

Premier Archaeological Landscape 1

Davidstow Moor, Davidstow



The PAL viewed from its northern edge looking across the RAF Davidstow Moor WW2 airfield to the gentle slope on which the great quartzite ridge of Lamiversary Rock is in front of the lower slopes of the highest mountain in Cornwall, Bronwenelyn, or Brown Willy (Pete Herring, August 2015).

Location, geology and topography

Centred: SX 157 838

Extent: 155 ha (384 acres)

Geology

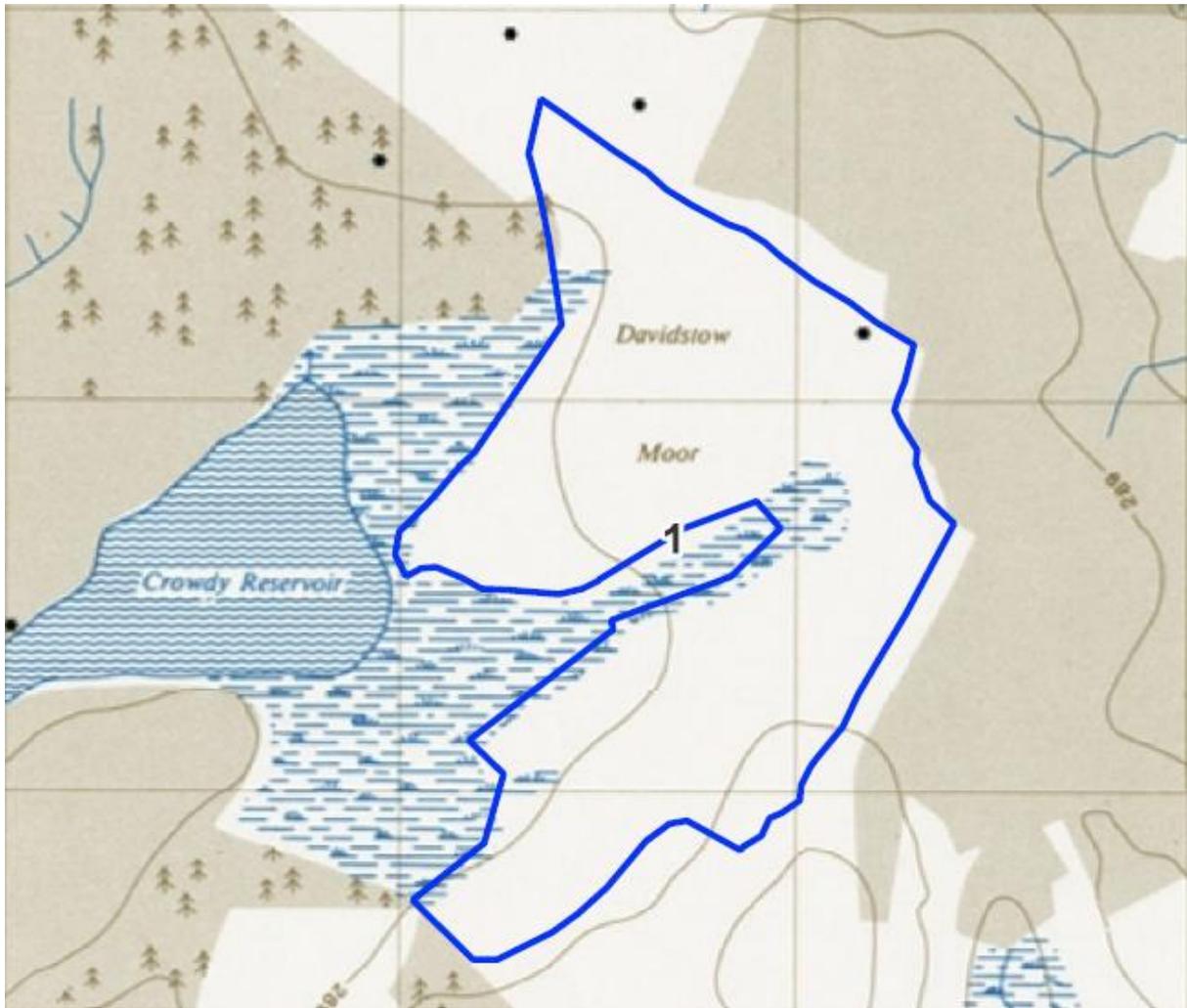
Bedrock geology is metamorphic slate, the Tredorn Slate Formation, formed between 372.2 and 358.9 million years ago in the Devonian period and superficial deposits are head – clay, silt, sand and gravel, formed in the Quaternary period, 2.5 million years ago to the present (BGS Online Viewer).

Topography

Very gently sloping rounded downland 285 to 310m AOD (935 to 1017 feet). Poorly drained convex tops.

Two shallow valleys rise on the downs within the PAL and flow or seep south-westwards to converge in the extensive Crowdy Marsh that was partially flooded in

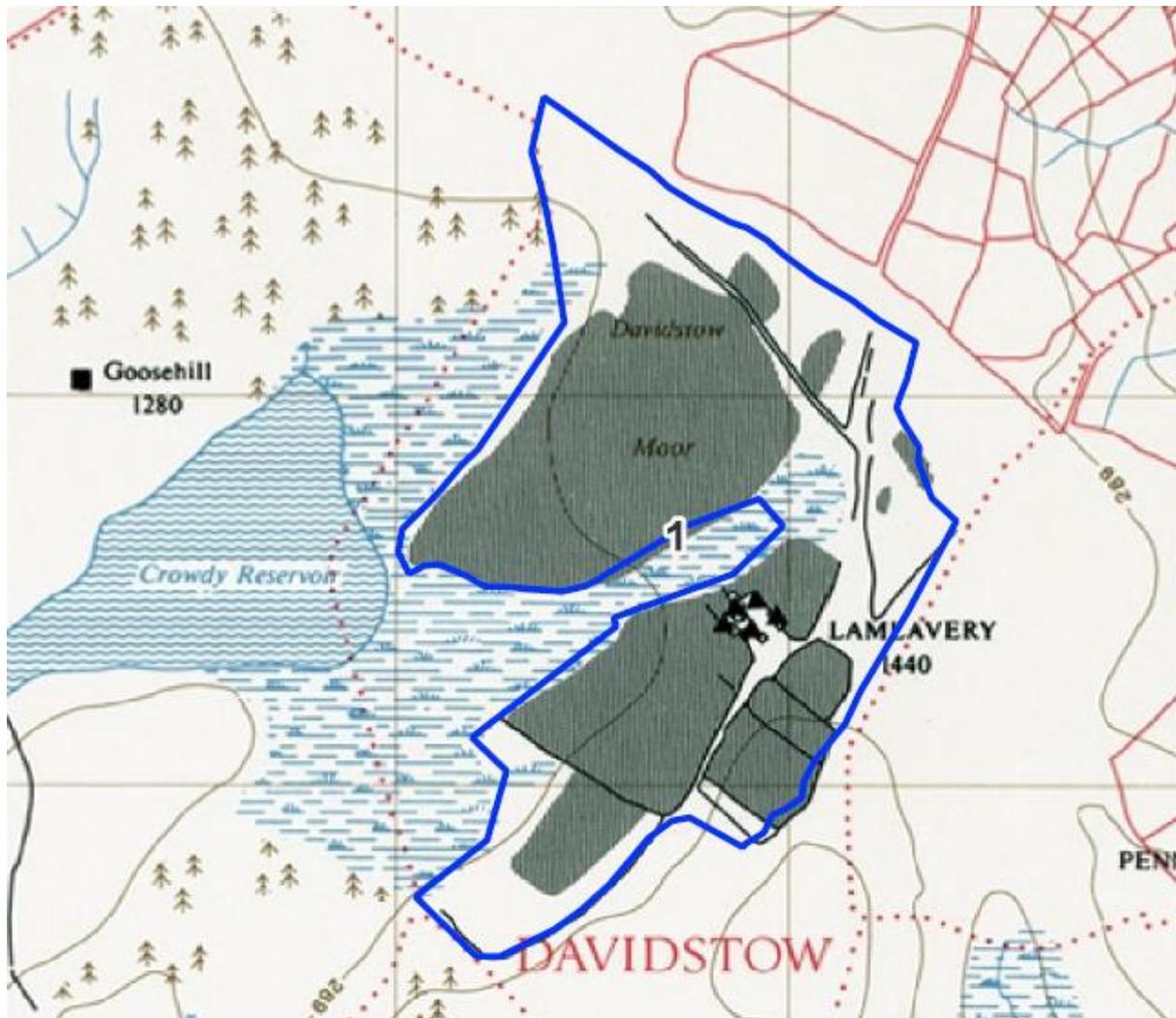
1973 as Crowdy Reservoir. The water from this marsh and now from the reservoir overflow flows south-west as the River Allan, running just inside the granite edge and ultimately joins the River Camel at Henon in St Breward.



- Prehistoric field and enclosure boundaries
- Stone banks and ramparts
- Hut Circle
- ◄ Long cairn (oriented)
- Cairn/barrow
- Stone Circle
- ⊙ Henge (with stone circle)
- Stone row
- _{SE} Stone Setting
- _{ST} Standing stone

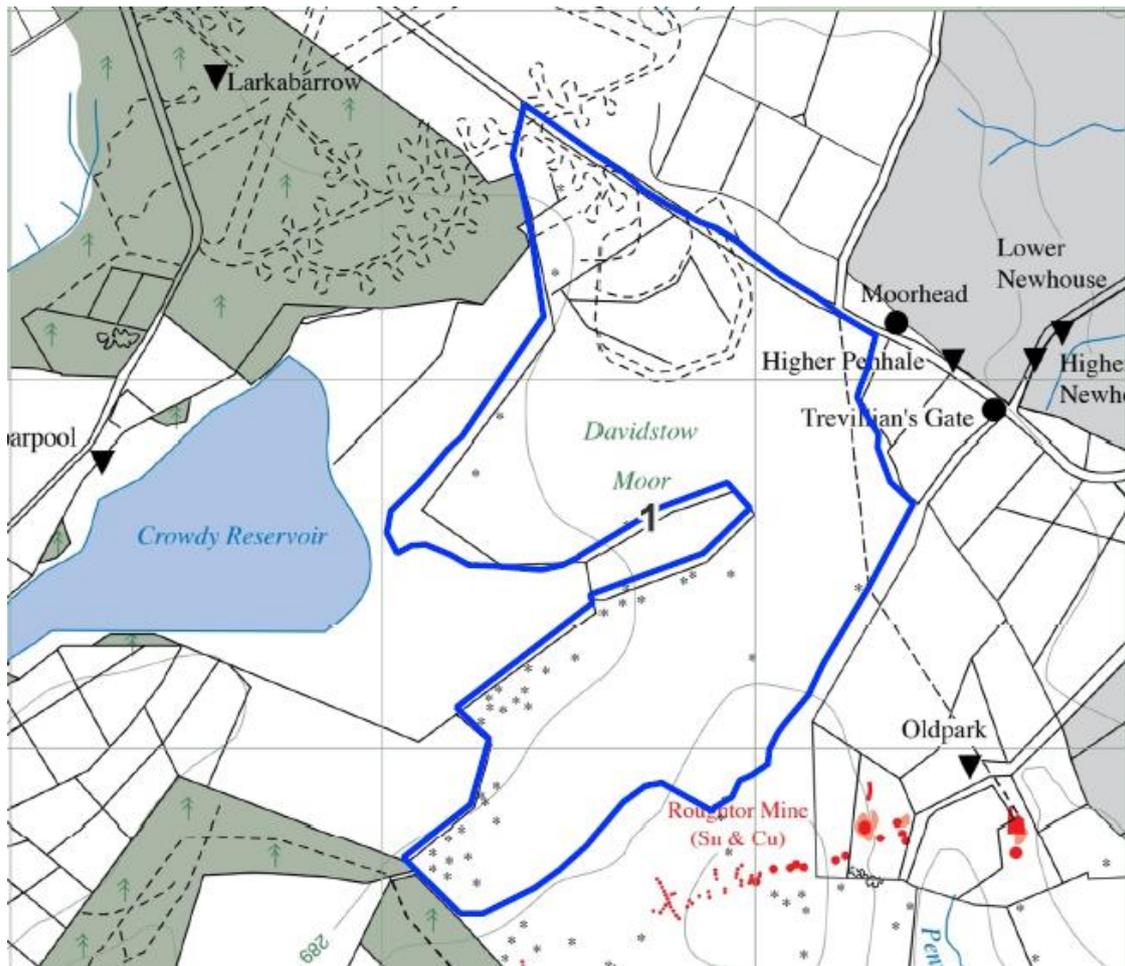
Extract from Prehistoric overview map showing just one cairn in the Davidstow Moor PAL (outlined in blue). Those cairns shown to the NW were largely removed in the

Second World War as the RAF Davidstow Moor airfield was created (Johnson and Rose 1994, Map 1; reproduced with permission of Cornwall Council and Historic England).



	Cultivation ridges
	Medieval and post-medieval field boundaries, based on the O.S. 1808 two-inch MS map, and tithe maps.
	Medieval and post-medieval field boundaries found by air and ground survey.
	Embanked enclosure
	Surviving settlement, recorded before 1540.
	Surviving settlement, recorded between 1540 and 1808.
	Deserted settlement, recorded before 1540.
	Medieval longhouse
	Post-medieval dwelling (abandoned)
	Other medieval structure
	Other post-medieval structure
LANK 1278	Cornish place name, and earliest recorded date.
Hulker 1407	English place name, and earliest recorded date.
	Parish Boundary c. 1840

Extract from Medieval overview map showing just Lamlavery longhouse hamlet, fields and cultivation ridges dominating the PAL (Johnson and Rose 1994, Map 1; reproduced with permission of Cornwall Council and Historic England).



- | | | | |
|--|------------------------------|------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| | Limit of survey | | Quarry |
| | Coniferous woodland | | Dump |
| | Broadleaf woodland | | China clay pit |
| | Mixed woodland | | Leat |
| | Waterbody | | Wheel pit |
| | River | | Adit |
| | Medieval field systems | | Engine house |
| | Medieval pasture boundary | | Horse whim |
| | Post-medieval field boundary | Mineral Working | |
| | Thoroughfares (tarmacked) | | Eluvial streamworks |
| | Byways and other tracks | | Alluvial streamworks |
| | Railway | | Leat |
| | Tramway | | Tinners' building |
| | Settlements: Medieval | | Wheel pit |
| | 1808–c1840 | | Horse whim |
| | c1840–c1880 | | Engine house |
| | later than c1880 | | Flat rod line |
| | Turf cutting | | Shoad and prospecting pits (smaller) |
| | Turf stead | | Lode back pits (larger) |
| | Flat rod line (certain) | | Openworks |
| | Flat rod line (uncertain) | | Shaft |
| | | | Adit |
| | | | Dump |
| | | | Railway |
| | | | Tramway |

Extract from Post-medieval and industrial overview map showing a group of turf steads alongside Crowdy Marsh and a fragment of the large Second World War airfield of RAF Davidstow Moor (Herring et al 2008, Map 1; reproduced with permission of Cornwall Council and Historic England).

Land use history

Pre-1748

Complex arrangements of parish boundaries, of Advent, Davidstow and St Clether, as they divided the downs between the headwaters of rivers that run to Padstow on the N coast of Cornwall and the Tamar on the SE. Parishes were formerly economic units and this equitable sharing indicates the importance to local economies of the grazing lands (and the turbaries, the rights to cut turf and furze for domestic fuel).

For most of its history an area of common grazing, from prehistoric times to the present, with the brief interlude when the Lamlavery hamlet and its fields took an area into separate management.

That brief period of medieval enclosure, with a strip field system with broad ridge and furrow indicates that this was cultivated land, possibly ploughed rather than spade-dug (unlike most other medieval fields on Bodmin Moor), though there are small patches of spade-dug lazybeds too. The longhouse hamlet had four or five households, a community of around 40 people perhaps. A possible corn-drying barn at the centre of the hamlet suggests difficulties in harvesting grain ripe, possibly an indicator that the land was too marginal, and that the episode of settlement and cultivation was brief.

Place on N edge of the downs called Butterwell was so named as early as 1656 (ICS place-names index, Davidstow). Butterwells were small structures used for storing dairy products, and this place-name may reflect memories or stories of dairying on the downs.



Hollow-way running through the low earthworks of the Lamlavery medieval field system (Dan Ratcliffe, January 2025).

Thomas Martyn's 1748 map.

Open ground but with two farmhouses shown at Lamb-Lavery, suggesting that the medieval hamlet was still partially occupied.

c1810 OS drawing

Shown as open ground, with the convention for rough grassland. Several unhedged lanes cross the downs and lead onto the commons to the south. Lamlavery is shown as an outcrop.

c1840 Tithe Map

Mainly on the Davidstow Tithe Map; it shows many of the unfenced trackways, and Lamlavery Rock. The open ground is described under Commons and Wastes, as TA1291, Davidstowe Moor, 1029 acres of 'Coarse Pasture', and the Tithe rent charge was 'put on the several Tenements to which it belongs' indicating that the commons were still divided among many farms.

The Advent part of the common was recorded as 914, 'Moor' and was recorded after the main properties were dealt with, suggesting it too was common. Both maps show the open ground unseparated from each other, with no fence or hedge.

c1880 OS map

Shown with a mix of rough grass and furze, with furze diminishing towards the SW. Note that there is limited furze here now. Bound stones shown. Some of the lode-back pits of Roughtor Mine (copper) also shown, as earthworks.

c1906 OS map

Still a mix of rough grass and furze.

Modern

In the Second World War the commons were descended upon by the international response to fascism, in the creation of RAF Davidstow Moor.

Leisure and recreation became significant after the War, when the runways and panhandle dispersals (where bombers and fighters had been secured between military operations), were scenes of families and friends gathering. Many young north Cornish people began their driving lessons on the long runways, and in the early 1950s Formula One motor racing took place here.

Historic Environment

Summary of main heritage assets

Prehistoric ceremonial and ritual

- Bronze Age barrow (MCO2564) near NE corner of the PAL. One of an extensive group of barrows investigated by Croft Andrew when RAF Davidstow was established in the Second World War.

Prehistoric domestic and agricultural

There are no remains at surface

Medieval

- Well-preserved medieval hamlet, Lamlavery, and its extensive field system, with ridge and furrow earthworks, banks around cropping units and lanes (MCO20888).

Industrial

- Gravel pit (MCO49494) at NE corner.

Post-medieval and modern

- Numerous braided trackways and hollow-ways run north to south from the lowlands to the north towards the common grazing land on Bodmin Moor to the south. Tracking along a ridgeway is likely to have prehistoric origins.
- Numerous turf steads just beyond the edge of the great Crowdy Marsh, an important source of peat for domestic fuel.

- South-eastern part of Second World War military airfield, RAF Coastal Command base called Davidstow Moor. Built in 1942 as an American base for B52, Fortress and Liberator bombers, but frequent mists limited its usefulness and it was abandoned in December 1945.

Intangible cultural heritage

- Lamlavery Rock, a natural granite and quartz outcrop is a local landmark and has probably been such since prehistoric times.
- The braided trackways indicate that this is an entrance to the Moor, the way on to the great common grazing lands from the farms to the north of the Moor.
- RAF Davidstow Moor has complex associations, national and local, as has its continued use for various forms of recreation, including Grand Prix motor racing in the early 1950s, microlight flying more recently and various forms of mooching.

Significance of landscape visibility

Very open landscape; a significant element of its character. The medieval hamlet sits at the heart of its extensive fields, and it is remarkable to be able to look over and walk around the resource that supported the hamlet.

Lamlavery Rock is a startling landmark and has been such for millennia.

The airfield runways, taxi-ing circuit and pan-handle dispersals are all visually impressive.

Designations

Historic Environment

Scheduled Monuments

The core of the medieval settlement is a Scheduled Monument,

- **NHLE 1004609, 'Medieval longhouse settlement (known locally as Lamlavery), and an associated field system'**, first Listed in July 1977.

Sites considered to be candidates for Scheduling

Evaluation of Bodmin Moor for sites of National Importance identified the following as a potential candidate for formal assessment for Scheduling using the criteria employed by the MPP (Rose and Herring 1990). Following the guidance in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) these non-designated heritage assets are demonstrably of equivalent significance to Scheduled Monuments. 'Substantial harm to or loss of [these] should be wholly exceptional' (MHCLG 2024: NPPF, para 206):

- **MCO4008 Davidstow Moor military airfield.**

Natural Environment

Sites of Special Scientific Interest

Bodmin Moor North SSSI (Units 10, 14). See Appendix to Overarching HEAP for description.

Special Areas of Conservation (SACs)

UK0030329, Crowdy Marsh.

Designated as an outstanding example of Habitat type 7140 [Transition mires and quaking bogs](#). One of just two such SACs in Cornwall, the other being Breney Common and Goss and Tregoss Moors. From the citation:

‘Crowdy Marsh is one of several valley mires found around the edge of the granite massif of Bodmin Moor. Most of the gently-sloping wide valley is now occupied by a freshwater reservoir, but feeder streams still meander via a network of water tracks between low peaty mounds over the remainder. The **H7140 Transition mire** includes the water tracks and occasional waterlogged hollows found throughout Crowdy Marsh.’

‘The deep hollows are dominated by the bog-moss *Sphagnum [auriculatum]* with a mix of typical transition mire species such as marsh cinquefoil *Potentilla palustris* and bogbean *Menyanthes trifoliata*. Marsh St John’s-wort *Hypericum elodes* and bog pondweed *Potamogeton polygonifolius* are common in the water tracks, often fringed by the rushes *Juncus effusus* and *Juncus bulbosus*. Pale butterwort *Pinguicula lusitanica* is widely distributed along the margins of the fen.’

Common Land

Part of CL186 Davidstow Moor.

CROW Access Land

The whole PAL is Open Access.

Registered rights of way.

- Bridleway in NE corner

Neighbourhood Plans

Davidstow parish does not have a Neighbourhood Plan.

Change between 2005 and 2025

(Overview derived from comparison of CCC 2005 aerial photography, available as a basemap on the Cornwall and Scilly Historic Environment Record, and the Airbus 2025 satellite imagery as viewed from Google Earth aerial photos.)

Spread of low furze into areas previously dominated by *molinia* grassland, especially to the SW of the medieval fields; between them and Lamlavery Rock.

Reducing signs of heath fires over the period, contained in places by farmers’ tracks.

Historic Environment Action Plan

Issues

Spread of furze

- Reducing the diversity of the ancient rough grasslands and their flora and fauna, including their invertebrates.
- Obscuring the more ephemeral archaeological remains – the hamlet, strip fields and cultivation ridges in particular
- Will begin to cause erosion as vehicles and livestock are confined to ever narrower tracks.
- Encourages tick-borne diseases in livestock and wild fauna.

Opportunities

To better guide grazing levels on the common by closer understanding of the flora and fauna of the ancient semi-natural grasslands

Recommendations

General approach

Retain open ancient semi-natural grassland with easy movement in all directions. Keep the important remains of the Lamlavery medieval hamlet and its fields clear of furze.

Adjusting the extent of the PAL:

- 1 Minor tweak of PAL's NW boundary to include the whole of the medieval field system.
- 2 Larger adjustment at the SE corner of the PAL
 - To include the prominent 'natural monument' Lamlavery Rock, a dramatic quartzite outcrop that was probably a significant landmark in prehistoric and medieval times, as it still is today.
 - To include more of the pattern of braided trackways leading onto the open downlands of High Moor and West Moor, many of them apparently at least as early as the later medieval fields of Lamlavery longhouse settlement through which they passed. These can be made personal through knowledge that it was along these tracks that Charlotte Dymond was making her way on the day she was murdered in April 1844.
 - To include those elements of the important early Victorian copper mine Great Roughtor Consols that lie on the open moor, including lode-back pits and prospecting pits.
 - To include a scatter of Second World War and later slit trenches on the rough ground around Lamlavery Rock, which has often been used as a target, a form of citadel, in military exercises.

References

MHCLG (Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government), 2024 *National Planning Policy Framework*, London, MHCLG

Rose, P and Herring, P, 1990 *Bodmin Moor, Cornwall, an evaluation for the Monuments Protection Programme*, Cornwall Archaeological Unit, Cornwall Council, Truro

2007 PAL text

1 Davidstow Moor

Historic Environment

At the centre of this PAL lies a deserted medieval settlement, Lamlavery, comprising of a very fine group of longhouses and associated enclosures covering approximately 1.5ha. The earthwork remains of five houses are well preserved, each with a small rectangular enclosure and associated smaller

outhouses; the whole is then enclosed by a low rectangular wall. Extensive ridge and furrow cultivation, divided into a number of enclosures based on strip fields, surrounds the settlement, creating an undisturbed and entire medieval landscape pattern.

Numerous trackways/holloways run past the settlement, following the medieval routeway to the houses and then onto the moor itself. These tracks have been reused again and again, sometimes on slightly different alignments, demonstrating the continuous movement of people and animals over the moor from this access point, mainly for summer grazing but also to access the rich mineral and fuel resources of the moor.

This later activity is also reflected in this PAL, through numerous turf steads (platforms on which dried turf was ricked), and the small lode back pits of Roughtor mine.

A Bronze Age barrow and numerous Mesolithic flint scatters demonstrate the time depth of this PAL, although they are not dominant features when compared with the medieval remains.

The PAL also includes part of Davidstow airfield, opened in 1942 and decommissioned in 1948. It was the highest operational airfield in the United Kingdom and the weather conditions created by its location made it a difficult site from which to carryout operations. The PAL encompasses a polygonal track surrounding four magazine complexes with loading ramps.

Natural Environment

Notified Features:-

Acid Grassland – Bristle Bent grassland (U3 - *Agrostis curtisii* grassland), Bent-Fescue grassland (U4 - *Festuca ovina* - *Agrostis capillaris* - *Galium saxatile* grassland), Mat Grass grassland (U5 - *Nardus stricta* - *Galium saxatile* grassland)

Wet Heath – Deer Grass – Cross-leaved Heath wet heath (M15 - *Scirpus cespitosus* - *Erica tetralix* wet heath), Cross-leaved Heath – Bog moss wet heath (M16 - *Erica tetralix* - *Sphagnum compactum* wet heath)

Valley Mire and other mire communities – Bog Asphodel – bog moss mire (M21 – *Narthecium ossifragum* - *Sphagnum papillosum* mire), Purple Moor-grass – Tormentil mire (M25 - *Molinia caerulea* - *Potentilla erecta* mire), bog moss bog pool community (M2 - *Sphagnum cuspidatum/recurvum* (fallax) bog pool community), Bottle Sedge – bog moss mire (M4 - *Carex rostrata* - *Sphagnum recurvum* (fallax) mire), Star Sedge – bog moss mire (M6 - *Carex echinata* - *Sphagnum recurvum* (fallax) /*auriculatum* (*denticulatum*) mire)

Aggregations of non-breeding birds – Golden Plover (*Pluvialis apricaria*)

Populations of nationally scarce butterflies – Marsh Fritillary (*Eurodryas aurinia*), Silver-studded Blue (*Plebejus argus*).

Butterflies which have experienced substantial declines – Dark Green Fritillary (*Argynnis aglaja*), Grayling (*Hipparchia semele*), Green Hairstreak (*Callophrys rubi*), Silver-washed Fritillary (*Argynnis paphia*).

Nationally rare and scarce dragonfly species - Scarce Blue-tailed Damselfly (*Ischnura pumilio*), Small red Damselfly (*Ceriagrion tenellum*).

Outstanding Dragonfly Assemblage

Specific notes:- fragmented Western Heath (U3/H4)

Designations

The core of the medieval settlement is a Scheduled Monument, No.1046.

Bodmin Moor North SSSI (units 10, 14)

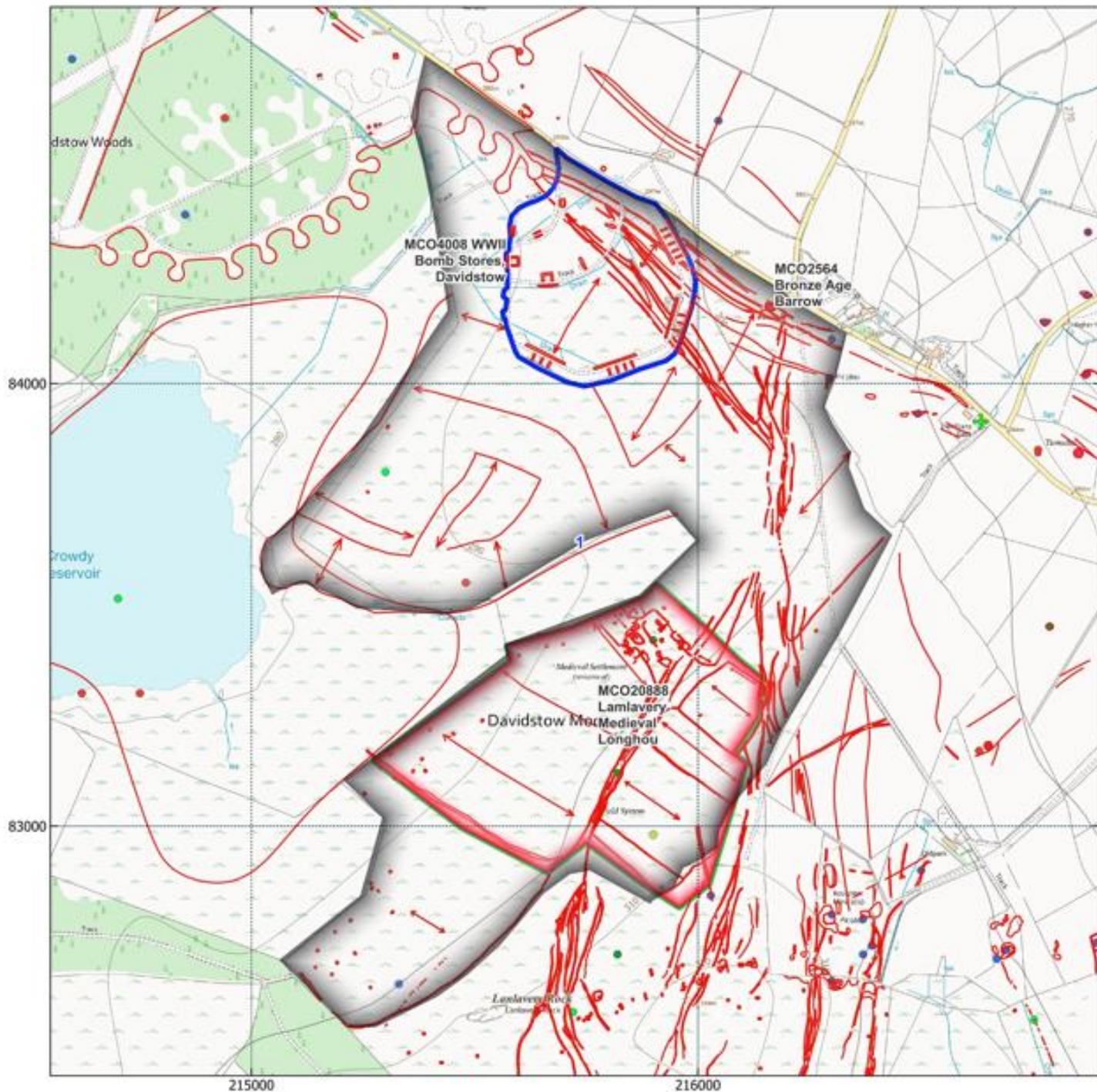
SAC



Lamlavery Rock from the north with braided hollow-ways created by livestock and travellers entering the West Moors and Hamatethy Common from north Cornwall, probably over several millennia (Pete Herring, December 2016).



Aerial view of Lamlavery hamlet showing five small longhouses, each within or adjacent to a small rectilinear enclosure and together surrounding an open townplace with a small structure at its centre, possibly a corn-drying barn. Parallel lines in the surrounding fields are medieval cultivation ridges, probably made by ploughs rather than spades. However, a small patch of spade-dug lazybeds is visible within the curve of the field to the SE of longhouse 4. (Image copyright 2025 Airbus, made available via Google Earth Pro.)



- PAL Areas
- Scheduled Monuments
- Scheduled Monuments @ Risk
- Feature Groups
 - Prehistoric
 - Medieval
 - Post Medieval
- Aerial Mapping Transcriptions
- CSHER point data
 - Prehistoric
 - Early Medieval
 - Romano British
 - Medieval
 - Post Medieval
 - Modern

Dominant Habitat: Dry Acid Grassland

Habitat Change: Medium

Notes: Low furze spread into molinia grassland areas, especially SW of medieval fields near Lamlavery Rock. Heath fires reduced, contained by farmers' tracks.

PAL 1 Davidstow Moor

www.statement-heritage.com

Cornwall Council

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AC000817921

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