

*A Survey at
The Wrekin Hillfort,
Shropshire, 2011*

by
H R Hannaford

Archaeology Service



Archaeology Service Report Number 299
© Shropshire Council
September 2011

**A SURVEY AT
THE WREKIN HILLFORT,
SHROPSHIRE, 2011**

by
H R HANNAFORD MifA

A report for
Raby Estate (Shropshire)
and
The Shropshire Wildlife Trust

Archaeology Service

Historic Environment Team, Environment,
Shirehall, Abbey Foregate, Shrewsbury, SY2 6ND
Tel: (01743) 252575 Fax: (01743) 252505



CONTENTS

	Page No
SUMMARY	1
1 INTRODUCTION	2
2 METHODOLOGY	3
3 THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL RECORDING	3
4 REFERENCES	4

ILLUSTRATIONS

Figure 1: Location of the survey area around the cairn (HER 01782) on The Wrekin

Figure 2: The cairn (HER 01782), triangulation pillar and toposcope; plan view, showing location of profile x-y (Figure 3); 1:100 scale

Figure 3: A profile across the cairn (Figure 2, x-y); 1:100 scale

PHOTOGRAPHS

Photo 1: The cairn, triangulation point and toposcope, looking southwest

Photo 2: The triangulation point, showing the erosion at its base; looking southeast

Photo 3: The toposcope, showing the erosion at its base; looking southwest

Photo 4: Heaven's Gate (the inner northeast entrance) looking west

Photo 5: The Aerial-Cam vehicle at the southwest entrance

Photo 6: The southwest entrance, showing erosion, looking north

Photo 7: Recent damage to the Hell's Gate (outer northeast) entrance, probably caused by a 4x4 off-road vehicle

Photo 8: The cairn, triangulation point and toposcope © Aerial-Cam

Photo 9: The WWII features within the hillfort, looking northeast © Aerial-Cam

Photo 10: Heaven's Gate (inner northeast entrance) looking southwest © Aerial-Cam

SUMMARY

In July 2011 the Archaeology Service Shropshire Council undertook a programme of archaeological recording on The Wrekin Hillfort, around a cairn (HER 01782) on the summit, in advance of earthwork repairs. The recording comprised a drawn and photographic record of the area around the cairn, and included low-level aerial photography, commissioned from Aerial-Cam.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Wrekin Hillfort (Historic Environment Record [HER] no. 01069) is a large multivallate hillfort on the summit of The Wrekin hill, a conspicuous landmark in the centre of the historic county of Shropshire. The hillfort has been shown by excavation to have had its origins in the late Bronze Age. Excavations have demonstrated intensive domestic occupation for long periods throughout the Iron Age and (possibly) some evidence of the Roman military campaign which may have forced the hillfort's abandonment in the mid 1st century AD. The hillfort is a scheduled Ancient Monument (National Monument No. 34933, Large multivallate and univallate hillforts, a round barrow, a Late Bronze Age settlement and WWII military remains, on the Wrekin).

1.2 The remains of a cairn or barrow (HER 01782) of presumed early Bronze Age date lie within the southwest entrance of the hillfort. The cairn is approximately 16m in diameter and now stands c. 0.4m high. A triangulation pillar and a toposcope have been built onto the cairn.

1.3 The deposits around the base of the triangulation pillar have eroded revealing part of what may be the structure of the cairn. It is intended to carry out earthwork repairs to protect the cairn and the base of the pillar by laying membrane, importing material, and securing with geotextile matting.

1.4 Because of the potential significance of the archaeological resource it has been considered necessary that the possible archaeological features be recorded prior to the ground stabilization work

1.5 The Archaeology Service, Shropshire Council, was commissioned by the Shropshire Wildlife Trust on behalf of the Raby Estate (Shropshire) to carry out this programme of archaeological work.

1.6 The aim of the programme of archaeological work is to allow for the preservation by record of the visible archaeological remains that may lie within the area of the ground stabilization work.

2 METHODOLOGY

2.1 A measured survey plan at 1:50 scale was made of an area of 100m² around the exposed stones around the triangulation pillar and possible cairn (reproduced here at 1:100 scale in Fig. 2). The summit and base of the cairn, and the bases of the trig point and toposcope were plotted using sub-metre Global Positioning System (GPS) survey equipment. A levelled profile was taken across the southeast-northwest axis across the cairn (Fig. 3). Elevation drawings at 1:20 scale made of the triangulation pillar and toposcope. The survey was supplemented by black and white 35mm photography and colour digital photography with a field of 11 megapixels.

3 THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL RECORDING

3.1 The cairn comprises a subcircular mound at the southern end of the summit of the hill, with the natural ground surface sloping down to the south and east. The mound is discernible by more steeply sloping ground on the eastern and southern sides of the hillside, and by a slight mound on the western side. On the south side the mound rises by about 1.2m. The northern side of the cairn is poorly defined and is marked by an even and gentle downward slope (0.5m in height) but there is no discernible earthwork on this side.

3.2 The toposcope has been sited on the northern edge of the cairn, though no earthwork remains survive on this side. There has been substantial erosion around the base of the toposcope, particularly on its northern side, exposing its stone and concrete foundations (Photo 3). The triangulation pillar is located just to the east of the centre of the mound. The present ground surface around the triangulation pillar forms a depression about 0.2m deep by about 4m in diameter. That this is due to erosion is evident from the exposure of the foundation concrete of the trig point (Photo 2). Away from the base of the triangulation pillar, the erosion has revealed the top of a number of larger stones in the ground surface. It is possible that these stones may comprise part of the fabric of the cairn. These appear to form a roughly circular pattern, though this is likely to be caused by the nature of the pedestrian traffic around the trig point rather than reflecting the construction of the cairn itself.

3.3 Low-level aerial photographs of the cairn and surrounding area were commissioned from Aerial-Cam as part of the recording exercise. The photographs were taken with a Nikon pro SLR camera on telescopic 22m mast mounted on a 4x4 vehicle.

3.4 The opportunity was also taken to capture low-level aerial photographs of the adjacent southwest entrance to the hillfort and the inner and outer northeast entrances (Heaven Gate and Hell Gate) to record the current erosion here, and to record some elements of the WWII military remains.

4 REFERENCES

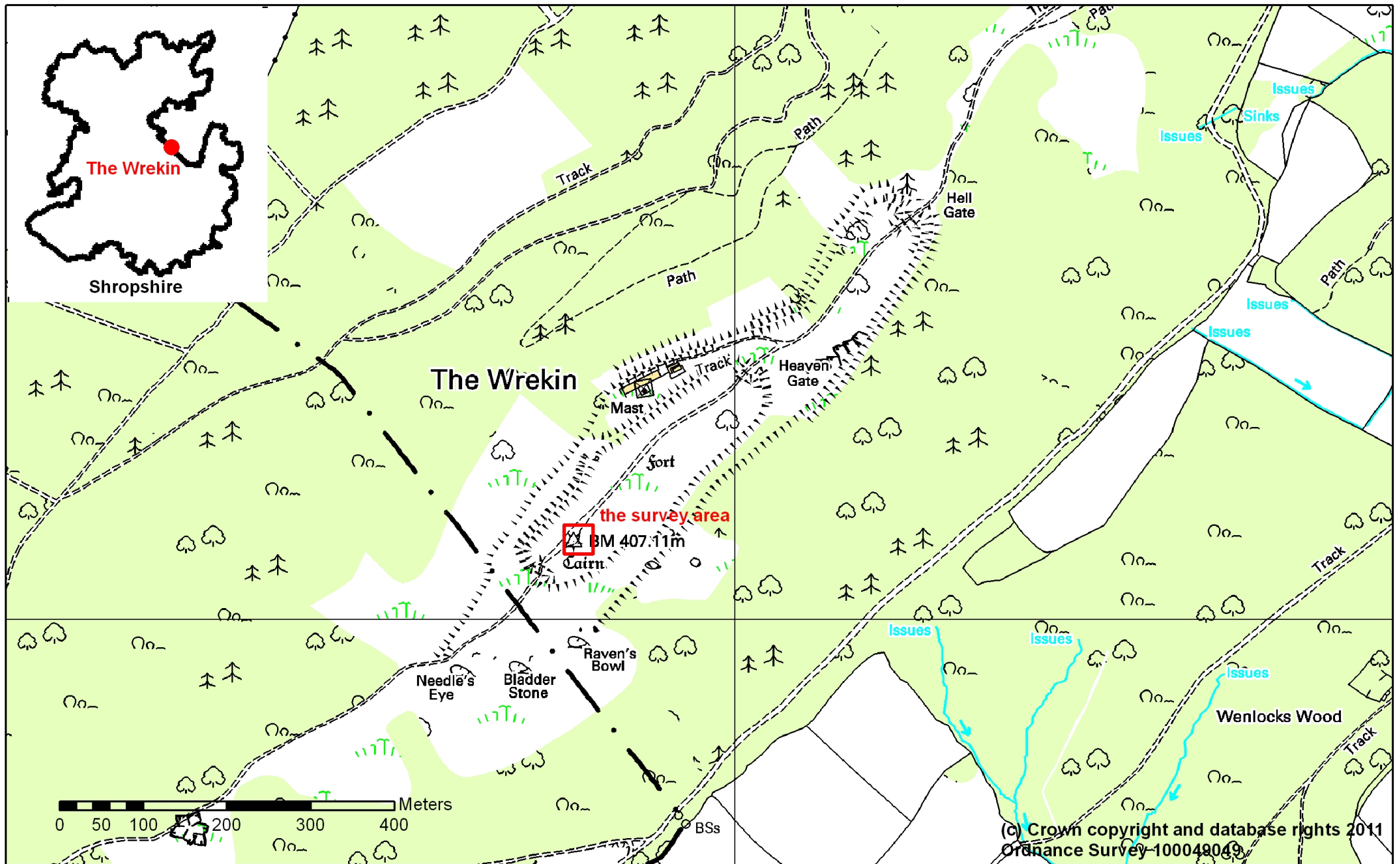
Kenyon K M, 1942: Archaeological Journal Vol XCIX (99) 1942, pp99-109.

Kenyon K M, 1956: Archaeological Journal

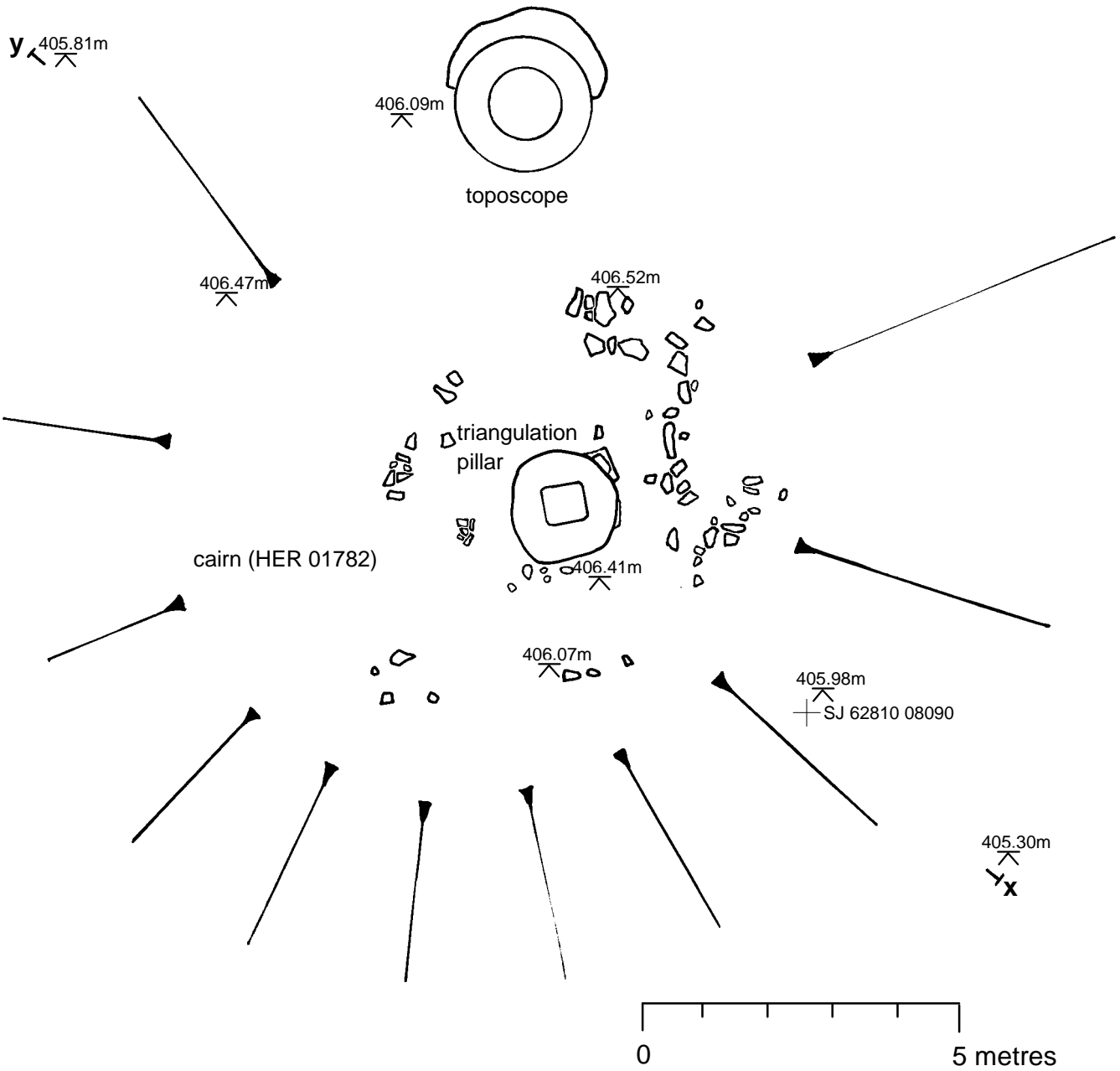
Stanford S C, 1984: The Wrekin Hillfort Excavations 1973, Archaeological Journal vol CXLI (141) 1984, pp 61-90

ABBREVIATIONS

AOD	Above Ordnance Datum
HER	Historic Environment Record, Shropshire Council
OS	Ordnance Survey
SA	Shropshire Archives, Castle Gates, Shrewsbury
TSAS	Transactions of the Shropshire Archaeological Society
 TSAHS	Transactions of the Shropshire Archaeological and Historical Society



THE WREKIN, SHROPSHIRE, 2011
 Figure 1: The location of the survey area around the cairn (HER 01782) on The Wrekin

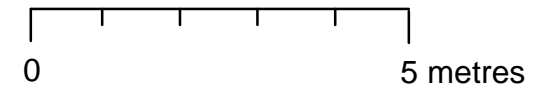
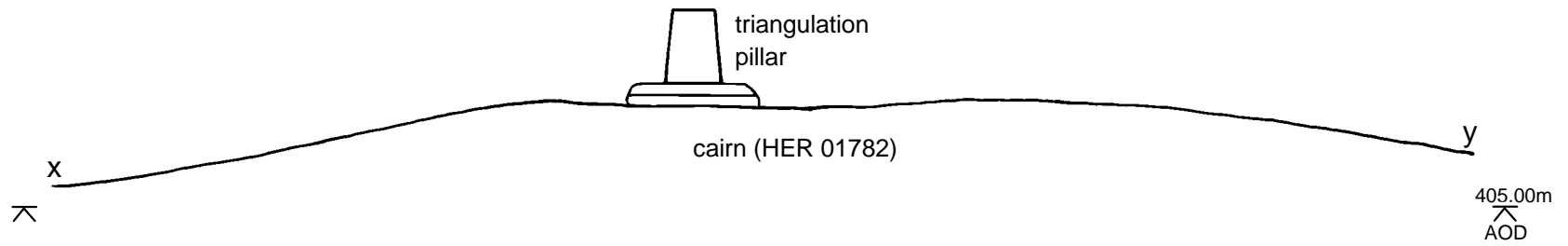


THE WREKIN, SHROPSHIRE 2011

Figure 2: The cairn (HER 01782), triangulation pillar and toposcope; plan view, showing location of profile x-y (Figure 3); 1:100 scale

SE

NW



THE WREKIN, SHROPSHIRE 2011

Figure 3: A profile across the cairn (Figure 2, x-y); 1:100 scale



Photo 1: The cairn, triangulation point and toposcope, looking southwest



Photo 2: The triangulation point, showing the erosion at its base; looking southeast



Photo 3: The toposcope, showing the erosion at its base; looking southwest

A Survey at The Wrekin Hillfort, Shropshire, 2011



Photo 4: Heaven's Gate (the inner northeast entrance) looking west



Photo 5: The Aerial-Cam vehicle at the southwest entrance



Photo 6: The southwest entrance, showing erosion, looking north



Photo 7: Recent damage to the Hell's Gate (outer northeast) entrance, probably caused by a 4x4 off-road vehicle



Photo 8: The cairn, triangulation point and toposcope © Aerial-Cam



Photo 9: The WWII features within the hillfort, looking northeast © Aerial-Cam



Photo 10: Heaven's Gate (inner northeast entrance) looking southwest © Aerial-Cam