

PAL 4 Trewint Downs



Aerial view of western slope of Trewint Downs March 2025 (by Skybus, accessed via Google Earth Pro, with thanks). Shows medieval strip fields extending onto the Downs and containing narrow cultivation ridges of spade-dug lazy beds. The strips can also be seen extending into the inbye land to the west (left). Also shows the hill top tor.

Location, geology and topography

Centred: SX 210 804

Extent: 38 ha (95 acres)

Geology

Bedrock geology is granite of the Bodmin Moor Intrusion, formed between 330.9 and 272.3 million years ago during the Carboniferous and Permian periods, and superficial deposits are granite boulders and head, formed in the Quaternary period, 2.5 million years ago to the present (BGS Online Viewer).

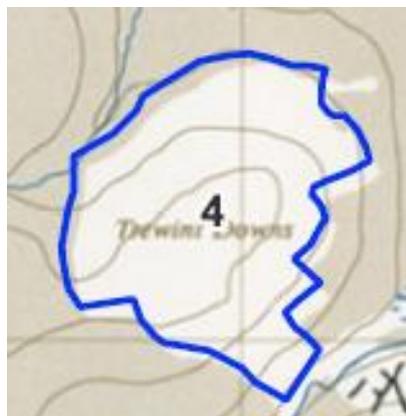
Topography

A neat discrete hill, of steeply sloping rounded downland 242m (794 feet) on southern slope and 260m (853 feet) on north-eastern slope to 304m (997 feet) at the summit, which is a fine granite tor.

Valleys of small tributaries of the Penpont Water run north-eastwards on the NW and SE sides of the hill. The Penpont Water joins the River Inny and eventually the River Tamar.

Current management and structures of ownership, commoners, etc:

Trewint Tor common, CL231. One private owner. Commoners have rights to turn out cattle, horses and sheep, and to cut peat (turbary).

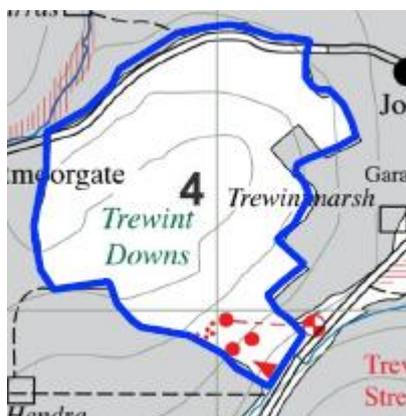


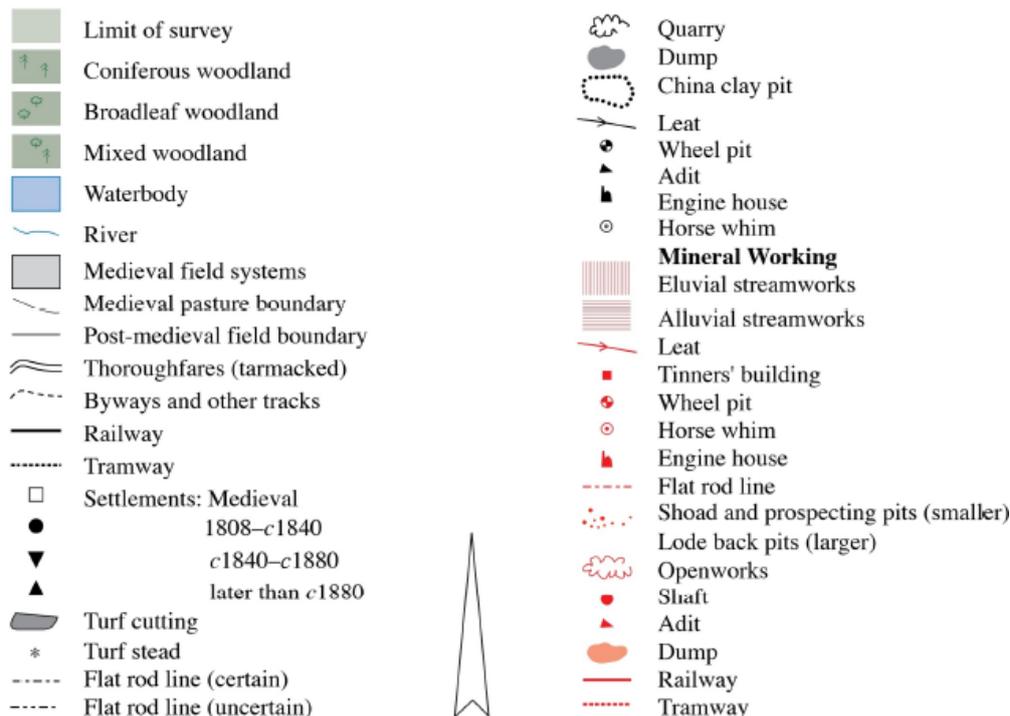
Extract from Prehistoric overview map (Johnson and Rose 1994, Map 1; reproduced with permission of Cornwall Council and Historic England).



- 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 and later landscape to c1808 overview map (Johnson and Rose 1994, Map 2; reproduced with permission of Cornwall Council and Historic England).





Extract from *Post-medieval and industrial overview map* (Herring et al 2008, Map 1; reproduced with permission of Cornwall Council and Historic England).

Land use history

Deeper mining through shafts and adits took place in the same area in the Victorian period.

Pre-1748

Trewint Downs has a landscape history typical of the edgelands of Bodmin Moor. There are no surviving signs that throughout prehistoric times it was anything other than a part of the extensive rough pastures of the upland grazing area.

In the early medieval period, a ring fence established by the farmers at Trewint (a hamlet to the SE) brought the eastern pastures into a home or hamlet common, but probably changed land use little – still rough grazing, with the larger western part of the hill still part of the commons of what became Altarnun. Then in the later medieval period the hill was encroached upon by the strip field systems of Trewint and its neighbours to the west and south at Hendra and Trespettigue. Extensive areas of lazy beds indicate that this episode included cultivation.

The hill may have reverted to rough pasture by the time the surface mining took place on the southern slopes, in the latest medieval or early post-medieval periods.

Thomas Martyn's 1748 map.

The hill was shown as a simple rounded hill and with enclosed land on its eastern side.

c1810 OS drawing

Shown as open ground under grassland and with a pimple, presumably the carn, and a spread of clutter.

c1840 Tithe Map

The hill was recorded as TA 2693, Trewint Down, 112 acres under Coarse Pasture. No Landowner or Occupier recorded in the Apportionment; instead a note: 'The [Tithe] Rent Charge in lieu of the Tithes accruing from these Lands is apportioned on the Estates to which the same are appurtenant.' Unfortunately, it does not elaborate on those estates.

c1880 OS map

Shown as open ground under rough grassland and with variably dense furze, densest on the lower western slopes and middle southern slope. Least dense, or most open on the northern side of the hill. The openwork was recorded as 'Old Quarry' and streamworks cutting was shown on the lowest SE edge. An open lane was shown running around the hill on the lower western slopes.

c1906 OS map

Shows greater detail of the tin working, including Old Shafts and Old Level (with tramways running onto a small dump).

Modern

All has reverted to rough grazing once again.

Historic Environment

Summary of main heritage assets

Prehistoric ceremonial and ritual

There are no records of propped stones or other adjustments to the massive tor on the summit of the hill, but it is likely to have been a significant landmark in early prehistory when it would not have been surrounded by fields and farms as it now is but instead stood on the edge of the granite uplands.

Prehistoric domestic and agricultural

No above-ground remains recorded.

Medieval

Well-preserved **medieval field systems**, concentrated in two main areas, on the west side of the hill and one on the south east side. **Well-defined cultivation ridging** covers approximately 18ha. The ridges are 2.3m wide and 0.3m high and were probably spade-dug lazy beds. On the east slope (MCO20865, PRN 1522) fields range from 0.2ha to 0.5ha in area. They are bounded by turf-covered stone and boulder banks which are 2.5m wide and up to 0.6m high. On the south hill slope, the ridge and furrow cultivation (MCO37925, PRN 54610), actually **spade-dug lazybeds**, is enclosed by three contour-following banks which are up to 0.6m high.

On the west of the hill, the fields vary in area from 0.25ha to 1.5ha, however the long, narrow fields may have been sub-divided. The turf-covered stone banks average 1.5m in width and 0.4m in height. The width of the ridges varies from 2.8m in the north, to 1.8m in the south.

The fields continue into the surrounding existing enclosed landscape.

A long curving boundary runs roughly north to south across the higher eastern slopes and appears to have many of the medieval fields attached to it, indicating that it was a primary line. It was probably originally a **pasture boundary**, the ring fence defining

the 'home' or hamlet common of Trewint, a settlement that was in existence before 1066, being included in the Domesday Book.

Industrial

To the south of the PAL lies a small but well-preserved **tin mining complex** (MCO12723, PRN 12055) with shode working, lode back pits, openworks, and prospecting pits in early phases, possibly as early as the later medieval, succeeded in the Victorian period by Trewint Mine, with two shafts, one served by flat rods worked by a waterwheel in the valley to its east (PRN 12058.01).

The **lode-back working** trends WSW-ENE with pits around 3.0m diameter, up to 2.5m deep with heaps to 1.8m high. They cut through **shode pits** up to 2.5m across and 1.0m deep, with heaps to 1.2m high. **Prospecting pits**, of similar size and shape to the shode pits, are visible to the east where a double row climbs the hillside.

At the west end are **two openworks**, or perhaps contiguous lode-back pits. The eastern is around 5.0m wide and 2.5m deep, the western 15m long with irregular sides and uneven bottom, around 2.5m wide and 3.5m deep. Pits are visible in its base.

The two **shafts** (12055.02) are located to the south east of these openworks. No adit was located but one presumably existed in the valley to the south east. This is probably the remains of **Trewint Mine**, working Trewint lode (Dines 1956, 583). Dines noted that it had indeed been previously worked by openwork and by **adit** (driven north-west into the valley side from SX 2104 7988). Hamilton Jenkin (1960, 53-54) saw an 1889 unpublished report on 'Wilhelmina and Trewint tin mines' that referred to extensive surface workings by the 'ancients' and discussed more recent workings, in the 'past fifteen or twenty years' (i.e. 1870 to 1889). A **waterwheel** was in place **working stamps** and with **flat rods** already attached to it. The likelihood is that this wheel was in the pit surviving today as a **flat rod channel** exists.

On the higher eastern slopes of the hill is a separate group of **prospecting pits** running north – south, dug to search for east-west lodes. The principal feature is a **costeaning trench** circa 1.3m wide, circa 1.0m deep with a heap to its west circa 1.8m wide and 0.9m high (MCO23708, PRN12054).

Post-medieval and modern

No above-ground remains recorded.

Significance of landscape visibility

The central tor on the summit of the down is a distinctive landmark visible from afar.

There are few parts of the hill where walkers or riders will not encounter the banks and earthworks of medieval fields and farming, and the early pasture boundaries that marked their edges.

The mining remains on the southern slopes form a coherent complex and their pits and banks have provided shelter in which trees have become established.

Semi-natural Environment

NB this section has not been updated from 2005.

Fragmented Western Heath, Scrub, Bracken and Woodland.

Designations

No current historic environment or natural environment designations.

Historic Environment

Scheduled Monuments

None

Heritage Assets assessed as being of National Importance

This part of Bodmin Moor was not covered by English Heritage's Monuments Protection Programme (MPP), undertaken in the 1990s and early 2000s.

However, evaluation by the Cornwall Archaeological Unit of sites of National Importance on Bodmin Moor identified the following within this PAL as candidates 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' (NPPF, para 206).

- Well-preserved **medieval field systems** on the west and SE sides of the hill, including **well-defined cultivation ridging** (MCO20865, PRN 1522).
- Well-preserved **tin mining complex** (MCO12723, PRN 12055) with shode working, lode back pits, openworks, and prospecting pits in early phases, possibly as early as the later medieval, succeeded in the Victorian period by Trewint Mine with shafts, waterwheel pit and flat-rods channel.

Natural environment designations:

Sites of Special Scientific Interest

NA

Special Areas of Conservation

NA

County Wildlife Sites

Yes, whole PAL is in NC/CN7/N

Cornwall Conservation Areas

NA

Other designations

Common Land

Common Land (part of CL231 Trewint Tor)

CROW Access Land

Yes, whole PAL.

Registered rights of way.

- Bridleway in NW corner

Neighbourhood Development Plans

No

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.)

- Increase in furze cover on north slopes of hill, and the merging of its bushes to create closed canopy furze in several places.
- Bracken covers the SE half of the hill now.

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.
- Will begin to cause erosion as vehicles and livestock are confined to ever narrower tracks.
- Encourage 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

Adjusting the extent of the PAL:

LIDAR has been examined. No change required to PAL extent; it includes the principal known archaeological remains on Trewint Downs.

Other initiatives or suggestions

In time, there will be a need for active removal of furze from areas known to have medieval and industrial remains.

Further archaeological recording.

The southern mine has an important palimpsest of earlier surface mining (lode-back pits and openworks cut through by small-scale later shaft mining).

Survey would help identify and then assess the significance of the mining remains.

References

Dines, HG 1956 *The Metalliferous Mining Region of South-West England*, HMSO

Jenkin, AKH 1970 *Mines and Miners of Cornwall: Wadebridge, Camelford and Bude*, Truro Bookshop

Moore, P, 2024 *Bodmin Moor's Boundary Markers, a Legacy in Stone*, Peter Moore

2005 PAL description

4 Trewint Downs

Historic Environment

This compact PAL contains the remains of a well preserved medieval field system, concentrated in two main areas, one on the west side of the hill and one on the south east side. Well-defined ridge and furrow cultivation covers approx 18ha. The ridges are 2.3m wide and 0.3m high and were probably spade-dug lazy beds. On the east slope more fields are traceable and range from 0.2ha to 0.5ha in area. They are bounded by turf-covered stone and boulder banks which are 2.5m wide and up to 0.6m high. On the south hill slope, the ridge and furrow cultivation is enclosed by three contour-following banks which are up to 0.6m high.

On the west of the hill, the fields vary in area from 0.25ha to 1.5ha, however the long, narrow fields may have been sub-divided. The turf-covered stone banks average 1.5m in width and 0.4m in height. The width of the ridges varies from 2.8m in the north, to 1.8m in the south.

The fields continue in the surrounding existing enclosed landscape.

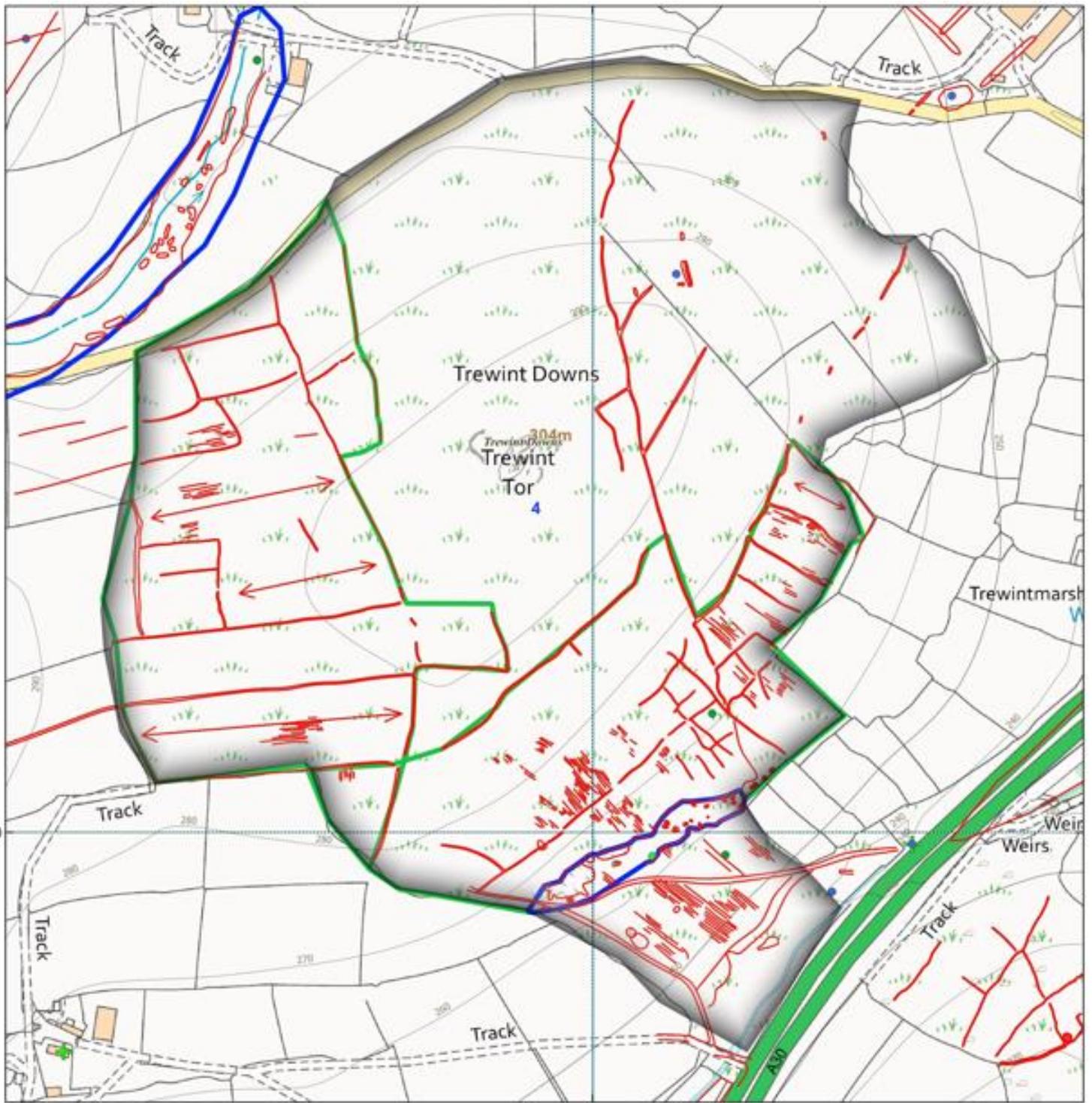
To the south of the PAL lies a small tin mine with lode back pits, shode working and prospecting pits in a primary phase succeeded by two shafts, one served by flat rods worked by a waterwheel in the valley to its east. This is another good example of a well contained small venture, which has not been reworked and had elements destroyed.

Natural Environment

Fragmented Western Heath, Scrub, Bracken and Woodland

Designations

No current HE or NE designations.



- 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: Western Heath Mosaic

Habitat Change: Considerable

Notes: Increase in furze cover on north slopes of hill, and the merging of its bushes to create closed canopy furze in several places.
Bracken covers the SE half of the hill now.

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www.statement-heritage.com

Cornwall Council

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