



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

# **Herefordshire Woodlands Pilot Study: Phase 2 Skenchill Wood, Llanrothal**

**Herefordshire Archaeology Report No. 81  
May 2003**

Report prepared by  
Tim Hoverd

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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 Scheme: Phase 2.**  
**Skenchill Wood, Llanrothal**  
**Herefordshire Archaeology Report 81**  
Herefordshire Archaeology, May 2003.

***Summary:***

*The survey described in this report (EHE38071), formed part of a pilot study of the archaeology of Herefordshire woodlands 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 late and post medieval periods. These included saw pits, charcoal burning platforms, quarries and woodland management boundaries.*

*A small stone built building of uncertain use was identified constructed within a quarry*

**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 Skenchill Wood, (EHE38071). The survey was carried out as part of a Phase Two pilot study being undertaken by Herefordshire Archaeology in partnership with and grant-aided by the Forestry Commission. The purpose of the study is to begin the process of documenting 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.

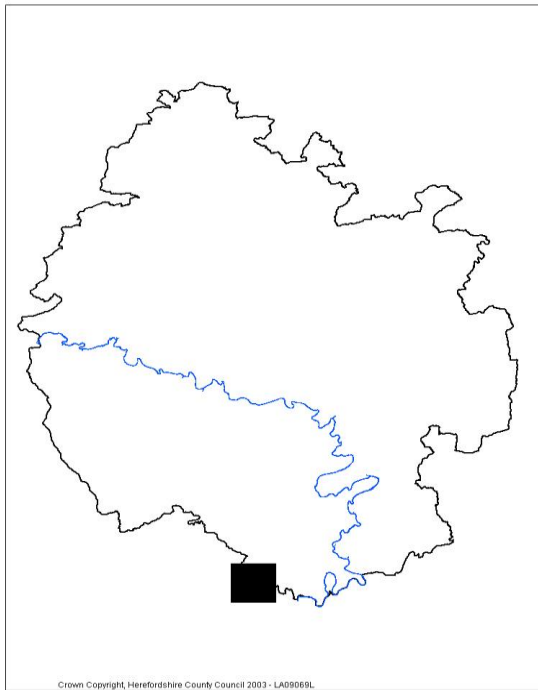
Woodland boundaries have often moved over the centuries, sometimes expanding to encapsulate and preserve evidence of alternative land-use (for instance, field systems) and on other occasions shrinking and being subject to differing forms of woodland management. These variations in land-use inevitably 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 has taken place in 2001-2 and has involved the rapid survey of eight areas of woodland in different areas of the county. These woodlands were deliberately selected from among 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 (see Ray, 2003).

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.

### ***Location***

Skenchill Wood is located at NGR: SO 380 481, within the parish of Llanrothal. The woodland covers the western slope of a Sandstone ridge.



The Historic Landscape Characterisation Study for Herefordshire describes Skenchill as woodland surrounded by fields derived from the enclosure of former common arable areas. These present day enclosures have experienced minimal insertion of boundaries after the initial intake (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 has resulted in a published record has taken place here previously.

### ***Method***

The primary survey work at Skenchill Wood took place on March 21<sup>st</sup> 2003. 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 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 is only a sample of the woodland and should not be taken as exhaustive or its results as 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**

Skenchill Wood covers the western slope of a sandstone ridge. The entire area of the wood is on a moderately steep slope and is under mixed deciduous woodland. The weather during the survey was fine and dry and visibility within the wood was generally good.

### ***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**

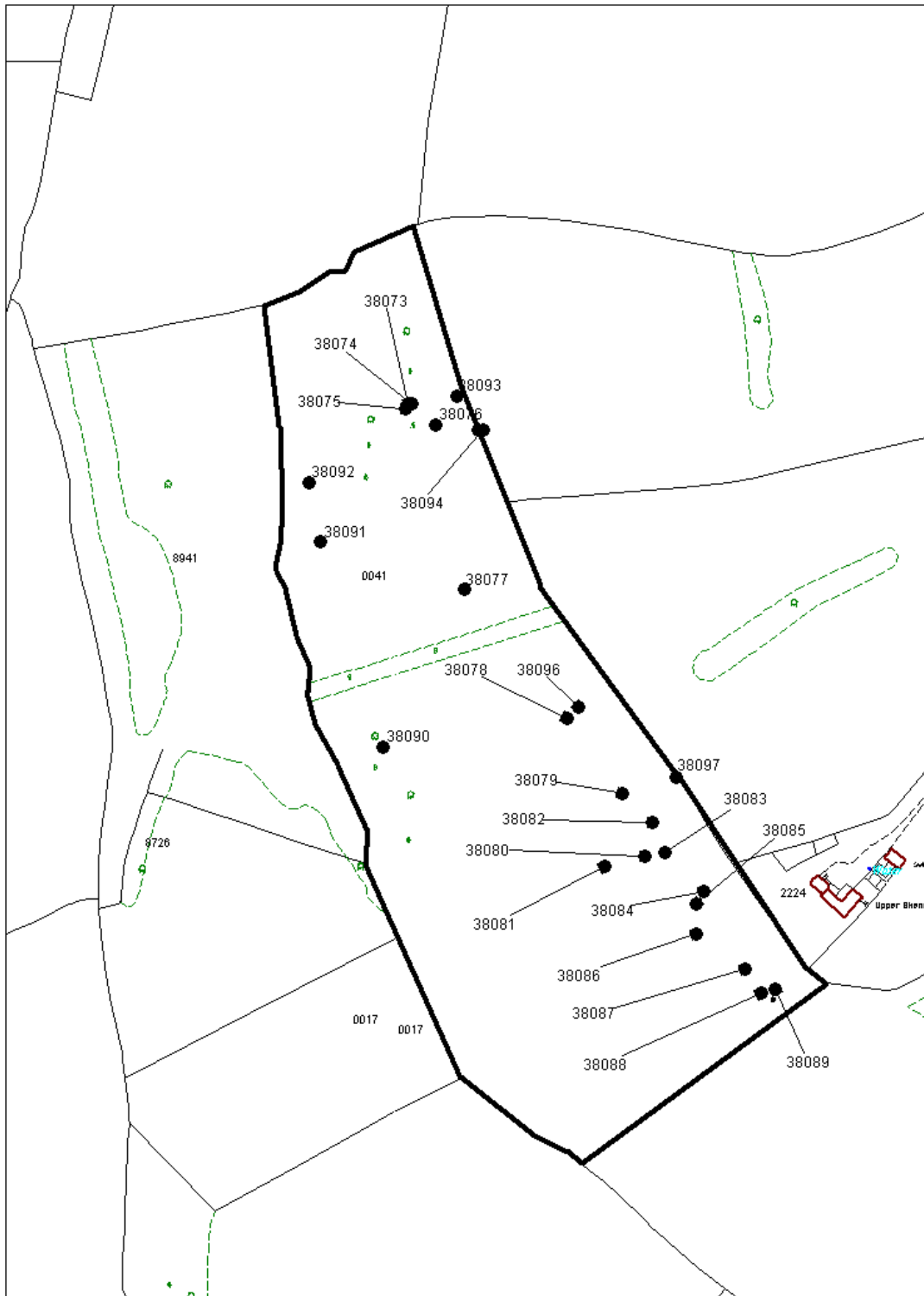
A total of eight charcoal burning platforms were recorded. These ranged in size from 5-12m in diameter and in the main comprised a level, circular platform with a pronounced down-slope lip.

No saw pits were recorded within Skenchill Wood. 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. This suggests that either:

The woodland has been exclusively managed historically for the production of coppiced timber predominantly for the production of charcoal.

Or that the woodland has been managed with standards and an under-storey of coppice but the lumber has been taken elsewhere for sawing.

Six other platforms were recorded within the wood, (HSM 38080, HSM 38085, HSM 38088, HSM 38089, HSM 38092 and HSM 38096). These range in size from 5m in length and 3.5m wide to 15m in length and 6m wide. Many of these platforms were in close association with charcoal burning platforms suggesting that they were either used as storage or, in the case of the larger ones, seasonal accommodation.



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

### **Woodland boundaries**

The woodland boundary bank is well preserved on all sides but particularly on the northern and eastern edges, (HSM 38076 and HSM 38078). These comprise a bank approximately 2m wide with a ditch on either side. The western boundary has been truncated by more recent ploughing and now comprises a lynchet with a 1.3m drop into the field outside the wood.

A single compartment boundary was recorded, HSM 38073. This comprised a bank and ditch and was located within the southern portion of the wood. This feature was very eroded and may once have represented the southern woodland boundary bank of the wood.

### **Industrial features**

Within a small quarry is a single arched, lime bonded stone built structure bonded onto the exposed the quarry faces, HSM 38087. This is approximately 1.8-2 meters long and 1.4 meters wide it has a flue on its western side running through the wall into a fire box approximately 1 meter square. There are two half bricks visible within the fabric, these are of hand made mid 18<sup>th</sup> century date. The access way to the structure is to the south-east and consists of an narrow track-way approximately 1.5m wide the track-way from the quarry is immediately up slope to the east and at this point it curves to the east out of the wood towards Upper Skenchill Farm. This structure may have originally been used as an ice house as it is only 50 meters west of the farmhouse. The brick arch structure seems to have been added to the original structure and a series of stub footings are visible running off the main structure. One runs from its south-western corner for approximately 2 meters and is 0.5 meters wide and may be the remains of a stoke hole or flue. This has been knocked through into the stone built structure at its base and lined in brick. There appears to be evidence for burning around it. A second wall runs off this to the south/south-west for 2.5 meters before turning to run south-east for 5-6 meters. On its northern, up slope face which is cut into the quarry face there was a small opening or vent right at the top of the apex of the roof. The quarry track way is immediately above it and turns towards the house at this point. The presence of a possible stoke hole and/or flue together with a top vent suggest that this structure was latterly used as some form of smoke house. Immediately to the south of this structure is a small, 5m long and 2.5 m wide platform, HSM 38088 possibly representing a storage area or the base for a timber structure.

Six other quarries were recorded during the course of the survey, (HSM 38074, HSM 38075, HSM 38079. HSM 38082, HSM 38083 and HSM 38086). All of these were small scale appear to be of post medieval date.

<h3><b><i>Discussion and Implications</i></b></h3>
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#### ***Site and feature condition***

The majority of features recorded were well preserved. An exception is those features which have been truncated by a relatively modern access track which runs diagonally

across the slope from the southern corner of the wood to the northern corner. The track has cut across the site of at least 2 charcoal burning platforms.

***Implications regarding the archaeological resource***

The features recorded during this survey were generally well preserved. With the exception of additional access tracks being constructed there is little threat to their survival

***Implications for future management***

Care should be taken if further access ways and extraction routes are to be constructed. However, the lack of internal boundaries facilitates the planning of a route or routes that would have minimal impact on the archaeological resource.

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

This rapid survey has recorded a number of features associated with past woodland management on an intensive scale and small scale quarrying. The presence of the stone and brick structure within a quarry is of interest and a more detailed survey of this structure and its immediate environs, linked to documentary research into Upper Skenchill Farm may reveal its use and more accurately date its construction.

<b><i>Acknowledgements</i></b>
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I would like to acknowledge the help and co-operation of Forest Enterprise for assistance and co-operation with access for this survey.

The Forestry Commission for their commitment to this pilot scheme and the co-operation and assistance of the landowner.

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

<b><i>Archive</i></b>
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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	Period
38072	48184	18146	Charcoal burning platform	Post-Medieval
38073	48020	18501	Bank/Ditch	Post-Medieval
38074	48022	18501	Quarry	Post-Medieval
38075	48019	18498	Quarry	Post-Medieval
38076	48035	18490	Bank	Post-Medieval
38077	48050	18403	Charcoal burning platform	Post-Medieval
38078	48104	18335	Bank	Post-Medieval
38079	48133	18295	Quarry	Post-Medieval
38080	48145	18262	circular Platform	Post-Medieval
38081	48124	18257	Charcoal burning platform	Post-Medieval
38082	48149	18280	Quarry	Post-Medieval
38083	48156	18264	Quarry	Post-Medieval
38084	48176	18244	Track	Post-Medieval
38085	48172	18237	D-shaped platform	Post-Medieval
38086	48172	18221	Quarry	Post-Medieval
38087	48198	18203	Quarry and structure	Post-Medieval
38088	48207	18190	small platform	Post-Medieval
38089	48214	18192	oblong platform	Post-Medieval
38090	48007	18320	Charcoal burning platform	Post-Medieval
38091	47974	18428	Charcoal burning platform	Post-Medieval
38092	47968	18459	rectangular Platform	Post-Medieval
38093	48057	18503	Charcoal burning platform	Post-Medieval
38094	48060	18487	lynchet	Post-Medieval
38095	48057	18487	Charcoal burning platform	Post-Medieval
38096	48110	18341	circular Platform	Post-Medieval
38097	48184	18303	Charcoal burning platform	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.

