



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

**Herefordshire Woodland
Pilot Scheme: Phase 1
Copse Wood
Herefordshire Archaeology Report
No.58**

Herefordshire Archaeology,
May 2002, revised 2004.

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 Woodland Pilot Scheme: Phase 1 Copse Wood

Herefordshire Archaeology Report No.58, May 2002, (revised 2004).

Summary:

The survey described in this report formed part of a pilot study in partnership with the Forestry Commission. A rapid walk over survey was carried out in the wood concerned. A hand held G.P.S unit was used to record the location of features encountered.

Structures were recorded within the wood that illustrate the intensive use of the woodland resource in the late and post medieval periods, i.e. Saw pits, charcoal burning platforms, quarries and woodland management boundaries.

The truncated remains of possibly medieval field divisions or earlier woodland boundaries were also recorded, however, their condition was too poor to interpret them further during the course of this survey.

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 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

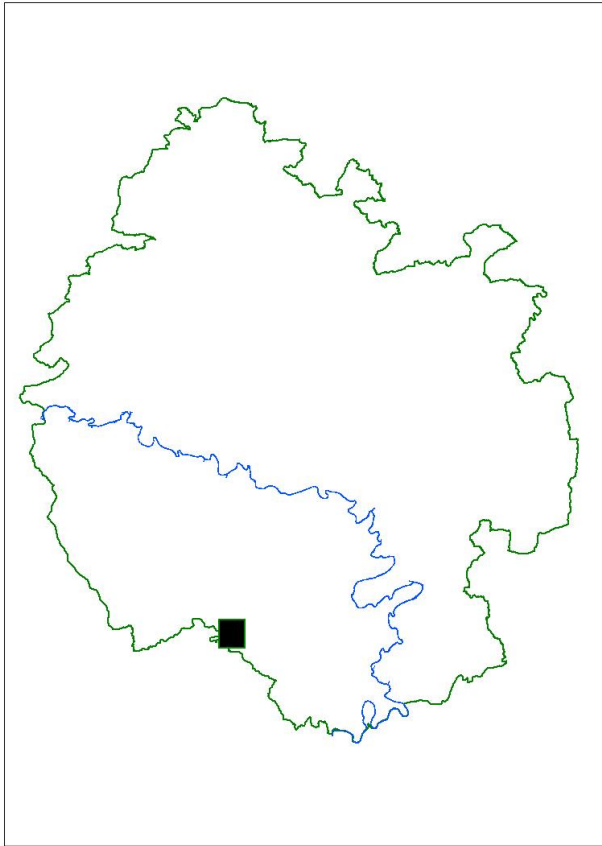
This report provides an account of a rapid survey of Copse Wood, (SMR No. 32763). The survey was undertaken as part of a pilot study in partnership with the Forestry Commission in order to document the archaeology of woodlands in the county. Woodlands are areas of high archaeological potential in that 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 and until recently recording an accurate location within woodland was often not practicable.

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 took place in 2001-2 and involved the rapid survey of eight areas of woodland in different areas of the county. These woodlands were split into those that are owned and managed by Forest Enterprises, those owned by large private estates, those that have recently been the subject of Woodland Grant Scheme applications and those for which Native Woodland Plans have been or are in preparation.

The survey for each woodland area in the pilot study identified the potential for the survival of archaeological features and sampled the types of features present. The stage two survey will re-visit woodlands identified in the stage one study as being of high archaeological potential and a more detailed survey undertaken. 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. The phase two survey will also expand the stage one survey and subject additional woodlands to rapid survey.

It is only when the changes throughout history within a wood have been documented and understood and put together with ecological information that a well informed management strategy can be implemented. Woodland boundaries have often moved over the centuries, sometimes expanding to encapsulate and preserve evidence of alternative land-use, e.g. field systems and on other occasions shrinking and being subject to differing forms of woodland management. These variations in land-use within a woodland influence the ecological data from that woodland. As such archaeological survey can contribute significant data concerning woodland history, management history and sequential development. This can provide independent verification of historical change from ecological study.

Location



Copse Wood is located at NGR SO 429 250, approximately 5km. south of Pontrilas. The woodland comprises the western side of Garway Hill, overlooking the Monnow Valley. The wood forms part of the Kentchurch Estate.

The Historic Landscape Characterisation Study for Herefordshire describes Copse Wood as woodland surrounded by fields derived from the enclosure of former common arable areas to the west, and historic parkland to the north. To the south and east is Garway Hill. (Ray and White, 2003).

Figure 1: Site Location

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 taken place here previously.

Method

Copse Wood was surveyed on February 15th 2002. 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 12 XL Global Positioning System, enabling a ten figure grid reference to be recorded for each feature. This system is accurate to within approximately 10m under tree canopy.

The wood was walked in transects aligned roughly north / south and approximately 50m 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 is only a sample of the woodland and should not be taken as exhaustive. It is intended to record the type of features present, their state of preservation and their relationships to other features within the woodland.

Results (Figure 2)

The recorded data from the survey is described in detail within the results section. This latter section is concluded by a brief discussion highlighting the historical development of the woodland as understood using the 2003 survey results. The significance of recorded features and management implications are then commented upon within the 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 three charcoal burning platforms were recorded, HSM 32774, 32779 and 32782. These ranged in size from 6-10m in diameter and in the main comprised a level, circular platform with a pronounced down-slope lip.

A single saw pit was recorded HSM 32770. The earthwork remains comprise an oval depression between 4 and 6m in length, 1.5m wide and 0.3-0.5m deep with spoil on their down-slope sides.

Two large rectangular platforms were recorded, (HSM 32768 and 32784). Platform HSM 32768 comprised a levelled area 8m square. This probably represents the earthwork remains of either a storage platform for processed or unprocessed lumber or charcoal. HSM 32784 comprised a platform c. 30m long and 10m wide and is directly associated with a large quarry, HSM 32783. It is probable that this area represents a loading area for quarried stone and a turning area for carts and other draught vehicles.

Former Land Use

The standing remains of a two cell building was recorded, HSM 32767. This comprised a two storey building with two added bay windows on the west front. There is a copper boiler in a lean-to on the south-western corner. It is constructed of local stone and is two up, two down with a chimney on both end gables and appears to date from the 18th or early 19th century. The north wall has collapsed and the roof has fallen in. The roof was stone tile with a clay ridge. It is presumed that this building represents an keepers or head woodsman’s cottage associated with Kentchurch Estate.

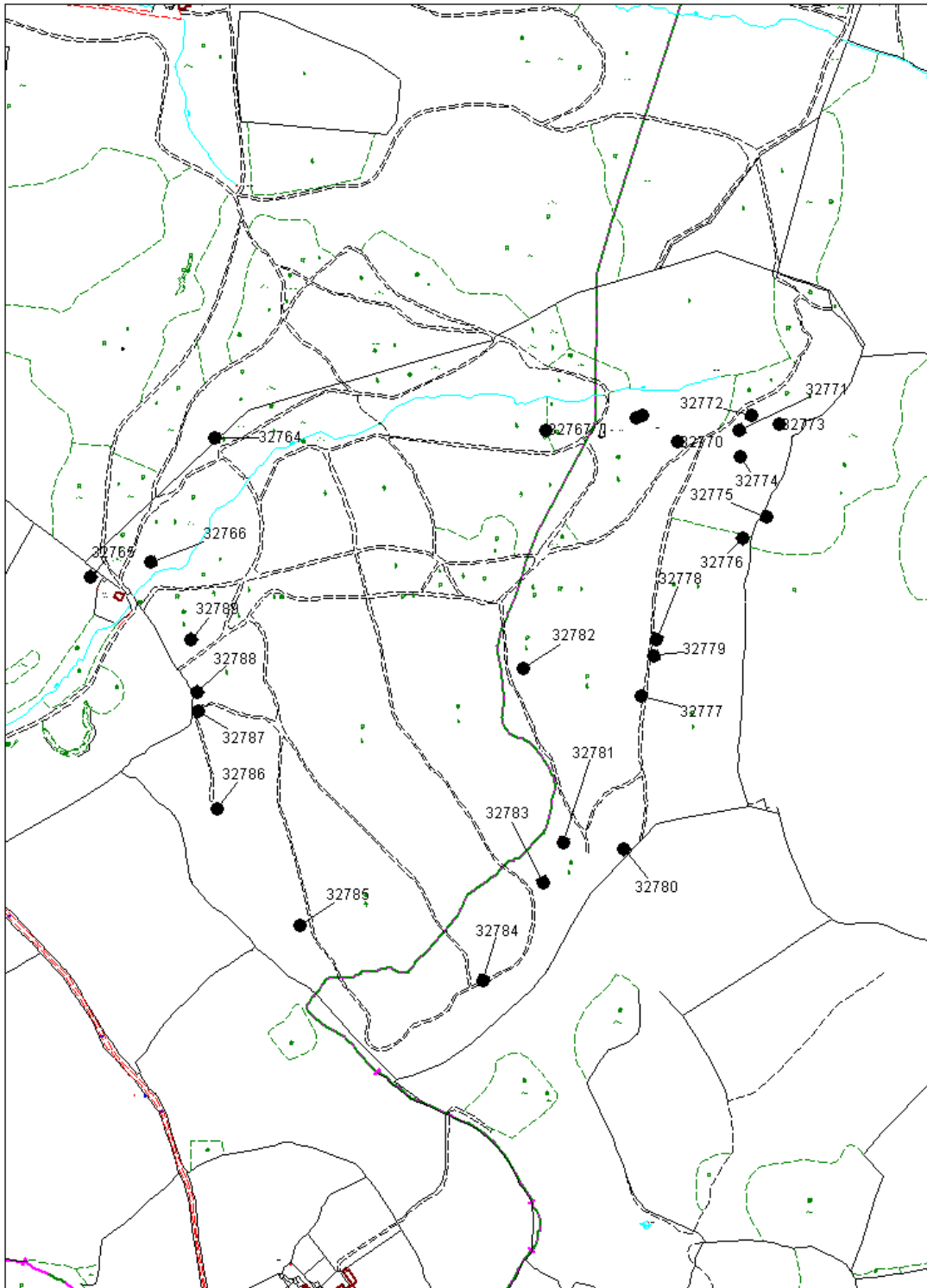


Figure 2: Location of earthworks recorded during the survey.

Woodland boundaries

In general the woodland boundary banks survive well particularly those forming the edge of Garway Hill. HSM 32773 overlay a series of small quarry scoops indicating a post medieval date for this feature.

Four compartment boundaries were identified. These all appear to relate to the post-medieval period. Many, e.g. HSM 32777, can be seen to cut or overly earlier features and indicate that much of the present woodland was laid out in the late-medieval or post-medieval period.

Industrial features

A series of quarries was recorded, these ran along the northern and eastern edges of Copse. These culminated in a very substantial quarry, (HSM 32783), and were presumably all associated with various phases of the development of Kentchurch Court and its associated buildings

Much of the central area has been severely damaged by heavy plant. Much of this area has become too overgrown to enable survey to take place. An under storey of bramble approximately 0.5m high covers the entire area making reliable survey impossible at this time.

Discussion and Implications

Indications of former land use

Besides the ruined cottage, (HSM 32767), there is little evidence of land use other than that related to woodland management. However the fragmentary remains of a substantial bank and ditch, (HSM 32786), may represent an earlier boundary or landscape division.

Site and feature condition

The survey recorded a wide range of features dating from the late 19th century to the medieval period. These included features associated with woodland management, industry and settlement. The majority of features recorded were well preserved and coherent. However, many of the features recorded on the southern and western edges of the wood were badly truncated by 20th century extraction and levelling. A number of smaller, more localised features, e.g. charcoal burning platform HSM 32781 have been truncated by recent ground-works associated with jumps and ditches constructed for a motor-cross course.

Implications regarding the archaeological resource

The archaeological features within Copse Wood are well preserved around the periphery but largely destroyed by modern clearance using heavy plant.

Implications regarding site condition

Woodland boundary banks and compartment boundaries generally survive well as do other woodland management features and features relating to former land-use. Relationships are difficult to establish between the woodland management features and earlier features due to their truncation.

Implications for future management

Existing access routes should be used for future management and extraction of the woodland. The density and overall state of preservation of a wide range of features suggest that, with the exception of the central area. Additional information concerning land-use and woodland management could be learned from further, more detailed survey of particularly the linear features.

Implications for future field work.

This area of woodland has a high potential for the presence of well preserved archaeological features around its edges and in its northern portion, particularly on the steeper slopes. It should be possible to recognise relationships between many features and hence produce a series of phases illustrating the changing management of the woodland and the extent of former land use. A more detailed survey would bring more subtle relationships out and may reveal the extent of medieval and post-medieval woodland boundaries.

<h2><i>Discussion</i></h2>

This rapid survey has identified features associated with most industries commonly associated with woodland. Evidence of large scale quarrying, charcoal burning, saw pits and woodland management boundaries were recorded.

It is clear that the central portion of Copse Wood has been subject to intensive 20th century timber extraction and this has destroyed much of the earthwork remains, which would usually be apparent. However enough survive on the wood edges and in particular in the northern and eastern slopes to establish that this has been an intensively managed wood for many centuries.

Many of the quarries are undoubtedly linked to various phases of construction at Kentchurch Court.

The ruined cottage is marked on the current Ordnance Survey map and was presumably lived in until relatively recently. It appears to be of 18th century origin with 19th century and later additions.

Acknowledgements

Herefordshire Archaeology would like to thank the Forestry Commission and acknowledge the help and co-operation of the land owner.

Archive

1 dictaphone tape
1 transcription record
1 Exel Database
1 Mapinfo Database
This document.

Appendix 1: Database of features and grid references.

HSM No.	East	North	Site type	Period	Description
32764	42656	25174	Park Pale	Medieval?	Survives up to 1.8m high in places
32765	42525	25027	Compartment bank	Post-medieval	1.5m wide and 0.3m high running n/s
32766	42588	25043	Circular depression	Post-medieval	5m in diameter and 0.5m deep
32767	43005	25182	Ruined cottage	Post-medieval	Two storey facing west made of local stone. Chimneys on both gable ends.
32768	43100	25195	platform	Post-medieval	Poss. Building platform c. 8m square
32769	43107	25198	Spring with cistern	C19th	Water supply to house.
32770	43144	25170	Saw Pit	Post-medieval	C. 4m long and 2m wide
32771	43208	25181	holloway	Post-medieval	4m wide and 1.5m deep running east.
32772	43221	25198	Lynchet	Medieval?	Corner of strip lynchet runs SE and NW.
32773	43251	25188	Wood bank	Post-medieval	Wood bank and ditch cutting quarry spoil heaps
32774	43209	25154	Charcoal Burning Platform	Post-medieval	CPB 8m in diameter
32775	43237	25090	Wood bank	Post-medieval	Very straight with ditch on up-slope side.
32776	43212	25068	Compartment boundary	Post-medieval	Bank c. 2m wide and 0.5m high with ditch to its south.

32777	43105	24902	Compartment boundary	Post-medieval	At right angles to 32776
32778	43121	24961	pit	Post-medieval	8m long and 4m wide
32779	43118	24944	platform	Post-medieval	Possibly a small charcoal burning platform
32780	43086	14740	ditch	Post-medieval	Ditch c. 1.5m wide and 0.2m deep.
32781	43023	24747	Charcoal Burning Platform	Post-medieval	8-10m in diameter but truncated by modern disturbance.
32782	42981	24930	Knoll	Natural?	Small knoll with very sharp edges. It is unusual in that it is the only feature in the centre of the wood
32783	43002	24704	Quarry	Post-Medieval	Very large and deep quarry
32784	42938	24601	platform	Post medieval	c. 30m long and 10m wide possibly for loading carts from the quarry
32785	42745	24660	Compartment boundary	Post-medieval	Bank 2-3m wide and 0.5m wide
32786	42658	24782	Bank and ditch	medieval	Substantial bank c. 4m wide with ancient yew tree on its northern side.
32787	42638	24885	Ditch	Post-medieval	Cuts the wood bank
32788	42637	24905	Ditch	Post-medieval	Ditch associated with wood bank
32789	42631	24961	access	Post-medieval	Old access way cutting wood bank

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.

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