

Bodmin Moor- Landscape Archaeology

Bodmin Moor is a very interesting site due to its wealth in archaeological finds and how these were left fairly undisturbed, the finds are from various different periods, and archaeologists found the site using some very interesting methods. The site is located in Cornwall and the site is rather large as seen in Figure 1, with the South West of the site being significantly important as it was occupied over many different periods of time (Bonney et al, 1994). This can be seen due to the vast collection of undisturbed remains from the prehistoric; medieval and post medieval industrial periods (Bonney et al, 1994). Occupation of Bodmin Moor dates back to around 4000 years ago to the present (Natural England 2013).



Figure 1: (digimap,2019). OS map of Bodmin Moor showing the size of the site and its modern uses.

The archaeologists have used various different methods to locate the site and to find all the remains and evidence of them. Firstly, archaeologists can carry out a process called desktop survey which involves many different aspects although on this site in particular archaeologists have



Figure 2: (digimap,2019). A closer image of the site showing some of the archaeological finds including settlements and the burial mounds.

used maps and aerial photography to locate different finds and features. The archaeologists can use maps specifically OS maps to explore the site in greater detail which can also be seen in Figure 1, it shows the modern uses of the site and the scale of the map allows you to investigate closer and see features in greater detail than on an ordinary map (Grant et al,2015). This can be seen in Figure 2 which shows

the contour lines which archaeologists can use to understand the topography of the site and they can also investigate particular parts of the site in greater detail for example the settlements they can investigate each of the buildings in greater detail (Grant et al,2015). Archaeologists will also use historical maps which are very helpful when looking and comparing the past land use to modern land use, in addition to this archaeologists use historical maps to see how the landscape has changed over time (Grant et al,2015).

Another method that was used was aerial photography which can help archaeologists detect different features which may go unnoticed on foot or on a map (Grant et al,2015). There are two different types of photograph (vertical and oblique) and archaeologists look at the shadow marks in the photographs to identify different features in the landscape as the shadow casts over features differently, they also look for crop marks which also show features as the crops grow differently when there are features such as walls underneath them which then outlines the features these are very difficult to identify on foot (Grant et al, 2015).

Another method that archaeologists used at Bodmin Moor was pollen analysis where the archaeologists looked at pollen samples to understand what type of vegetation was at the site (Bonney et al, 2015). Pollen samples can also tell archaeologists about the previous climate and the environment of a site and is very good when looking at landscapes as they can tell how the landscape was used for example for farming (Grant et al,2015). From this evidence archaeologists discovered that Bodmin Moor was used for farming and that during the prehistoric period parts of the area were burnt away to develop farming (Bonney et al, 1994). Also, cultivation was a major theme in the prehistoric and the medieval period and many of these ancient fields are still visible in modern day (Natural England 2013).

Using these methods archaeologists have found around 358 burial cairns (burial mounds) from the prehistoric period and they also found 211 settlements that date back to the prehistoric period (Natural England,2013). These settlements are described as circular hut like settlements Also other evidence from this period include various flint artifacts, enclosures, clearance mounds, defensive enclosures, and finally trackways (Bonney et al, 1994).

Also found at the site were 37 medieval settlements that had been deserted and around 544 km of prehistoric and medieval boundaries

(Natural England,2013). In addition to this also found in the medieval layer of the site were cultivation ridges as well as chapels (Bonney et al,1994).

From the later industrial periods the remains included processing sites of all kinds including those for china clay, many different minerals, granite quarries, and many sites for working (Bonney et al 1994) this shows the archaeologists that the landscape was used for lots of industrial work at this particular time period. Also found there were more trackways and railways (Bonney et al 1994) which shows archaeologists that there was a wide range of transportation and industrial work going on which can also suggest that there was some form of trade at Bodmin Moor.

Overall the site of Bodmin Moor is fairly significant as archaeologists have interrogated the landscape using many different techniques such as looking at various different maps to identify how the land was used and how the landscape has changed. Using aerial photography to explore the landscape and using shadow, crop and various other marks to identify a range of features that spread over a range of different time periods. They also use pollen analysis which helps them reconstruct landscapes and helps identify what vegetation was at the site. This site is very interesting as it was occupied over 4000 years ago and shows a wide range of archaeology and activity at the site and without maps and photographs etc archaeologists would only have half the picture.

Bibliography

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