



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

**Herefordshire Woodlands  
Pilot Study: Phase 1  
Hyde & Busland Wood  
Herefordshire Archaeology Report  
No.56**

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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 Pilot Study: Phase 1 Hyde & Busland Wood

Herefordshire Archaeology Report No. 56, May 2002, (revised 2004).

## *Summary:*

*The survey described in this report, (EHE32489), formed part of a pilot study in partnership with the Forestry Commission. A rapid walk over survey was carried out in the woodland 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.*

*Compelling evidence was recorded, showing that much of the wood was under arable field in the medieval period. This took the form of areas covered by strip lynchets, headlands and ridge and furrow.*

*Squatter settlement relating to the now deserted Hyde Common was also recorded.*

**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***

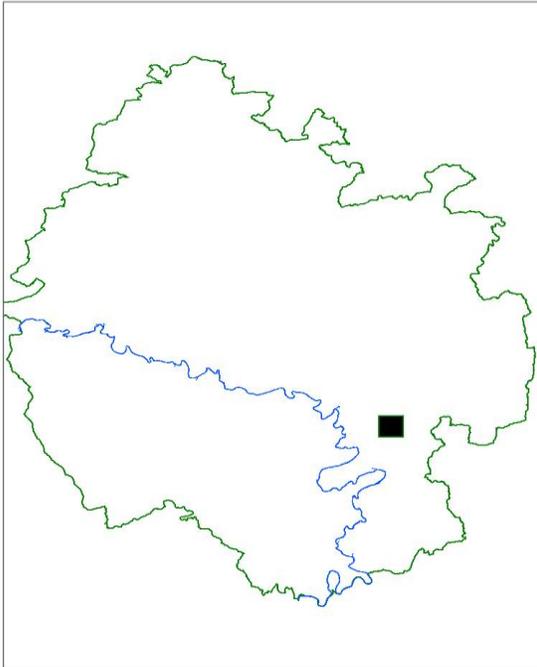
This report provides an account of a rapid survey of Busland and Hyde Woods, (EHE32489). The survey was undertaken as part of a pilot study in partnership with the Forestry Commission in order to document the archaeology of woodlands in the county. Woodlands are areas of high archaeological potential 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***



Busland and Hyde wood is located at NGR SO 623 350, approximately 1km. south / east of Woolhope, to the west of the Marcle Ridge. The woodland comprises the top and sides of a north / south limestone ridge with a clay vale to its east and west. The ridge narrows towards its southern end.

The Historic Landscape Characterisation Study for Herefordshire describes Hyde and Busland Woods as woodland surrounded by fields derived from the enclosure of former common arable areas (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***

Busland and Hyde wood were surveyed on March 6<sup>th</sup> 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 or its results 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***

Busland and Hyde Wood covers the top and upper slopes of a Limestone ridge. Approximately 30% of its area is relatively level comprising the plateau of the hill top and an area within the valley bottom. The wood is predominantly under mixed deciduous woodland but areas in the north and west are under conifer and a small central area on the western slope is under immature conifer.

### ***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 thirteen charcoal burning platforms were recorded. These ranged in size from 6-15m in diameter and in the main comprised a level, circular platform with a pronounced down-slope lip. These were often recorded in small clusters of three or four, usually also associated with saw pits and possible storage platforms. The size of some of these charcoal burning platforms, (HSM 32512), would suggest prolonged use.

Seven saw pits were recorded. Their 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. These were predominately located on the northern and south-western slopes. Associated with many of the saw pits were rectangular platforms presumably for stacking sawn or squared timber on. Several saw pits, (HSM 32496, 32500 and 32524), are unusually large, (3m wide and up to 6m long), possibly suggesting that there were some very large standards to be processed, or that exceptionally long beams or planks were being produced.

A single large rectangular platform was recorded on the western flank of the wood, (HSM 32505). This comprised a levelled area 8m in length and 3m wide, aligned north / south along the contour. This platform was in close association with both saw pits and charcoal burning platforms suggesting that it was either used as storage or seasonal accommodation.

### **Former Land Use**

The standing remains of a two cell building was recorded within the southern portion of the wood, (HSM 32509). This appears to relate to squatter settlement associated with

what was formerly Hyde Common. The building is of one and a half stories with and is constructed of local nodular Woolhope Limestone with handmade brick quoins. It has been constructed in two phases and only the western cell survives to any height. The external walls are 0.6m thick and the partition wall is 0.45m thick. Each room is approximately 3m square and the main entrance appears to have been in the eastern gable end. There is no evidence for a chimney. There is a stone lean-to against the western gable end. The structure is constructed partially within a small quarry, almost certainly used to provide much of the material to construct the dwelling. Immediately to the east of the building are two small lynchets aligned east/west and forming a small patch of garden, each is 30m long and 5m wide. This was the only evidence for habitation recorded within the area marked on the 1<sup>st</sup> Edition Ordnance Survey Map as Hyde Common. However much of this area was over grown with blackthorn making the recognition of subtle earthworks problematical.

Six areas of lyncheting and/or ridge and furrow were recorded during the survey. A group of three well defined lynchets were recorded on the south-western slope of Hyde Wood, (HSM 32490-92). These follow the contour and are between 1 and 3m in height and 3-4m wide. The lower lynchet has been used to form the later woodland boundary bank indicating that this series of earthworks is probably of medieval date. The two small lynchets associated with the dwelling discussed above relate to small scale produce production.

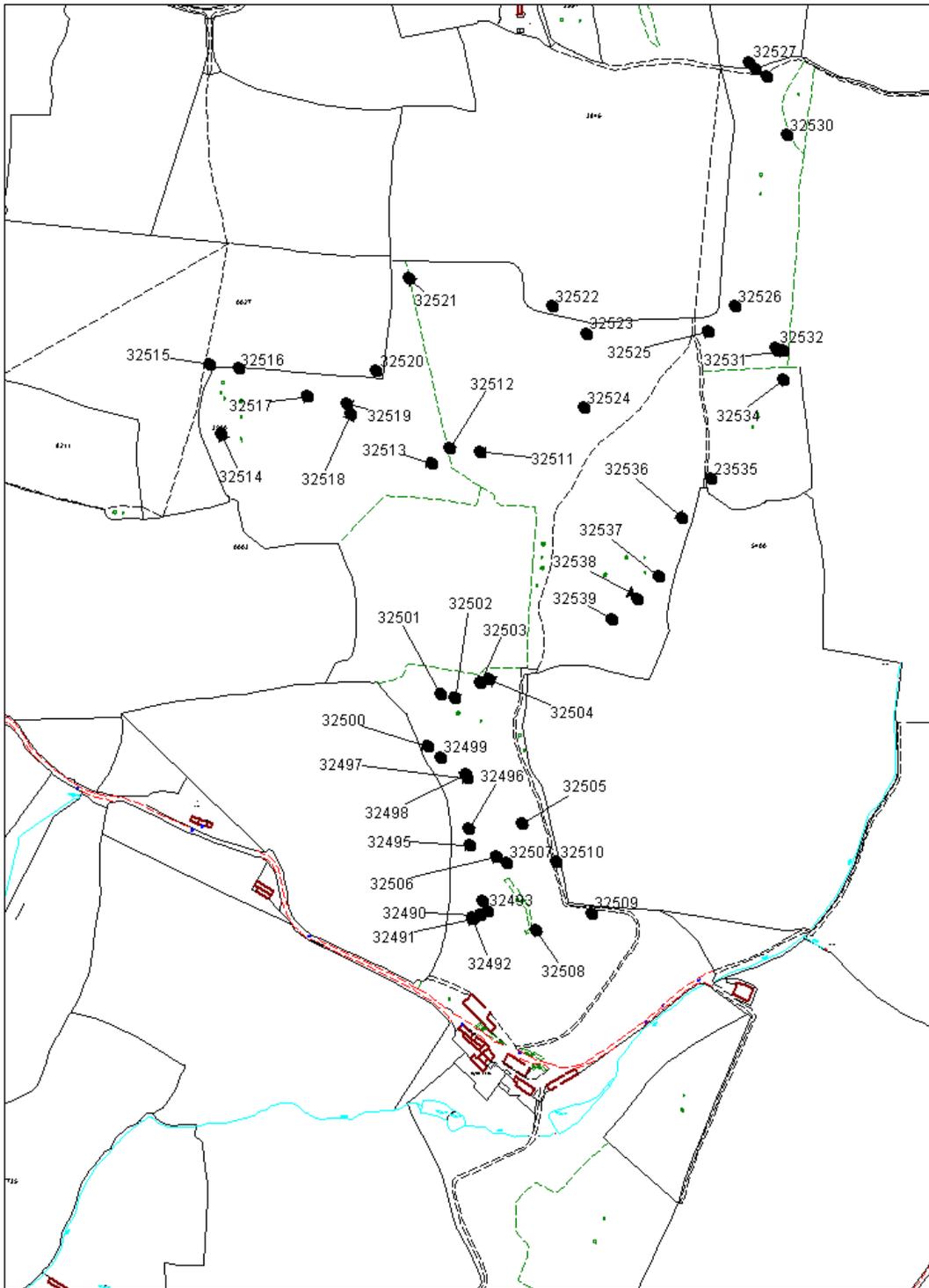
HSM 32513 comprises a series of five lynchets each approximately 25m apart with ridge and furrow between them. These are located on relatively level ground close to the valley bottom on the western side of the ridge. It is thought that this series of fields may represent a late or post-medieval phase of arable land use. This is based on the straightness of both the lynchets and the ridge and furrow.

Four additional areas of ridge and furrow with lynchets and / or headlands were recorded, HSM 32522, HSM 32528, HSM 32531 and 32535. These all seem to relate to one open field system and suggest that at least the entire hill top and eastern flank were under arable in the medieval period. It is interesting to note that ridge and furrow exists on two axis on the hill-top both north/south, (HSM 32522), and east/west, (HSM 32528, 32531 and 32535). All four areas are overlain and / or cut by later woodland management features.

### **Woodland boundaries**

In general woodland boundary banks were found to be well preserved on all edges of Hyde and Busland Wood. They did however vary in form and scale and may represent a number of phases. HSM 32519 is particularly large, 3m wide and 0.5m high with a ditch on its western, (down-slope), side 1.5m wide and a ditch to its east over 3m wide. This feature appears to partition off the area of possible post-medieval fields, (HSM 32513) from the wooded area following the base of the break of slope.

Seven compartment boundaries were identified. These all appear to relate to the post-medieval period. Many, e.g. HSM 32493, can be seen to cut or overly medieval features



**Figure 2: Location of earthworks recorded during the survey.**

and indicate that much of the present woodland was laid out in the late-medieval or post-medieval period.

### **Industrial features**

Three quarries were recorded during the course of the survey. These were all located in the south portion of the wood. HSM 32507 and 32508 comprised linear quarries following veins of harder limestone. Both appear to be cut into what was the area known as Hyde Common in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and therefore are relatively modern. HSM 32514 consists of a series of small scoops suggesting a less industrial scale of extraction and possibly an earlier date within the post-medieval period.

Much of the central and western area was too overgrown to enable survey to take place. An under storey of bramble approximately 0.5m high covers the entire area beneath immature conifer.

## ***Discussion and Implications***

### ***Indications of former land use***

Large areas within the northern part of Hyde Wood and the Majority of Busland Wood contain evidence for medieval and possibly post-medieval agriculture in the form of lynchets, headlands and ridge and furrow, indicating that much of the present wood dates from the post-medieval period at the earliest. The lynchets on the western slope within Hyde wood, (HSM 32490-2), are of medieval date and suggest that this was the limit of medieval arable on this steep slope. This, in turn would suggest that the southern part of Hyde Wood was common land during the medieval period and remained as such well into 19<sup>th</sup> century.

### ***Site and feature condition***

The survey recorded a wide range of features dating from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century to the medieval period. These included features associated with woodland management, industry, settlement and previous land use. The majority of features recorded were particularly well preserved and coherent. Relatively subtle earthworks such as the ridge and furrow show up well even on level ground.

### ***Implications regarding the archaeological resource***

The survey of Hyde and Busland Wood provides an important insight into past woodland management and land-use. It appears to establish a link with the 19<sup>th</sup> century Hyde Common to the medieval common fields, suggesting that most, (if not all), of the woodland surveyed dates from the post-medieval period. The woodland management features recorded suggest an intensively managed, mixed woodland with both coppice and an over-storey of standards. The extraordinary size of some charcoal burning platforms indicate prolonged use whilst unusually large saw pits suggest a specific need for large lumber.

### ***Implications regarding site condition***

Woodland boundary banks and compartment boundaries generally survive well as do other woodland management features and features relating to former landuse. Relationships can be established between the woodland management features and earlier features. The area under immature conifer could not be surveyed, however, the recent [planting may not have significantly damaged any features of archaeological importance. The area of chestnut coppice on the north-western slope of Busland Wood appears to have damaged most archaeological features within this area.

### ***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 such a wide range of features suggest that; with the exception of the planting of an area of chestnut coppice on the western flank of Busland Wood, little damage has occurred in recent years. Care should be taken to avoid further damaging areas of ridge and furrow and woodland management features, particularly those located on the more level ground.

### ***Implications for future field work.***

This area of woodland has a high potential for the presence of well preserved archaeological features and it should be possible to recognise relationships between many features and hence produce a detailed 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 both common land and medieval open field system.

## ***Discussion***

This survey has identified a range of well preserved features within the wood reflecting the major changes that have occurred over at-least he last seven centuries. It appears that very little, (if any), of this wood can be considered as being ancient in the true sense of the word. The extensive ridge and furrow and lynchets suggest that at-least during some of the medieval period there was no woodland here at all. This raises questions concerning the population during this period; why cultivate such marginal land with such poor, shallow top-soil?

The density of saw pits and charcoal burning platforms is interesting. There appears to be far more on the eastern side of the ridge than the west. This is presumably dictated by wind direction. The high density and large size of platforms in the south /east of the wood suggests that this was an intensive industry for a considerable period of time in the post medieval period.

The ruined dwelling is of much interest. It is relatively well preserved and is surrounded by all the features that went with it, i.e. garden plots and out-building. It may be the final phase of a squatter development on Hyde Common or it may be accommodation for later quarry workers or charcoal burners.

The survey has shown that much of archaeological significance survives in a good state of preservation within Busland and Hyde Wood. These features cover all aspects of land use from relatively modern quarrying, (for lime and/or building stone), through a period of many hundreds of years of woodland management, and into a time in the medieval period where much, if not all of the area surveyed was under the plough.

### ***Acknowledgements***

I would like to acknowledge the help and co-operation of the Forestry Commission and of the land owner's at Hyde Farm and Court Farm, Woolhope.

### ***Archive***

2 dictaphone tapes  
 1 transcription record  
 1 Exel Database  
 1 Mapinfo Database  
 This document.

### ***Appendix 1: Database of grid references and features.***

<b>SMR No.</b>	<b>East</b>	<b>North</b>	<b>Site type</b>	<b>Period</b>	<b>Description</b>
32490	62261	34633	lynchet	Medieval	c. 3m high.
32491	62253	34630	lynchet	Medieval	
32492	62253	34631	lynchet	Medieval	continues north for c. 80m. It is 4m wide.
32493	62268	34638	Compartment boundary bank and ditch	Post-medieval	bank is 0.3m high and 2m wide and ditch is 1.5m wide and 0.2m deep.
32494	62263	34648	charcoal burning platform	Post-medieval	c. 5m in diameter.
32495	62250	34707	charcoal burning platform	Post-medieval	10m in diameter.
32496	62248	34723	quarry/saw pit	Post-medieval	5m long and 3m wide aligned NS with spoil on its western side.
32497	62247	34777	charcoal burning platform	Post-medieval	c. 10m in diameter.

32498	62246	34781	charcoal burning platform	Post-medieval	c. 10m in diameter.
32499	62219	34798	charcoal burning platform	Post-medieval	c. 10m in diameter.
32500	62206	34810	saw pit	Post-medieval	aligned north east with spoil on its western side. It is c. 6m long and 2.5m wide.
32501	62219	34864	saw pit	Post-medieval	6-7m long and 2m wide, aligned NS with spoil on its western side.
32502	62234	34860	charcoal burning platform	Post-medieval	c. 10m in diameter.
32503	62261	34876	saw pit	Post-medieval	6m long and 3m wide, aligned NS with spoil to the west.
32504	62270	34879	saw pit	Post-medieval	6-8m long and 3m wide, aligned NS with spoil to the west.
32505	62304	34729	platform	Post-medieval	8m long and 4m wide aligned NS.
32506	62278	34695	charcoal burning platform	Post-medieval	west facing and c. 10m in diameter.
32507	62288	34688	quarry	Post-medieval	runs due west for c. 30 m and south c. 100m.
32508	62318	34618	quarry	Post-medieval	c. 20m wide.
32509	62377	34635	two cell house	Post-medieval	house may date from the 18th or 19th century.
32510	62340	34689	compartment bank	Post-medieval	
32511	62261	35117	lynchet	Post-Medieval	c. 2m high.
32512	62229	35120	charcoal burning platform	Post-medieval	c. 15m in diameter.
32513	62210	35105	lynchet	Medieval	one of 5 all parallel and c. 25m apart.
32514	61991	35135	scoops for quarries	Late/ Post-medieval	
32515	61979	35207	lynchet	Medieval	runs eastwards for c. 50m and is c. 1m high.
32516	62009	35203	bank and ditch	Post-medieval	bank is c. 1.5m wide and 0.5m high and the ditch is to the west.
32517	62081	35174	lynchet	Medieval	
32518	62125	35156	charcoal burning platform	Post-medieval	facing west and 12m in diameter.

32519	62121	35167	bank and ditch	Medieval?	bank is c. 3m wide and 0.5m high. Ditch to west is 1.5m wide but ditch to east is c. 4m wide.
32520	62152	35201	wood bank	Late Medieval?	Ditch on both sides
32521	62186	35298	saw pit	Post-medieval	aligned N/S with spoil on its western side.
32522	62336	35268	charcoal burning platform	Post-medieval	c. 8m in diameter and facing west.
32523	62371	35240	ridge and furrow	Post-medieval?	20m westwards on a N/S axis.
32524	62369	35162	saw pit	Post-medieval	5m long and 2m wide aligned N/S with spoil on its east side.
32525	62498	35242	bank	Post-medieval	1.5m wide and 0.3m high.
32526	62526	35268	charcoal burning platform	Post-medieval	c. 15m in diameter and east facing.
32527	62541	35523	bank and ditch	Post-medieval	bank is 1m wide as is the ditch and the bank is 0.2m high.
32528	62548	35516	wood bank / ridge and furrow	Post-medieval	5m inside the wood and runs W/E. Runs over ridge and furrow.
32529	62559	35508	bank	Post-medieval	c. 1m high.
32530	62581	35447	charcoal burning platform	Post-medieval	c. 10-12m in diameter facing east.
32531	62577	35222	ridge and furrow	medieval	running up and down slope on an E/W axis.
32532	62569	35225	lynchet	medieval	
32533	62570	35222	compartment bank	Post-medieval	E/W axis and 1.5m wide with a ditch c. 1m wide.
32534	62577	35192	lynchet	medieval	1.5m high facing south.
23535	62501	35089	ridge and furrow	medieval	
32536	62471	35047	lynchet	medieval	
32537	62447	34987	lynchet	medieval	
32538	62425	34963	lynchet or bank	medieval	
32539	62398	34942	charcoal burning platform	Post-medieval	c. 15m in diameter and facing east.

**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