

Northamptonshire's Iron Age Hillforts

Isolated hill-forts began to appear in the British landscape during the Bronze Age, before 1000BC.

A new phase of hill-fort construction commenced in the Iron Age during the 5C/6C BC – and defended hilltop enclosures were still being created in the Late Iron Age, during the 70-80 years prior to the main Roman invasion in AD43. About 25 defended hill-fort sites have so far been recorded in Northamptonshire – some were only recognised in the last 15 years.

Hill-forts undoubtedly served a variety of different purposes, and some of these will certainly have changed over the centuries during which they were in use. Only so much can be learned from physical investigation within a specific hillfort – an understanding of its intended function(s) also requires close study of 'external' factors, such as the hill-fort's relationship with its surrounding landscape (especially its range of view across the landscape), the surface geology on which it sits, and the overall distribution of hill-fort sites across the wider landscape.

The National Atlas of Hill-forts project was set up, with government funding, to create a comprehensive map of all such historic sites, along with accurate up to date surveys of each site. The project is led by Oxford and Edinburgh Universities – and the Community Landscape Archaeology Survey Project (CLASP) acted as the focus for work on the project within Northamptonshire. During a 2-year programme of data collection, survey visits and subsequent analysis, a small team of CLASP members surveyed all the known hill-forts within the county, plus some additional 'potential hillfort' sites, feeding the resulting detailed reports back to Oxford University.

The individual site reports

Site reports were prepared on each of the thirteen Northamptonshire Iron Age Hillforts that were surveyed by the project team.

This was CLASP's contribution to the national Hillforts Atlas project jointly run by Oxford University and Edinburgh University. The reports will be incorporated into the national survey and the Internet-based Hillforts Atlas, which is currently in preparation.

NB: The report format was laid down by Oxford University, and it does not ideally suit the type of data that we were able to gather. The most relevant (and informative) part of each of our reports is the General Comments, Section 5 of each report; it is suggested that readers will probably find that section the most interesting.

Download the individual site reports:

- [Arbury Banks, Chipping Warden](#)
- [Arbury Hill, Badby](#)
- [Borough Hill, Daventry](#)
- [Castle Yard etc., Farthingstone](#)
- [Crow Hill, Irthlingborough](#)
- [Guilsborough](#)
- [Hunsbury Hill, Northampton](#)
- [Old Tun Copse, Paulerspury](#)
- [Rainsborough Camp, Aynho](#)
- [Salcey Egg Rings, Hartwell](#)
- [Thenford](#)
- [Thrapston](#)
- [Whittlebury](#)

Northamptonshire's Iron Age Hillforts – analysis of the data

A 50-page detailed report analysing the survey material contained in the individual site reports. This is an interpretative report, which studies and compares the basic data in the various individual reports, and suggests explanations of the possible functions and purposes of the sites.

This 2-year project brought to light some new aspects not explored in previous surveys of these hillfort sites. Also, this report looks at Northamptonshire (and its neighbouring counties) holistically, whereas previous work has tended to focus on each individual site without considering possible interactions between the network of sites.

[Download the Iron Age Hillforts Analysis Report](#)

Case study summary leaflet

A short case-study leaflet is also available, summarising key aspects of the work in a brief and accessible format, for those who do not have the leisure to absorb the content of the full detailed report.

Download the case study, " [Interpreting the Iron Age hillforts of Northamptonshire](#) "

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