

PAL 14 Goonzion Downs, St Neot, Historic Environment Action Plan



Crossroads in northern part of Goonzion Downs in a satellite photo from March 2025. Crowpound, probably the hundredal manor of West Wivelshire, to left of road south; lines of lode-back and shode tin-working pits in the rusty bracken in lower right. (Courtesy of Airbus 2025, via Google Earth Pro.)

Location, geology and topography

Centred: SX 175676

Extent: 74 ha (182 acres)

Geology

All but the southernmost quarter of the PAL is on Trevoze Slate Formation and Rosenum Formation slate and siltstone, sedimentary bedrock formed between 393.3 and 372.2 million years ago during the Devonian period. This overlies the southern bedrock which is of the Saltash Formation of slate and siltstone, sedimentary bedrock formed between 407.6 and 346.7 million years ago during the Devonian and Carboniferous periods.

Two dykes of felsite, an igneous bedrock formed between 298.9 and 252.2 million years ago during the Permian period cut, run through part of the Trevoze slates and

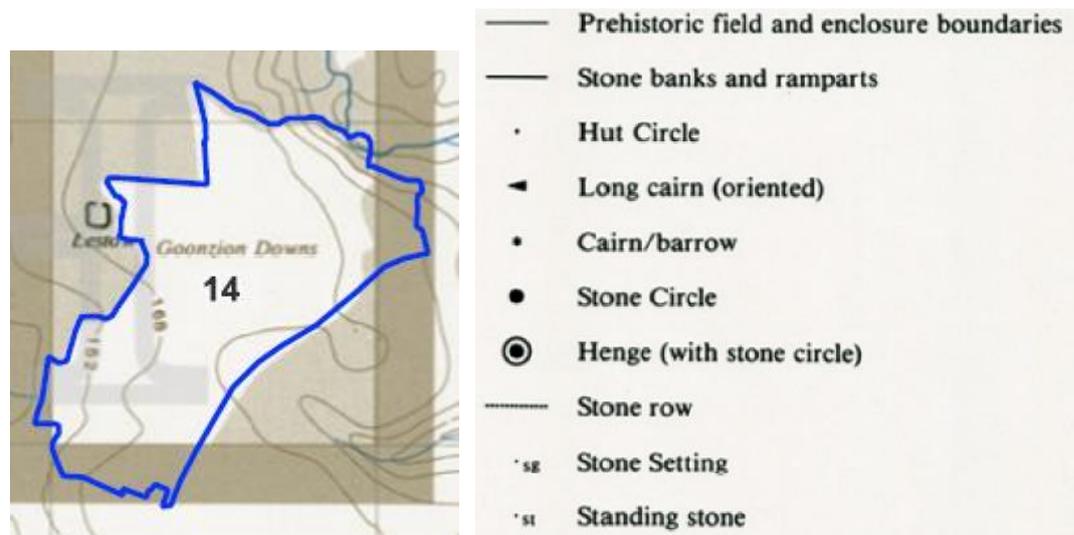
siltstone area, running broadly E-W (British Geological Survey online viewer). These were described as ‘stanniferous elvans’ (Jenkin 1966, 21).

Topography

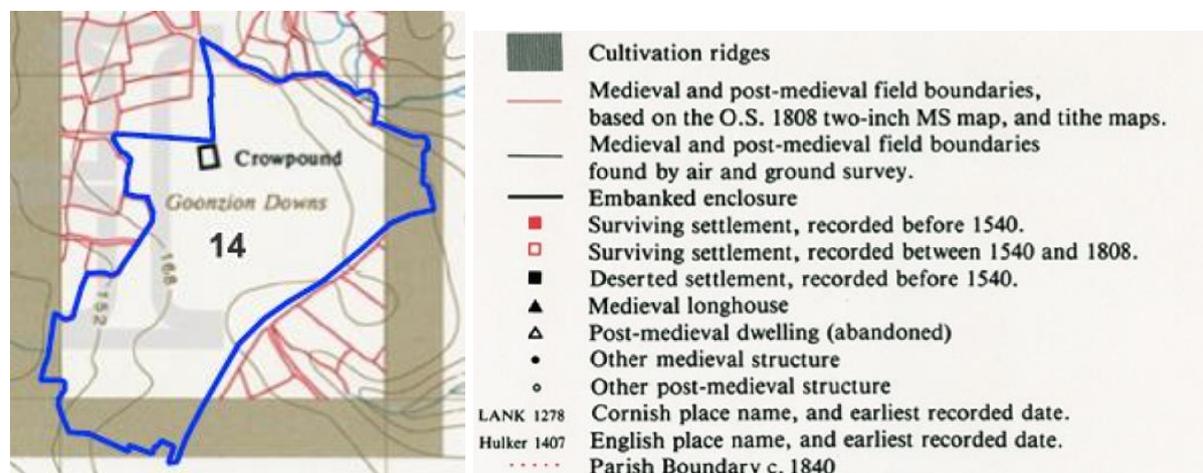
Gently undulating downland to 181 metres (594 feet) high at the north-western edge of the PAL, beside Crowpound, with lowest ground to the NE (at 118m, 387 feet) where it runs down very steeply to the River Loveny.

Current management and structures of ownership, commoners, etc:

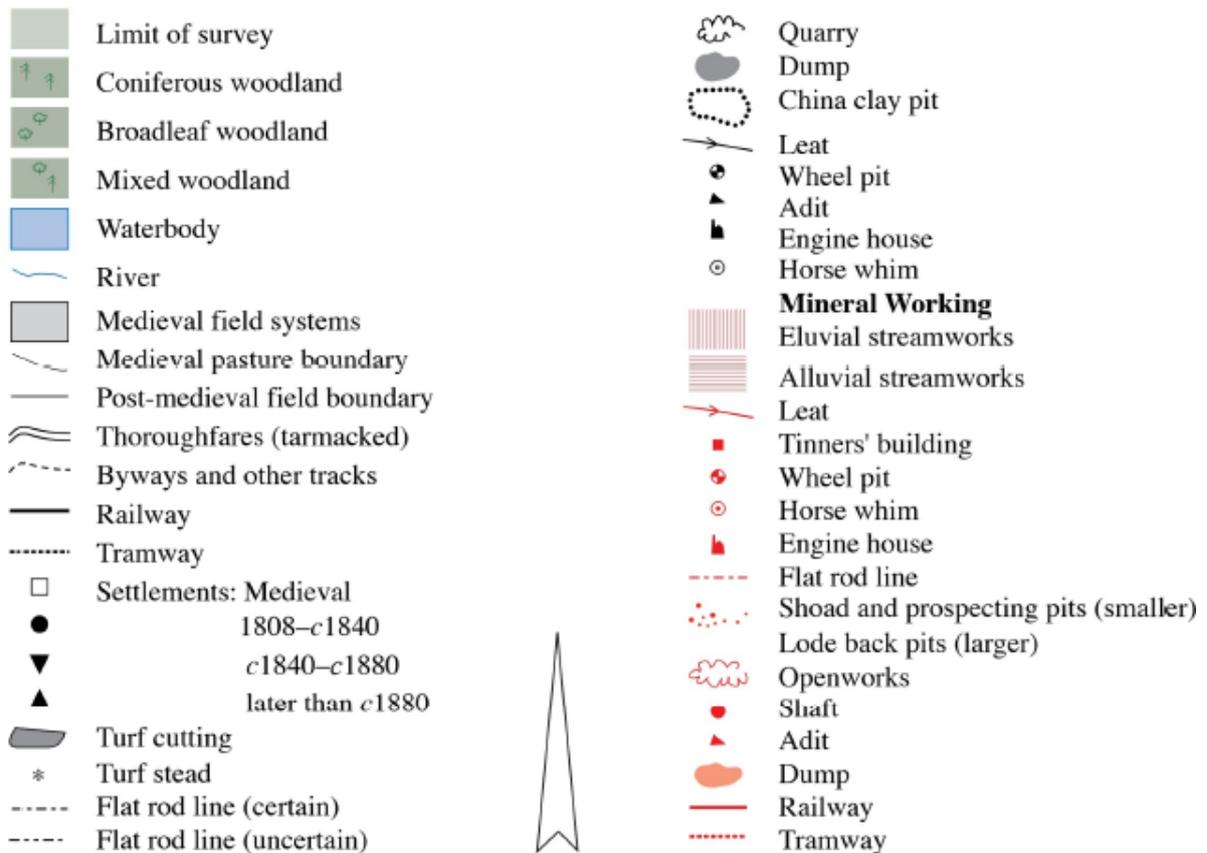
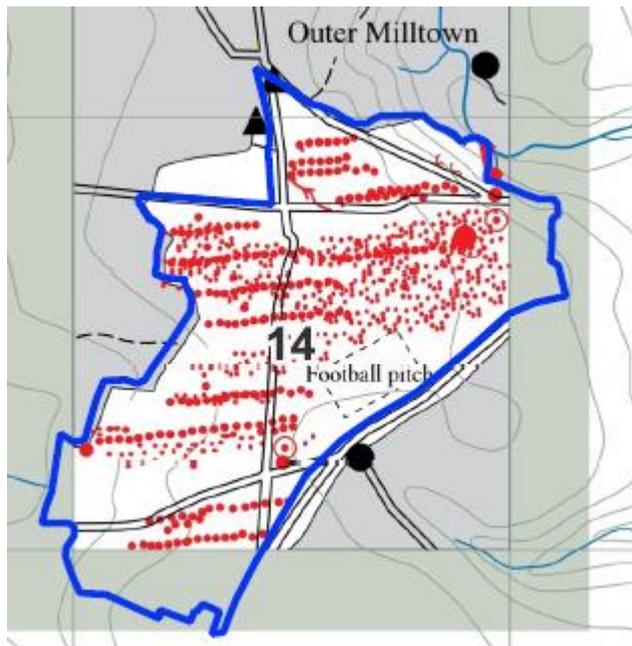
The whole area is common land, virtually the whole of CL133, Goonzion Downs.



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

A slightly undulating plateau with relatively minimal surface drainage. A large Early Bronze Age barrow stands on the SE crest of the plateau and there is a possible standing stone, but otherwise remains are predominantly medieval and later.

The dominant character is created by the working of several E-W trending lodes of tin, and the shode dislocated from them. The plateau made streamworking difficult (as water could not be ponded in great quantities), so much was excavated dry in extensive shambles of shode pits to be dressed elsewhere.

In terms of pastoralism, the main archaeological feature is the Crowpound, a rectangular enclosure at the cross roads, where a cross may once have stood and so may have provided the feature's name's first element, if that derived from Cornish *crous*, cross. The pound is on the land of Fawton, in 1086 the caput or head manor of the Hundred of West Wivelshire, and may have been the hundredal pound, where livestock identified during drifts as 'trespassers' (i.e. their owners lacked the right to graze them there) were held. Fawton is close by, just 500 metres away to the north-west and with lanes leading directly to the down.

The name of the down is also of interest pastorally, in that the first element of Goonzion, goon means unenclosed pasture (Padel 1985, 108), usually areas that were operated as common lands, and the second element, zion, may derive from *seghan*, 'dry place', which would suit it well.

Thomas Martyn's 1748 map

Shown as open land through a pattern of open-sided lanes that ran across it, all the roads that still cross it, the tin mining making it quite difficult to adjust the road pattern.

c1810 OS drawing

Shown as rough grassland and named 'Conzion Downs', with Crowpound drawn and labelled. No attempt was made to represent the mining remains.

c1840 Tithe Map

Again shown with no sign of the mining remains and instead as one large empty place, TA 2827, 'Gonzion Down' recorded among the Commons and Waste and occupied by Commoners.

c1880 OS map

Shown as rough grassland with relatively dense concentrations of furze.

The most pronounced of the surface workings were shown, with one labelled 'Parson's Pit'. 'Old' shafts were also shown, in the NE part of the down at Goonzion Mine.

c1906 OS map

Little change, except for the construction of a hedge alongside the roads to the NW of the Crowpound crossroads

Modern

Still grazed as a common, but stocking levels are low and furze taking hold. Used for walking and riding. D-Day exercises nearby led to the erection of large numbers of tents alongside the roads. Post-War recreation needs led to the creation of a football ground beside the barrow.

Historic Environment

Headlines

- Large **Early Bronze Age platform cairn**.
- Second suggested **Early Bronze Age barrow**, but more likely to be a mine spoil tip.

- Possible site of a recently removed **Early Bronze Age standing stone**.
- Probable **early medieval hundredal pound** of Fawton and West Wivelshire Hundred. Now known as **Crowpound**, at the crossroads near the NW edge of the PAL.
- Site of a medieval cross, possibly the source of the name Crowpound, crow from Cornish *crous*.
- One of the most significant areas of early tin **shode working and lode-back working** in Cornwall.
- **Wheal Grylls tin mine** with at least one **shaft**.
- Site of a small **shaft mine** with **horse engine platform**.
- Several small quarries.
- Site of extensive **WW2 temporary camps**, ahead of D-day, June 1944.
- Includes a possibly unfinished post-WW2 **football pitch**.

Summary of main heritage assets

Prehistoric ceremonial and ritual

A large **Early Bronze Age platform cairn** (MCO2720) set on the crest of a ridge near the SE edge of the PAL.

A possible **Early Bronze Age barrow** (MCO2931) near the SW edge of the PAL is more likely to be a mine spoil heap.

A standing stone that once stood at the crossroads beside Crowpound was regarded as a **possible Later Neolithic or Early Bronze Age standing stone** (MCO56843). In 2004 it was removed to another crossroads at the southern end of Goonzion Downs and used as part of a guidepost. It has the appearance of a fairly recently split stone and is an unlikely candidate for a prehistoric monument.

Prehistoric domestic and agricultural

No remains

Medieval

The rectangular enclosure with rounded corners standing to the SW of the crossroads on Goonzion Downs, known as **Crowpound** (MCO21534), is probably a **drift pound** used for distraining livestock caught grazing the commons of Fawton manor and West Wivelshire Hundred. It is 50m by 38m, formed of a shillet and earth bank with a sharp profile, 2.5m wide and 2.0m high and traces of ditches both inside and outside. Two entrances, centrally placed in N and S sides. In the centre is a **circular feature** of uncertain origin.

A **medieval wayside cross** (MCO5226) was moved from near Crowpound to the churchyard at St Neot. It may have contributed to Crowpound's name, *crous* being Cornish for cross.

Industrial

Goonzion Downs is riddled by broadly parallel lines of **surface mine workings** (MCO12120), cut through by later **shafts**. Sandy Gerrard found references to tin working on Goonzion Down, including 'Le Est Worke of Gosyan' dated 1516 (Gerrard 1986). Hamilton Jenkin that 'the area is pitted with shallow surface excavations which extend in all directions with no apparent plan or order' (1966, 21). Gerrard surveyed the densest area of surface working and noted that there was in fact some order, and he established that **shode pits** exploited tin weathered from the **fourteen lodes** which cross the area. He also recorded an **openwork**. Herring later recorded a **further 15 lodes** with **shode and lode-back working** to the north and south of the central area that Gerrard had planned. Runs of prospecting pits (oriented north south) are interspersed with extensive **lode-back workings**, which trend east - west. There are also **costeaning trenches**, of more recent date.

All the lodes would have had names, and **Wheal Grylls** (MCO12966) on the western side of the Downs, operational in 1836 was working Punch Bowl, John's and Lions Park lodes, then being also worked by the adjacent St Neot and St Cleer Consolidated Mines (Jenkin 1966, 24)

One area of the complex, E of Crowpound, is known as **Parson's Pit** (OS 1882). It is a particularly substantial set of **lode-back pits**.

A **small mine** with **shaft** and **adit**, and a **horse engine platform** at the NE edge of the PAL, beside the road to St Neot (MCO12121). A rectangular structure on the lower slopes shown on 1882 OS map might be a **wheelpit**, oriented on the shaft. Power from it would have been transmitted by **flat rods**.

A group of **quarries** cut into the western slope of Goonzion Downs (MCO24176). Already disused and 'Old' in 1882 (OS map). Pits are irregular, to 5.5m deep, with hollow entrances wide enough for carts. Dumps are small in relation to the excavations, indicating that most material was removed. Possibly **stockwork quarries**, removing multiple close-spaced lodes.

A group of four **quarries** on the lower NE slopes beside the River Loveny (MCO43729), Minimal dumping suggests the material was taken in bulk for hedging or roadstone.

Post-medieval and modern

Second World War encampments, erected to house those involved in D-day lined the several trackways and roads crossing Goonzion Downs. The c165 large rectangular tents have been plotted from RAF aerial photographs (MCO43728).

The remains of **7 Second World War gun emplacements** (MCO43721) survive to the NW of the southern crossroads on Goonzion, at the heart of the D-day temporary camp, and the guns may have been placed there to help defend the camp.

A **large rectangular enclosure** in the SE part of the Downs has caused some conjecture, being a little like a Roman fort, but it post-dates the 1946 RAF aerial photo and is understood to be an **unfinished football pitch** created in the 1950s. Its builders respected the Bronze Age barrow which lies within it, and there is room to its SW for two full-size pitches set NW-SE.

Significance of landscape visibility

The key feature of Goonzion Down is the surface tinworking; the sense of a landscape created by hard but systematic labour. The variability in the scale of dumps indicates or suggests variability in the success of the effort.

Designations

Historic Environment

Scheduled Monuments

NHLE 1004456 **Animal pound called Crowpound**

NHLE 1004360 **Platform cairn on Goonzion Downs**

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.

The following sites which were assessed as satisfying the criteria for National Importance using the criteria employed by the MPP and were therefore proposed as candidates for formal assessment for Scheduling during the Evaluation of Bodmin Moor (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).

- The whole of the down with its 29 parallel lines of **surface mine workings** cut through by later **shafts** (MCO12120).

Natural environment designations:

Sites of Special Scientific Interest

NA

Special Areas of Conservation

NA

County Wildlife Site

Yes, part of CN5, Goonzion Downs.

Cornwall Conservation Areas

NA

Other designations

Common Land

Wholly within CL133, Goonzion Downs.

CROW Access Land

Yes, whole PAL.

Registered rights of way.

Bridle way winds its way from near Luna to St Neot and footpaths enter the far eastern part of the PAL.

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.)

- Furze cover in all parts of the PAL is increasing rapidly, to the great detriment of the semi-natural vegetation of the ancient semi-natural grasslands that were still significant in 2005, but which were already appearing threatened. And to the detriment of the visibility and condition of the archaeological remains.
- If the current trajectory is maintained the common will become largely covered with impenetrable furze, obscuring archaeological remains, its roots affecting below-ground remains and its closed canopy blocking light to other plants. A heterogeneous biodiversity will be replaced by a homogenous blanket of furze that makes resumption of grazing difficult and provides few benefits to those who enjoy exploring the common.

Issues

Spread of furze and bracken.

- 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 Goonzion tin-working and the Crowpound visible and clear of furze.

Specific recommendations

- Address the growth of furze on the cairn and Crowpound.
- Adjust grazing to push back the conversion to furze.
- Further archaeological recording.
 - Careful survey of the Crowpound to establish as much as possible of its form and function.

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 Goonzion Downs.

References

Gerrard, GAM, 1986 *The Early Cornish Tin Industry, an archaeological and historical survey*, St David's University College, Lampeter [Early Tin Industry](#)

Jenkin, AKH, 1966 *Mines and Miners of Cornwall, XII, Around Liskeard*, Truro Bookshop, Truro

Appendix 1 2007 PAL text

14 Goonzion Downs

Historic Environment

The Goonzion Downs historic mining complex remains one of the best examples of its kind in Cornwall, covered by thousands of pits, trenches and shafts resulting from surface mine workings ranging in date from the 16th to the 19th centuries.

With the exception of a bronze age round barrow close to the south east of the PAL, there is little to suggest prehistoric activity on the Downs. This is probably due to the effects of the subsequent mining activity. The earthwork known as Crowpound, south west of the crossroads in the centre of the Downs has a probable medieval or post medieval origin. A semi-circular earthwork of uncertain date and function lies at the centre of Crowpound, and has been much disturbed by both mining and military activity, as have the banks of Crowpound itself.

It is believed that tin was being extracted here as early as the 16th century, probably forming many of the pits and open works still visible today to the south and east of Crowpound. One of these open works is named as 'Parson's Pit', indicating re-use as a Methodist preaching pit.

Mining exploiting deeper lodes is known to have been active on the Downs from 1836. A number of shafts are known by name and there are three adits which drained the mines into the St Neot River to the north. The remains of buildings and horse whims associated with the adits and shafts are still visible today. At least fourteen lodes trend east-west across the study area, many marked by lode back pits.

In the south east of the PAL, the large rectangular earthwork surrounding the barrow is thought to be an abandoned football pitch, probably of post Second World War date.

Natural Environment

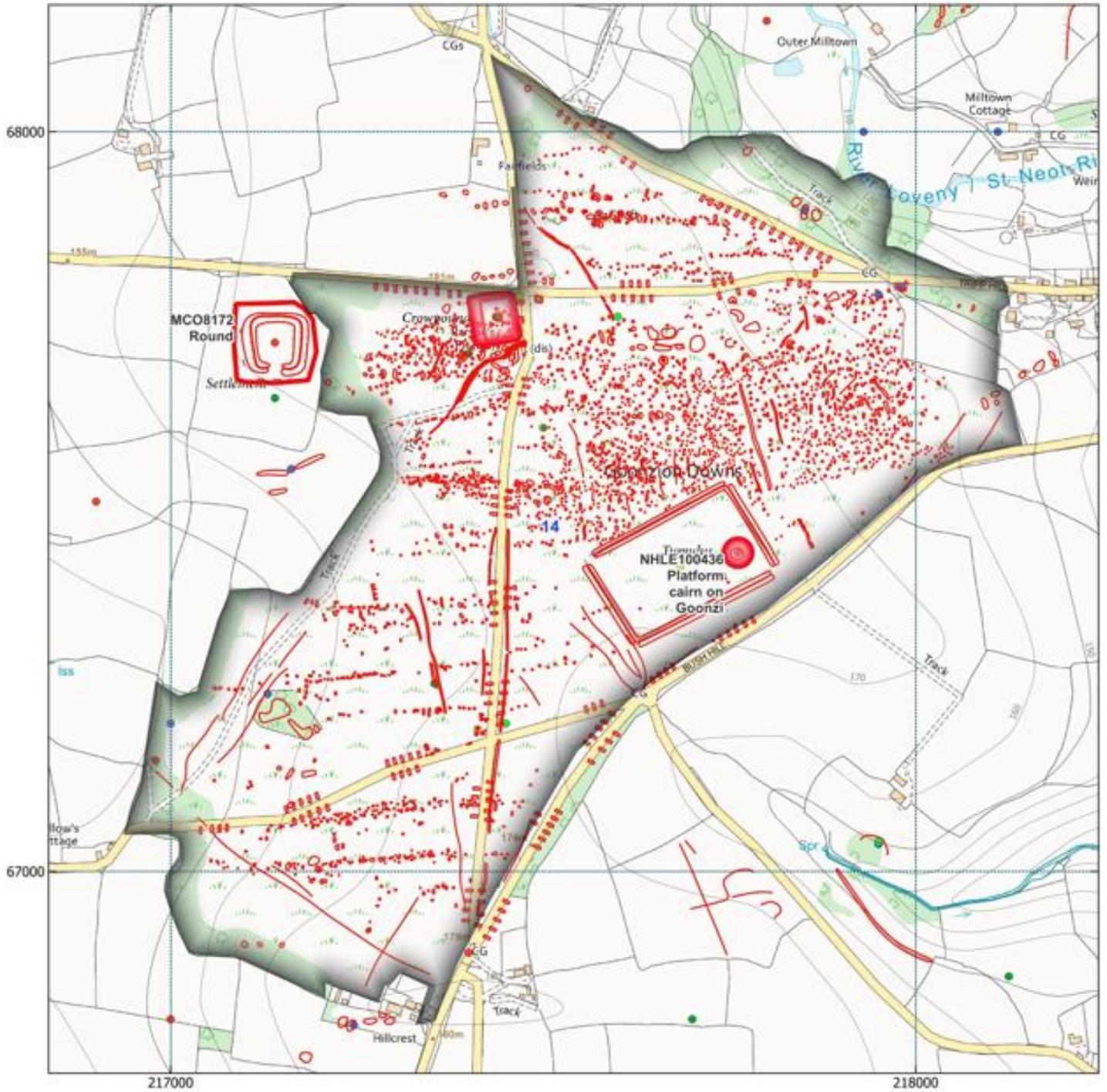
Not within Moorland Line

Designations

Crowpound (No. 393), and the barrow (No.672) are both Scheduled Monuments, although the whole of the area has been recommended for Scheduling due to the mining landscape.

No current NE designations.

Vision



- 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: Furze cover is rapidly increasing, threatening semi-natural vegetation and archaeological remains. If this continues, the common will be covered with impenetrable furze, obscuring remains, affecting below-ground roots, and blocking light to other plants.

PAL 14 Goonzion Downs

www.statement-heritage.com

Cornwall Council

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