



Herefordshire Archaeology
Conservation and Environmental Planning
Planning Services
Environment Directorate
Herefordshire Council

**Herefordshire Woodlands
Archaeological Survey,
Prior's Wood, Dulas
Herefordshire Archaeology
Report No. 273
June 2009**

Report prepared by
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Herefordshire Archaeology is Herefordshire Council's county archaeology service. It advises upon the conservation of archaeological and historic landscapes, maintains the county Sites and Monument Record, and carries out conservation and investigative field projects. The County Archaeologist is Dr. Keith Ray.

Herefordshire Woodlands Archaeological Survey, Prior's Wood, Dulas

Herefordshire Archaeology Report No.

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Summary:

The survey described in this report (HSM 49289), formed part of the Herefordshire Woodlands Archaeological Survey undertaken in partnership with the Forestry Commission. A rapid site identification survey was carried out in the wood concerned, using a hand held Global Positioning System to record the location of the features that were recognised as having archaeological significance.

Earthwork features were recorded within the wood that illustrate the intensive use of the woodland resource in the post medieval period. These included, charcoal burning platforms, quarries and woodland management boundaries. a single section of bank and ditch was recorded, which appeared to relate more to the early field boundary pattern of the area than woodland management. It is thought that this feature dates from the medieval period. The course of a small leat or drain was recorded which appears to have fed a small pool outside the woodland that formed part of the designed landscape associated with the historic parkland and gardens of Dulas Court.

Disclaimer: It should not be assumed that land referred to in this document is accessible to the public. Location plans are indicative only. NGRs are accurate to approximately 10m. Measured dimensions are accurate to within 1m at a scale of 1:500, 0.1m at 1:50, and 0.02m at 1:20.

Figures contain material from the Ordnance Survey. The grid in this material is the National Grid taken from the Ordnance Survey map with the permission of the Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office. This material has been reproduced in order to locate the site in its environs.

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Introduction

This report provides an account of a rapid survey of Prior's Wood, Dulas, (HSM 49289). The survey was carried out in 2009 as part of the Herefordshire Woodlands Archaeological Survey, which followed a pilot study undertaken by Herefordshire Archaeology in partnership with and grant-aided by the Forestry Commission. The purpose of the survey is to begin to document the archaeology of woodlands in the county. Woodlands are areas of high archaeological potential in that they have seldom been subjected to the types of disturbance associated with intensive modern agriculture. Relatively little information concerning archaeological sites within woodland has been recorded in the past. Access is often difficult, aerial photographs are of little or no use for site identification and until recently recording an accurate location within woodland was often not practicable.

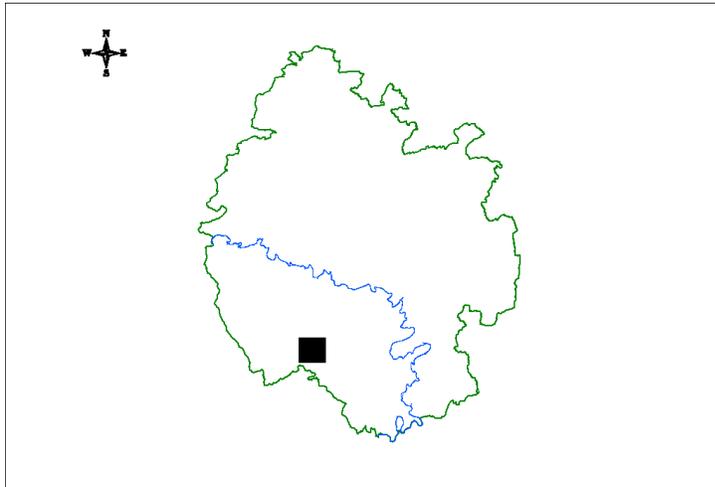
Woodland boundaries have often moved over the centuries, sometimes expanding to encapsulate and preserve evidence of alternative land-use (for instance, field systems) and on other occasions shrinking and being subject to differing forms of woodland management. These variations in land-use inevitably influence the kind of ecological data that can be obtained from different areas of woodland. Archaeological survey can contribute significant data concerning woodland history, management history and sequential development, and this can provide independent evidence of historical change. It is only when the changes throughout history within a wood have been documented and understood in this way that a well informed management strategy can be implemented.

Since 1999 Herefordshire Archaeology has been involved in regular discussions with the Forestry Commission concerning the lack of archaeological data available when management plans are being prepared and applications for Woodland Grant Schemes are submitted. As a result of these discussions, the Forestry Commission has grant aided Herefordshire Archaeology to undertake a two phase pilot study, Phase One of which took place in 2001-2, and Phase 2 took place in 2003. The surveys carried out in 2004 and later were an extension to this initial pilot work.

The survey for each woodland area identifies the potential for the survival of archaeological features and samples the types of features present. Further planned survey may re-visit woodlands identified in the rapid reconnaissance surveys as being of high archaeological potential and will involve a more detailed survey. This will illustrate the density of archaeological sites within the woodland and record the relationships between features to enable some degree of understanding concerning the evolution of the woodland.

Location

Prior's Wood is located at NGR: SO 375 290, within the parish of Dulas in south-west Herefordshire. The woodland covers the north facing side of a low hill between elevations of approximately 180m and 120m above Ordnance Datum (Ordnance Survey, 1998).



The HistoricLandscape Characterisation Study for Herefordshire describes Prior's Wood as woodland surrounded by contour aligned enclosure including the adaptation of earlier enclosed systems, characterised by boundary re-definition and some insertion, (HLC L2.3). (Ray and White, 2003).

Figure 1: Prior's Wood Location.

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Previous fieldwork / records

Prior to the survey taking place the county Sites and Monuments Record was consulted. However, no entries were found indicating the discovery of sites within the present woodland, and it is therefore assumed that no fieldwork that has resulted in a published record has taken place here previously.

Method

The primary survey work at Prior's Wood took place on February 23rd 2009. The survey comprised a rapid assessment of the potential of the woodland to contain well preserved archaeological features. Features were mapped using a hand-held Garmin GPS 60CSx Global Positioning System, enabling a ten figure grid reference to be recorded for each feature. This system is accurate to within approximately 5m under tree canopy.

The wood was walked in transects aligned roughly east - west and approximately 50m to 100m apart. If a large feature was encountered and no other features of archaeological significance can be seen, then this feature was followed and features 50m either side of it recorded. Field observations and grid references were recorded on a dictaphone and transcribed at a later date.

The following survey comprises only a rapid appraisal of the woodland and should not be taken as exhaustive or its results as entirely definitive. It is intended to record the type of features present, their state of preservation and their relationships to other features within the woodland.

Field conditions

The solid geology comprises the Eardiston Association. This is made up of reddish, well drained, coarse, loamy soils over hard red sandstone, shales and limestone. (Ragg, Beard et al. 1984. p171).

The lower portion of the wood covers a gentle slope, however, the degree of slope increases rapidly within the southern half of the wood to the extent that small scale slippage has occurred historically and in the more recent past and this will have caused a loss of monument definition in places. In part the southern edge of the wood runs onto the top of the hill.

The weather during the survey was fine and dry and visibility within the wood was generally good.

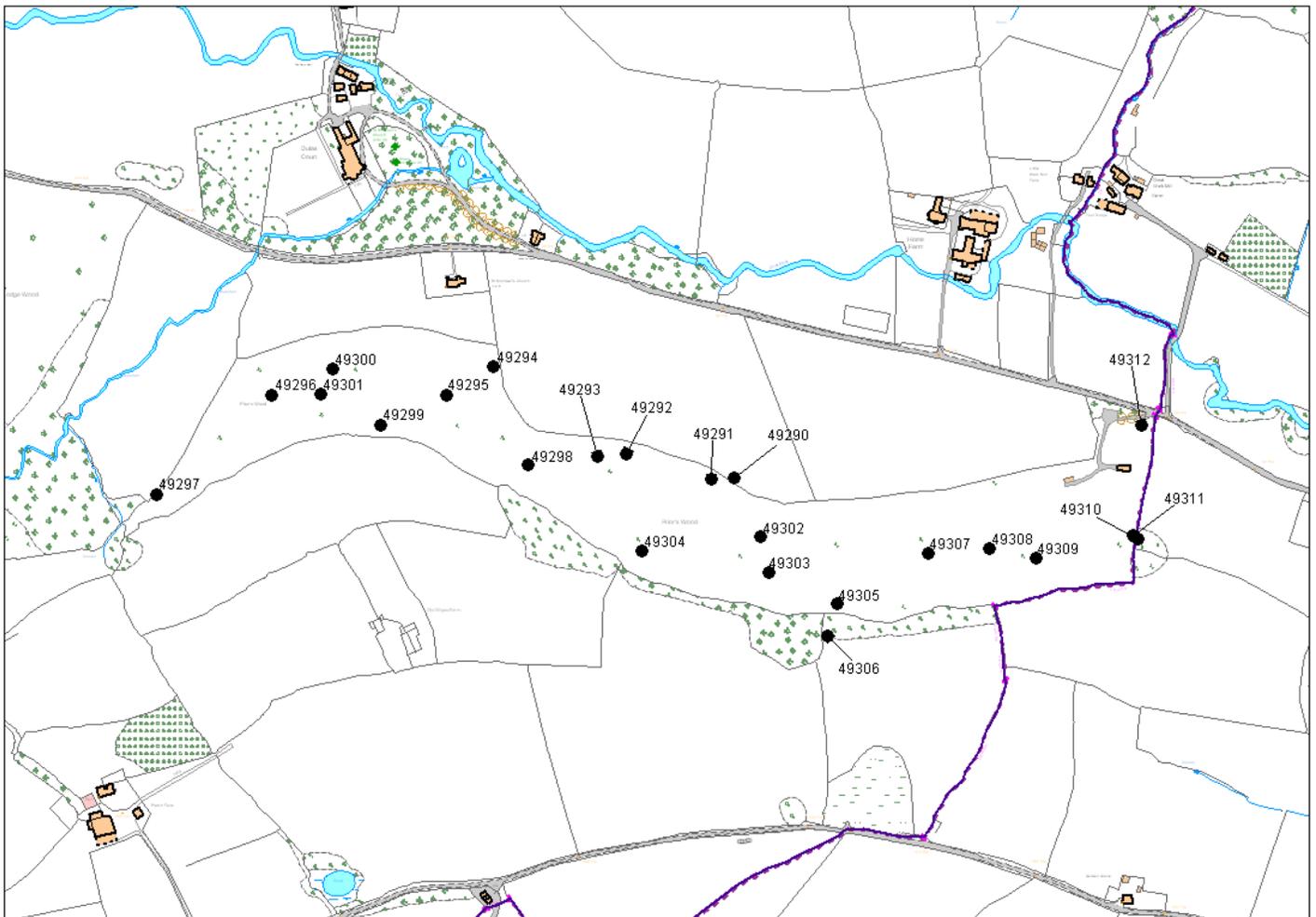


Figure 2: Location of features identified during the survey. (© Crown Copyright (OS Licence 1000024168) & Herefordshire Archaeology)

Results (Figure 2)

The recorded data from the survey is described in detail within this results section. This section is concluded by a brief discussion highlighting the historical development of the woodland as understood using the 2009 survey results. The significance of recorded features and management implications are then commented upon within the subsequent discussion section.

Appendix 1 contains a simple data base which cross references each site to the Ordnance Survey National Grid, (NGR), and the series of unique Sites and Monuments “Primary Record Numbers” (PRN), allocated following the transcription. These numbers are referred to within both the text and illustrations. They are prefixed by HSM, these initials relating to Herefordshire Sites and Monuments Record unique numbers.

Woodland management features

A total of thirteen charcoal burning platforms were recorded (HSM 49290, HSM 49292, HSM 49293, HSM 49296, HSM 49299-49301, HSM 49303-49305, HSM 49307-49309). These ranged in size from 5-7m in diameter and in the main comprised a level, circular platform with a pronounced down-slope lip. This class of monument is often only visible in areas where there is a reasonable degree of slope. It is therefore likely that other charcoal burning platforms exist within the wood, both on the hill-top and close to its northern edge other areas of more level ground that do not show up as earthworks. It is equally likely that more have been buried or rendered unrecognisable due to landslips within the mid-slope section of the wood. It is therefore likely that this monument class has been under represented, and that the charcoal burning industry was even more intensive than the number recorded platforms suggest.

No saw pits were recorded during the survey.

The quantity and distribution of charcoal burning platforms together with the apparent lack of saw pits, suggests that either:

- The woodland has been primarily managed historically for the production of coppiced timber predominantly for the production of charcoal, or
- The woodland has been managed with standards and an under-storey of coppice. The lumber would have been taken elsewhere for sawing, possibly to one of the mills on the Dulas brook nearby.

Woodland boundaries

Prior’s Wood appears to have a good series of woodland boundary banks present on all sides. The boundaries appear to be two separate lengths of bank and ditch which vary in form and

scale. The boundary that defines the northern and western edges of the wood (HSM 49297) comprises a 2m wide bank which survives to a height of 0.3m. It has a 1.5m wide ditch on its southern side. The woodland boundary on the southern and eastern edges of the wood (HSM 49310) comprised a 1.3m wide bank with a 1m wide ditch on either side. The length of bank on the eastern edge of the wood has been re-cut and has a very pronounced and sharp ditch on its western side. This re-cutting has been done to define the parish boundary at this point.

Within the wood and running straight up and down the slope on a north – south axis was a 15m long stretch of bank and ditch, (HSM 49298). This continued out of the wood at the crest of the hill, running under the woodland boundary bank and continuing as a field boundary heading towards Old Wigau Farm. The bank is approximately 1.2m wide and 0.3m high with the remains of a ditch on its eastern side. Its northern end has been truncated by landslips.

Industrial features

Three quarries were recorded during the survey. HSM 49306 comprised a substantial quarry measuring 50m in length (east – west) by 35m wide and having a depth of over 5m. This was located on the top of the hill immediately to the south of the present boundary of Prior's Wood. Quarry HSM 49311 was located at the eastern edge of the wood and opened onto a field. The quarry measured 20m in length, and 12m wide with a maximum depth of 1.8m. This would appear to be of some antiquity as the parish boundary and woodland boundary bank and ditch (HSM 49310) run across the entrance to the quarry suggesting that the quarry was not being used at least during the 19th century and possibly before this. HSM 49312 comprised a 4m deep and 30m diameter quarry within the wood but next to the road. Much of the quarry appears to have been filled with imported material including marl and building rubble.

A small delve was also recorded during the survey (HSM 49291) It is unclear whether this was a small quarry (4m in diameter and up to 2m deep with spoil on its northern side) or simply excavated to reveal the source of a spring which is still evident in its base. In addition to formally excavated quarries there exists within the wood a number of naturally occurring rock faces exposed by localised land slips from which stone could have easily been extracted.

Communication / extraction routes

No hollow ways were identified during the survey. A service track (HSM 49302) was however recorded. This is present on the 1886 1st Edition Ordnance Survey Map (see figure 3) and ran the length of the wood following the base of the break of slope for much of its route. The location recorded for the reading taken is however at a point where the track diverges and one arm (which is not present on the 1st Edition Map) runs diagonally upslope. It is assumed that this spur of track post-dated the 1886 map.

Former land use

With the exception of bank and ditch HSM 49298, no other historic boundaries were recorded during the survey which might indicate internal compartment divisions or an underlying field pattern. HSM 49298 would appear to be a relatively early feature and does

appear to have more in common with the surrounding field system than the present wood suggesting that this boundary may once have formed either a wood edge or internal ownership boundary.

A leat or drainage ditch was recorded close to the northern edge of the wood to the south of St. Michael's Church. This comprised a 0.6m wide ditch with a low bank on its down-slope side. It appears to kink cutting a corner off the present woodland and runs out of the wood towards a depression in the field immediately to the south of the church. It is suggested that this may be a designed landscape feature associated with the gardens of Dulas Court. It was noted that a group of eight Wellingtonias are located immediately to the north of this feature. This feature appears to have supplied water from a natural spring within the wood (now a pool) to a pond to the south of the church.



Figure 3: Location of features identified during the survey, plotted onto the 1st Edition Ordnance Survey Map 1886.
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Discussion and Implications

Site and feature condition

The majority of features recorded were well preserved with little modern disturbance. The frequent occurrence of localised landslips has affected a number of charcoal burning

platforms and some sections of track and this has made feature recognition difficult in some areas

Implications regarding the archaeological resource

The principal monument type recorded within Prior's Wood was the charcoal burning platform. It is clear that Prior's Wood has been intensively managed woodland for several centuries and that in part at least it has historically been managed as coppice for the production of charcoal. Much of Prior's Wood is too steep to be cultivated and it is therefore suggested that with the possible exception of rough pasture no other land-use other than woodland could be assigned to it. The bank and ditch HSM 49298 is potentially of significance as it appears to be one of if not the earliest feature recorded within the woodland. It is unfortunate that its northern extent can no longer be traced as this would help shed some light on the character of the early boundaries surrounding Dulas Court.

Implications for future management

The features recorded during this survey were generally well preserved. The construction of further access tracks should be avoided. It would seem reasonable to utilise the tracks which appear on the 1st Edition Ordnance Survey Map, together with the later length of track identified during the survey.

References

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Acknowledgements

I would like to acknowledge the help and co-operation of the owner of Prior's Wood for their assistance and co-operation with access for this survey.

The Forestry Commission for their commitment to this survey scheme.

Dr. Keith Ray, County Archaeologist, for his editorial input into this report.

Archive

1 Dictaphone tape

1 Transcription Record
 1 Excel Database
 1 Mapinfo data file
 This document

Appendix 1: Database of features and grid references.

HSM No.	Easting	Northing	Site type	Description	Period
49290	337485	229192	Charcoal Burning Platform	6m in diameter and facing north	Post-medieval
49291	337460	229190	Excavated spring / small delve	4m in diameter with spring at base	Post-medieval
49292	337366	229219	Charcoal Burning Platform	5m in diameter	Post-medieval
49293	337335	229216	Charcoal Burning Platform	6m in diameter and facing north	Post-medieval
49294	337220	229315	Leat	0.5m deep with bank	19 th century
49295	337168	229283	Platform	7m in diameter for storage	Post-medieval
49296	336975	229283	Charcoal Burning Platform	6m in diameter and facing north	Post-medieval
49297	336848	229174	Woodland boundary bank	2m wide bank and 1.5m wide ditch	medieval?
49298	337258	229206	Boundary bank	1.2m wide with ditch on eastern side	medieval?
49299	337095	229250	Charcoal Burning Platform	6m in diameter cuts wood boundary	Post-medieval
49300	337043	229312	Charcoal Burning Platform	5m in diameter	Post-medieval
49301	337029	229284	Charcoal Burning Platform	6m in diameter and oval	Post-medieval
49302	337514	229127	Trackway	Trackway runs diagonally across slope.	Post-medieval
49303	337523	229087	Charcoal Burning Platform	cut by track	Post-medieval
49304	337384	229111	Charcoal Burning Platform	6m in diameter	Post-medieval
49305	337599	229053	Charcoal Burning Platform	7m in diameter	Post-medieval
49306	337589	229018	Quarry	50m e/w by 35m n/s and 5m deep	Post-medieval
49307	337699	229109	Charcoal Burning Platform	6m in diameter, poor	Post-medieval
49308	337767	229114	Charcoal Burning Platform	7m in diameter	Post-medieval
49309	337819	229104	Charcoal Burning Platform	5m in diameter	Post-medieval
49310	337931	229125	Parish boundary bank	1.3m wide runs over entrance to quarry	Post-medieval
49311	337925	229128	Quarry	12m wide and 20m long	Post-medieval
49312	337935	229250	Quarry	30m in diameter and up to 4m	Post-medieval

Validation

Herefordshire Archaeology operates a validation system for its reports, to provide quality assurance and to comply with Best Value procedures. This report has been checked for accuracy and clarity of statements of procedure and results.

Dr. K. Ray, County Archaeologist.