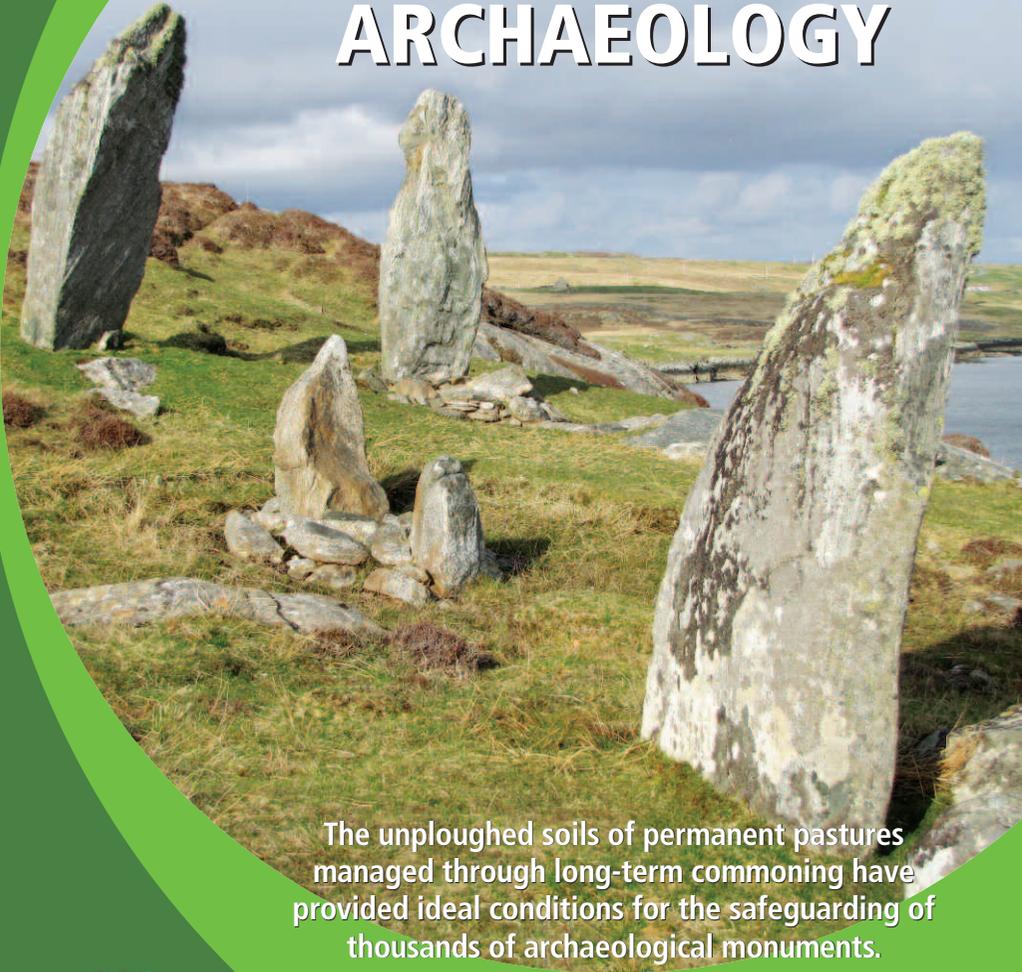


COMMON LAND AND ARCHAEOLOGY



The unploughed soils of permanent pastures managed through long-term commoning have provided ideal conditions for the safeguarding of thousands of archaeological monuments.

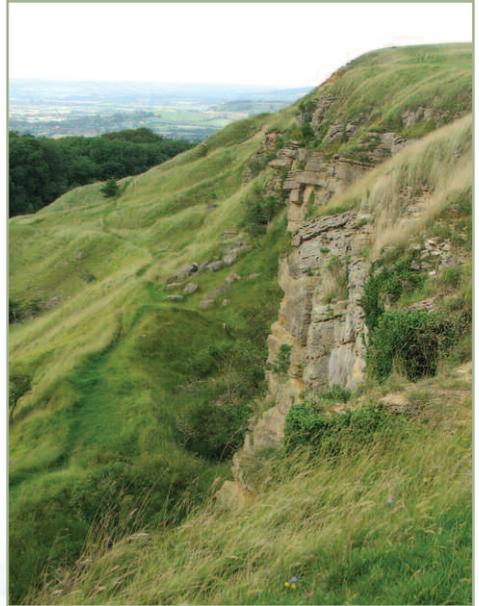
Archaeological and historical remains are so prevalent in large upland commons that they are instrumental in understanding how whole landscapes have evolved through interplay of natural and human factors for thousands of years.





Certain archaeological features associated with common land can illuminate aspects from the dawn of commoning itself. The first permanent farming hamlets established on the granite uplands of Devon and Cornwall, from the middle Bronze Age, had settlements of roundhouses amongst small fields, with wide lanes funnelling onto unenclosed, communal pasture. Such layouts closely resemble those found in contemporary situations, providing evidence that commoning may be 3,000 years old. Networks of long dykes preserved on certain uplands (and called reaves on Dartmoor), reveal sophisticated pre-historic land apportionment which lasted for half a millennium.

Some of the archaeological remains in the uplands of Scotland, England and Wales are relicts of transhumance, with seasonally occupied settlements taking advantage of higher pastures. Summer farms or shielings feature in regional place-names, including *havos* in Cornwall, *hafod* or *llyuest* in Wales, *shield* and *scales* in northern England, and *airigh* or *buaille* in Gaelic.





- 3,000 scheduled ancient monuments protected on British commons.
- Monuments include Mesolithic flint workings, henges, stone circles, standing stones, stone rows, barrows, hillforts, dykes, roundhouses, Bronze Age pounds, settlements, Roman camps, and industrial or military relics.



- Detailed survey reveals huge numbers of unrecorded sites. A study at Mynydd Mallaen in Carmarthenshire uncovered 266 features, only eight of which were previously known.
- Some 11% of all scheduled monuments in England are found on commons.



- High level arable enclosures in currently inhospitable terrain on the Berwyns of Wales throw light on climatic conditions in prehistoric times.
- Machair common grazings of the Outer Hebrides protect Iron Age farmsteads, buried in wind-blown sand associated with shifts in polar climate.



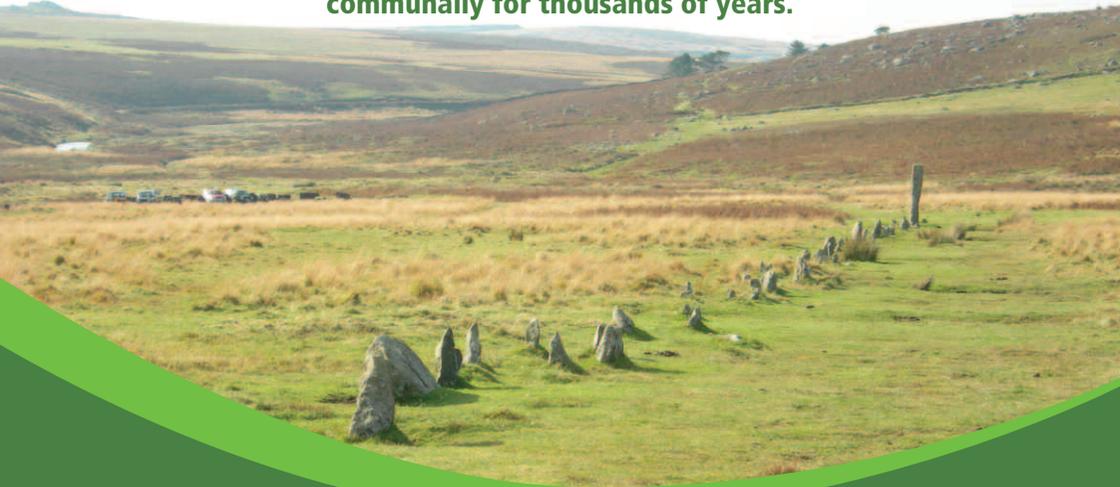
- Port Meadow in Oxford city, has six Bronze Age Barrows, and three Iron Age farmsteads, locally unrivalled in their preservation.

- Over 450 listed archaeological features preserved on the commons of Dartmoor.
- On Lewis and Harris an estimated 500 sites on the National Monument Record of Scotland are associated with common grazings.



Not only has the legal status and sympathetic management of common land enabled the protection of many thousands of monuments, but ongoing grazing remains critical to the discovery, investigation and understanding of these features.

Large numbers of archaeological structures were uncovered for the first time when appropriate grazing levels on Bodmin Moor removed obscuring scrub and dense vegetation. The presence of stone rows just inches high at Leskernick, Cornwall, reveal that these were emplaced in a well-grazed landscape. In some cases the land may have been grazed communally for thousands of years.



Keeping commons alive by active grazing

www.foundationforcommonland.org.uk

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Our vision is of thriving commoning communities across Great Britain and beyond making real contributions to economic, cultural and environmental wellbeing

