The Atlas of Hillforts of Britain and Ireland Hillfort survey (v2 October 2013)

Important information:
This form must be used with the accompanying Notes for Guidance which are downloadable from the Project website (http://www.arch.ox.ac.uk/hillforts-atlas.html). Please read the notes before attempting to fill in this form.
Once completed this form can be either posted or emailed to us, alternatively you can transcribe the information into the web-based form and submit electronically – see the Notes for details.

Access to sites 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.

Section 1.

Introductory comments
Thank you for taking part in this survey, by doing so you are agreeing that all information provided can be used and published by the project. You will remain anonymous unless you indicate here that you want to be named on the project website:

1.1. YES – Name to be used: C.L.A.S.P.
   (this site surveyed by Gren Hatton)

Basic information about you

1.2. Your name: Community Landscape Archaeology Survey Project (CLASP)
1.3. Contact phone number: c/o G.W. Hatton, 01788 822411
1.4. email address: c/o ghatton@toucansurf.com
1.5. Did you visit this site as part of an archaeological society/group, if so which one:
   See answers to 1.1 and 1.2 above
Section 2.

Basic information about the site

2.1. Name of the site: Thenford Hill Camp
2.2. Alternative name of the site: n/a
2.3. National Grid Reference: SP 45230 24400
2.4. Any known reference numbers:
2.5. Current county/Unitary authority: Northamptonshire
2.6. When did you visit the site (month/year): 06 November 2014

Landscape setting of the site

2.7. Altitude (metres): 181-184m above OD, measured by GPS (not 168-175m above OD as reported in RCHME)
2.8. Topographic position: [you can tick more than 1]
   HILL TOP X
   COASTAL PROMONTORY .
   INLAND PROMONTORY .
   VALLEY BOTTOM .
   KNOLL/HILLOCK .
   OUTCROP .
   RIDGE X
   PLATEAU/CLIFF-EDGE .
   HILLSLOPE .
   LOWLAND (E.G. MARSH) .
   OTHER .
   Comments on topographic position: The site is located at the edge of a high plateau, commanding excellent long-distance views in virtually every direction. The geology of the site is also interesting – like many other IA hilltop sites in Northamptonshire, it is strategically located at a junction of outcrops of Northants Sand & Ironstone, Marlstone Rock Bed and Upper Lias Clay. It is also worth mentioning that the site is located directly alongside the junction of Banbury Lane and Welsh Lane; for further comment on this point, see section 5.

2.9. Maximum visibility/view:
   NE: [tick 1 only]
   LONG X (4.5km)
   MEDIUM .
   SHORT .
   SE: [tick 1 only]
   LONG X (>20km)
2.10. Water source inside: [you can tick more than 1]

- SPRING 2 (seasonal), see comment below.
- STREAM .
- POOL .
- CISTERN .
- OTHER (details): The surveyor was accompanied by the resident gamekeeper, who confirmed the existence of seasonal springs at two points close to the circumference of the N and W ramparts.

2.11. Water source nearby: In addition to the 2 seasonal water sources mentioned in 2.10 above, there are 4 or 5 permanent springs around the border of the hilltop, all within 200-300m of the site (including a stream that forms the headwaters of the R. Tove); see relevant extract from Google Maps in the Appendices.

2.12. Current land category (over whole site footprint) (you can tick more than 1)

- WOODLAND X (north and west of the site)
- COMMERCIAL FORESTRY PLANTATION .
- PARKLAND .
- PASTURE (GRAZED) .
- ARABLE X (the rest of the site)
- SCRUB/BRACKEN .
- ROCKY OUTCROPS .
- HEATHER/MOORLAND .
- HEATH .
- BUILT-UP .

Comments: Apart from the northern and western rim of the site, which has remained as thin woodland since at least 1884 (see 1884 OS map extract in the Appendices), the rest of the site has been continuously under the plough, so that virtually nothing of any original ditch and rampart is now visible in the arable land. Most of the comments in this report will therefore focus on the remaining traces that are visible in the woodland.
2.13. Pre-hillfort activity: RCHME records the excellent work by D.J. Barrett, which has revealed evidence in the same parish of Neolithic, Bronze Age and Roman occupation in addition to this Iron Age site. Of particular relevance is the RCHME comment “A Late Bronze Age hoard found in the 19th century 'at Thenford Hill Farm' (about SP525438) contained two swords, four spearheads, two rings and other bronze objects .... .... its exact find spot is unknown, but it may have come from the vicinity of the Iron Age settlement”. Thenford Hill Farmhouse stands at the opposite end of the field in which the IA camp site is located, about 150-200m distant from the camp.

2.14. Post-hillfort activity: None is recorded for the IA site itself. However, the so-called “Brick Field” marked on the 1884 OS 6” map may perhaps be worthy of note. This site, which is a very deep-dug quarry, much exploited in the 19th century as a source of clay for brick-making, may perhaps also have served in earlier times as a source for quarrying ironstone (as mentioned above, the site is located on a geological boundary between different outcrops). It would be interesting to know whether any evidence of slag has ever been found on or near the Iron Age site – the surveyor will explore this possibility in further work following this report.

Surface morphology of the site

Note (see the Notes for guidance document): from this section onwards we are assuming that you are working with a plan of the site. If it is a published plan then we do not expect you to record every item, only those which are different/additional to the plan you are working with. If you are drawing your own plan you can annotate details on it.

2.15. Which plan are you using:

The plan in the RCHME survey (South Northants volume, Fig. 36, p144), supplemented by the 1884 OS 6” map and views from Google Earth historical imagery. See copies in the Appendices.
2.16. Have you used any other sources of information (tick any that apply):

- HER X
- NMR
- PUBLISHED SOURCE (details): 
- OTHER (details): RCHME

2.17. Is there an annex (see diagram in Notes for Guidance):

- YES
- NO X

Note: Sections 3 and 5 are for every site, section 4 only applies to sites with an annex.

Section 3. Enclosed area

3.1 General overall shape of enclosed area: [you can tick more than 1]

- CIRCULAR
- SUB-CIRCULAR/oval X
- RECTANGULAR
- SUB-RECTANGULAR X
- POLYGONAL
- IRREGULAR
- COMPLEX (MORE THAN ONE ENCLOSURE)

Comments: Although very little now remains of the original ditch and bank, the 1884 OS 6” map indicates that its outline was probably sub-rectangular, and not circular as reported in RCHME. The plan included in the RCHME report (included in the Appendices to this report) is a more reliable guide to the outline, which actually appears to follow the topography. RCHME states that it was “probably a lightly defended farmstead” – however, this is not the only possible interpretation, and the dimensions of the camp (comparable for example with the defended enclosures at Castle Yard Farthingstone and Guilsborough) are somewhat greater than those of some other comparable Early IA defended farmsteads in west Northants, though generally smaller than the southern-counties IA defended settlements at Little Woodbury and Gussage All Saints; this point is discussed further in Section 5.

3.2. Maximum dimensions of internal area (see diagram in Notes for Guidance):

1. See 3.3 below.
2. See 3.3 below.

Comments: It is difficult to be precise about any area dimensions, owing to the degradation of most of the site due to plough damage.

3.3. Maximum dimensions of whole site footprint (see diagram in Notes for Guidance):

1. 140m
2. 140m
Entrances

3.4. Number of breaks/entrances through the rampart by position: [give a number for each]

N .
NE .
E ? see comment
SE .
S ? see comment
SW .
W .
NW .

Comments: The raised portion of remaining bank just visible within the arable field, with its clearly-demarcated ends, may perhaps indicate that the enclosed area had at least one entrance, and perhaps two (to the east and the south). However, this is mere speculation.

3.5. How many are apparently secondary breaks: [give a number for each]

N .
NE .
E .
SE .
S .
SW .
W .
NW .

Comments: Insufficient evidence.

3.6. (see diagram in Notes for Guidance):
For each entrance that is not a simple gap, is it most like any of the following (e.g. in-turned), if so record which position it is in:

IN-TURNED: [you can tick more than 1]

N .
NE .
E .
SE .
S .
SW .
W .
NW .

OUT-TURNED: [you can tick more than 1]

N .
NE .
E .
SE .
S .
SW .
W .
NW .

BOTH (IN- AND OUT-TURNED): [you can tick more than 1]
N .
NE .
E .
SE .
S .
SW .
W .
NW .

HORNWORK: [you can tick more than 1]
N .
NE .
E .
SE .
S .
SW .
W .
NW .

OVER-LAPPING: [you can tick more than 1]
N .
NE .
E .
SE .
S .
SW .
W .
NW .

OUTWORKS: [you can tick more than 1]
N .
NE .
E .
SE .
S .
SW .
W .
NW .

Comments: .

OTHER FORMS:
Comments: .
Enclosing works - ramparts/banks/walls and ditches

3.7. Number of ramparts/banks/walls per quadrant:
   NE: .
   SE: .
   SW: .
   NW: .
   Comments: From the surviving evidence in the wooded north-western section, probably univallate enclosure with raised bank and single external ditch.

3.8. Number of DITCHES per quadrant:
   NE: .
   SE: .
   SW: .
   NW: .
   Comments: Same comment as for 3.7.

3.9. Form of rampart/bank/wall
   Same all the way around:
   Y Probably, but not possible to say with certainty.
   N .
   If yes: [tick one only]
      EARTHEN BANK X
      STONE WALL .
      BOTH .
      PALISADING .
      VITRIFICATION .
      OTHER BURNING .
      Comments: Very little evidence now remains.
   If NO then by quadrant:
   NE: [you can tick more than 1]
      EARTHEN BANK .
      STONE WALL .
      BOTH .
      PALISADING .
      VITRIFICATION .
      OTHER BURNING .
      Comments: .
   SE: [you can tick more than 1]
      EARTHEN BANK .
      STONE WALL .
      BOTH .
      PALISADING .
      VITRIFICATION .
      OTHER BURNING .
      Comments: .
   SW: [you can tick more than 1]
      EARTHEN BANK .
STONE WALL .
BOTH .
PALISADING .
VITRIFICATION .
OTHER BURNING .
Comments:  .

NW:  [you can tick more than 1]
EARTHEN BANK .
STONE WALL .
BOTH .
PALISADING .
VITRIFICATION .
OTHER BURNING .
Comments:  .

3.10. For each quadrant how many of each of the bank/wall/ditch combinations are there (see
diagram in Notes for Guidance):

NE:
BANK/WALL (NO DITCH) .
BANK/DITCH .
BANK/DITCH/BANK .
OTHER .
Comments:  .

SE:
BANK/WALL (NO DITCH) .
BANK/DITCH .
BANK/DITCH/BANK .
OTHER .
Comments:  .

SW:
BANK/WALL (NO DITCH) .
BANK/DITCH .
BANK/DITCH/BANK .
OTHER .
Comments:  .

NW:
BANK/WALL (NO DITCH) .
BANK/DITCH .
BANK/DITCH/BANK .
OTHER .
Comments:  .

3.11. Chevaux de Frise (tick if YES, you can tick more than 1]

NE .
SE .
SW .
NW .
Comments:  .
Interior features

3.12. Tick all that are present, mark where on the plan and send to us: [you can tick more than 1]

- NO APPARENT FEATURES  X
- STONE STRUCTURES  
- PLATFORMS  
- QUARRY HOLLOWS  
- PITS  
- OTHER  

Comments: All ploughed out.

Section 4.

If the site has an annex (see notes for definition of an annex), continue here with information about the annex, otherwise go to section 5 below:

4.1. Shape of the annex [tick only 1]

- LOBATE  
- CONCENTRIC  
- CIRCULAR  
- SUB-CIRCULAR  
- RECTANGULAR  
- SUB-RECTANGULAR  
- POLYGONAL  
- IRREGULAR  
- OTHER  

4.2. Number of annex ramparts:  

4.3. Number of annex ditches:  

4.4. Number of annex entrances:  

4.5. Comments on the annex:
Section 5.

5.1. Any general comments (including comments on erosion/damage, especially if recent):

Most of the site has been under the plough for centuries, and has suffered such extensive degradation that little is now visible except in the north-western part of the site, where long-term woodland cover has protected a section of the rampart, which rises about 2-2.5m above the surrounding approaches. There are hollows in the topography adjacent to the north and west sides of the enclosure (indicated by the surveyor on the marked-up RCHME plan in the Appendices), and springs of water regularly appear at these points in wet weather, which may have informed the original choice of the site.

Aside from these seasonal water sources directly adjacent to the site, four or five more permanent streams all rise within about 300-400m of the site, including one of the headwaters of the R. Tove.

The overall size of the Thenford Camp enclosure is about 1.6ha. RCHME suggests that it was probably just an Early IA “lightly defended farmstead”, and this is one possibility. Larger defended single farmstead sites have been described – notably at Little Woodbury and Gussage All Saints in the south of England – however, such evidence as has so far been collected for Northamptonshire suggests that Early IA single defended farmsteads in this area tended to be significantly smaller, typically 0.1-0.2ha. The Thenford enclosure is almost comparable in size, for example, with other Northamptonshire defended enclosures at Hunsbury Hill, Guilsborough and Farthingstone (Castle Yard), none of which are thought to have been farmsteads (indeed, they are all acknowledged as IA hillforts).

RCHME goes on to comment that “A large area of Neolithic or Bronze Age worked and waste flints has been found in the SE of the site, and scatters of flints including microliths lie outside the enclosure (SP 5234390, 52054385). Iron Age and Roman pottery has come from the eastern part of the site. The Bronze Age hoard found in the parish [SP 54 SW 7] may be from this site.” In fact, as RCHME states
elsewhere, this Late BA hoard was found in the 19th century at "Thenford Hill Farm" (about SP 525438) and contained two swords, four spearheads, two rings and other bronze objects as well as a piece of wood. The exact find spot was not recorded – but it should be noted that Thenford Hill Farmhouse lies within 150m of the IA site that is the focus of this report.

The likelihood that this site may well have BA origins, and that it apparently continued as an occupied site throughout the IA and early RB periods, seems to invest it with more significance in the landscape than might be accorded to a mere “lightly defended Early IA farmstead”. To support this line of argument, three further distinct factors may be called as evidence:

- **Topography and viewshed**
  The site commands extensive views, especially from SE clockwise to NW. In this respect, it has more in common with typical BA and IA hillforts in this region than with defended farmsteads.

- **Geology**
  The site appears to have been located strategically with respect to geology, between outcrops of Northants Sand & Ironstone and Upper Lias Clay, with Marlstone Rock Bed relatively close nearby. It has been noted time and again during these surveys, that many of Northamptonshire’s IA hillforts are similarly located, apparently with great precision, exactly on boundaries between Northants Sand & Ironstone and Upper Lias Clay.

- **Traffic routes**
  Banbury Lane and one course of the Welsh Lane intersect at Thenford Camp – and whilst it may be mere coincidence, this close proximity to important ancient traffic routes has also been noted, during these surveys, in connection with several other BA and IA hillforts, such as Castle Yard (Farthingstone) and Arbury Banks (Chipping Warden). In addition to these two ancient routes, there may also be other early routes through this area – and these will be explored and discussed further in a second phase of this IA hillfort investigation in Northamptonshire, to be summarised in a follow-up paper.
Appendices:

1. 1884 OS 6” map of the area of Thenford Hill Camp

2. Best available Google Earth historical image
3. RCHME site map of Thenford Hill Camp

4. Viewshed diagram (see overleaf)
Thenford Hill Camp

Thenford Hill
elev 181-184m

17km
The Tews area
elev 170m

13km
Mill Hill, Fenny Compton
elev 155m, then >20km

13km
Hornton ridge
elev 180m,

5.5km
Warden Hill, nr Chipping Warden
elev 173m

4.5km
Barrow Hill, Culworth,
elev 180m

2km
Marston Hill
elev 175-177m

9.7m
Rainsborough Camp
elev 146m
then >20km

>20km
R.Tove
headwaters
= location of hollows, where springs form in wet weather
6. Photographs

6.1 View of north rampart from the north, standing at the edge of the clay quarry

6.2 Clay quarry, viewed from below the northern rampart
6.3 – 6.4 Views to north of northern rampart, and along the northern rampart

6.5 Western edge of northern rampart viewed from the north side, at edge of quarry slope
6.6 Cross-country view to NW, from top of northern rampart

6.7 – 6.8 – 6.9 Interior area of camp, viewed from approx. mid-point of remains of western rampart
6.10 Remains of western rampart viewed from the west (exterior)

6.11 As 6.10, but viewed from 50m further west
6.12 – 6.13 Viewshed to the south and east of the camp