

## The Atlas of Hillforts of Britain and Ireland

### Hillfort survey – notes for guidance (v2, October 2013)

These notes provide more information about how to fill in the Hillfort Survey form. The form can be filled in online at <http://www.arch.ox.ac.uk/hillforts-atlas.html> or as a downloadable Word file and returned either by email or by post to the following addresses.

#### General conditions

We welcome contributions to this project from members of the public either as individuals or as part of local field groups. We very much hope this new way of gathering data will help us produce the best overview of hill- and promontory forts in Britain and Ireland that can be achieved in the timescale available to us. We regret that we are not in a position to reimburse expenses you may incur either in visiting sites, or in forwarding information to us. We shall of course acknowledge all individuals who contribute to the project in the final products, notably the online material; should you wish not to be credited in this way, please inform us so on this form, and you can remain anonymous. If you send us any imagery, we shall assume that it is your copyright and that we may reproduce it with due acknowledgement but without charge, unless you advise us otherwise. A member of the project team will contact you (preferably by e-mail) if we would appreciate additional information from you. We shall attempt too to respond to questions you may have but, since we cannot predict demand, we ask that you excuse us if responses are slow. Messages from us will include 'AHFBI' in the subject line.

At the end of the project, we will make an assessment of the three most helpful Citizen Science contributions. These contributors will be acknowledged specially on the website and the Project Directors will send each of them a copy of the paper Atlas.

Gary Lock, University of Oxford  
Ian Ralston, University of Edinburgh  
Co-directors of the Atlas project

For Scotland, Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland:  
Email: [shallid4@staffmail.ed.ac.uk](mailto:shallid4@staffmail.ed.ac.uk)  
Address: Mr Strat Halliday  
Archaeology, School of History, Classics and Archaeology  
University of Edinburgh  
William Robertson Wing, Old Medical School,  
Teviot Place,  
Edinburgh EH8 9AG,  
Scotland UK

For England and Wales:  
Email: [ian.brown@arch.ox.ac.uk](mailto:ian.brown@arch.ox.ac.uk)  
Address: Dr Ian Brown  
The Atlas of Hillforts in Britain and Ireland  
Kellogg College,  
60-62 Banbury Road,  
Oxford.  
OX2 6PN

This survey has three aims:

1. To gather information for the Atlas of Hillforts of Britain and Ireland project. The results will be made widely available.
2. To enable people to learn more about hillforts in a structured informed way, to encourage an understanding of the characteristics and details of hillforts and how they differ.
3. To record any damage/erosion occurring to hillforts (record at question 5.1).

**Important:** What is a hillfort? This is difficult to answer precisely although there are three criteria which come together to make a site a 'hillfort' – the scale of the enclosing works (ramparts/banks/walls and ditches, and entrances); the topographical position, not always on the top of a hill but often 'prominent' in the local landscape in some way; the enclosed area, very variable from region to region and also within regions. Hillforts are 'enclosed sites' but the problem is that there is a continuum of enclosures from small ditched farmsteads to massive monumental hillforts. If you are in doubt about a particular site either contact us or include it and let us decide.

**Important:** Read through the questions and these notes before you start the survey. You might also find it useful to have an initial walk around the site to orientate yourself and then to go around again in more detail filling in the form. You can transcribe the information into the online form on the website and submit it, or post the paper form.

**Important:** Although we aim to provide as much support as possible, this survey does assume a certain amount of prior knowledge. You may find it more productive to do the survey with someone else so that you can discuss what you see and how you interpret it. It may be even better to visit with a group, perhaps a local archaeological society.

**Important:** Do not be concerned about whether surveys of a particular site have already been done. It is useful for us to have more than one survey of the same site. 'Citizen Science' works on the idea that agreement on certain bits of data implies reliability whereas disagreement implies something that needs to be investigated further. Therefore, we suggest that if you belong to a group the best and most useful way to proceed is to form small survey groups of 3 or 4 people, each small group can then survey different and/or the same sites.

Some questions require you to give information by orientation (N, NE, E, SE, S, SW, W, NW) so you will need to have a clear idea of what information to collect at each point as you walk around the hillfort.

You will not need any specialised equipment to carry out this survey other than:

1. A site plan (see paragraph below).
2. A compass to establish positions and quadrants.
3. A hand tape measure, preferably 30m. Some questions ask for measurements (in metres if possible). If you haven't access to a tape, you can 'pace out' a measurement to give us an approximate dimension. Either try to get your paces as close to 1 metre as possible and indicate that you are using paces (not a metre tape). Alternatively, work out the length of your average pace and multiply this by the number of paces and convert to approx. metres.

**Using a plan** – there is no need to reproduce information which is already available. We are looking for additional information and for changes to existing planned information (e.g. a possible extra outer rampart) where they exist. To enable us most effectively to evaluate the information you provide we must know which plan you used (if you have used one). Question 2.15 asks for information about this: please tell us the source of your plan, e.g. if it is from a published article or

book. If possible (and certainly if you want to annotate the plan with any comments), please either scan the plan and send to us electronically or post it to the relevant address above.

If you cannot get a published plan of the site then please produce your own sketch plan and send to us (either scanned by email or by post).

**Possible sources for plans are:**

Forde-Johnston, J. 1976. *Hill Forts of the Iron Age in England and Wales: A Survey of the Surface Evidence*. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press.

Hogg, A.H.A. 1975. *Hill-forts of Britain*. London: Hart-Davis MacGibbon

For some sites the Ordnance Survey 1:2500 maps are the best, and sometimes the only, surveys.

Web-based resources, notably Google Earth, can also be helpful.

**England**

If the site is a Scheduled Ancient Monument (and many hillforts are) a plan should be available from The National Heritage List for England: <http://list.english-heritage.org.uk/advancedsearch.aspx> . Use the Advanced Search facility to search by district and parish, where this is known; or search for individual hillforts and enclosures by site name.

The Royal Commission (now English Heritage) has various publications, ranging from County Inventories to for example regional studies such as Exmoor, Dartmoor, the Malverns, and the Quantocks, which include hillfort plans. Also some EH research volumes, such as *Northumberland Hillforts*, and the *Wessex Hillforts Project* <http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/publications/wessex-hillforts-project/>

There is also a large number of unpublished hillfort surveys in the National Monuments Record, (or 'EH Archive' as it is now called), including the original Ordnance Survey 'antiquity models'. Information on these can be accessed from the EH Swindon centre: <http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/professional/archives-and-collections/nmr/enquiry-and-research-services/>

Your local county/unitary authority Historic Environment Record (HER) will also probably have information including a plan. For a list of these, see <http://www.heritagegateway.org.uk/Gateway/CHR/>

**Wales**

Cadw ([www.cadw.wales.gov.uk](http://www.cadw.wales.gov.uk)) holds records on protected monuments.

Cadw, the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales (RCAHMW), the National Museum Wales and the four Welsh Archaeological Trusts (Gwynedd, Clwyd-Powys, Dyfed and Glamorgan-Gwent) all provide information for an online resource called the 'Historic Wales Portal'. The portal provides an overview of the records held by each organisation and can be found at: [www.historicwales.gov.uk](http://www.historicwales.gov.uk)

The Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historic Monuments of Wales ([www.rcahmw.gov.uk](http://www.rcahmw.gov.uk)) curates the National Monuments Record of Wales (NMRW), where there is an index to the drawings, manuscripts and photographs held in the NMRW archive collections, see [www.coflein.gov.uk](http://www.coflein.gov.uk)

Each of the four Welsh Archaeological Trusts holds a Historic Environment Record (HER). These are a principal online source of hillfort plans and information on sites, but tend to be variable from one area to another, see [www.archwilio.org.uk](http://www.archwilio.org.uk)

The Trusts have also undertaken major surveys of Small Enclosures in their areas, including hillforts, and details and copies can be found on-line at each of the Trusts' websites as follows:

Gwynedd – [www.heneb.co.uk](http://www.heneb.co.uk)

Clwyd-Powys – [www.cpat.org.uk](http://www.cpat.org.uk)

Dyfed – [www.dyfedarchaeology.org.uk](http://www.dyfedarchaeology.org.uk)

Glamorgan-Gwent – [www.ggat.org.uk](http://www.ggat.org.uk)

The Royal Commission Inventories contain plans and information and can be found at the various Record Offices and Libraries of each of the Welsh Unitary Authorities. Ask for the 'Inventory of Ancient Monuments of the Royal Commission' for the county with which you are concerned, also asking for the Volume that concerns the Iron Age and hillforts. They are also available online <http://www.rcahmw.gov.uk/Hi/ENG/Publications/Bookshop/Inventories/>

Most local authorities in Wales have an archaeological service and sometimes details of the important hillfort sites can be found on the website of the individual council concerned.

The most important journal publication pertaining to prehistoric Wales is *Archaeologia Cambrensis*, published by the Cambrian Archaeological Association, but the transactions of the various county and regional societies of the area of your interest can be useful. Consult your local County Library Service.

### **Scotland**

The principal sources of plans for forts in Scotland are the OS 25-inch maps and the *County Inventories* prepared by the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland (RCAHMS).

The latter are available through many libraries and can be consulted in the reading room of RCAHMS, John Sinclair House, Bernard Terrace, Edinburgh EH8 9NX. The catalogue of original drawings held in the National Collection is available online through CANMORE at <http://www.rcahms.gov.uk>. Relatively few of these drawings are yet digitised, but original ink drawings and pencil surveys dating from 1913 and after can be consulted by appointment. The original ink versions of many of the forts surveyed for the OS 1:2500 map are included in the archive set of OS index cards in the National Collection and can also be inspected on request.

The *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland* is the main source for plans drawn up prior to the establishment of the Royal Commission in 1908 and are available online via the publications section of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland website at <http://www.socantscot.org>.

Plans may also be available through Local Authority Sites and Monuments Records/Historic Environment Records (HERs), see <http://www.archaeologyscotland.org.uk/index.php?q=node/214>

Plans appearing on the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> editions of the OS 1:10560 maps are available online from the National Library of Scotland at <http://maps.nls.uk>, where they can be inspected in a seamless zoomable format covering the whole of Scotland; 1:2500 sheets are available as individual sheets. For the zoomable format, a National Grid Reference copied from Canmore can be inserted to take the user directly to the site concerned.

## **Northern Ireland and Republic of Ireland**

A listing of known hillforts in the Republic of Ireland is available in Archaeological Survey of Ireland see: <http://www.archaeology.ie/>

Location and other data for recorded archaeological monuments in the Republic of Ireland is available at <http://webgis.archaeology.ie/NationalMonuments/FlexViewer/>

A similar listing of hillforts is also contained in the Northern Ireland Sites and Monuments Record see: <http://www.doeni.gov.uk/niea/other-index/content-databases/content-databases-ambit.htm>

The Republic of Ireland surveys list hillforts, hilltop enclosures and promontory forts, with location and summary site descriptions available for many examples. If information for the monument has been digitised, a brief description of the hillfort is accessible, although site plans are not available. Other information may be available in the *County Archaeological Inventory* publications for Ireland. This web-GIS also provides various background layers which can be toggled on/off. These include historic Ordnance Survey mapping (1<sup>st</sup> and 2nd editions and 6-inch and 25-inch scale), vertical aerial photography and Discovery series mapping. A similar digital archive of aerial photography and OS maps are available at Ordnance Survey Ireland's website (<http://maps.osi.ie/publicviewer/>).

There are a number of site specific publications which contain detailed plans of some hillforts, for example the Discovery Programme's 'Western Stone Forts Project', 'North Munster Project' and 'Ballyhoura Hills Project' publications (see <http://www.discoveryprogramme.ie/research/>). Other publications that contain hillfort plans include Professor John Waddell's *The Prehistoric Archaeology of Ireland*, (Dublin Wordwell 2000 2 edn) and Professor Barry Raftery's *Pagan Celtic Ireland* (London: Thames & Hudson 1994).

**Photographs** – We are happy to receive photographs (digital or paper) but only if they are related to specific elements of the data you have collected (e.g. an in-turned entrance, an internal feature, etc). It must be clearly indicated which site and feature is shown (file name for digital, marked on paper). See the introductory note above for a comment about copyright.

Any information supplied to us, whether forms or photographs, will not be returned.

## **Access and Health and Safety**

**The project and its host Institutions bear no responsibility for any access or health and safety issues that may arise during your participation in this project.**

**Disclaimer: The Co-directors of this project and their institutions are not responsible for issues of access to sites and health and safety of participants in the survey. By taking part in this survey you are acknowledging that access and health and safety are your responsibility.**

Before setting out it is worth consulting online sources for advice on local conditions and any other appropriate measures to ensure your safety.

## **Access**

It is your responsibility to establish permission for access to a site; please do this before entering. If a site is not obviously on public land, or has a public right of way, then you should establish who the landowner is and get permission to visit. Note that legal requirements vary across Britain and Ireland. Some sites have mixed access, both public and private. Do not climb over fences or gates; use stiles and obvious entrances; close gates after use; respect wildlife and stock. Abusing access is

likely to annoy the landowner and may make the visiting of sites more difficult for the rest of us - so please be sure.

The following offer useful information:

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Environment/Countryside/16328>

<http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/ourwork/enjoying/countrysidecode/default.aspx>

[http://www.doeni.gov.uk/niea/places to visit home/access to the countryside.htm](http://www.doeni.gov.uk/niea/places%20to%20visit%20home/access%20to%20the%20countryside.htm)

<http://www.countrysidecodewales.org.uk/advice-for-visitors.aspx?lang=en>

The Ramblers Association has a section on walking in general in a wide range of environments with subsections covering safety equipment, clothing, ticks and all sorts.

<http://ramblers.org.uk/go-walking.aspx>

### **Health and Safety**

It is your responsibility to take health and safety precautions when visiting a site. Ramparts and ditches can be steep, muddy and dangerous underfoot so be careful and wear appropriate clothing and foot wear; a walking pole can be useful for support. It is a good idea to take a mobile phone in case of emergency, telling someone where you are going (especially if you are going alone), taking clothing, food, water and a hot drink in case you are out for longer than you initially expected. Never underestimate the variability of the weather at our latitudes.

### **Guidance on questions:**

**Please use the comments boxes if you can't fit anything into the formal reply boxes.**

#### **Section 1.**

1.1. By taking part in this survey you are agreeing to us being able to use and publish the information you provide (see comments above on copyright). If you indicate here that you want to be acknowledged by name on the project website then give us the name to use here. We are unable to acknowledge everyone within the published atlas due to space constraints.

1.2-1.4. Personal details. We may need to contact you to follow up on information sent. Email is our preferred means of communication.

1.5. We are interested to know whether archaeological societies/groups get involved in the project.

#### **Section 2.**

2.1-2.2. Some sites are known by different names. Please give us the principal one used in your sources and any others.

2.3. National Grid Reference, as accurate as possible (i.e. to at least six figures, eight if possible), as close as possible to the centre of the site.

2.4. Reference numbers – Most hillforts are well known and recorded so will probably appear in one or more of the monuments records which will assign each site a unique reference number. Other published catalogues/lists may also have unique numbers; if you supply any of these make sure you tell us where it is from.

2.5-2.6. Should be straightforward.

2.7. As accurate as you can get it, towards the centre of the enclosed area if altitude is variable across the site.

2.8 These are the most common locations for hillforts:

Hill top – the ramparts may or may not approximately follow the contours around the top of a hill.

Promontory – the ramparts cut off a promontory (coastal or inland); smaller examples are sometimes called ‘Cliff Castles’ if coastal.

Valley bottom – low lying in a valley.

Knoll/hillock – on an isolated small hill.

Ridge – encloses the top of a ridge.

Plateau/cliff-edge – cliff forms one side.

Hillslope – on the slope of a hill. In this case please give the aspect (direction the slope faces, e.g. NW, SE)

Lowland – low lying, not in a valley, perhaps surrounded by marsh.

Comments: anything relevant to topographic position, i.e. local ‘dominance’.

2.9. Maximum visibility/view.

This is current view. In the comments box you can comment on how you think the original view when the site was constructed and used may have been (e.g. to the SW the view is blocked by a building but without this it would be to the far horizon).

Use a compass to establish the quadrants, NE, SE, SW and NW. Tick the appropriate value for the **maximum** view for each quadrant.

This is somewhat subjective but the categories to apply are roughly:

Long – far distant horizon

Medium – view is blocked by hills, buildings, woodland from c. 1 mile away

Short – view is blocked at less than c.1 mile.

Comments: Please distinguish whether the view is blocked by topography or e.g. a power station!

2.10. Water source inside the enclosure and/or annex possibly contemporary with its use (i.e. not modern)

2.11. Comments on any water source nearby (not modern), e.g. half a mile from the River Exe; a spring is 200 metres outside the western rampart.

2.12. Current land category (use). Please indicate all that apply.

2.13. Anything pre-hillfort – e.g. two round barrows within the enclosure.

2.14. Anything post-hillfort – e.g. a church within the enclosure, includes buildings, pill boxes etc.

2.15. As stated above, it is important that you tell us which plan you are using, and if possible send us a copy of it.

2.16. Other sources of information – both ‘formal’ (HERs, NMRs, publications) and ‘informal’ (leaflets etc).

2.17. Annex – an extra enclosed area adjoining but external to the main enclosure and sharing a boundary (rampart), as shown in the diagram below.

**Note: Sections 3 and 5 are for all sites; section 4 only applies to sites with an annex.**

### Section 3.

3.1 General overall shape – approximate description will suffice.

3.2 and 3.3. Dimensions. As indicated in the diagram, the maximum dimension and the dimension at 90 degrees to it. For:

The enclosed area, inside the inner rampart.

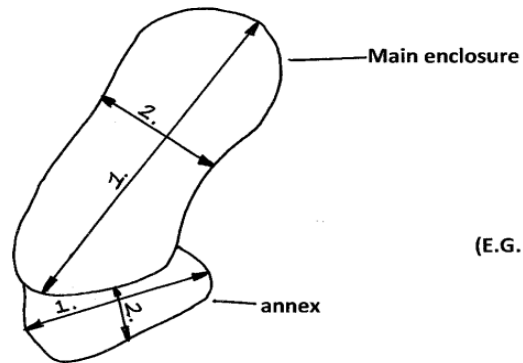
The whole site footprint, to the bank/ditch which is the furthest from the enclosed area.

3.4 -3.5. It can be difficult to differentiate between an original hillfort entrance and a subsequent (secondary) break through the rampart. Generally speaking (but by no means always) a secondary (especially relatively modern) break will be a simple break through the ramparts without any form of in- or out-turn, outworks or added complexity. Other pieces of information may suggest a secondary/modern break through a rampart, for example if it is particularly wide, if rampart structure shows within the section of a terminal end, and/or if the ditch appears to have continued across the rampart.

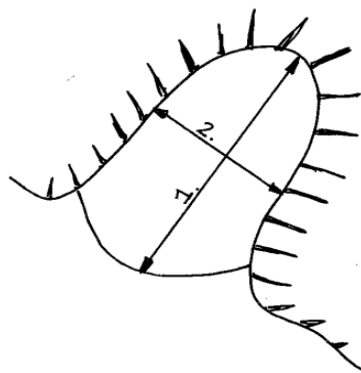
3.4. is the total number including original entrances, 3.5. is the number you consider are post-hillfort construction (i.e. 'secondary')

### DIMENSIONS AND ANNEX

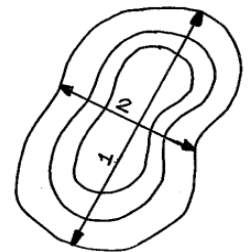
COMPLETE CIRCUIT



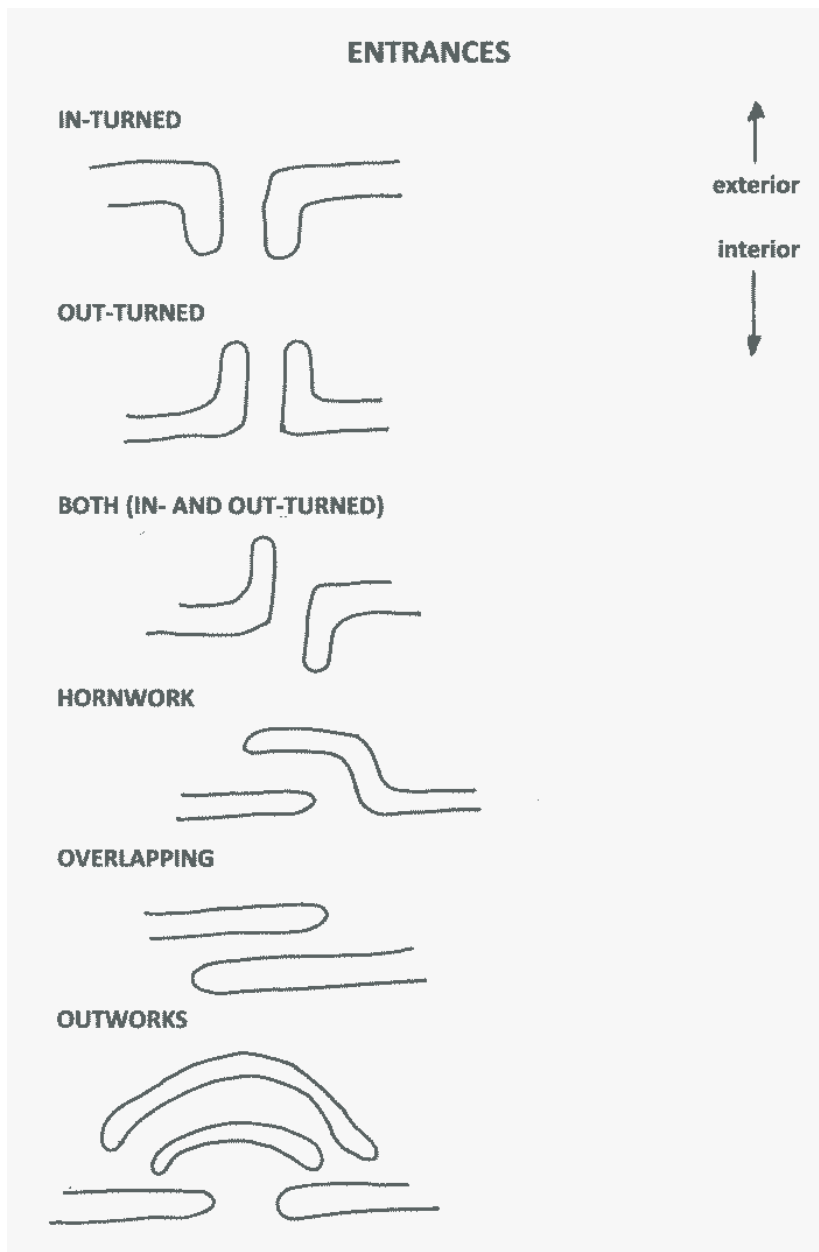
PROMONTORY FORT



WHOLE SITE FOOTPRINT (E.G. 3 RAMPARTS)







3.6. The common forms of hillfort entrance are shown in the diagram. For entrances that are not simple gaps (i.e. just a break through the rampart) record which quadrant they occur in next to list items.

Use the comments field if you think there is an entrance type not covered in the list, e.g. a blocked entrance or passage-type of entrance.

3.7. Enclosing works - note that we use the terms 'rampart' and 'bank' interchangeably (i.e. both imply a sloping face), whereas the term 'wall' indicates evidence for a vertical outer face (usually stone-built). They all form the enclosing works.

A 'counterscarp bank' could have resulted from cleaning out the outer most ditch – so is, therefore, often the outermost bank and smaller than the inner ones.

Record the maximum number of ramparts/banks/walls visible for each quadrant

3.8. The maximum number of ditches visible for each quadrant.

### 3.9. Rampart/bank/wall form.

Indicate whether the rampart/bank/wall is the same all the way around the circuit, and its form if it is.

If it isn't then indicate form by quadrant. You can tick more than one so if there are stone faces (inner or outer rampart face) showing within an earthen bank then tick both Earthen Bank and Stone Wall.

Vitrification is burnt and melted stone.

Other burning refers to within the rampart/bank (not modern burning on the surface).

3.10. Bank/ditch combinations. As shown in the diagram, record how many of each form for each quadrant:

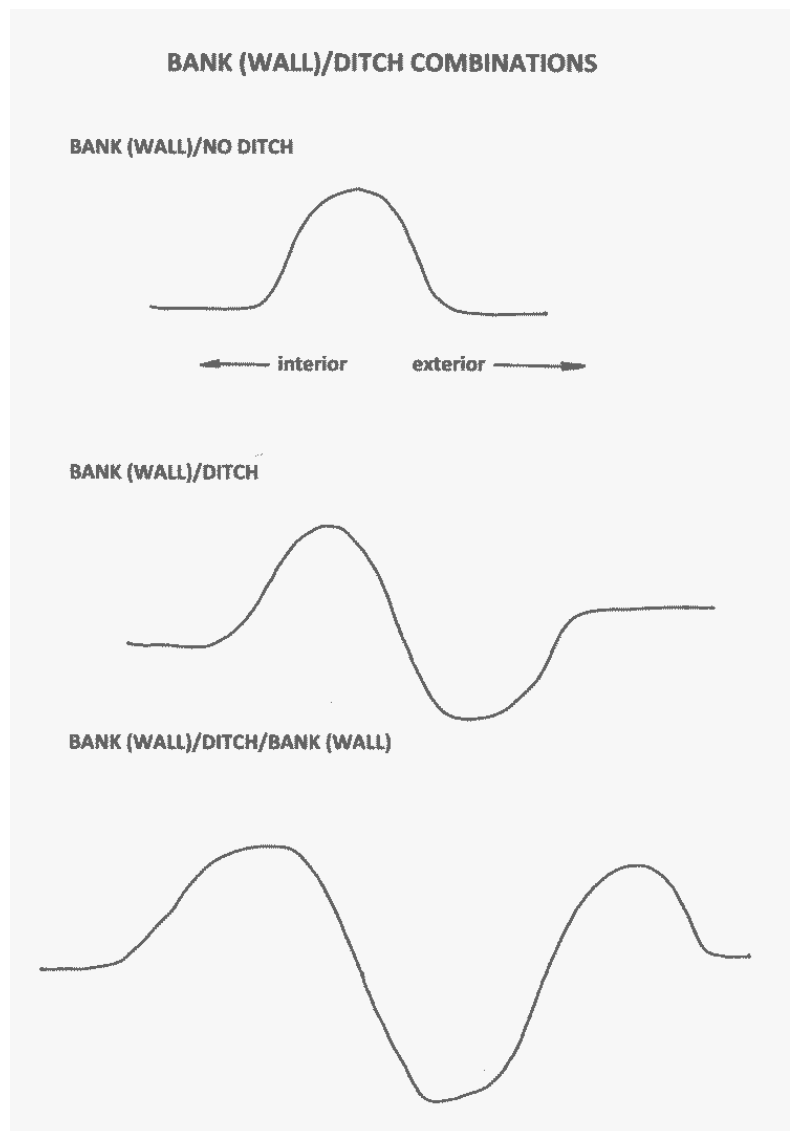
Bank/wall no ditch.

Bank (or wall) plus ditch.

Bank/ditch/bank – most likely to be the final set, this is to record a possible 'counterscarp bank', i.e. a final bank without an external ditch.

This is intended to show any variation in the enclosing works around the site and adds detail to the answers in 3.8 and 3.9.

3.11. Chevaux de Frise are obstacles embedded in the ground (usually upright stones), usually outside entrances, thought to obstruct access. Record presence by quadrant.



3.12. Record which of the internal features are present, also mark on a plan the position of features and send the plan to us.

Remember – you are only recording differences to the plan that you are using, there is no need to re-record what is already there.

Platforms are any sort of flat area, sometimes roughly circular terraces for roundhouses.

Quarry hollows are shallow, and sometimes wide, hollows inside the rampart.

**Section 4.**

**Annex** (see figure above)

4.1. The approximate shape.

4.2. – 4.4. Describe the ramparts ditches and entrances, e.g. two ditches to the east, one elsewhere; one entrance joining the main enclosure, one to exterior.

**Section 5.**

5.1. A last chance for comments including anything you couldn't fit anywhere else. We are also interested in recording any damage/erosion to hillforts so please describe her if you notice anything, especially if it is recently inflicted.

**Many thanks for participating in this survey. We hope you have enjoyed many happy hours visiting and thinking about hillforts.**