



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

Herefordshire Woodlands Archaeological Survey: Part 1 Bear's Wood, Mordiford CP

**Herefordshire Archaeology Report No. 158
December 2004**

Report prepared by Richard Lello

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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.

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Summary

The survey described in this report (HSM 39093) formed part of a pilot study undertaken in partnership with the Forestry Commission. A rapid walk over survey was carried out in Bear's Wood using a hand held Global Positioning System to record the location of archaeological features encountered.

Features were recorded within the wood that illustrate a long history of woodland management since the post medieval period, including the intensive use of woodland resources, e.g., charcoal burning platforms and associated trackways, and woodland boundary features.

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 Bear's Wood (HSM 38869). The survey was carried out in 2004 during the first year of the Herefordshire Woodlands Archaeological Survey following a pilot study undertaken by Herefordshire Archaeology in partnership with, and grant-aided by, the Forestry Commission. The purpose of the survey is to begin 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 for site identification, and, until recently, recording an accurate location within woodland was often not possible.

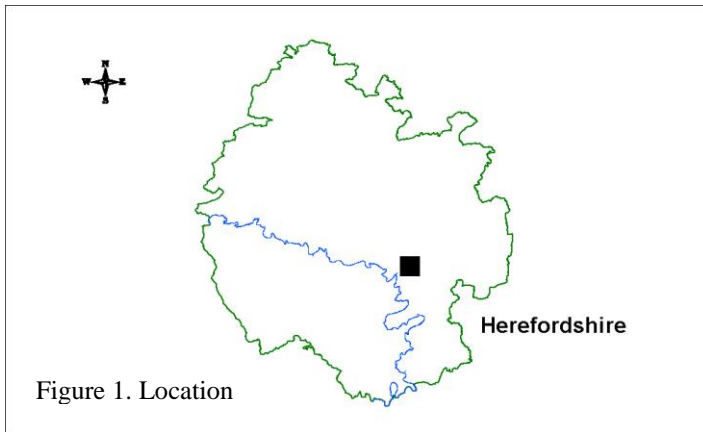
Woodland boundaries have often moved over the centuries, sometimes expanding to encapsulate and preserve evidence of alternative land use, e.g. field systems, and on other occasions shrinking, and being subjected to different forms of woodland management. These variations in land-use inevitably influence the kind of ecological data that can be obtained from different areas of woodland. Archaeological survey can contribute significant data in terms of woodland history, management history and sequential development. 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 grant aided Herefordshire Archaeology to undertake a two-phase pilot study, phase one of which took place in 2001-2, and phase two took place in 2003. The surveys carried out in early 2004 were designed to continue and expand the programme of pilot studies.

The survey of each woodland area identifies the potential for the survival of archaeological features, and samples the types of features present. Further planned surveys may re-visit woodlands identified during rapid reconnaissance surveys as being of high archaeological potential, and will involve a more detailed survey. This will illustrate the density of archaeological sites within the woodland, and record relationships between features to enable some degree of understanding concerning the evolution of the woodland.

Location

Bear's Wood is located at NGR: SO 5840 3787 in the Civil Parish of Mordiford, approximately 6km east of Hereford. It covers a small hill aligned north-east to south-west. Bear's Wood is rectangular in shape, approximately 0.5km long and up to 0.35km wide. The east-facing slopes rise from 75m OD to 110m OD at the summit. The more



gentle west-facing slopes rise from 100m OD. The north-western part of the wood tends to be waterlogged, and is drained by a network of ditches.

Geologically, the northern part of Bear's Wood is underlain by limestone and siltstone of the Woolhope Limestone Formation of the Wenlock Series, Silurian System. The southern part of

the wood is underlain by calcareous siltstone of the Coalbrookdale formation of the Wenlock Series (British Geological Survey, 2000). The bedrock is overlain by typical stagnogley soils of the Stanway Series consisting of seasonally waterlogged, often stoneless, fine silty soils or fine silty over clayey soils, on rock (Soil Survey of England and Wales, 1983).

Previous fieldwork and records

A search of the Herefordshire Sites and Monuments Record (SMR) revealed no entries for Bear's Wood.

Method

Bear's Wood was surveyed on 4 March 2004. A rapid assessment was undertaken of the potential of the wood to contain well-preserved archaeological features. A hand-held Garmin 12 XL Global Positioning System was used to map features, and a ten-figure grid reference was recorded. This system is accurate to within approximately 10m under tree canopy.

The wood was walked in transects aligned north to south or east to west, approximately 50m or 100m apart. Where a large feature was encountered, and no other features of archaeological significance could be seen in the vicinity, the feature was followed and any other features up to 50m on either side of it were recorded (where conditions allowed). Field observations and grid references were recorded using a dictaphone, and transcribed later.

Information recorded included a description of features observed, their state of preservation, and relationships to other features within the wood. This survey is only a sample of the wood and should not be taken as exhaustive, or its results as definitive.

Field conditions

Bear's Wood is made up of deciduous woodland with some coppicing, particularly on the upper east-facing slopes. In this area, too, there is evidence of ground disturbance by badgers.

On 2 February 2004 during the survey the weather was dry and sunny. Visibility was good.

Results (Figure 2)

Recorded archaeological features are described below, and the historical development of the woodland is discussed briefly. The significance of the archaeological features and management implications is then commented upon.

Each archaeological feature has been assigned a unique Sites and Monuments Primary Record Number, prefixed by HSM (Herefordshire Sites and Monuments Record). In this report each feature is identified by its HSM number. The appendix contains a simple database in which each feature is cross-referenced to its HSM number and to the Ordnance Survey National Grid (NGR).

Woodland management features

Direct evidence of post medieval woodland management was observed in the form of charcoal burning platforms and associated trackways. Eleven charcoal burning platforms were recorded, most of which are located in the northern part of Bear's Wood. Charcoal burning platforms consist of a level platform, generally circular in form up to 8m in diameter, depending on the state of preservation. A cut in slope is present on the up slope side, and a 'lip' of spoil on the down slope side. Charcoal fragments may also be present.

Nine charcoal burning platforms (HSM 39098 to 39101, HSM 39109 to 39111, HSM 39113, HSM 39114) are located on the north-facing slopes. All are in poor condition. Access to charcoal burning platforms in this area was provided by a network of trackways (HSM 39095, HSM 39107, HSM 39108, HSM 39112).

One charcoal burning platform (HSM 39105) was recorded on the gentle slopes in the south-west part of the wood. Access was provided by a trackway (HSM 39104). A single charcoal burning platform (HSM 39096) was recorded on the east-facing slopes, accessed by a trackway (HSM 39104). It is likely that evidence of charcoal burning on the upper east-facing slopes has been destroyed as a result of recent forestry activities and ground disturbance by badgers.

A major access point to Bear's Wood was located at the north-east corner (NGR: SO 5870 3790). From this location a network of trackways gave access to the summit and upper slopes (HSM 39105), the east side of the wood (HSM 39094), the upper east-facing

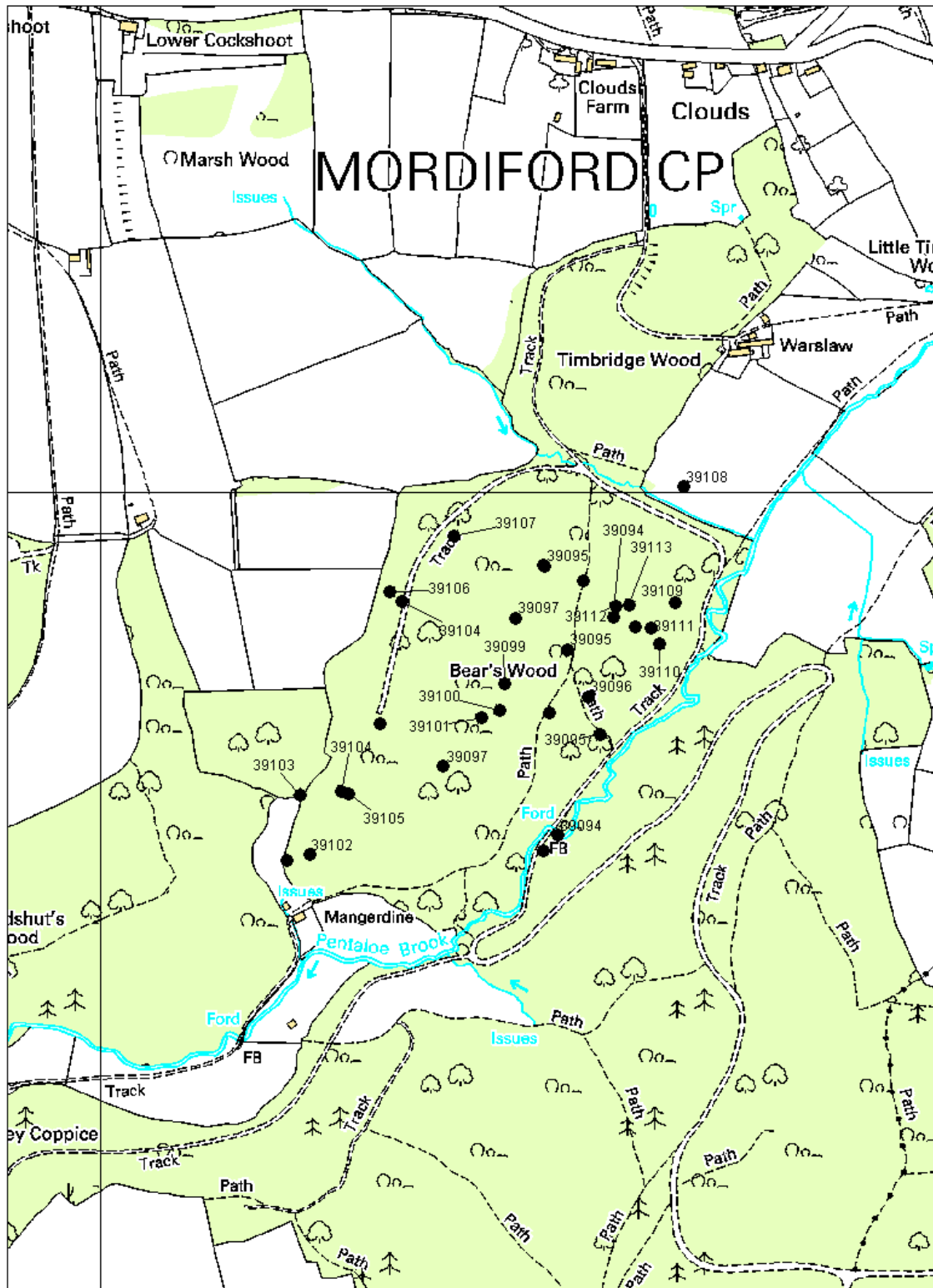


Figure 2: Location of features recorded within Bear's Wood.

slopes and the southern slopes (HSM 39105/HSM 39108). Access to the west side of the wood was provided by a trackway (HSM 39104). It is likely that an access point was located on the south side of the wood at Mangerdine (NGR: SO 5825 3760). From this location trackways extended to the north-west (HSM 39104) and to the north-east (HSM 39108).

A network of well-maintained forestry trackways is present in Bear's Wood today. Most of these follow the course of trackways recorded on the Ordnance Survey 1st edition map of 1887.

Woodland boundaries

Two woodland boundary features were recorded. A sinuous bank (HSM 39103) marks the south-west edge of the wood. This feature is very eroded and is in the form of a lynchet up to 1m high facing into pasture. The western edge of the wood is marked a low, eroded bank up to 2m wide (HSM 39106).

The eastern and southern boundaries of Bear's Wood are marked by the Pentaloe Brook which also marks the Mordiford/Fownhope parish boundary. The northern boundary of the wood is marked by a small stream, and the north-western boundary by a well-maintained drainage ditch.

Industrial features

Limited evidence of industrial activity was recorded in the form of an extraction pit (HSM 39102) located in the south-west part of the wood. The feature consists of 3 small pits up to 10m in diameter and up to 2m deep, and is likely to be the result of clay extraction.

Evidence of former land use

The parish of Mordiford Tithe Map of 1841 records Bear's Wood as woodland. The intensive management of woodland resources, recorded during the survey in the form of charcoal burning platforms and associated trackways, dates to at least the post medieval period. A network of trackways giving access to all areas of the wood was also recorded, many of which are shown on the Ordnance Survey 1st edition map (1887). Entry points to Bear's Wood were located at the north-east corner, and probably on the south side at Mangerdine.

The woodland boundaries observed during the survey are essentially the same as those recorded on the Ordnance Survey 1st edition map and on Bryant's *Map of Herefordshire* of 1835. The western and south-western boundaries are marked by eroded banks. Natural and artificial drainage features mark the other boundaries of the wood. Some evidence of change in woodland boundaries is indicated, however, which suggests that Bear's Wood was previously part of a more extensive woodland. On the south side of the wood at Mangerdine, a narrow strip of pasture with several agricultural buildings separates Bear's Wood from Woodshut's Wood. The Tithe Map records 7 small fields or

enclosures with houses at this location. This is interpreted as evidence of assarting during the post medieval period. Bear's Wood presently adjoins Timbridge Wood on the north side.

Further documentary evidence of a more extensive woodland is provided by field names recorded by the Tithe Map. On the west side of Bear's Wood are 2 large fields named Woodfield Croft and Stockhall Bridge, indicating woodland clearance, possibly during the medieval or post medieval periods.

Limited evidence of industrial activity was recorded in the form of an extraction pit located in the south-west part of the wood near Mangerdine. This is likely to be the result of post medieval clay extraction for local use.

No direct evidence of agricultural activities was observed within Bear's Wood. However, evidence of assarting on the south side of the wood, and woodland clearance on the west side is indicated (discussed above).

Discussion

Site and feature condition

Many of the archaeological features recorded in Bear's Wood are in a poor state of preservation. This applies particularly to charcoal burning platforms and woodland boundary features. This is likely to be the result of intensive forestry activities, encroachment by agriculture, and ground disturbance by wildlife. Some trackways have survived quite well due to their continued use and maintenance as forestry trackways .

Implications regarding the archaeological resource

Archaeological features are at risk as a result of direct damage caused by intensive forestry activities including road and drainage construction, and clear felling; by agriculture activities at the woodland edge; by wildlife. Where these activities occur on hillsides, there is a significant threat of erosion due to the fine silty character of the soil.

Implications regarding site condition

Where archaeological features survive, it is sometimes possible to determine functional and chronological relationships. Examples of functional relationships observed during the survey include: the association of charcoal burning platforms with trackways that give access to them; the relationship between networks of trackways and access points to the woodland, providing evidence of patterns of transportation and communication; the organisation of administrative and economic activities indicated by parish and woodland boundaries. Evidence of chronological relationships is provided by: the cutting of archaeological features such as trackways by more recent features including forestry facilities, and assarting or encroachment of woodland for agricultural purposes.

Implications for future management

A long history of human activity relating to woodland management and economic organisation dating from at least the post medieval period can be demonstrated at Bear's Wood. Many of the activities are recorded in the archaeological record. Archaeological features are at risk, however, particularly as a result of intensive forestry activities. Preservation of archaeological features can be enhanced through well-informed management strategies that recognise both the value and the non-renewable nature of the archaeological resource. This applies particularly to evidence of woodland management, including charcoal burning and woodland boundary features.

Implications for future fieldwork

The rapid survey of Bear's Wood has identified a number of archaeological features associated with the management of woodland resources, patterns of transportation and communication, and administrative and economic organisation dating from at least the post medieval period. Evidence for charcoal production is particularly well represented. It is unlikely that a more detailed archaeological survey would be productive.

Acknowledgements

I would like to acknowledge the commitment and co-operation of the Forestry Commission and Forest Enterprise.

I would like to thank Dr. Keith Ray, County Archaeologist, and Tim Hoverd, Archaeological Projects Officer, for their advice and editorial comments in the preparation of this report.

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Soil Survey of England and Wales (1983) *1:250,000 Soils of England and Wales Sheet 3, Midland and Western England*. Harpenden: Soil Survey of England and Wales.

Archive

1 Dictaphone Tape
1 Transcription Record
1 Excel Database
1 Mapinfo Data File
This Document

Appendix: Database of features and grid references

Note: Eastings and Northings shown below on the database include an additional first digit which should be deleted for location of the NGR, e.g. 358561 237863 represents SO 5856 3786.

HSM	Eastings	Northing	Site type	Period	Description
39094	358561	237863	Trackway	Post medieval	Aligned NE-SW along E side of wood, 2.5m wide, cut 1m deep on W up slope side. Good. Used as a recreational footpath and forestry trackway. Pentaloe Brook on E side marks Mordiford/Fownhope parish boundary
39095	358546	237734	Trackway	Post medieval	Aligned NW-SE, 2m wide, cut 0.5m deep, overgrown, barely discernible, extends NW u/s from j/w trackway 39094. Fair
39094	358499	237624	Trackway	Post medieval	Further position to SW of trackway 39094
39096	358533	237775	Charcoal burning platform	Post medieval	Circular, 4m dia, cut 0.5m on N u/s, lip on S d/s, eroded. Poor
39095	358510	237827	Trackway	Post medieval	Further position to NW of trackway 39095, cut by trackway 39108, continues NW u/s
39097	358483	237607	Trackway	Post medieval	Aligned NE-SW, 2m wide, extends SW u/s to summit, NE d/s. Good. Used as a forestry trackway
39095	358484	237919	Trackway	Post medieval	Further position to NW of trackway 39095. Used as a forestry trackway
39098	358485	237918	Charcoal burning platform	Post medieval	Circular, 3m dia, cut 0.35m on N u/s, lip on S d/s, eroded. Poor
39097	358453	237862	Trackway	Post medieval	Further position to SW at summit of trackway 39097
39099	358441	237790	Charcoal burning platform	Post medieval	Oval, 3m x 1.5m, cut 0.3m on W u/s, eroded. Poor
39100	358436	237761	Charcoal burning platform	Post medieval	Circular, 2.5m dia, cut 0.4m on N u/s, lip on S d/s, eroded. Poor
39101	358416	237753	Charcoal burning platform	Post medieval	Circular, 3.5m dia, damaged by badgers. Very poor
39097	358374	237700	Trackway	Post medieval	Further position to SW d/s of trackway 39097. Poor
39102	358228	237604	Extraction pit	Post medieval	Group of 3 circular pits cut into W facing slope: central pit, 10m dia, 2m deep; north pit, 3m dia, 1.5m deep, south pit, 3m dia, 1m deep. Fair. Clay extraction?

39103	358203	237597	Bank	Post medieval	Aligned N-S at SW edge of wood, in the form of a negative lynchet, 1m high facing into pasture, eroded. Poor
39103	358218	237668	Bank	Post medieval	Further position to N of bank
39104	358263	237672	Trackway	Post medieval	Aligned NNE-SSW, 1.5m wide, cut 0.25m. Poor
39105	358271	237670	Charcoal burning platform	Post medieval	Circular, 3m dia, cut 0.35m on E u/s, lip on W d/s. Poor. Located 3m W of trackway 39104
39104	358305	237746	Trackway	Post medieval	Further position to NNE of trackway 39104, 4m wide, continues as a causeway through waterlogged ground, embanked on W side, parallel drainage ditch on E side
39104	358329	237880	Trackway	Post medieval	Further position to NNE of trackway 39104, embanked on W side, drainage ditch on E side, 1.5m wide, 0.25m deep
39106	358316	237890	Bank	Post medieval	Aligned N-S on W edge of wood, 2m wide, 0.35m high, with wire fence, eroded. Poor
39107	358385	237952	Trackway	Post medieval	Aligned E-W, 1.5m wide, extends E u/s from j/w trackway 39104. Poor
39108	358637	238006	Trackway	Post medieval	Aligned N-S, 3m wide, cut 0.35m. Good. Used as a recreational footpath and forestry trackway
39108	358527	237902	Trackway	Post medieval	Further position to S of trackway 39108, cut by trackway 39097
39109	358628	237878	Charcoal burning platform	Post medieval	Circular, 3m dia, cut on W u/s, lip on W d/s, eroded. Poor
39110	358610	237834	Charcoal burning platform	Post medieval	Circular, 3m dia, cut 0.5m on W u/s, lip on E d/s, eroded. Poor
39111	358601	237851	Charcoal burning platform	Post medieval	Oval, 3m x 2m, cut 0.35m on W u/s, lip on E d/s, eroded. Poor
39112	358584	237852	Trackway	Post medieval	Aligned NW-SE, 2m wide, cut on SW u/s, embanked on NE d/s. Poor
39113	358577	237876	Charcoal burning platform	Post medieval	Circular, 4m dia, cut 1m on S u/s, lip on N d/s, eroded. Poor
39112	358563	237874	Trackway	Post medieval	Further position to NW of trackway 39112
39114	358490	237758	Charcoal burning platform	Post medieval	Oval 3m x 1.5m, cut 0.5m on W u/s, lip on E d/s, eroded. 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.