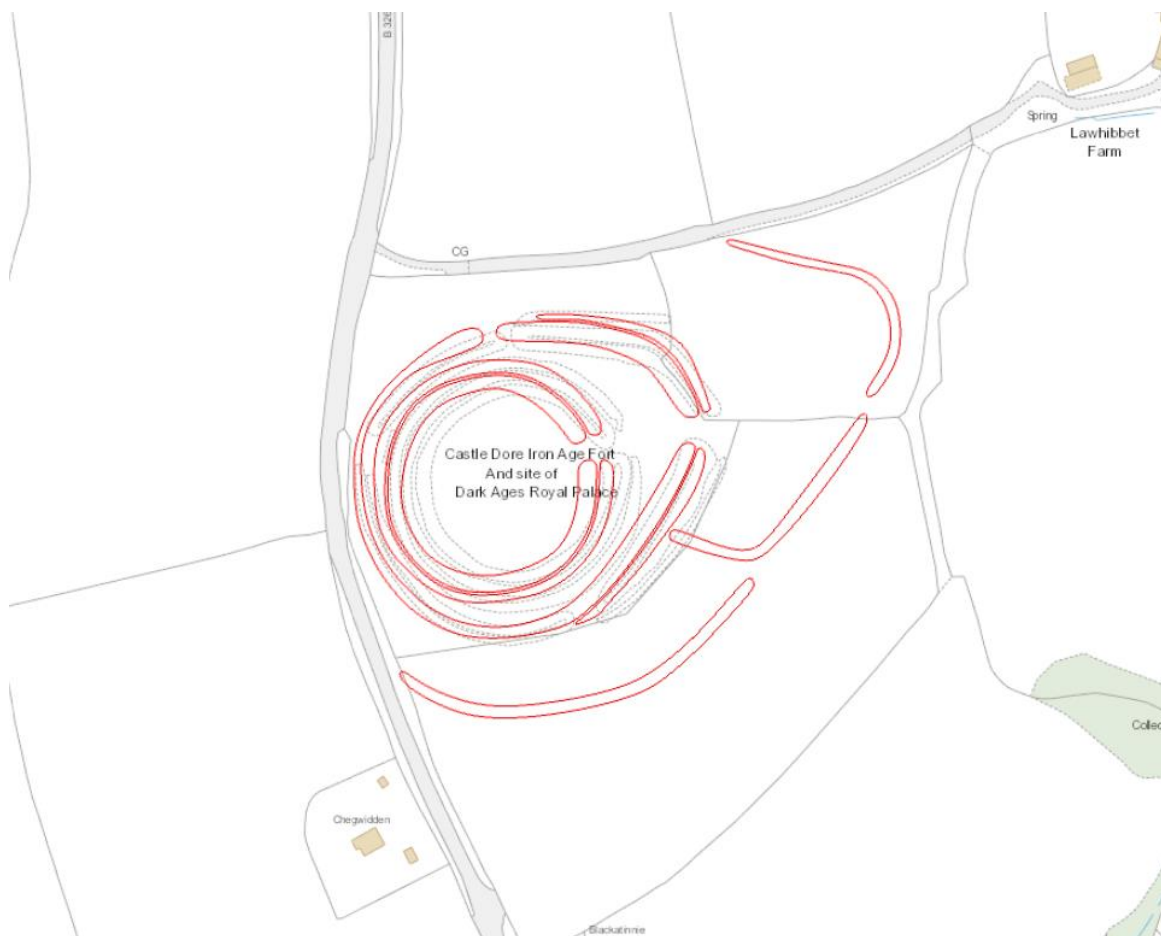


Fig 2 Castle Dore, with National Mapping Project overlay in red showing the annex enclosures to the south and east as cropmarks (Crown Copyright. All rights reserved. Cornwall Council 100049047).

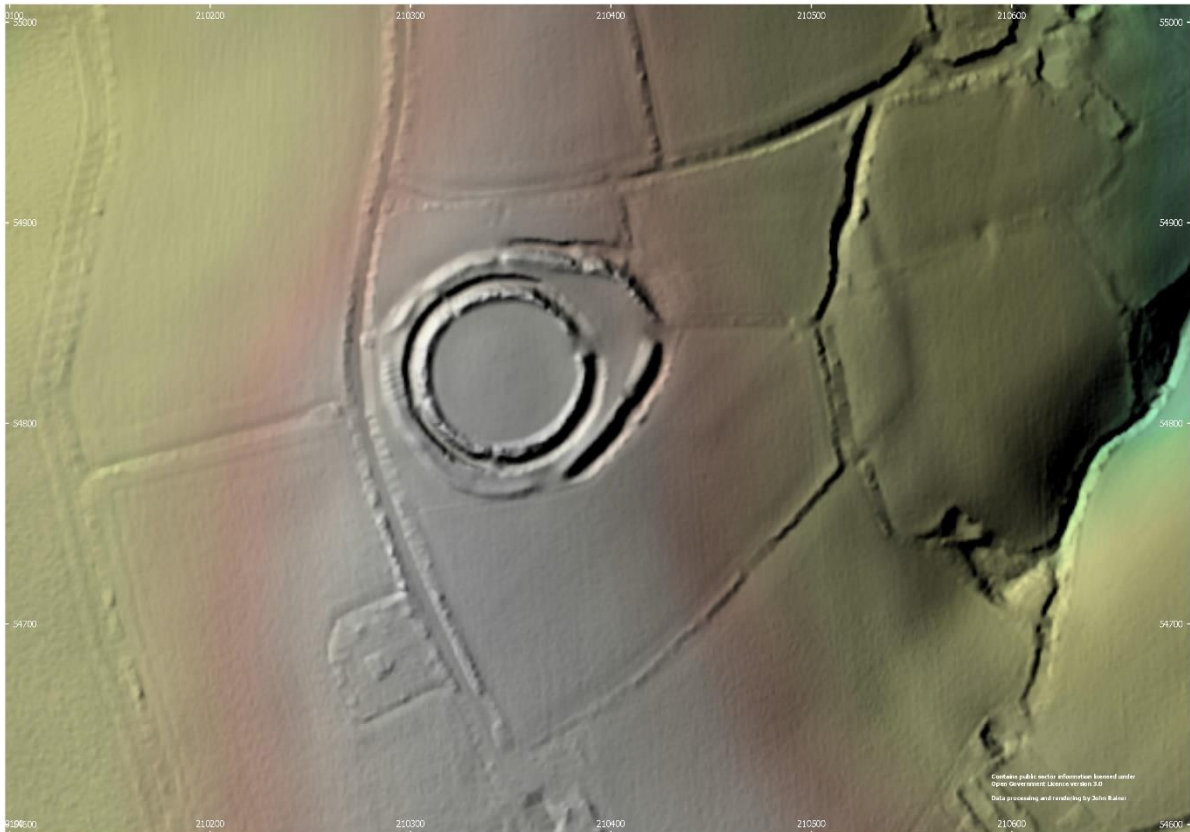


Fig 3 Lidar imagery showing continuation of the southern boundary further east into the field south of Lawhibbet.

2.2 Land use – recent history

With contribution by Callum Booker

The current owners, the Paull family, took possession of the land in 1958 (Mr Paull, pers comm). The land was cultivated for crops including winter brassicas – broccoli/cauliflower, summer cereals including barley and was at other times permanent pasture, predominantly dairy and beef cattle, as well as sheep.

However, when the Paull family first came into possession of the land the earthworks of Castle Dore were badly overgrown with brambles, gorse and furze and it took some years before the field area that can be seen now was fully cleared (Mr Paull, pers comm). Over the years the site has been cleared and maintained largely by manual effort – there have been some limited attempts to clear the weeds and other growth using chemicals or contractor but never with any success. Hand removal of brambles, furze and gorse has however achieved a much better result.

3 Designations

Castle Dore is a Scheduled Ancient Monument (1006691 , 'Small multivallate hillfort called Castle Dore') and as such it is a designated site of national importance with statutory protection under the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological areas Act of 1979 (Fig 1), in Cornwall AONB Area 10: South Coast Eastern.

It is part of a Registered Battlefield List entry 1413762 Lostwithiel Battelfield, 31 August - 1 September 1644.

3.1 Consents needed for the proposed work

- Scheduled Monument Consent.

4 Main threats

The extensive 2021 survey has identified a number of issues affecting the site (Fig 4). The principal threat at Castle Dore is erosion as a result of livestock use and the trend is declining. Cattle graze the site, sheltering under trees, causing extensive damage to the ramparts. Livestock also congregate in the ditches particularly on the northern side, leading to seasonal poaching of the ditch-bottoms. In places rampart core and revetment walling is exposed. There is some evidence of burrowing activity, particularly on the south-east side and the south-eastern outer rampart.

A badger/rabbit survey is recommended in order to assess the level of ongoing threat. Vegetation is not an ongoing threat apart from the fact that it provides shelter for cattle. Four priority erosion areas have been identified:

P1 erosion either side of a breach in the outer bank on the northern side.

P2 a large area of erosion on the northern slopes of the outer enclosure close to a field gate and water trough, where cattle have grouped together under the shelter of trees and caused considerable damage. Discussion with the landowners and tenant should take place to discuss into relocating the gate and water trough, so restoration of this area would depend on this being an acceptable option.

P3 erosion around the existing information panel, undermining the supporting stone plinth. The plinth should be moved outside the monument and repair should include the introduction of hardcore add to the level of protection from footfall.

P4 erosion across the slopes of the inner rampart on the western side, used as an informal entrance into the hillfort.

In addition, there is considerable erosion of the south and eastern slopes of the inner and outer ramparts. These should be considered for consolidation works if the priority area repairs are successful.

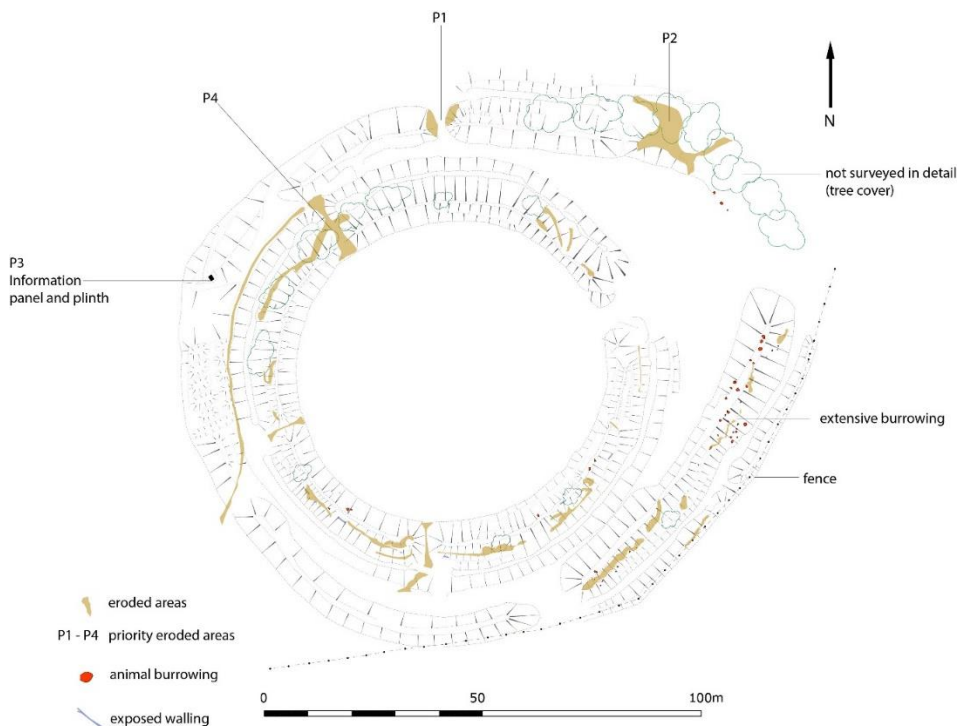


Fig 4 2021 survey plan showing surviving earthworks and principal threats.



Fig 5 Priority erosion area P1.



Fig 6 Priority erosion area P1.



Fig 7 Panorama of priority erosion area P2, with field gate and trough visible on the left.



Fig 8 Priority erosion area P2 facing upslope over the outer rampart, showing exposure of tree roots.



Fig 9 Priority erosion area P2 facing south showing the extent of damage.



Fig 10 Priority erosion area P2 facing east towards the field gate.



Fig 11 Priority erosion area P2 facing downslope over the outer rampart, field gate and trough on the right.



Fig 12 Priority erosion area P3, showing the undermined information panel.



Fig 13 Priority erosion area P3, illustrating the precarious situation of the stone plinth and a recent attempt to support with stones.



Fig 14 Priority erosion area P4, facing south-east over the inner rampart, commonly used as a visitor entrance.



Fig 15 Priority erosion area P4 facing south-west, showing the exposed core of the rampart.



Fig 16 Priority erosion area P4 facing south-west, showing the exposed core of the rampart.



Fig 17 Erosion of a desire-line running around the west side of the monument from the informal stile in the hedge and out onto the main road.



Fig 18 Erosion of the south side of the inner rampart, with revetment walling exposed.



Fig 19 Panoramic view of the south side of the inner rampart showing extent of erosion on the very steep slopes.



Fig 20 Erosion of the south side of the outer rampart, showing burrowing by badgers.

5 Drone surveys

A drone survey was undertaken by Isca Drones, capturing a record of current condition and producing a 3D model to assist with interpretation.

6 Management Recommendations

6.1 Introduction and objectives of proposed management work

Castle Dore is an exceptional site with outstanding preservation but is suffering greatly from the effects of erosion due to grazing by cattle. Monumental Improvement hopes to improve the condition of the monument through a programme of conservation works which should include repairing badly eroded sections of the rampart and eroded tracks, forming informal entrances into the interior.

Conservation work and ongoing monitoring into the future has the potential to provide opportunities for volunteers, such as training in the conservation of historic monuments.

Geophysical survey of the interior and exterior of the monument, not available when Radford carried out his excavations, should be carried out in order to provide further information for interpretation.

6.2 Management Proposal

- Repair erosion damage to ramparts. Initially this should be to four prioritised areas (P1 – P4, Fig 5-16). Whilst this may not necessarily provide a long-term solution, the new material would provide a 'sacrificial' layer, preserving the original rampart material. Arisings from vegetation cutting (gorse and thorn) should be pinned over the repaired sections to deter disturbance whilst material re-establish. Repairs to area P2 should be carried out pending discussions with the landowner and tenant with a view to relocating the gate and or/trough (this would require SMC).
- Discuss management of grazing regime with landowner/tenant to formulate a grazing plan to limit erosion of the monument.
- Re-site the current access gate for the public and replace with accessible gate.
- Re-site the water trough and adjacent gate to encourage cattle to graze away from the monument.
- Carry out annual monitoring and scrub clearance with volunteer groups (e.g. CAS Area Reps, Truro College students).
- Geophysical survey of the interior and outside the ramparts to help inform management requirements on the edges or beyond the current scheduled area and help interpretation. Also has the potential to provide information on extent of damage caused by burrowing animals.
- Burrowing animal survey (badgers/rabbits) to establish level of damage.

6.3 Guidelines for erosion repair

Erosion repair:

The repair will be carried out by an experienced conservation/landscaping professional, assisted by volunteers where possible. Sandbags used with subsoil-type material should be used, packed closely together and well tamped down to provide a firm surface which can be gradually built up and profiled to match the contours of the surrounding, un-eroded parts of the rampart.

- Loosely fill hessian sandbags with subsoil-type material. (**Note:** The subsoil will be obtained from a site which is well away from the monument: the material eroded from the ramparts will not be used for infilling, to avoid any possibility of further damage to the ramparts).

- Lay subsoil-filled sandbags over the eroded areas, packing closely together and compacting well to produce a firm surface.
- Fill the eroded hollows to a level which matches reasonably well with the level of the un-eroded parts of the rampart to either side.
- The final level for re-profiling should be discussed and agreed with the archaeologist.
- Cover sandbags with a thin layer (0.1m) of topsoil (obtained from outside the Scheduled area) and spread grass seed over the surface.
- Details of erosion repair would be specified in a WSI provided for Scheduled Monument Consent.

Aftercare

- Following completion of the work, stock must be kept off the repaired areas for at least a year, to allow the repair time to consolidate and the grass time to develop.
- The volunteer group should continue to monitor the ramparts in the future.

6.4 Interpretation

- Retain original sign but propose that we move to a new location to the southwest, outside the area of any earthworks and rebuild/repair base to stabilise. Add QR code to access updated information.
- Geophysical survey of the interior and hinterland of the monument to help inform interpretation.
- Presentation in the form of online information (via QR codes) with the advantage in being easy to update in terms of style and content. Augmented reality content could be produced to aid interpretation of the site and could include drone flyover/walkthrough footage and 3D modelling with embedded information.
- Artists reconstructions featuring use of the site during the Iron Age and Civil War would provide attractive online and/or on-site content to help visitors understand how the site was used.

6.5 Outreach and training opportunities

- Guided walks with local experts, e.g. CAS Area Reps.
- Training in monument conservation alongside contractor.
- A public event or re-enactment with experts in prehistoric reconstruction or Civil War re-enactment would help bring the site to life and increase awareness.
- School visits, highlighting the changing use of the site over time.
- Survey training e.g.:
 1. Introduction to archaeological survey. A successful archaeological survey training day was held in 2021 as part of the Development Stage.
 2. Geophysical survey training (introduction to techniques and practice).

6.6 Volunteer programme

There is an opportunity for volunteer involvement in erosion repair and scrub clearance.

- Erosion repair volunteer days:
 1. Year 1 – 5 days
 2. Year 2 – 5 days
- Scrub clearance volunteer days:
 - Year 2 – 2 days

6.7 Action plan

Priority	Project year	Action
Immediate/ Short term	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussion with tenant/landowner regarding development of a livestock management plan. • Carry out erosion repair work on ramparts at prioritised/trial areas (areas P1, P3, P4) (Figs 5-16). P2 to be carried out pending discussions regarding moving the trough and gate. • SMC application for repair work (including WSI). • Archaeological supervision and recording of repair areas required. • Temporarily fence repair areas to prevent access by livestock to allow repair work to establish. • Badger/rabbit survey in order to assess the level of damage. • Geophysical survey to inform management and help interpretation.
Intermediate	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If earthwork repair on priority areas in year 1 is successful, further repair work should be carried out on the southern and eastern slopes of the inner and outer ramparts. • Carry out annual scrub clearance as necessary and monitoring of repairs by volunteer groups.
Longer term	3 (post project)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Carry out annual scrub clearance as necessary and monitoring of repairs by volunteer groups.

6.8 Outline Costs for conservation

Contractor repair of ramparts with volunteer help/training.	£7000
Temporary fencing	£1,000
Re-siting of access gate	£2,000
Re-siting of water trough and adjacent gate	£2,000
Archaeological supervision and recording of repair work/reporting	£3,000
SMC (rampart repair, gates etc)	£1,000
Geophysical survey	£3,500
Burrowing animal survey	£1,000

7 References

7.1 Primary sources

Ordnance Survey, MasterMap Topography

Cornwall and Isles of Scilly Historic Environment Record
Historic England List Entry

<https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1004257>

7.2 Publications

McLauchlan, H. 1849. Unknown Title. RRIC. 29-31.

Radford, CAR. 1951. Report on the Excavations at Castle Dore. JRIC (NS) Vol 1

Coate, M., 1933. Cornwall in the Great Civil War and Interregnum. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Quinnell, H & Harris, DG, 1985, Castle Dore: The Chronology Reconsidered (Cornish Archaeology No 24, 1985), VOL 24, 123-131

7.3 Websites

Online database of Sites and Monuments Records, and Listed Buildings:

<http://www.heritagegateway.org.uk/gateway/>

<https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1004257>

<https://historicengland.org.uk/advice/heritage-at-risk/search-register/>

Cornwall Archaeological Unit

Fal Building, County Hall, Treyew Road, Truro,
Cornwall
TR1 3AY



(01872) 323603
enquiries@cau.org.uk
www.cau.org.uk

