

PAL 11 Carburrow, Warleggan, Historic Environment Action Plan



View from the larger eastern cairn down the possible bank cairn towards the outcrop supporting the Cannon Stone (Pete Herring, December 2005).

Location, geology and topography

Centred: SX 155708

Extent: 35 ha (86 acres)

Geology

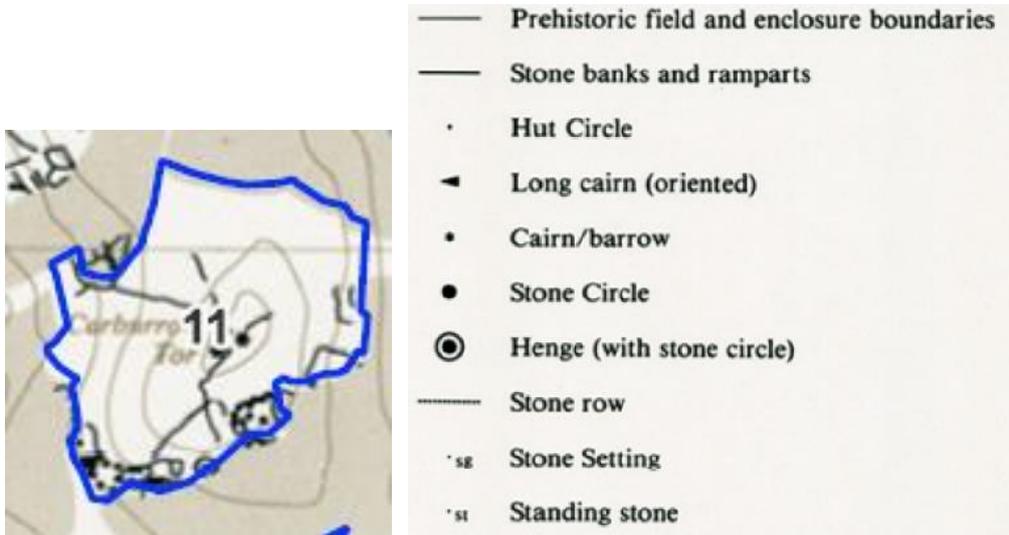
Granite, igneous bedrock formed between 330.9 and 272.3 million years ago during the Carboniferous and Permian periods, with a short dyke of felsite, igneous bedrock formed between 298.9 and 252.2 million years ago during the Permian period running WSW-ENE on the higher western slopes.

Topography:

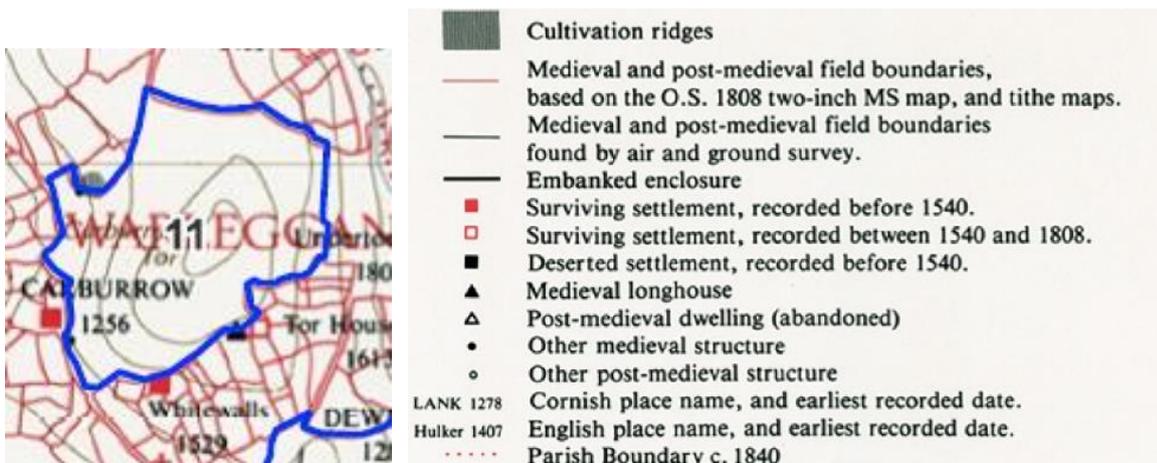
A discrete hill 276 metres (905 feet) high with a rounded top and steeper slopes to W and E than to N where the hill grades more gently into Hardhead Downs and S where it grades in Warleggan Down.

Current management and structures of ownership, commoners, etc:

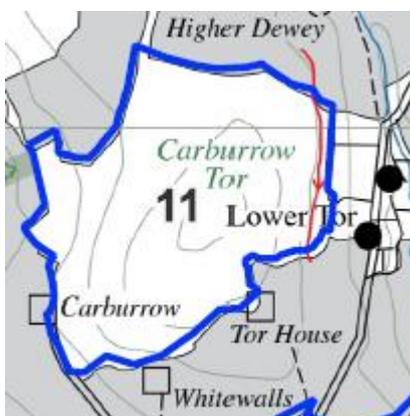
The whole area is common land, the central part of CL164, Hardhead Downs and Carburrow Tor.

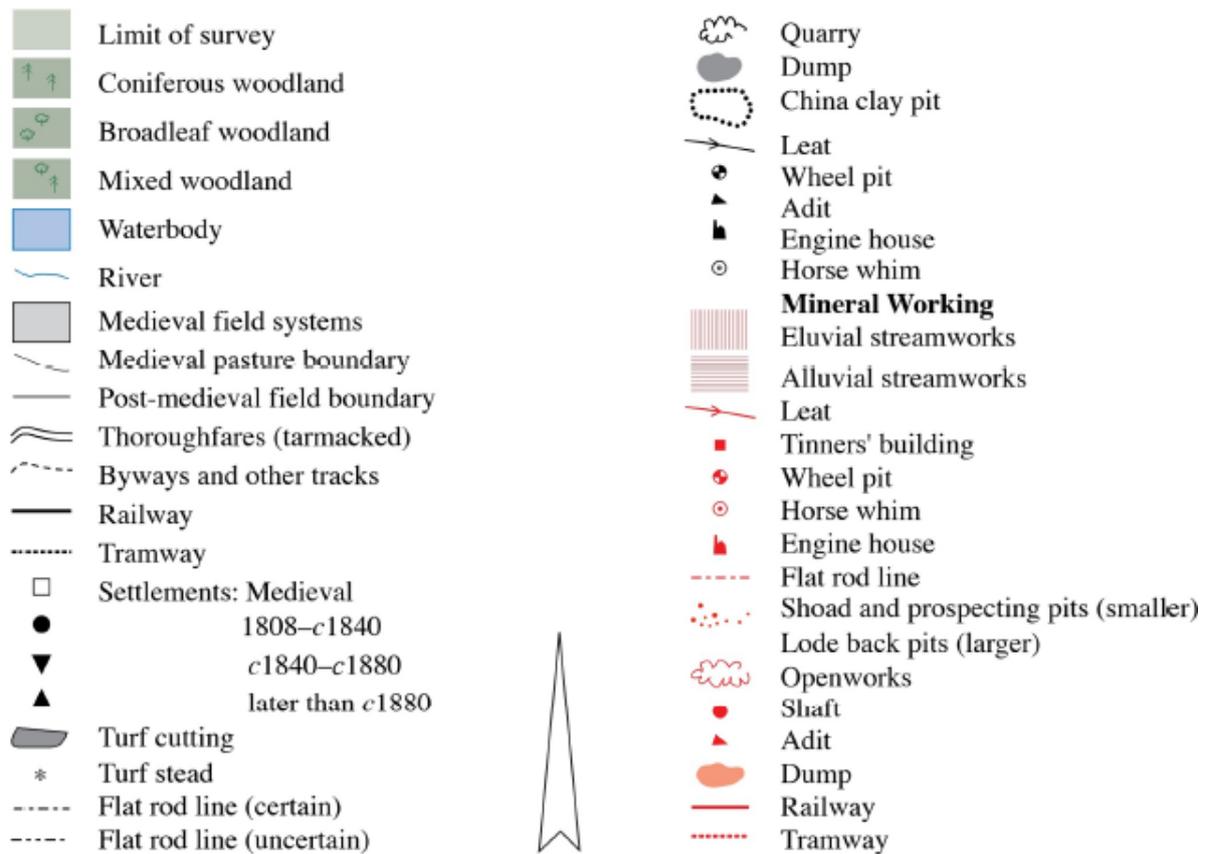


Extract from Prehistoric overview map (Johnson and Rose 1994, Map 1; reproduced with permission of Cornwall Council and Historic England).



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

Pre-1748

The summit cairns, bank cairn and the important propped stone all indicate the importance of Carburrow as a place for gatherings in early prehistory. The views across the grazing lands of the SW sector of Bodmin Moor are extensive and it is likely that the gatherings were in part to deal with the issues and needs of grazing.

Several prehistoric roundhouse settlements on the lower S and W slopes, and a single longhouse, presumed to be part of the hamlet of Tor House, but otherwise largely used for rough grazing in prehistoric and medieval times. Long sinuous pasture boundaries subdivided the grazing into sectors, presumably also in the prehistoric period.

The fields of Tor House hamlet were arranged to its S and E, that is on the lower slopes, but the hamlet's position on the edge of the rough grazing suggest that the emphasis in its economy may have been placed on the pastoral.

Thomas Martyn's 1748 map.

The hill is shown in profile and three farm houses were placed to its west ('Carburrow') and south, 'Torr' (= Tor House), and an un-named one.

c1810 OS drawing

Land cover is shown as rough pasture.

The hill was portrayed as having two distinct foci, the eastern with a large summit barrow and the western with a tor and clutter to the south of each. There appears to have been an attempt to portray roundhouses on the southern slope.

The name Tor was applied to the farmstead now called Whitewalls, not to Torhouse.

c1840 Tithe Map

The hill was shown edged with fields, essentially as it still is, though the area of the 'Common' (TA 465) extended a little further to the east, reaching down to the road. The Common was owned by the Rev R G Grylls (two thirds) and William Bickford Coham (one third) and occupied by the commoners.

c1880 OS map

The eastern incursion of four new fields onto the lower part of the common was shown but otherwise it was still open rough pasture, shown as coarse grassland with clumps of furze. The summit cairns were shown (as barrows) but none of the roundhouses was noticed.

c1906 OS map

No change.

Modern

Still used as rough grazing.

Historic Environment

Headlines

- **Dominated by prehistoric remains.**
- A form of **Neolithic bank cairn** on NW slope is associated with a **propped stone**, known locally as the 'Cannon Stone'.
- A pair of large **Bronze Age cairns** on the summit are seen from miles away and make the hill one of the more distinctive on the Moor.
- Dense **clusters of roundhouses** on the lower southern slopes that probably include Middle Bronze Age and later prehistoric settlements.
- One of the roundhouses is especially large and lies within a **possibly defensive enclosure**.
- Some of the roundhouses are ovoid and may be **early medieval transhumance huts**.
- A fine **later medieval longhouse** next to the farmstead of Torhouse.
- Second World War reuse of the summit cairn as an **observation post**, looking for the Luftwaffe.

Summary of main heritage assets

Prehistoric ceremonial and ritual

Two large Early Bronze Age cairns at the hill's summit. The larger NE **cairn** (MCO4252) reaches 26m in diameter and 3.5m high, one of the largest cairns on Bodmin Moor, and a significant landmark.

The SW **cairn** (MCO4251) is also 26m in diameter but is lower, not exceeding 2.2m high and has been disturbed, presumably by treasure hunters. Its form suggests it was originally a platform cairn.

The two cairns together appear to be carefully designed to frame the view of the two great hills Rough Tor and Brown Willy as they are approached from the south. The cairns' forms also replicate the hills, in a way very similar to the effect on nearby Brown Gelly (PAL 17).



The two cairns on Carburrow framing and replicating the distant hills of Rough Tor (left) and Brown Willy (Pete Herring, April 2000).

On the NW midslopes a natural slab has been deliberately levered into place to serve as a **propped stone**, a probably **Neolithic** monument. The capstone has been shifted to a position that overlies and thus is secondary to a broad stony bank, a **possible bank cairn** (MCO22340) that runs up the steep and clittery NW slopes of the hill and appears to be overlain by the larger of the two summit cairns (see below). It is consistently 3.6m wide, much wider than a normal pasture boundary, and broadly comparable with the more certain bank cairn on Rough Tor (PAL2).

The Cannon Stone contains a large chamber in which an adult can sit on a natural bench and observe through the frame created by the capstone and side stones the two principal hills or mountains of the Moor, Rough Tor and Brown Willy (Farnworth et al 2024).

All of this suggests that Carburrow Tor in early prehistory was a significant place for looking across to the great meeting place, Rough Tor, with its tor enclosure.

The bank cairn may have originally ended on a summit feature that preceded the eastern cairn, possibly a tor.

Prehistoric domestic and agricultural

The hill is divided into three unequal portions by a **pattern of pasture boundary banks** radiating from the hilltop (MCO20715, 22341, 22342).

A large **settlement** of 23 probably **roundhouses** on the SW slope of the hill (MCO20712) approximately 2.5 hectares. Closer examination of the settlement enables it to be broken down into four distinct zones.

The 8 houses in the eastern part are all linked to the boundaries of **curvilinear and rectilinear fields**. West of these are 7 large roundhouses, all of very similar size (8-9m diameter), unenclosed, freestanding, and apparently without fields. A cluster of 4 **very small ovoid houses** lies slightly further west and may be early medieval transhumance huts; and north west of these are the remains of 4 more with a few fragmentary field boundaries.

A second **large roundhouse settlement** lies on the SE slopes of the hill (MCO19157). This is an example of the distinctive '**string-of beads**' settlement form that occurs elsewhere on Bodmin Moor (see Louden Hill in PAL 2 for another). It has **14 roundhouses** forming a tight arc that are then linked by a joining bank that creates a **large enclosure**. It also incorporates and possibly earlier **smaller enclosure**, or pound, on its western side. **Three larger roundhouses** (MCO19165, 19166 and 19169) within the larger enclosure may be of a different period of use.

At the centre of the southern side of the hill is an unusually large **prehistoric roundhouse**, around 10m internal diameter, set within a roughly concentric circular enclosure formed by a heavy bank up to 5m wide, seen by some to be a small '**round**', i.e. a **later prehistoric or Romano-British enclosed settlement** (MCO20514).

Very close to the 'round' on its western side is another **heavy-banked enclosure**, this one **rectilinear** in plan, 32 by 20m, with banks 23.5m wide and 1.2m high. (MCO22315). It might be a pound (Dudley 1953-4).

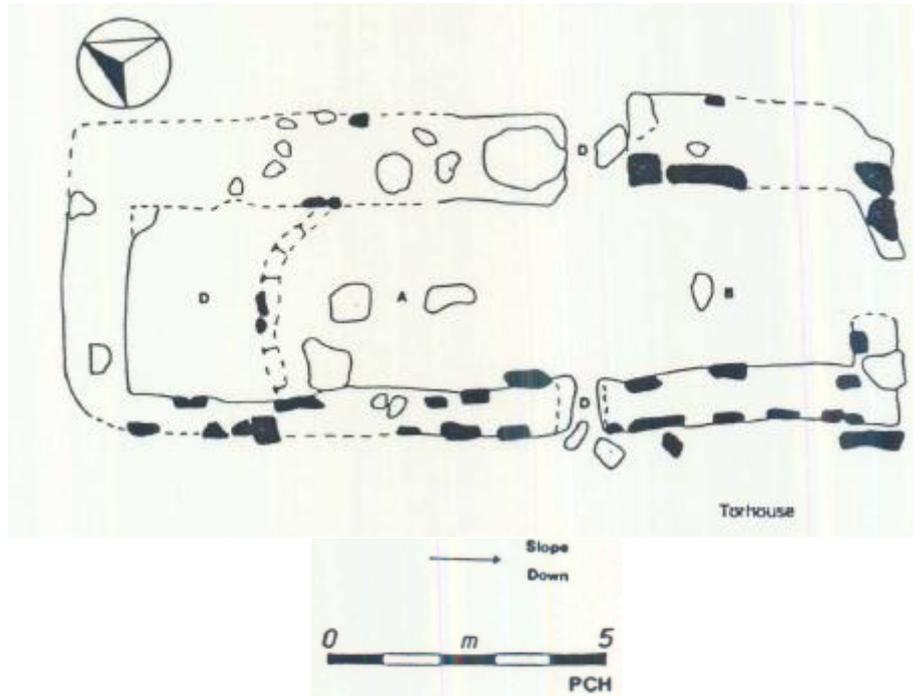
A **probably prehistoric field system** on the lower eastern slopes of the hill (MCO20716); there are no signs of roundhouses, but the boundaries lack ditches and are of typical prehistoric form.

Medieval

A cluster of 4 **very small ovoid houses** included in the westernmost prehistoric roundhouse settlement (MCO20712) may be **early medieval transhumance huts**.

They are a short way south of a **sub-rectangular ruined building** that is close to the edge of the medieval settlement of Carburrow and may be another medieval building.

A fine **later medieval longhouse** survives in the extreme SE corner of the PAL, immediately adjacent to the shrunken medieval settlement of Torhouse (MCO22313), of which it was presumably originally part. It is unusual in having so many slabs set upright in its walls.



Industrial

A **leat** runs along the lower eastern side of Carburrow, apparently from N to S. Its function is uncertain.

Prospecting for Wolfram in World War Two has left pits around the summit area.

Post-medieval and modern

Several **scooped shelters** have been created in the fabric of the eastern summit cairn. This Second World War arrangement, 'shared by the Home Guard of Warleggan and St Neot parishes, is perhaps the most elaborate [of the several **observation posts** known on Bodmin Moor]. **Steps** were fashioned on three sides of the larger of the two Bronze Age summit cairns, presumably to ease night-time movement up its stony sides, and a **rectangular drystone shelter** was built against its western side' (Herring 2008, 135). It is understood that a **disused car** was placed within the enclosure to serve as a warmer shelter on wild nights (Torr Keast pers. comm.).

Intangible cultural heritage

- Cannon Stone is a locally noted landmark.
- Dorothy Dudley associated with the roundhouse remains.
- WW2 observation post at the summit is recalled locally.

Significance of landscape visibility

The summit cairns are important landmarks seen from much of the western half of Bodmin Moor and from the lowlands to the south of the Moor. When climbing the hill from the south the two cairns frame the view N to Rough Tor and Brown Willy and it has been suggested that their shapes mimic the forms of the two hills (Farnworth et al 2024).



Rough Tor and Brown Willy on the distant northern horizon when viewed framed by the two summit cairns, with the lower western one mimicking the form of Rough Tor and the taller eastern one that of Brown Willy (Pete Herring, December 2005).

The focus on Rough Tor and Brown Willy is of interest as the propped stone, the Cannon Stone, creates a framed view to the N that neatly contains the same two mini mountains.



The view to Rough Tor and Brown Willy framed by the Cannon Stone propped stone (Pete Herring, April 2008).

Designations

Historic Environment

Scheduled Monuments

NHLE 1003073 **Two round cairns, three enclosed and two open stone hut circle settlements, a rectangular enclosure and a medieval longhouse to the south of Carburrow Tor**

Heritage Assets assessed as being of National Importance

This part of Bodmin Moor was not covered by the Monuments Protection Programme (MPP) and so the full extents of the prehistoric complexes were not included.

In particular, most of the large **settlement** of 26 probably **Middle Bronze Age roundhouses** on the SW slope of the hill (MCO20712) falls outside the Scheduled area, as does the lower north-western half of the **possible bank cairn** (MCO22340).

Natural environment designations:

Sites of Special Scientific Interest

NA

Special Areas of Conservation

NA

County Wildlife Site

Yes, NC/CN7/S2, 'Hardhead Down & Warleggan Down'.

Cornwall Conservation Areas

NA

Other designations

Common Land

Wholly within CL164, Hardhead Downs and Carburrow Tor.

CROW Access Land

Yes, whole PAL.

Registered rights of way.

None

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.)

- Considerable increase in bracken cover on the lower and midslopes on all sides of the hill.
- Furze cover has not changed greatly.

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

General approach

Retain open ancient semi-natural grassland with easy movement in all directions. Keep the important remains of the prehistoric roundhouse settlements on the southern and western slopes, and their enclosures clear of furze.

Specific recommendations

- Address the growth of furze on the roundhouse settlements and cairns at summit.
- Adjust grazing to push back the conversion to furze.
- Further archaeological recording
 - The roundhouses settlements have basic plans only and require closer recording, as do the possible transhumance huts that are scattered among them.
 - The Cannon Stone has not been planned, nor its relationship with the bank cairn..

Adjusting the extent of the PAL

LIDAR and other mapped resources on the historic environment have been examined. No change is required to the PAL extent; it includes the principal known archaeological remains on Carburrow.

References

Dudley, D., 1953-4, Sub-Rectangular Earthworks with rounded corners, *P.W.C.F.C.* **1.2**, 54-58

Farnworth, R., P. Herring, B. Tapper, and C. R. Farnworth. 2023a. The Rough Tor Effect: Early Prehistoric Monuments Focussing on Significant Tors in Cornwall, *Time & Mind*, **16:1-4**, 7-38

Appendix 1 2007 PAL text

11Carburrow

Historic Environment

Carburrow is a relatively small and discrete PAL but one which exemplifies the nature of the isolated blocks of open rough ground which characterise Bodmin Moor, distinguishing it from its larger neighbours of Exmoor and Dartmoor.

Two huge cairns on the summit of the tor dominate the surrounding area, standing 25m apart and of similar diameter at 26m but differing form, the western a complex platform cairn 2.2m high, the eastern a massive bowl cairn 3.5m high. These highly visible features mark out Carburrow from a number of surrounding hills. The eastern cairn appears to overlie and so post-date a substantial stone bank running downhill, the closest equivalent to the bank cairn on Roughtor so far discovered on Bodmin Moor. This bank cairn incorporates a fine propped stone, known locally as the Cannon Stone, of possibly Neolithic date.

On the lower slopes of the tor are two groups of prehistoric round houses, probably later than the cairns.

The smaller settlement to the east, covering approx. 1 ha, includes a pound and a wall linking all but two of the houses into an enclosure, but otherwise has no evidence of an associated field system.

The remaining round houses, to the west of that site, fall into four contrasting groups, fairly densely spread over approximately 2.5 hectares of the hillside. Those in the east are all linked to curvilinear and rectilinear field boundaries. To the west of these are seven houses, all of very similar size, unenclosed, freestanding, and apparently without fields. A cluster of four small houses lies slightly further west; and north west of these are the remains of four more with a few fragmentary field boundaries. The field system may formerly have been more extensive, but would have been destroyed by the nearby medieval settlement of Carburrow.

A small round on the southern slope survives as an enclosure of 40m diameter with a single bank and external ditch; it contains a single large round house. A roughly rectangular enclosure, 32.0m long north-south by 20.0m, terraced into the slope lies to its west.

Substantial boundaries cross the hill, forming a roughly radial pattern, which may reflect the division of grazing upon the hill in the past. Lynchets to the east of the hill appear to be abandoned continuations of the surrounding enclosed land and have been cut by a large leat of unknown date or function.

A single medieval long house, set amongst the smaller settlement is probably the medieval predecessor of Tor House.

On the west side of the north west cairn is a square stone wall which was made around a wooden World War Two Home Guard hut (equipped with bunks etc for night watches), while an earlier shelter hollowed into the cairn top was used as a lookout, with steps made up to it. Prospecting for Wolfram in World War Two has left pits around the summit area.

Natural Environment

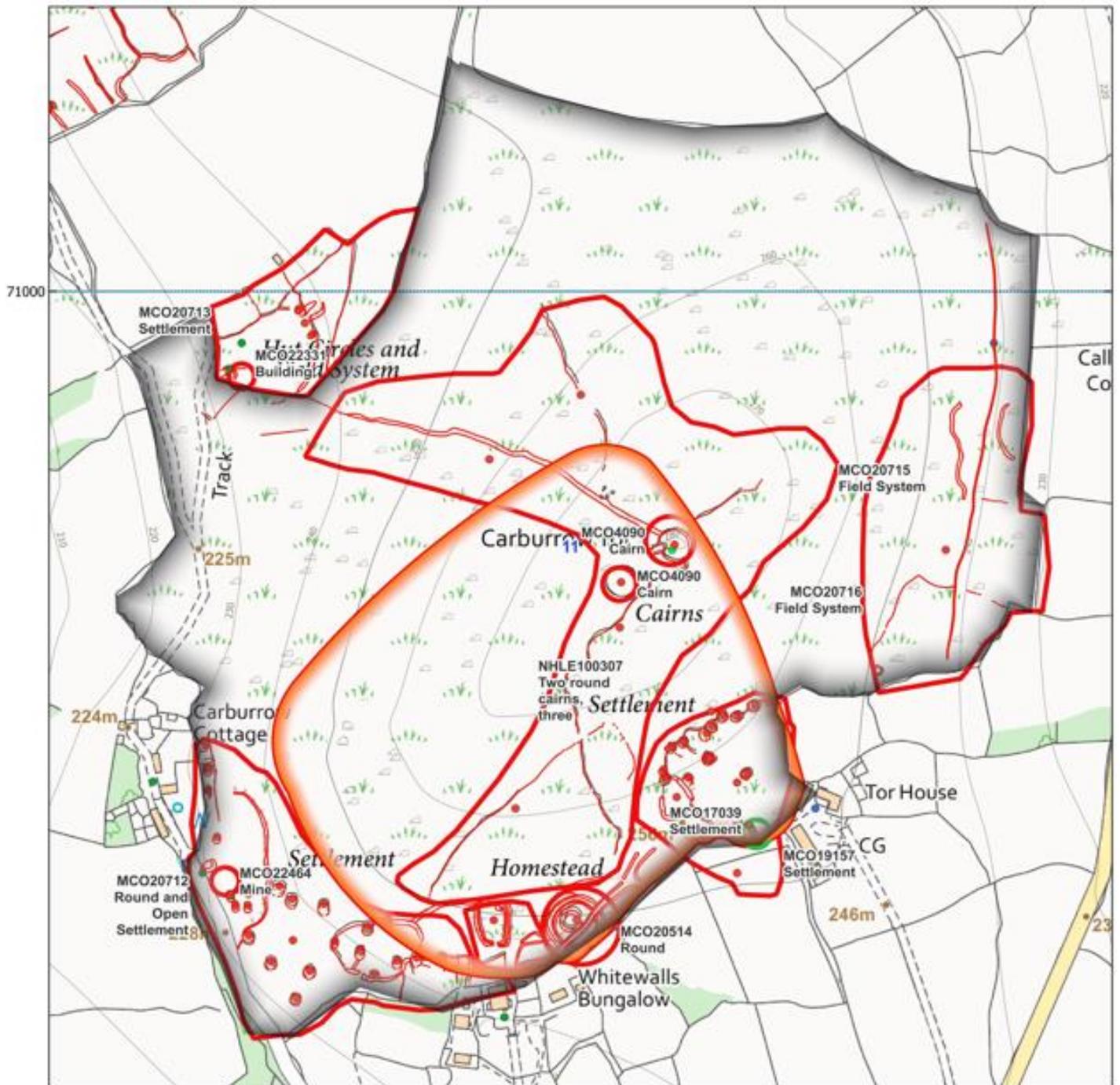
Fragmented Western Heath and Acid Grassland

Designations

A large part of Carburrow is Scheduled (No. 394), although because it is an early scheduling based on old maps its boundary is inaccurate and it omits much of the larger round house settlement.

No current NE designations.

Vision



- PAL Areas
 - Proposed PAL extensions
 - 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: Considerable increase in bracken cover on the lower and midslopes on all sides of the hill. Furze cover has not changed greatly.

PAL 11 Carburrow

www.statement-heritage.com

Cornwall Council

Contains OS Data © Crown
Copyright, All Rights Reserved
2025 Ordnance Survey
AC000817921

0 100 200 m

