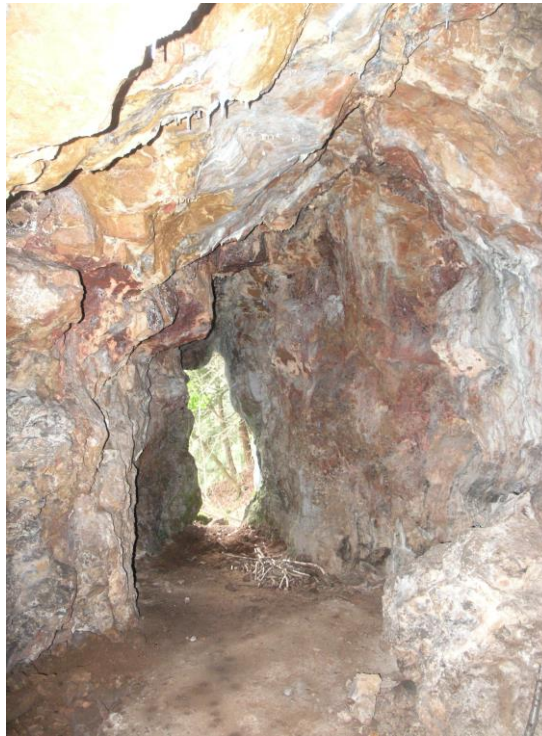


February 2013

Symond's Yat West, Whitchurch: A New Survey of Caves, Rock-Shelters and Industrial Remains



Report prepared by

Tim Hoverd

Herefordshire Archaeology Report No. 315

Herefordshire Archaeology
Conservation and Environmental Planning
Planning Services, Places & Communities Directorate

Herefordshire Council



***Herefordshire
Council***

Symond's Yat West, Whitchurch: A New Survey of Caves, Rock-Shelters and Industrial Remains

**NGR: SO 552 146
EHE 2072**

HAR 315

Report copyright Herefordshire Council 2013

Herefordshire Archaeology is Herefordshire Council's county archaeology service. It advises upon the conservation of archaeological and historic landscapes, supports the maintenance of the county Sites and Monuments (Historic Environment) Record, and carries out conservation and investigative field projects. The County Archaeologist is Dr. Keith Ray.

Herefordshire Archaeology

PO Box 230

Blueschool House

Blueschool Street

Hereford

HR1 2ZB

Contents

Summary

1. Introduction
2. Aims, objectives and methods for the study.
3. Location
4. Background history
5. Gazetteer of caves, rock-shelters and industrial features
6. Conclusions

Appendix 1 Site Archive

Acknowledgements

List of Illustrations

Bibliography

Summary

Many of the caves and rock-shelters within the Wye Gorge have been the subject of research over the last 150 years. Despite this (and in the main due to the difficult terrain and land use), few have been accurately located. This has led to confusion over site names, locations and site type for some caves. This was highlighted during recent archaeological works in close proximity to Merlin's Cave during 2010 and 2011. An HER enhancement project was therefore developed in order to accurately locate and describe caves, rock-shelters and mining adits on the Herefordshire side of the Wye Gorge.

During the winter of 2012 the base of the cliffs was walked by Herefordshire Archaeology staff together with suitably qualified and experienced cavers. Each cave, rock-shelter and adit was located using a hand-held GPS unit, a brief description was made of its dimensions and appearance and where possible, a photographic record was made. A record of each site's archaeological potential was also made. Caves and adits of any size / depth were inspected but not thoroughly explored. The walk over survey identified in excess of 40 sites previously unrecorded on the HER.

The survey has shown that there are many more caves and rock-shelters than had been previously recorded. A number do not appear to have been investigated and are of high archaeological potential. The adits and other features associated with mining which have now been recorded represent an important, complex and well preserved class of monuments relating to the rich industrial heritage of this part of the county.

Disclaimer: It should not be assumed that land referred to in this document is accessible to the public. Location plans are indicative only. NGR's 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 contained within this report 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 (OS Licence 100024168). This material has been reproduced in order to locate the site in its environs.

Copyright Herefordshire Council 2013.

1. Introduction

This report (EHE 2072) provides an account of a survey of the caves, mining adits and rock-shelters on the Herefordshire side of the Wye Gorge. The survey was conducted during February and March 2012 and comprised a walk over survey, locating features using a hand-held Global Positioning System. A description of each feature was made commenting upon its environs, dimensions and archaeological potential. Where possible and safe to do so Caves and adits were entered and their internal features briefly described. The descriptions were complemented by a photographic record.

The production of this report is a consequence of fieldwork undertaken by Herefordshire Archaeology during 2010 and 2011. During this fieldwork it became clear that difficulties existed in the locating of sites where earlier fieldwork had taken place and that this had led to confusion and the duplication of records.

2. Aims, objectives and methods for the study, including reporting

The principal aims of the study were to locate sites, both sites which have been the subject of previous fieldwork and “new” sites, to provide an accurate grid reference for each site together with a photographic record and brief description of the feature and its immediate environs.

A number of sites covered within this survey have been the subject of archaeological excavation in the 19th and early 20th century and during the 1990's. Due to the dense woodland and poor visibility even sites which have been excavated on a number of occasions are poorly located. This has led to a degree of confusion between the description of a site, its recorded location and its actual location. As a consequence there are a number of separate sites which have been given the same name or the same grid reference, (or both), whilst others have not been located at all.

The survey was conducted during the winter months in order to maximise visibility and to make walking through dense undergrowth easier. Grid references were taken using a hand held Global Positioning System, (GPS). Descriptions and other information were recorded onto a dictaphone for later transcription. A photographic record was made by digital camera.

The report was produced as a gazetteer with the grid reference, HER number, any other names / site codes that the site could be cross referenced to from previous fieldwork, a brief description and brief comments concerning each sites archaeological potential. Where possible a photographic record was included with the entry.

3. Location

The survey was confined to the Herefordshire side of the Wye Gorge between Symond's Yat West and the boundary of the Wyaston Leys Estate at Little Doward. This area was chosen as it contains the majority of sites which have been documented in the past that have not been satisfactorily located or described.

Geology

The area lies at the junction of numerous geological strata. The site is characterised by the carboniferous limestone series of the upper old red sandstone. The lower slopes consist of the lower dolomite series and above this is a significant limestone band (British Geological Survey 1989).

The soils of this area are the Crwbin series, part of the Rankers group and consist of fine silt over carboniferous limestone (Ragg et al, 1984). Merlin's Cave lies within the northern, upstream, end of the Wye Gorge. The course of the Wye here is thought to have arisen when a large river meandered across a floodplain of soft sediments and then cut down through successive layers of rock as land levels rose, the result is the spectacular Wye Gorge.

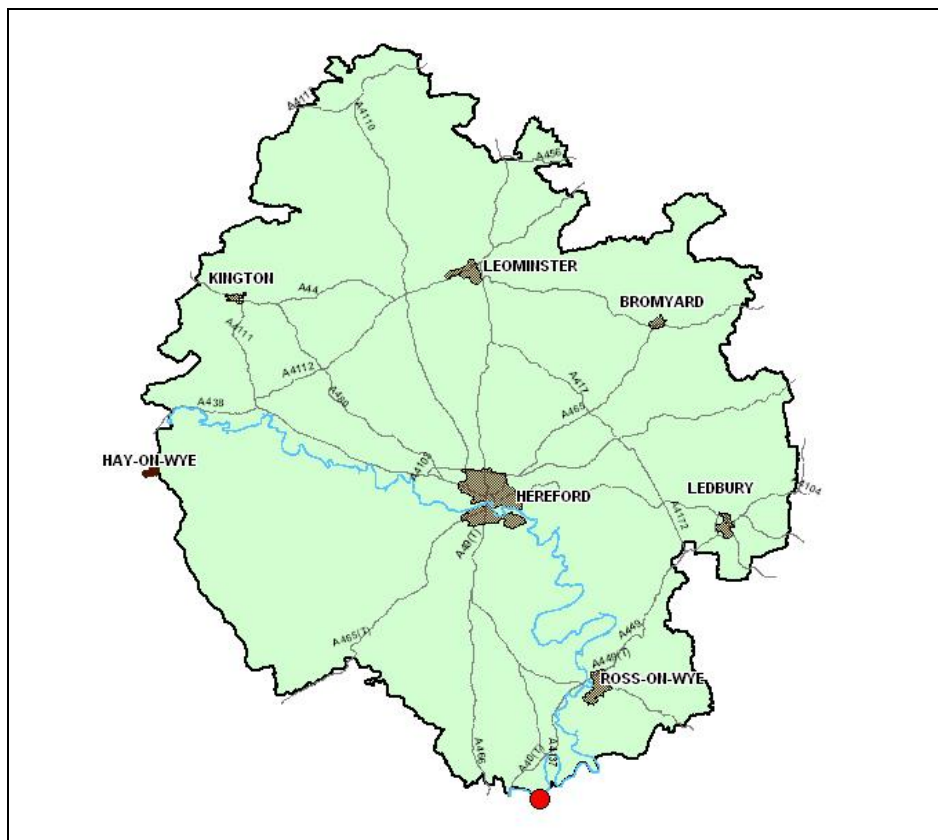


Figure 1: Location of the study area in relation to the main towns and city in Herefordshire.
© Herefordshire Council

The river runs some 120m below the plateau at this point. On the east side, the cliffs are vertical whilst on the west they are slightly less steep. The distance between the plateaux at the top of the gorge is 400m. The river is confined within a narrow course leading to dramatic rises in water levels in times of flood. The limestone geology has given rise to some classic Karst features; isolated pillars of rock tower above the river and caves are abundant.

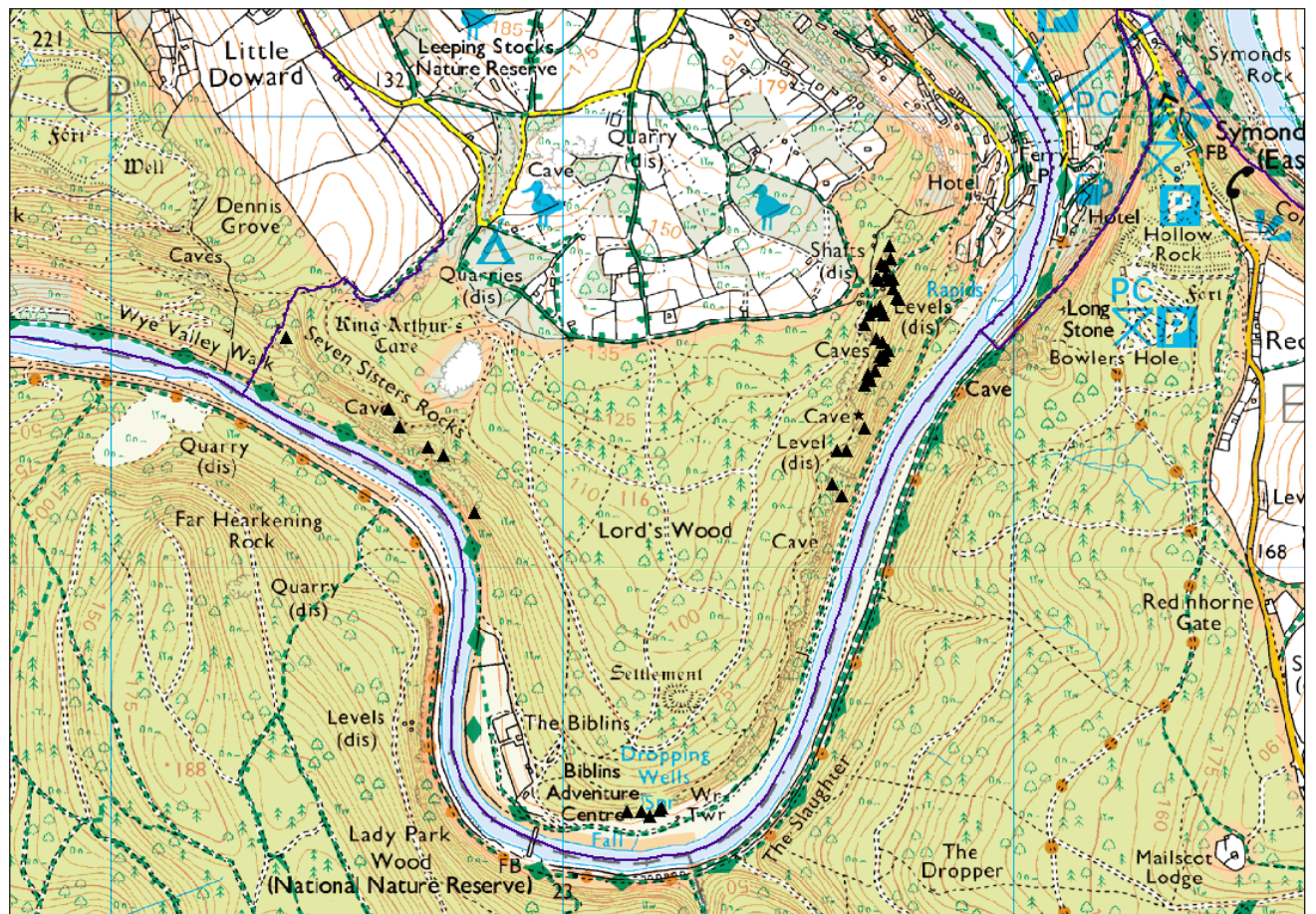


Figure 2: location Plan showing location of sites recorded during the survey . Each site is represented by a ▲ .
© Herefordshire Council

4. Background history / previous fieldwork

Statutory designations:

In 1989 an area of 245.1-hectare (606-acre) of Upper Wye Valley Gorge was designated as a SSSI. Of this, 192 hectares (470 acres) are in England and 53.1 hectares (131 acres) are in Wales. The majority of the site is owned and managed by the Forestry Commission, with part of it owned and managed as a nature reserve by the Herefordshire Nature Trust. It contains part of Lady Park Wood, a National Nature Reserve in Wales (NNR), as well as King Arthur's Cave. Part of Lady Park Wood NNR is in England (Gloucestershire) and a larger part is in Wales.

The SSSI falls within the Wye Valley Woodlands Special Area of Conservation (SAC) under the EU Habitats Directive.

Only two caves have been designated as a Scheduled Ancient Monuments. These are "King Arthur's Cave", first Scheduled in 1952, and "Merlin's Cave", first Scheduled in 1992.

A total of four caves / rock-shelters and adits including the scheduled sites have been recorded on the county Sites and Monuments Record.

Archaeological History:

A number of cave and rock-shelter sites have been the subject of prolonged research over the course of the late 19th and 20th centuries. The most prominent of these is King Arthur's cave, a large, double chambered cave, set back from the gorge. Excavations are first recorded in 1871 when the caves were excavated by Reverend W. S. Symonds, after he learned that some miners had raided them. Between 1925 and 1955 the University of Bristol Speleological Society (UBSS) excavated here.

A similar series of investigations has occurred at Merlin's Cave, with unrecorded "excavations" during the late 19th century followed by a series of written up excavations between 1924 and 1933.

In 1993 the Wye Valley Caves Project undertook an exploratory season of survey and trial excavations in a series of caves and rock-shelters within the Wye Valley Gorge, (Barton, R.N.E. University of Bristol Speleological Society proceedings 19-21). This was a 5 year project designed to assess and sample the caves and rock-shelters within the Wye Valley Gorge in relation to their archaeological and paleo-environmental potential. Barton also conducted small scale excavations at Merlin's cave, Madawg Rock-shelter, Cavall's Cave together with a number of less well known caves and rock-shelters on both sides of the gorge.

During 2010 and 2011 excavations were carried out by Herefordshire Archaeology immediately outside of Merlin's Cave, after flints, pottery, human and animal bones and other material were recovered from a series of tree throws on the slope below the cave. The

resulting fieldwork, although small in scale resulted in the recovery of two inhumations dating to the late 6th and early 7th centuries. (Hoverd, 2012, HAR 299).

Little is known concerning the investigation of mining adits, delves etc within the study area. No documentation has come to light describing any of the industrial remains. It would appear that most, (if not all) of the sites recorded during this survey have been at least visited by cavers / potholers, if not fully explored but these have never been looked at by historians or industrial archaeologists.

Despite the presence of a considerable quantity of archaeological data for a number of sites, it has until recently been impossible to accurately locate many of them. The terrain and often dense vegetation cover results in visibility being severely limited, making it impossible to produce accurate compass bearings. This has led to a considerable amount of confusion and uncertainty, especially when sites are in close proximity to one another.

5. Gazetteer of Caves, Rock-shelters and industrial features.

This section of the report is a gazetteer of the caves, rock-shelters and mining adits recorded during the walk-over survey. It is not intended to be anything other than a tool for locating and (briefly) describing each site, in order to put an end to, or at least minimise, the confusion which currently exists.

The grid reference for each cave was recorded using a hand-held GPS unit and gives an accuracy of between 5 and 10m, due to the proximity of the cliff face. Where possible, each entry has one or more photographs, one showing the feature and its immediate environs and one showing any significant external or internal detail. The sites recorded are described as Caves, Rock-shelters or Adits, where there is evidence for the existence of a collapsed cave, this is recorded as either a relict cave or rock-shelter. Information is then recorded concerning the overall dimensions of the site. The archaeological potential of the inside and immediate area outside of the site is commented upon as is any evidence for disturbance (animal or human). Any numbers or significant signage associated with each site is also noted. Where possible sites have been cross-referenced with either existing HER numbers or site codes used by Barton in his research during the 1990's.

Not all caves were internally inspected. A number of caves and adits are gated due to the presence of hibernating and / or roosting bats, others were too high in the cliff face for easy/safe access without specialist equipment.

It should be remembered that this survey only lists features encountered along the line of cliffs which comprise the wye gorge within the parish of Whitchurch. Other caves, adits and rock-shelters exist within other areas of Symond's Yat, Lords Wood, The Doward. These sites and their environs have not yet been examined or recorded in this way.

Grid Reference: SO 55508 14839

Site Type: Cave

HER: 53632

Description: 4m wide and 0.8m high goes back over 20m and gradually narrows. Roof gradually drops to rear and floor is good with large depth of sediment.

Potential: Steep approach to cave mouth little potential for deposits immediately outside it. High potential for deposits within it, although a 1.2m wide strip along the centre of the floor appears to have been disturbed by possible mining activity. Badger loo in cave mouth, possible sett to rear.

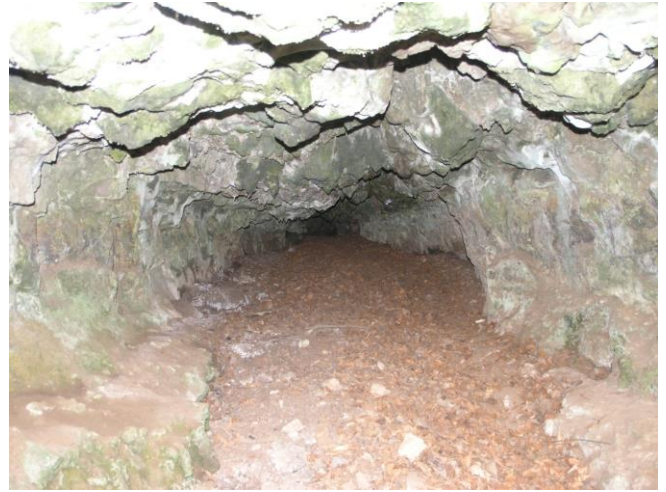


Plate 2: Inside Cave HER 53632



Plate 1: Entrance to cave HER 53632

Grid reference: SO 55612 15196

Site Type: Rock-shelter

HER: 53633

Description: Rock-shelter or collapsed cave. The face is under-cut, water-worn and smooth. overhangs by 0.6m. collapsed rubble at base. 6-7m long and close to top of outcrop.

Potential: fair.



Plate 3: Rock-shelter HER 53633

Grid reference: SO 55607 15260

Site Type: Adit

HER: 53634

Description: An entirely engineered adit . runs west into cliff and is 2m wide and 1.7m high and runs for c.60m. At c. 10m before it stops (and it suddenly stops!) the floor has given way into a natural cavern / solifluction hollow which I assume is the reason for it stopping. Approx. 15m in there are 2 small side chambers which are natural.

Potential: Low



Plate 4: Adit entrance HER



Plate 5: inside HER 53634

Grid reference: SO 55630 15260

Site Type: cave

HER 53635

Description: Approximately 12m long and 4m wide and 3m high entrance is 0.8m high, tooling all over roof.

Potential: Floor appears to be intact, potential is high. Ground falls away steeply so little potential outside it.



Plate 6: Cave Entrance HER 53635



Plate 7: Detail of tooling within HER 53635

Grid reference: SO 55673 15313

Site Type: Rock-shelter

HER 53636

Description: Relict cave or rock shelter. The roof is c. 5m high, well water worn. 8m long with 3.5m overhang. Faces SW.

Potential: high – some floor levels may be intact although people have been using it as a platform on which to camp and have fires.



Plate 8: Rock-shelter HER 53636

Grid reference: SO 55682 15333

Site Type: Cave

HER 3358

SAM 13692

Description: Merlin's Cave. Significant cave approximately 4.5m above the present ground surface. It has 3 openings with one main chamber approximately 15m in length with a small side chamber to the west. The cave has been excavated between 1923 and 1995 to exhaustion. There is a cone of spoil immediately below it. Human remains have been discovered interred on the slope below the cave. These have yielded a 6th century AD C14 date. One burial was interred with cattle bones which gave a c14 date of 900BC suggesting a direct link to the contents of the cave. (Hoverd, 2012). The Cave is a Scheduled Ancient Monument (No. 13692) although the grid reference for the Scheduling is not correct.

Potential: The cave has been completely emptied so potential inside is very low. However potential outside the cave is very high.



Plate 9: Merlin's Cave with external burial under spoil tip. HER 6406

Grid reference: SO 55704 15620

Site Type: Cave

HER 53637

Description: A small opening c. 1.5m wide and less than 0.5m above ground level. Goes back over 4m and filled with loose stone and earth. This is next to the modern track and any deposits outside of the cave may have been disturbed / removed.

Potential: Internally high but externally low



Plate 10: Cave entrance HER 53637

Grid reference: SO 55725 15638

Site Type: Cave

HER 53638

Description: There is a small opening at the base of the cliff, less than 1m wide and c. 0.2m above present ground level. Goes back c. 0.8m but may be the top of something bigger.

Potential: Internally High. In front of the cave is a stony ledge 2-2.5m wide before the steep slope down to the river.



Plate 11. HER 53638 and HER 53639

Grid reference: SO 55724 15639

Site Type: Cave

HER 53639

Description: 3m above cave HER is a cave which is 4m wide and 2.1m high and 4m deep. The floor is clean bedrock,

Potential: low.

Grid reference: SO 55733 15619

Site Type: Cave

HER 53640

Description: A cave approx. 3m high. At its opening and a little over 1m wide. The initial chamber goes back 10m with a small passage or squeeze going back at least a further 10m.

Potential: Thick earth floor with animal bone apparent. Potential high. Immediately outside the entrance there is a small apron 3.5m wide and then the steep slope.



Plate 12: Cave entrance HER 53640

Grid reference: SO 55746 15596

Site Type: Rock-shelter

HER 53641

Description: The back of a collapsed shelter or cave 1-1.5m deep. The base is full of loose stone and leaf litter. Immediately above this is a small hole 1.5m high and goes back over 1m and is 1m wide with a thin soil floor. It is 3.5m above the present ground level.

Potential: low due its size for the top and medium for the lower one depending on its floor make up. Immediately outside is a small step running along the base of the cliff for c.4-5m then the normal steep slope.



Plate 13: Caves HER 53641 and HER 53642

Grid reference: SO 55743 15595

Site Type: Cave

HER 53642

Description: Fissure / cave approx.. 4.5m above the present ground level, with a second immediately above that. The lower one is c. 2.5m high and goes back over 2.5m .

Potential: unknown, there is no shelf or apron outside the caves.

Grid reference: SO 55743 15598

Site Type: Cave

HER 53643

Description: Approx. 2m above Cave HER is another cave entrance 1.5m high and 1.5m wide, depth uncertain.



Plate 14: Cave's HER 53642 and HER 53643

Grid reference: SO 55692 15569

Site Type: Adit

HER 53644

Description: Adit approx. 1.8m wide 1.6m high and very irregular, however within 5m of entering it becomes a rectangular sectioned adit which runs for 120m plus with side tunnels , drilled holes for explosives , dry stone walling etc. Excellent example of an adit.

Potential: As part of an industrial complex, high.



Plate 15: Entrance to adit HER 53644



Plate 16: Interior of adit HER 53644

Grid reference: SO 55686 15569

Site Type: Cave / Adits

HER 53645

Description: There is a very substantial cavern, the front of which has partially collapsed, it has 2 adits running off it both go for well over 100m each with side chambers, evidence for drilling, blasting and substantial drystone walling. The cave is natural at its opening. It has a number of different numbers on it all of which are virtually unreadable. It has a front apron of spoil. Barton dug a trench in the front chamber but the location of the trench is uncertain. There are the remains of a masonry structure within the collapsed front chamber.

Potential: Huge amount of mining activity here in this area. Spoil tips built on top of spoil tips, track ways and retaining walls. This is clearly a significant and well preserved industrial complex. Potential for activity pre-dating the industrial activity – moderate and at depth.



Plate 17: Front chamber of HER 53645

Grid reference: SO 55680 15561

Site Type: Adit

HER 54646

Description: Adit partially filled in by recent collapse. This is a true adit which opens into a large cavern after 30m. There is a side adit which looks as though it is an exploited fissure on the left hand side. The entrance is labelled No. 13. The adits run for several hundred metres both northerly and westerly. Low potential except for industrial features.



Plate 18: Entrance to Adit HER 53646

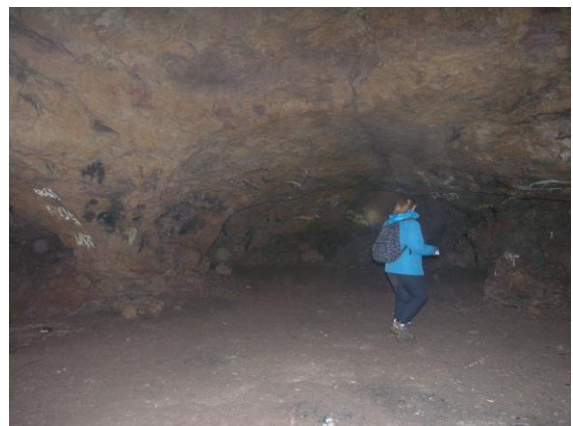


Plate 19: Cavern within HER 53647

Grid reference: SO 55687 15521

Site Type: Cave / Adits (Pancake Cave)

HER 53647

Description: cave 14, 2 entrances opening into a large cavern, some adit work and stone walling. Goes back 25m as a main cavern but continues as smaller passages, largely inaccessible .

Potential: good build-up of soil inside. Outside the cave mouth is a vast amount of spoil and debris but this may have preserved material at depth.



Plate 20: Entrances to Pancake Cave
HER 53647

Grid reference: SO 55719 15517

Site Type: Cave

HER 53648

Description: Small cave opening of a ledge 1.5m above present slope. It goes back initially 4.5m as a main chamber but continues for a further 4-5m in a smaller chamber. The front chamber is approx.. 1.5m wide and 5m high.

Potential: Floor has some potential but not the most comfortable of shapes. Has a 1m wide ledge immediately outside it



Plate 21: Entrance to HER 53648

Grid reference: SO 55704 15576

Site Type: Adit

HER 53649

Description: 2 adits running parallel to each other. The first cuts right through the cliff and comes out on the north-eastern side. 15-20m long, 1.5m wide and up to 5m high. The second terminates after 6m and is 4m high and 2m wide. It is well cut with a u shaped roof. Both have loose fills in them. The second adit floor is made of loose fine ash and charcoal, with fragments of burnt, heat shattered rock.

Potential: For industrial activity, High.



Plate 22: Adits HER 53649 and HER 53650

Grid reference: SO 55704 15568

Site Type: Cave

HER 53651

Description: There is the opening of a small cave which looks entirely natural. The entrance is 1m wide and 0.6m high which opens into a small chamber which returns under itself. It has a well preserved earth floor and looks untouched.

Potential: high.



Plate 23: Entrance to Cave HER 53651

Grid reference: SO 55704 15579

Site Type: Adit

HER 53650

Location of second adit.

Grid reference: SO 55709 15568.

Site Type: Cave

HER 53652

Description: This is 2m wide and up to 5m high and is a long narrow chamber with an earth floor. The floor looks to be intact but the ceiling may have been quarried.

Potential: fair.



Plate 24: Entrance to Cave HER 53652

Grid reference: SO 55726 15504

Site Type: Cave / Adits

HER 53653

Description:

Cave 16, adit but with a natural cave entrance, Adit is large – 3.5m wide with multiple passages off either side and is currently gated for bats hibernating. The cave entrance appears to go back for 7m before the mining adits start. The cave floor looks reasonable and is mainly of earth. There is a small platform outside it which has been cut through by the Holloway which leads from the main area of quarrying.

Pontential: fair.

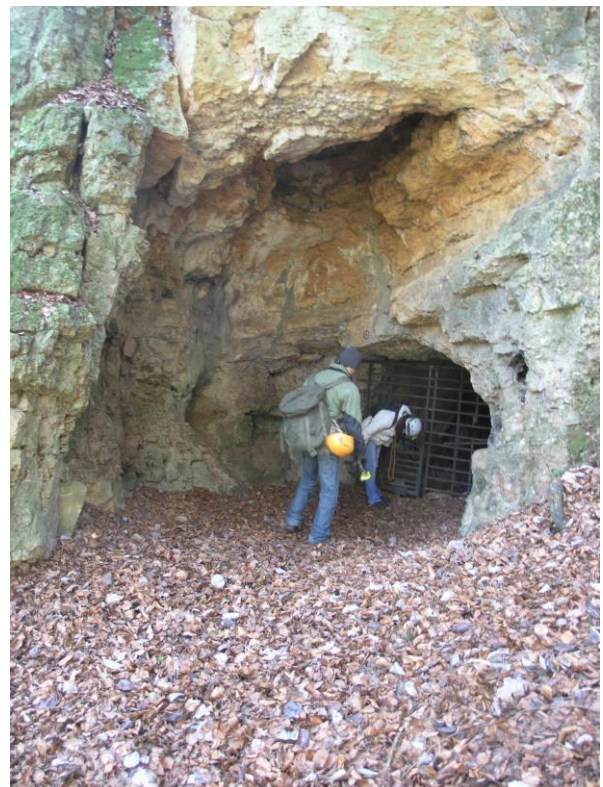


Plate 25: Cave / Adit HER 53653

Grid reference: SO 55719 15482

Site Type: Cave

HER 53654

Description: Cave 17a, 1.2m wide and 1m high entrance, 1.5m high inside, goes back approx. 4m. This is a natural cave with an intact earthen floor. The slope runs right up to the entrance.

Potential: inside high.



Plate 26: Cave 17a Entrance, HER 53654

Grid reference: SO 55723 15480

Site Type: Cave

HER 53655

Description: Cave 17b, similar in size and shape to 17a but there is a small passage leading from the rear of the chamber which continues for 6-7m. There is a 4m square level area immediately outside the cave where the front of the cave has collapsed.

Potential: both inside and out, high.



Plate 27: Cave 17b Entrance, HER 53655

Grid reference: SO 55714 15470

Site Type: Cave

HER 53656

Description: Natural cave, 3m wide and 2m high, goes back 4m and has an earth floor. This is 5m above the present cliff base.

Potential: inside the cave is high.

Grid reference: SO 55704 15468

Site Type: Cave

HER 53658

Description: There is a small hole 0.3m wide and 0.2m high at the present ground level. This opens into a small chamber which is almost completely filled with rubble and earth.

Potential: high.



Plate 28: HER 53658

Grid reference: SO 55709 15471

Site Type: Cave

HER 53657

Description: Cave at the present cliff base. This is 3-4m in diameter and oval in shape. It is 2m high with a 1.2m wide and 0.7m high entrance.

Potential: Earth floor, potential high.

No photos of either as I cannot get back far enough!

Grid Reference: SO 55702 15479

Site Type: Cave (Cave 18)

HER 53659

Description: Long cave approximately 20m or more over head height falling to a narrow passage which apparently joins up with Cave 19. Good, undisturbed earth floor.

Potential: inside is high. Steep slope by entrance.

No photograph

Grid Reference: SO 55692 15435

Site Type: Cave (Cave 19)

HER 53660

Description: Large cave, with two chambers to the front and rear joined by a narrow passage. Front chamber has an undisturbed earth floor. Rear chamber is mostly rock. The passage has been cleared by cavers and a small side chamber may have been filled with rubble as a result. A well preserved Proximal Phalanx was found in this area during the survey. There is a level area immediately outside the cave.

Potential: Very high potential both inside and out.



Plate 29: Entrance to Cave 19 HER 53660

Grid Reference: SO 55681 15416

Site Type: Rock-shelter

HER 53661

Description: rock shelter, 5m long, 2m wide and 1.5m high. It may be a collapsed cave of which one side has gone. Its floor is level and there is a good depth of floor soil.

Potential: good. The floor forms a step c. 2-2.5m wide.



Plate 30: HER 53661

Grid Reference: SO 55658 15428

Site Type: Cave

HER 53662

Description: An opening at present ground level at the base of the cliff approx.. 1m wide and 0.75m high. It runs under the cliff for at least 4m and is almost completely filled with earth and rubble.

Potential: High both inside and out.



Plate 31: HER 53662

Grid Reference: SO 55669 15404

Site Type: Cave, (CAVE 20)

HER 53663

Description:

Gated cave, entrance is 0.7m wide and 2m high which opens into a substantial cavern.

Potential: inside appears to be good. Steep slope immediately outside., so low potential outside.



Plate 32: Entrance to Cave 20, HER 53663

Grid Reference: SO 55704 15638

Site Type: Cave

HER 53664

Description: A small cave right next to the track. 3.5m wide and a meter high at its entrance, goes back 3.5m with a small chamber to the rear which goes back a further 1-2m. it is about 1.5m high inside.

Potential: Floor is fairly thin earth over rock, potential inside fair – outside it has been cut by the track so no potential.



Plate 33: Entrance to HER 53664

Grid Reference: SO 55732 15639

Site Type: Cave and adit (cave 11)

HER 53665

Description: Next to track. Adit which opens into a large cavern, very uniform in shape, 12m long and 6m wide, and 6-8m high. Entrance is 2m in diameter and round. It has been mined.

Potential: Low potential inside and out.



Plate 34: Entrance to Cave 11, HER 53665

Grid Reference: SO 55717 15649

Site Type: Cave

HER 53666

Description: small cave 3.2m high and 2m wide at its widest point. It goes back approx. 4m.

Potential: Fair, it has an earth floor so it has good potential inside. There is not much evidence of mining activity. No potential outside as it is next to the track.

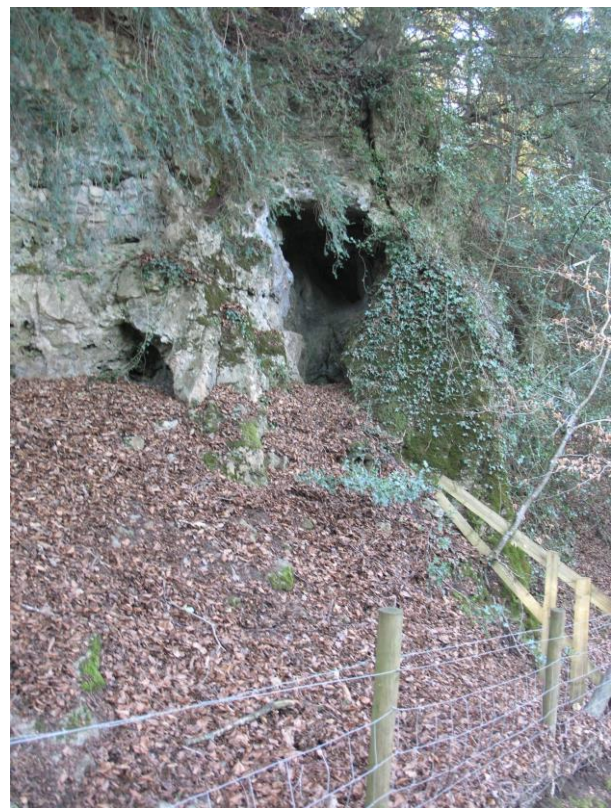


Plate 35: Entrance to HER 53666

Grid Reference: SO 55706 15674

Site Type: Cave

HER 53667

Description: Small cave approx. 1m, in diameter and 5m in length. 1.5m high max inside.

Potential: Some potential inside although there is not much soil but none outside.



Plate 36: Entrance to HER 53667

Grid Reference: SO 55713 15670

Site Type: Cave

HER 53668

Description: The entrance is 3m wide and 6m deep with a small cave with multiple chambers up to 5m square and 1.5m high.

Potential: high inside.



Plate 37: Entrance to HER 53668

Grid Reference: SO 55762 15690

Site Type: Rock-shelter

HER 53669

Description: rock shelter or partially collapsed cave, 12-15m long. The present overhang is over 4m long, 1m high and 2m wide.

Potential: Inside is good. Outside is fair there is a level base which is presumably the cave floor which looks undisturbed.



Plate 38: Rock-shelter, HER 53669

Grid Reference: SO 55735 15702

Site Type: Cave

HER 53670

Description: a small cave 2.5m above the base of the cliff. The entrance is 0.6m high and 1.5m wide with a single chamber 2m long. Rock floor.

Potential: Low



Plate 39: Cave HER 53670

Grid Reference: SO 55220 14465

Site Type: Rock-shelter

HER 53671

Description: Rock shelter, water worn at the back with less than 1m deep overhang. There is a relatively gentle slope from the base of the cliff for the first 5m.

Potential: Medium , there may be some deposits within the gentle slope.



Plate 40: Rock-shelter HER 53671

Grid Reference: SO 55214 14460

Site Type: Rock-shelter

HER 53672

Description: Rock shelter, 3m high with 2m overhang. At its base there is a shelf of rock which extends 3.5m at its widest point from the cliff face.

Potential: There is 0.4m thick soil / rubble on the shelf so fair potential. It is close to the Biblin's campsite so disturbance could be high.



Plate 41: Rock-shelter, HER 53672

Grid Reference: SO 55192 14447

Site Type: Adit

HER 53673

Description: there is a mine / adit, the entrance is 1.6m high and 1.4m wide. And almost completely obscured by tuffa growth.

Potential: Low



Plate 42: Tufa deposits covering Adit entrance, HER 53673

Grid Reference: SO 55173 14458

Site Type: Cave

HER 53674

Description: there is a collapsed cave. It was c. 15m long and ran along the length of the cliff face. It is water worn and has traces of Stalagmites. The cave has clearly collapsed in antiquity and now comprises a series of tufa covered blocks.

Potential: It is assumed that any contents of the cave are well preserved at depth and therefore this site has high potential.



Plate 43: Back of collapsed cave HER 53674

Grid Reference: SO 55142 14451

Site Type: Cave / Adit , (Dropping Well)
Also known as Biblins Cave, MB 3.

HER 26390

Description: Gated 2m diameter entrance which opens out into a chamber. It does appear to be a mine rather than a cave – radon warnings.

Potential: Low, due to mining and recent activity immediately outside. It is thought that this cave was test pitted by Barton in 1996. Mesolithic? Remains were found.



Plate 44: Entrance to Biblin's Cave, HER 26390

Grid Reference: SO 54734 15249

Site Type: Cave

HER 53675

Description: cave / fissure, 1.5m wide and 4m high and runs back into the stack (seven sisters) and is 6-7m long.

Potential: Mud floor with some potential. Immediately outside it there is the floor of the fissure as it has been cut back and still overhangs. Fair potential.



Plate 45: HER 53675

Grid Reference: SO 54700 15267

Site Type: Rock-shelter

HER 26386

Description: Madawg Shelter – Very large rock shelter 3.5m high sloping back to rift at rear, overhang 7-8m at maximum. 25m long.

Potential: High but many modern camp-fires. The site has been trial trenched by Barton in 1993 and 1994 and by Hewer in 1925. Much Bronze Age material recovered including human remains, also Roman.



Plate 46: Madawg Rock-shelter, HER 26386

Grid Reference: SO 54638 15313

Site Type: Rock-shelter

HER 53676

Description: Rock-shelter, 15m long and 1.2m max overhang 1.5m above present ground. Level floor up to 2.5m wide from cliff face.

Potential: moderate.



Plate 47: HER 53676

Grid Reference: SO 54614 15351

Site Type: Cave (Cavall's or Cabal's Cave)

HER 26387

Description: Cabals (or Cavall's) cave 4.5m high and 4m wide entrance rift cave. Small apron potential high goes back 7m.

Potential: Internally and externally high. This was excavated in the 1950's and in 1993 by Barton. Roman and earlier material was recovered.



Plate 48: Cabal's Cave, HER 26386

Grid Reference: SO 54803 15512

Site Type: Cave

HER 53677

Description: small cave, 1.2m wide and 1m high goes back 4m and opens onto a 2m wide level area before a steep slope down to the river.

Potential: Low



Plate 49: Entrance to HER 53677

6. Conclusions

A total of 47 caves, adits and rock-shelters were recorded during the survey. Whilst it is clear that all have been “explored” in one way or another, the majority have not been looked at from an archaeological perspective. Most have been explored by cavers who have done little damage and appear to have had a numbering system in the past. This appears to run from zero in the north east to at least 20 as one heads south and west. This system is however only used for “climbable” caves and as a result gaps occur. The number and extent of the adits was unexpected, bearing in mind that none were listed on the HER. Some of the adits appear to run for many hundred metres and contain much physical information regarding the methods employed in their construction and decommissioning.

The sites located and briefly recorded here have also been assessed for their archaeological potential, in terms of intact floors which may contain archaeological deposits and / or features. The adits were not sufficiently explored to comment on their contents, e.g. timber props, drystone walling, ramps etc.

Acknowledgements

The author would like to acknowledge the assistance of Tom Elliot and Rebecca Symonds during the survey work.

Herefordshire Archaeology would like to thank the Tim Yarnell, Ray Beasley, Dave Sykes and Phil Morton of The Forestry Commission for their assistance and co-operation.

Bibliography

BGS 2000 British Geological Survey Solid and Drift Geology.

Earp, J. R. and
Haines, B. A. 1971, British Regional Geology. The Welsh borderland (3rd ED).
Natural Environment Research Council, Institute of Geological
Sciences. London: HSMO.

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. KEITH Ray, (County Archaeologist).