



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

Herefordshire Woodlands Pilot Study: Phase 2 Lea Bailey Inclosure

Herefordshire Archaeology Report No.93

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 Woodlands Pilot Scheme: Phase 2.
Lea Bailey Inclosure
Herefordshire Archaeology Report No.68
Herefordshire Archaeology, February 2003.

Summary:

The survey described in this report, (EHE33372), formed part of a pilot study for the Forestry Commission. An intensive walk over survey was carried out in the wood concerned. A hand held Global Positioning System 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.

A new class of earthwork was identified within the wood during Phase 1, and a second example was found during Phase 2. These appear to be charcoal burning platforms but this type and its method of construction has not been recorded in Herefordshire before.

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.

Figure 1 contains 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 an intensive survey of part of Lea Bailey Inclosure, (EHE33372). The survey was undertaken in advance of extraction activities in an area identified by rapid survey (Hoverd 2002, HSM No. 32693) as of archaeological interest. The whole survey programme is part of a pilot study for 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.

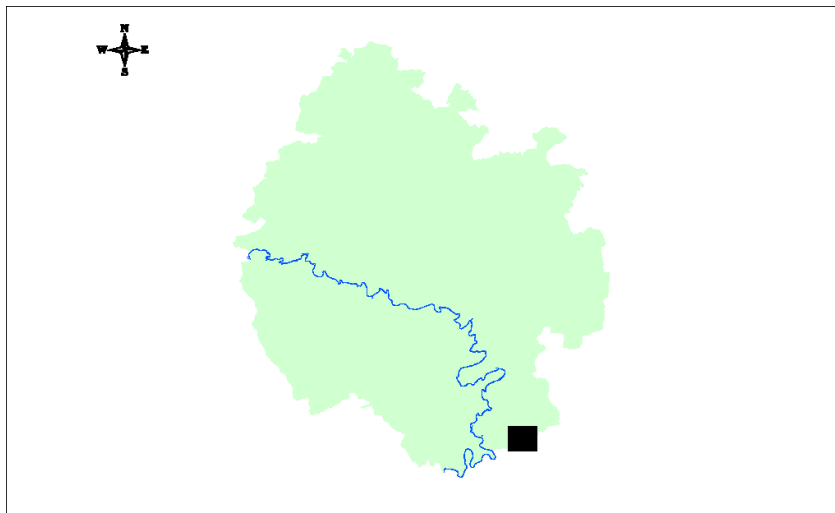
Since 1999 Herefordshire Archaeology has been involved in regular discussions with the Forestry Commission concerning the lack of archaeological data available when management plans are being prepared and applications for Woodland Grant Schemes are submitted. As a result of these discussions, the Forestry 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. This report is part of the Phase two survey which in this case involves re-visiting woodlands identified in the phase one study as being of high archaeological potential and a more detailed survey undertaken. This illustrates the density of archaeological sites within the woodland and records the relationships between features to enable some degree of understanding concerning the evolution of the woodland.

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

Lea Bailey Inclosure is located at NGR: SO 635 200, approximately 5km. south / east of Ross-on-Wye, to the north of The Forest of Dean. The woodland comprises the top of an Old Red Sandstone outcrop. This survey was centered on the Newtown area (NGR SO 63400 19600).



The Historic Landscape Character for Herefordshire describes Lea Bailey as woodland surrounded by the enclosure of former common arable fields with minimal insertion of boundaries.

Figure 1: Location of survey area within the county.

Previous fieldwork / records

Prior to the survey taking place the county Sites and Monuments Record was consulted but no entries were found within the present woodland. Previous work has however been undertaken in the surrounding woodland (Hoverd 2002, HSM 32693). This study identified numerous features associated with the running and management of the woodlands. These included such features as woodland boundaries and hollow ways, charcoal-burning platforms, saw pits and quarries.

Method

Lea Bailey Inclosure was surveyed on February 6th 2003. The survey comprised an intensive survey of the archaeological features in this portion of the wood, the potential having been identified in the Phase 1 survey. 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 with the contours and approximately 50m to 100m apart. Linear features were recorded along their length where possible.

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

Lea Bailey inclosure covers the top and upper slopes of a sandstone outcrop. Approximately 60% of its area is relatively level, comprising the plateau of the hilltop. Most of the slopes are relatively gently sloping with occasional deeply cut and steeply sided dingles usually associated with natural water-courses.

The area of the survey is planted with conifers and the majority of the under story vegetation was minimal except to the north of the survey area.

Survey Conditions

The rapid walkover survey was conducted on 6th February 2003. The weather was bright with occasional overcast periods. Visibility was good throughout the survey.

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 sixteen charcoal burning platforms were recorded. These ranged in size from 6-12m in diameter and in the main comprised a level, circular platform with a pronounced down-slope lip. However, within this woodland, as identified in Phase 1, a second class of charcoal burning platform was recorded. This consists of a circular, level platform approximately 10m in diameter surrounded by a ring of spoil approximately 0.4m high and 0.6m wide. This is the first record of such a monument type in the county

and appears to be a distinct class of charcoal burner associated with the Forest of Dean and its immediate environs. Similar features have been recorded in Cumbria, (Hoverd 2002). This may suggest that a specific type of charcoal was being produced for a specific industry or that the charcoal burning was managed in a more regulated way than in other parts of Herefordshire. This new form of charcoal burning platform is found exclusively on the plateau of Lea Bailey Inclosure, and a single example was identified during this survey.

Nine 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. Associated with many of the saw pits were small rectangular platforms presumably for stacking sawn or squared timber on.

Two sections of hollow way were recorded, one appearing to link a series of charcoal burning platforms and saw pits and the second giving access to a quarry. This latter hollow way cut across one of the charcoal burning platforms.

Woodland boundaries

A single wood bank was recorded (HSM 33407), and may be of medieval date as it is cut by later charcoal burning platforms. This consisted of a bank and ditch that was aligned southwest/northeast. A forty meter length was visible. The ditch was 2.5-3m wide and 0.5m deep and the bank on the down slope side was 1.5m wide and 0.40m high. The external bank is well rounded and appears to be of considerable antiquity.

A single compartment boundary was recorded. This has been attributed to the post medieval period primarily due to the lack of evidence linking them to the medieval wood bank. This boundary consisted of a ditch, (HSM 33379), approximately 1-1.5m wide with no sign of a bank on either side. The scarcity of such features suggests that Lea Bailey Inclosure was divided into relatively large woodland compartments, which may have changed little since the late medieval period.

Industrial features

Three quarries were recorded during the course of the survey, (HSM 33373, HSM 33385, HSM 33406). These were all located on the lower portion of the survey area, suggesting easy access to an accessible outcrop of sandstone. All three quarries appear to be of post medieval date as spoil from these quarries and their associated workings (hollow ways and drainage ditches) overly earlier features such as charcoal burning platforms.

Unidentified features

Two unidentified features were located but their function was unclear. The first was a shallow hollow (HSM 33374) and the second was a small platform (HSM 33409)

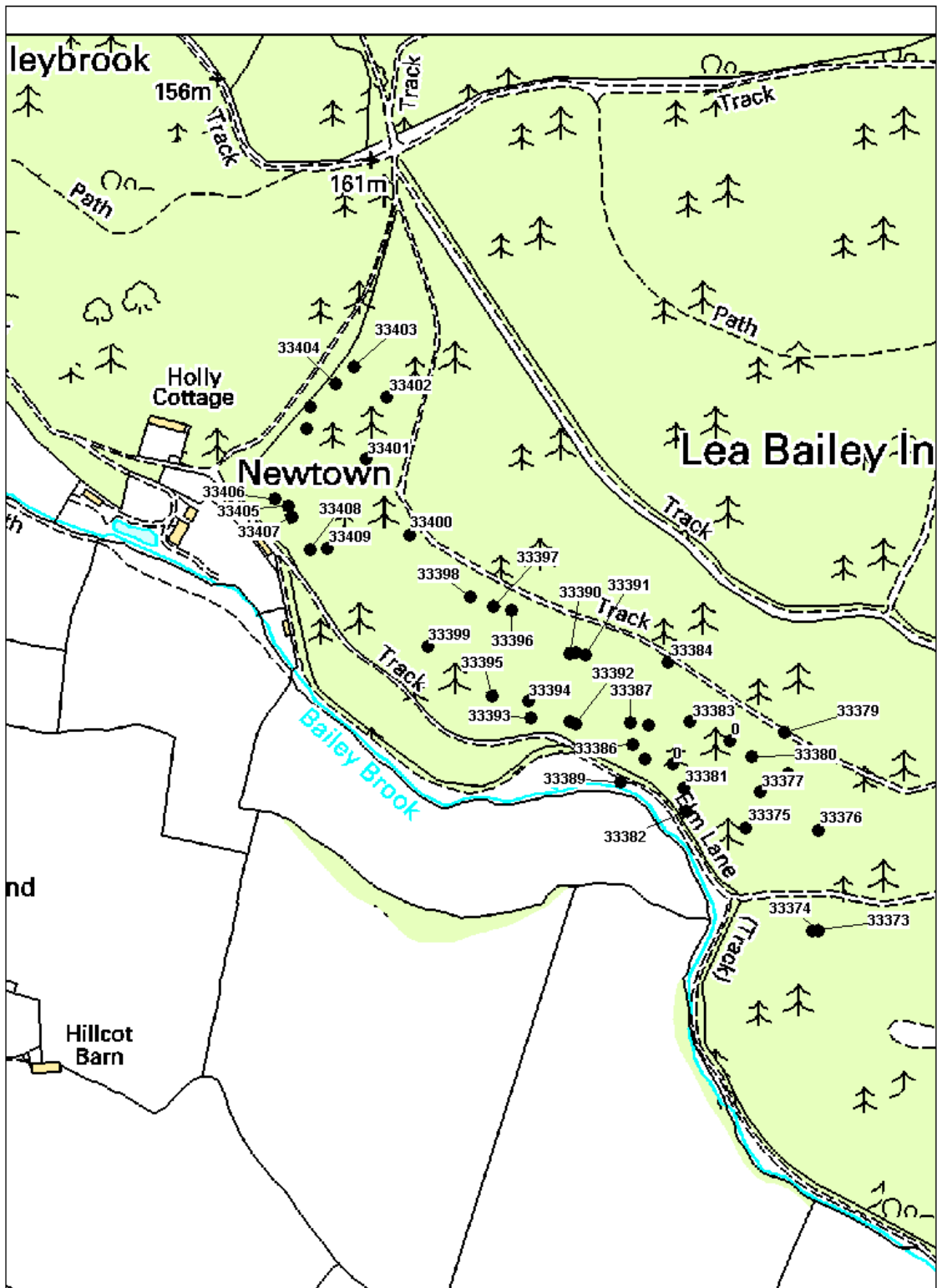


Figure 2: Location of features recorded within Lea Bailey.

Indications of former land use

Lea bailey Inclosure appears to have been woodland, possibly from the medieval period onwards. The boundaries identified appear to have changed little over this period of time, and the single internal boundary identified indicates that there has either been little change in the size of woodland compartments throughout this time, or that at some point in time the entire wood was re-designed and previous boundaries erased.

It is clear from the survey that this section of Lea Bailey Inclosure has been intensively worked, namely for the removal of natural resources, whether it be wood or stone, on an industrial scale.

There was no indication of “farming” (ridge and furrow, orchards etc) that again suggests that this area has been woodland for a considerable time.

Site and feature condition

The majority of features recorded were well preserved, some having been damaged by later activity both in antiquity and up to the modern day. An example of the former would be the quarry damaging charcoal platforms and the latter are those sites that have only recently been damaged by the felling of occasional rows of trees. This recent felling and extraction has cut across the site of a number of charcoal burning platforms and saw pits.

Discussion and Implications

Implications regarding the archaeological resource

The topography and geology of Lea Bailey Inclosure dictates that it is particularly susceptible to erosion. The steep slope means that there is the potential for large scale erosion if large areas are clear felled during or prior to periods of heavy or prolonged rainfall. This makes the earthworks present within the survey area vulnerable to erosion.

This area of woodland is important due to its proximity to The Forest of Dean and this appears to be reflected in the presence of a second type of charcoal burning platform. These suggest an entirely industrial phase of charcoal production using a type of structure that was constructed to a universal plan in order to maximise the efficiency charcoal production.

Implications regarding site condition

The Wood banks and compartment boundaries identified by the survey generally survive well, but due to the small number of features, no relationships can be identified. Traces of past communications also survive well, in the form of hollow ways and some can be related to specific features, particularly quarries. It has been noted (Hoverd 2002 HSM

32693) that there are significantly more quarries in the southern portion of Lea Bailey than in the north. This may be due to differing geology or the depth of bedrock.

Implications for future management

This report was undertaken as part of the management scheme for this part of Lea Bailey Inclosure, namely tree felling.

Implications for future field work.

Lea Bailey Inclosure contains a high density of archaeological features relating to intensive woodland management and industrial scale production of charcoal and sawn, processed timber.

From this and the previous survey, it is clear that Lea Bailey Inclosure has been extensively managed as woodland for a considerable period of time. Its importance as a charcoal production site is not surprising considering its position in relation to the metal production in the Forest of Dean.

This area of woodland contains a high number of well preserved archaeological features and it is possible to recognise relationships between many of the features and hence produce at least a rudimentary series of phases illustrating the changing management of the woodland.

The Phase 1 report suggested that “Prior to further clear felling or other significant extraction of areas within the survey area these areas should be subject to a more detailed walk over survey in order to record and assess the location, archaeological potential and significance of any features present”. This report contains the results of a second, more intensive walk-over survey, proceeding extraction, that has shown the intensity and longevity of woodland management within this area of the Lea Bailey Inclosure.

Acknowledgements

We 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 Forest Enterprise, in particular Peter Kelsall.

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

Archive

2 Dictaphone tapes
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	Description
33373	363770	219314	Quarry	Post-medieval	10m in diameter, Condition, fair
33374	363775	219314	Pit	Post-medieval	Circular, 5m diameter, Condition, fair
33375	363719	219393	Saw Pit	Post-medieval	6m x 2m, aligned E/W, Condition, fair
33376	363775	219391	Saw Pit	Post-medieval	6m x 2m, Aligned E/W, Condition, poor
33377	363730	219420	Charcoal burning platform	Post-medieval	8m diameter, Condition, poor
33378	363751	219434	Charcoal burning platform	Post-medieval	Oval, 8m x 6m, aligned N/S, Condition, poor
33379	363749	219466	Linear ditch	Post-medieval	Aligned E/W, 1m wide, 0.20m deep
33379	363707	219459	Linear ditch	Post-medieval	Continuation
33379	363663	219442	Linear ditch	Post-medieval	Continuation
33380	363724	219447	Saw pit	Post-medieval	7m x 3m, 1.5m deep, Condition, good
33381	363672	219423	Saw pit	Post-medieval	7m x 3m, 2.5m deep, Condition, good
33382	363674	219406	Pit	Post-medieval	6m diameter, function, unknown
33383	363676	219474	Saw pit	Post-medieval	3m diameter, shallow, Condition, poor
33384	363660	219520	Charcoal burning platform	Post-medieval	10m diameter, down slope lip 2m high, Condition, good
33385	363645	219471	Quarry	Post-medieval	25m x 12m x 7m, aligned E/W
33386	363633	219457	Hollow way	Post-medieval	2m wide, aligned SW/NE, from quarry, Condition, good
33387	363631	219473	Saw Pit	Post-medieval	3m x 2m, aligned NW/SE partially covered with spoil from Quarry.

33388	363642	219445	Charcoal burning platform	Post-medieval	8m diameter, down slope lip 1.5m high, truncated by quarry
33389	363624	219428	Terrace	Post-medieval	40m long, aligned east/west, barely discernable
33390	363585	219526	Charcoal burning platform	Post-medieval	7m diameter, down slope lip 1.5m high, Condition, good
33391	363597	219525	Hollow way	Post-medieval	3m wide at base, 4m at top, depth 1-1.5m, Condition, good
33391	363589	219527	Hollow way	Post-medieval	Second reading
33391	363578	219500	Hollow way	Post-medieval	Third reading
33391	363585	219474	Holloway	Post Medieval	Forth reading
33392	363589	219472	Charcoal burning platform	Post-medieval	7-8m diameter, down slope lip 1.5m high, Condition, good
33393	363555	219477	Charcoal burning platform	Post-medieval	5m diameter, heavily overgrown, Condition, fair
33394	363553	219490	Charcoal burning platform	Post-medieval	8m diameter, Condition, poor
33395	363525	219494	Charcoal burning platform	Post-medieval	7-8m diameter, down slope lip, 1m. Condition, poor
33396	363540	219559	Saw pit	Post-medieval	Visible dimensions 2m x 1.5m, Cut by extraction trackway. Condition, poor
33397	363526	219562	Charcoal burning platform	Post-medieval	7m diameter, damaged by modern track, Condition, fair.
33398	363509	219570	Saw pit	Post-medieval	3.5m long x 2.5m wide, down slope lip 0.40m high. Condition, fair
33399	363476	219532	Charcoal burning platform	Post-medieval	6-7m diameter, down slope lip 1m. Condition, very good
33400	363462	219617	Charcoal burning platform	Post-medieval	Donut platform, small bank all the way round. 7m diameter. Down slope lip 1.5m. Condition, good
33401	363429	219675	Saw pit	Post-medieval	3m x 1.5m, aligned NE/SW, Condition, fair.
33402	363445	219722	Charcoal burning platform	Post-medieval	10m diameter, down slope lip 1.5-2m. Condition, good
33403	363420	219746	Bank and ditch	Medieval ?	2.5-3m wide, 0.5m deep, visible for 40m to the northeast. West bank 0.40m high x 1.5m wide. Condition, good
33403	363386	219715	Bank and ditch	Medieval ?	Second reading

33403	363384	219698	Bank and ditch	Medieval ?	Third reading. Not visible beyond this point.
33404	363406	219733	Charcoal burning platform	Post-Medieval	7m diameter, cuts bank (see above). Down slope lip 1-2m high. Condition, good
33405	363370	219639	Charcoal burning platform	Post-medieval	8m diameter, down slope lip 1.5m. Condition, fair
33406	363360	219645	Quarry	Post-medieval	15-18m diameter, up slope 3m deep. Down slope, shallow. Condition, fair
33407	363373	219631	Bank and ditch	Medieval ?	Possible continuation of previously mentioned bank and ditch.
33408	363386	219606	Charcoal burning platform	Post-medieval	7m in diameter. Down slope lip 2m. Condition, fair
33409	363399	219607	Unidentified	Post-medieval	Shallow platform, 5m x 2m, Condition, poor

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.