

# Hillsborough Promontory Fort

A headland enclosed by two parallel ramparts which are characteristically Iron Age, overlooking Ilfracombe and the North Devon Coast. The site was later used in the medieval/post-medieval periods for livestock grazing, and was enjoyed as pleasure ground during the Victorian period, before it took a role in the Second World War given the exceptional views of the coast. This document looks at the later prehistoric use of the site.



A 3D model was made using photos taken from a drone. Click on the drone to find out more.



[Click here to see the earthworks up-close through the interactive 3D model!](#)

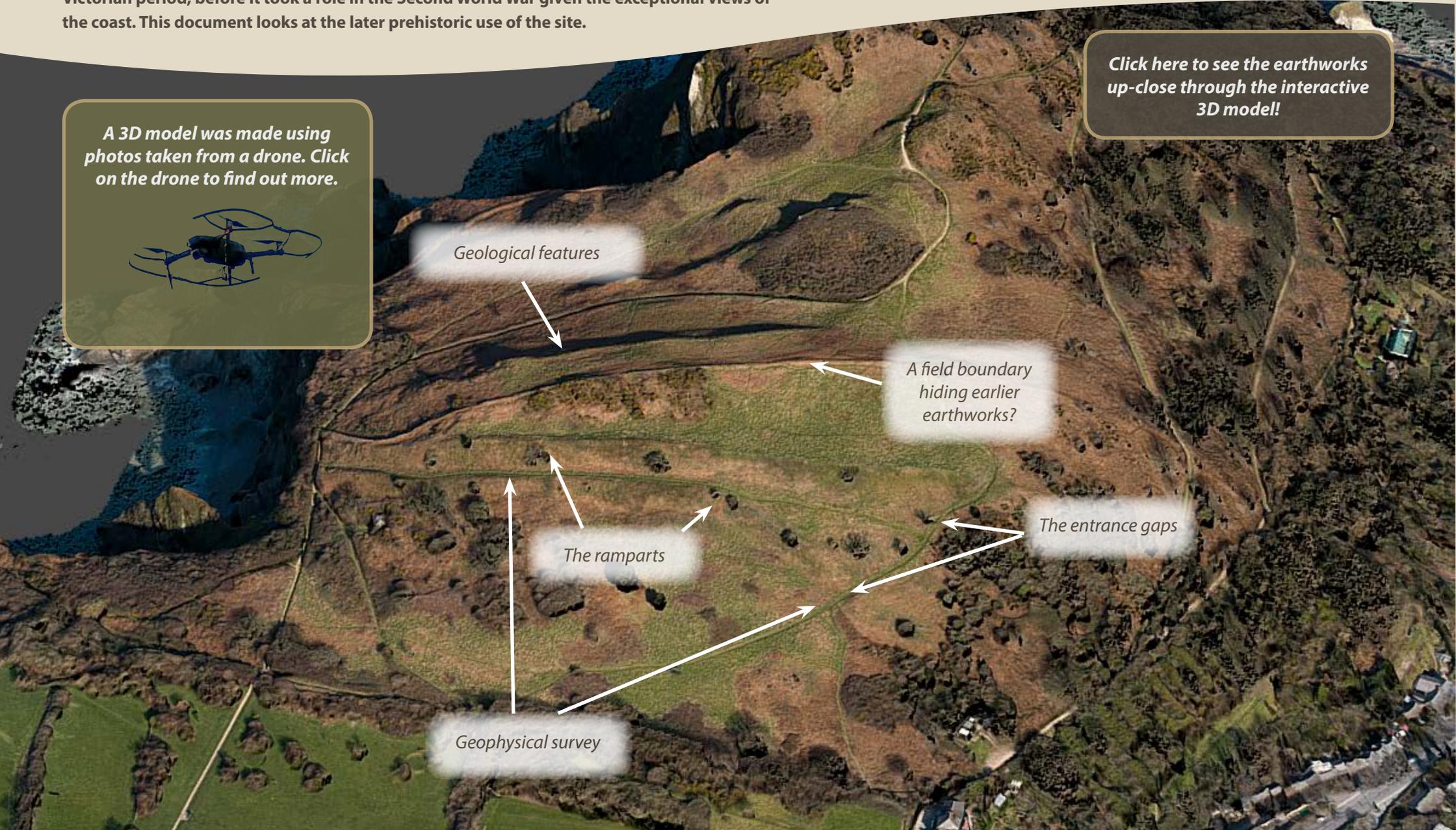
Geological features

A field boundary hiding earlier earthworks?

The ramparts

The entrance gaps

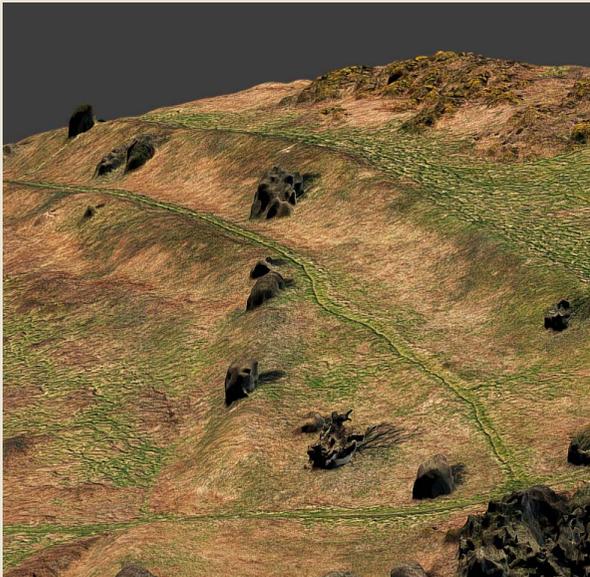
Geophysical survey



## *The ramparts*

The two parallel banks which form the promontory fort's ramparts are very similar in form, located on the south facing slope of the headland, comprising of a section which runs from close to the cliff edge in the west to an entrance gap in the rampart in the east of the site. There is little remainder of the earthwork continuing further east due to historic quarrying in the area.

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## *The entrance gaps*



The entrance through the ramparts is located in the south-east of the site, where the eastern footpath leads northward. The footpath has been worn over thousands of years, leaving a hollowed route leading towards the entrance.

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## *A field boundary hiding earlier earthworks?*



A wall has been built a short distance to the north of the ramparts, at the peak of the promontory. At present, it survives as an earthen bank in the east, which gradually increases in height towards the west, where it is formed of a stone wall. This wall is thought to be medieval or post-medieval in date, and is thought to have been built to enclose sheep while they grazed on the promontory. However, it is possible that part of the wall overlays a bank of prehistoric date, perhaps meaning that the earthen section of the wall took little effort to build as there was already a bank present.

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## *Geological features*

The geology at Hillsborough Promontory Fort weathers in a way which can lead to misunderstandings in the origins of some of the features at the site. There are a number of linear features which look like they could be prehistoric ramparts, but are in fact just natural features.



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## *Geophysical survey*



In 2011, two areas within the site were chosen for a geophysical survey to be undertaken. One area focussed on the entrance through the southern rampart, and the other across both ramparts, encompassing the area between the two, and the possible location of an earlier prehistoric cist. No clear sign of the cist was found, however, the survey did show the presence of possible settlement structures, and a possible round house in the south-east. Parts of the survey which covered the visible earthworks identified that they are likely to have been constructed of one or more linear stony structures, such as retaining walls.

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## *Creating the 3D model of Hillsborough Promontory Fort*

The 3D model was produced from a series of high quality aerial photographs taken by drone above the site. The drone was flown in a grid patten, taking a large number of high quality photographs, each overlapping the one before it. This method can survey over large areas in relatively short time-frames when compared with surveys which can be undertaken on foot. The images are processed to produce 3D models.

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[Click here to find out more about Hillsborough Promontory Fort on the North Devon Coast AONB website](#)

[Click here to see the earthworks up-close through the interactive 3D model](#)

