



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

**Herefordshire Commons
Survey
Climbing Jack Common,
Richard's Castle CP
SO 477 718**

Herefordshire Archaeology Report No.237

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 Commons Survey: Climbing Jack Common Richard's Castle CP

Herefordshire Archaeology Report No.237

Herefordshire Archaeology, February 2007.

Summary:

The survey described in this report formed part of a pilot study for The Community Commons Project operated by Herefordshire Nature Trust. A rapid walk over survey was carried out on the common concerned. A hand held Global Positioning by Satellite System was used to record the location of features encountered.

Features were recorded within the common that would illustrate the intensive use of the land resource in the late and post medieval periods, i.e. quarries, relic boundaries, platforms and hollow way's.

The remains of an earlier Common Boundary were recorded running through the north of the present common. Other features consisted of a circuit of level track ways and hollow ways.

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 a rapid archaeological survey of Climbing Jack Common, (EHE44542). A total of twelve commons have been targeted as part of the Community Commons Project. The project was created by Herefordshire Nature Trust with the support of the Heritage Lottery Fund. The overall aims of the Community Commons Project is to record and measure the level of biodiversity upon the common land in order to form a management plan for each common to improve and promote the habitat of local fauna and flora as well as improvements to public access. The project also provided the opportunity to document and record known and previously unknown archaeological features within the common landscape through a series of rapid survey assessments.

Commons 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 common land in Herefordshire has been recorded in the past. The rapid survey assessment centres on the recording of archaeological features and their position within the landscape.

When the visible archaeological traces within each common have been documented and understood, the results can be combined with the ecological records. From these, a well-informed management strategy can be developed to preserve and interpret the archaeological record alongside the other aims of the Community Commons Project.

Location

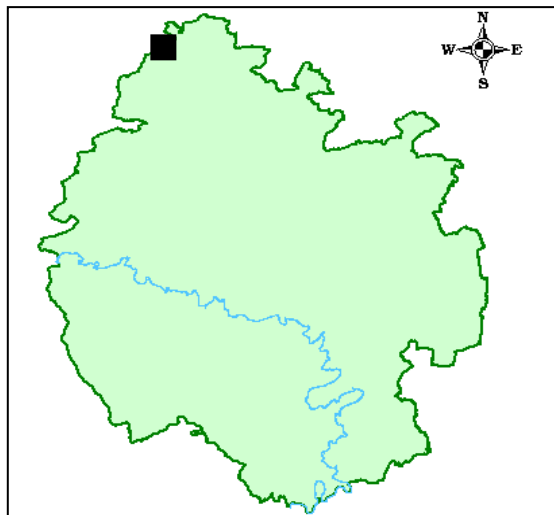


Figure 1: Location of Climbing Jack Common within Herefordshire

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Climbing Jack Common is located at NGR: SO 47753 71888, 1.8 miles southwest of Ludlow within the parish of Richard's Castle, Herefordshire. The common sits on the east-facing slopes of a ridge that stretches north from Aymestry CP before it turns west ending within Burrington CP. Climbing Jack Common occupies a maximum height of 345m OD and is aligned north-south. The western edge of the common marks the parish boundary between Richard's Castle CP and Pipe Aston CP. The common is flanked to the east by High Vinnalls wood and to the south by Haye Park Wood. North of the common is Sunny Dingle Wood, all of these woods consisting of conifer. To the east is an area of post-medieval field systems associated with Haye Park House.

Method

Climbing Jack Common was surveyed on 12th February 2007. The survey comprised a rapid assessment of the potential of the Common to contain well-preserved archaeological features. The survey therefore approximated a 'Level 2' survey (RCHME 1999) and as such it has identified most of the more prominent traces. It should not be regarded as definitive in its results however, given that survey coverage, although systematic was not total. Features were mapped using a hand-held Garmin 12 XL Global Positioning by Satellite System, enabling a ten-figure grid reference to be recorded for each feature. This system is accurate to within approximately 10m.

The common (11.67 hectares) was walked in transacts aligned roughly south/north and approximately 50m to 100m apart. If a large feature was encountered and no other features of archaeological significance could 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 Common 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 throughout the Common

Field conditions

Climbing Jack Common occupies an area along the east-facing slope of a high ridge situated to the southwest of Ludlow. The Common is aligned roughly north-south along the ridge. The geology of the area consists primarily of Bringewoodian formation belonging to the Ludlow Series; it is built up of Calcareous siltstones part of the 'Lower Bringewood Beds'. On the downward slope of the common to the east the geology forms the 'Upper Bringewood Beds' that consist of limestone and shales.

Survey Conditions

The rapid walkover survey was conducted on 12th February 2007. The weather was a mix of rain and clear spells with limited snow cover on the ground. Light winds from the southwest.

The vegetation on the common consisted predominantly of bracken with areas of grass associated with track ways. There was no restriction to access throughout the common.

Previously records

Prior to the commencement of the walkover survey a search of the Sites and Monuments Record (SMR) was made in order to locate any known archaeological features within the common and avoid replication of the archaeological record. The

survey would serve as a reinterpretation of some of the previously recorded archaeological features. On this occasion no archaeological features had been recorded prior to this survey.

Results

The recorded data from the survey is described in detail in the database. The present section is concluded by a brief discussion providing an interim assessment of the historical development of the common. 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.

The Common Boundary

The common boundary survives remarkably well throughout the common (HSM 44543). On the approach to the common from the south the entrance is flanked by the common boundary as the common stretches north forming an elongated funnel entrance into the common’s centre. The funnel entrance measures c.20m wide at its start before widening to c.35m. The Common Boundary is clearly defined as a bank 1-2m wide and up to 1.5m high with an internal ditch 1.5m wide and 1m deep. These measurements are the average throughout the common. However within the northeast corner of the common where a track approaches from Haye Wood the common boundary is absent. In its place is a high terrace/lynchet aligned north-south that stands c.3m high facing east. Its centre is cut by the Haye Wood track way aligned east-west. Interpretation of the terrace is that it is naturally formed, though its eastern edge may have been cut/quarried forming a defined edge to the common.

The course of the Common Boundary along the western edge of the common is also a demarcation boundary for the parishes of Richard’s Castle CP and Pipe Aston CP. Despite this the boundary is unchanged in its form the bank stands c.1.5m high and 3m wide with the interior ditch measuring a maximum of 1.5m wide and 1m deep. There is a row of hawthorn growing along its course.

A major feature within Climbing Jack Common is a relict common boundary (HSM 44546), possibly dating to the Medieval Period on account of its scale. The boundary appears branching from the current common boundary lining the common’s eastern edge at a point where the elongated funnel entrance comes to an end. As the current boundary turns due east the relict common boundary continues north through the common. The boundary measures 3-3.5m wide and up to 1.5m high, the ditch lays along its western edge and measures 1m wide and 0.5m deep. The boundary continues due north until it meets with the east-west aligned track way through the common at NGR SO 48280 72491 where the boundary begins to sweep around to the northeast and then east. At this point the boundary begins to take the form of a c.2m high terrace/lynchet facing north.

It is worth noting that at NGR SO 48330 72513 this boundary runs over the top of an earlier feature (HSM 44547). The feature consists of a straight bank 7m long, 2.5m wide and 1.5m high. It is aligned north-south and does not appear to the south of the boundary. The feature may mark the position of an earlier *Pillow Mound* though there is an absence of associated ditches. The *Pillow Mound* (HSM 44547) would suggest Medieval activity on the common.

The relict common boundary continues its course turning south for a distance of c.15m before redirecting east at NGR SO 48350 72488. The boundary remains as a lynchet with a ditch along its northern edge measuring 1.5m wide and 0.5m deep. Along the edge of the lynchet is a scattering of hawthorn for a distance of c.40m. The boundary continues, crossing the modern east-west aligned common track way at NGR SO 48447 72433 before it joins with the current course of the common boundary at NGR SO 48462 72411.

The relict common boundary may have some connection with the establishment of the field systems to the east. This might account for the formation of a lynchet along the down slope sections of the boundary, the cause of which may be due to natural slope erosion or through the movement of soil due to past ploughing.

The recording of the relict common boundary and its possible medieval origins as well as the evidence for ploughing within the now enclosed land of the common may indicate as to when the lands to the east of the common were brought into agriculture. It maybe that it was with the post-medieval reorganisation of this farmland into the system visible today that the land enclosed by the relict boundary was given back to the common.

Communication route ways

Along the north face of the common aligned east-west parallel to the relict common boundary and the modern track way that runs west from Haye Wood is the site of a levelled track c.5m wide (HSM 44548). It enters the common from the northwest and runs due east where it joins with the modern track way to run east out of the common at NGR SO 48635 72406. The course of the levelled track way is heavily overgrown with bracken making it difficult to trace in places.

The course of a second levelled track way (HSM 44549) appears at NGR SO 48068 72273 and runs southwest away from a modern entrance onto the common and an area of quarrying (HSM 44545). The track measures 3-4m wide and has been disturbed by some past vehicle use. It continues southwest until it joins with a modern track associated with the western common boundary where it runs south along the western edge of the funnel entrance. The track splits from the modern track at NGR SO 47838 72138 and runs parallel to the common boundary as a level terrace 4m wide, standing 1m above the modern track. The width of the levelled track varies from 3-6m as it runs south.

At NGR SO 47783 72025 the level track changes to form a hollow way 5m wide and 1.5m deep for a distance of 7m before it changes back to being a levelled track. At this point the interior ditch of the common boundary has been removed by this

levelled track way. The hollow way reappears at NGR SO 47750 71831 and continues south separate from the interior ditch of the common boundary. The hollow way measures 3m wide and 1m deep and continues south before levelling out as the track exits the common.

Post-medieval industrial features

Along the course of the eastern common boundary next to a modern entrance to the common is a substantial pit or quarry (HSM 44545). It measures approximately 15m diameter and is up to 3m deep. There is no stone present within both the feature and the surrounding area, which has led the interpretation of the site as being one for the extraction of clay or gravel. To the south of the pit is a large mound (HSM 44544), presumably spoil from the pit. It measures c.7m diameter and stands 2-3m high. The levelled track HSM 44549 appears to have some connection to this site and may have served as an access route whilst the quarry was in operation.

Along the course of the modern north-south aligned track within the funnel entrance is a levelled sub-rectangular platform (HSM 44551) cut into the east-facing slope. It measures 8m long and 5m wide and is cut into the slope by 1m. Its eastern edge opens onto the modern track. To the north of the platform is a mound, presumably the upturn from the platform. It measures 4m diameter and 1.5m high. There is no surface material present, though it could have support a structure or simply have acted as a collection point, or 'lay-by'.

Interpretation of Results

The primary activity upon the common appears to have been concerned with the grazing of livestock. It is assumed that the surviving industrial features and communication networks within the common are the product of post-medieval activity though the possibility of the archaeology being earlier and relating to medieval activity cannot be ruled out. It is certain that the profile of the common has altered considerably from when the common land was first established. This is best recognised with the survival of a relict boundary within the current extent of the common that would have once formed the boarder between the common and the farmland to the southeast.

Indications of former land use

The earliest evidence identified during the survey was the common boundary and the relict common boundary possibly dating to the medieval period. The survival of the relict common boundary can aid in the reproduction of events that led to the appearance of the common as it is today.

It is possible that during the medieval period the common extended further east than it does today. At some point during this period, the land to the east was claimed from the common up to the point of the relict common boundary HSM 44546. The land was subsequently ploughed which led to the formation of a lynchet along the boundary. During the post-medieval period a reorganisation of these lands saw the area associated with the relict boundary returned to the common where as the remaining land to the east was divided into rectangular fields.

The site of a possible Pillow Mound mark one of the earliest sites on the common, prior to the establishment of the relict common boundary. There may have been similar features within the surrounding area but have been removed through continued land use.

Evidence for quarrying and the extraction of clay remains within one area of the common, this is supported by the track way HSM 44549 that runs from the site, south out of the common. A second track survives within the north of the common aligned east-west linking the area of Hyde Wood to the east and Sunny Dingle Wood to the west.

Implications regarding the archaeological resource

The topography and geology (especially the soils) of Climbing Jack Common dictates that due to the east facing slopes of the ridge and drainable soils within a large area of the common, archaeological features i.e. banks, ditches platforms survive generally well. In addition the lack of modern activity and the absence of woodland have greatly favoured the survivability of archaeological features. Disturbance upon archaeology within the common is caused largely by bracken coverage.

Implications regarding site condition

Throughout the common, platforms, banks, ditches and track ways remain visible. As such relationships can be noted linking features. Traces of past communications survive in the form of levelled track ways and hollow ways that can be traced linking to at least one site of quarrying. The survival of features makes it possible to produce a rough chronology between sites. This is best observed in the relic common boundary, and its association with the lands to the east of the common.

Implications for future management

The implications for the future management of the historic environment on Climbing Jack Common fall into two categories: reducing further loss and potential enhancement.

In order to reduce further loss to the historic environment a number of management approaches are recommended.

- Avoid works that cause disturbance to the ground surface on or adjacent to known archaeological features as these may disfigure upstanding monuments and can irreversibly damage any *in-situ* archaeological deposits.
- Avoid the dumping of materials on or adjacent to any upstanding archaeological features as this will result in a modification to their form.
- The clearance of bracken should be done in periods when ground conditions are firm and not prone to disfigurement and compaction. In some circumstances, such as soft ground conditions, it maybe appropriate that lightweight machinery or vehicles equipped with low compaction tyres would be favourable so as to reduce ground disturbance.
- Significant earthmoving operations such as the creation of new drains, ponds, parking areas, and access tracks may disturb currently unrecorded archaeological deposits. Proposals should be subject to a rapid assessment by Herefordshire Archaeology to assess the potential archaeological impact of the works and if appropriate instigate a programme of archaeological work.

The aim here is to highlight some of the key archaeological features for enhancement under the Community Commons Project. Further management advice can be obtained from Herefordshire Archaeology. The highlighted features are:

- To reduce bracken/scrub cover over identified archaeological features, in particular the Pillow Mound (HSM 44547) and the junction of the common boundary with the relict boundary (HSM 44546).
- It would be beneficial to incorporate the course of the relict boundary (HSM 44546) into areas planned for creation of open habitat free of scrub and bracken, as this would greatly improve visibility and accessibility.
- The numerous hollow ways and tracks on the common (HSM 44548 & HSM 44549) present the opportunity to create walking or access routes by the reduction of bracken and scrub.

Implications for future field work.

Climbing Jack Common contains a low density of visible archaeological features relating to land management, agriculture and communication links. The features recorded consist primarily of post-medieval route ways, though evidence for medieval land use is also present.

The common land has a limited presence of well-preserved, visible archaeological features. It should be possible to recognise relationships between the features recorded and hence produce at least a rudimentary series of phases illustrating the changing management of the common. Due to substantial areas of bracken growth within the common it is probable that a number of archaeological features remain undetected.

Opportunities to further investigate the archaeology of the common should target key aspects to establish a more complete picture of the archaeological resource. These are:

- Investigate the possible *Pillow Mound* and its relationship with the relict field boundary and other boundaries on the common. Pillow mounds are commonly found within areas defined as *waste of the manor* in the medieval period. The relict field boundary, which apparently overlies the structure, provides the opportunity to achieve a relative dating of the pillow mound.
- Investigation of the intersection of boundaries on the common to confirm the chronological sequence, which will further enhance understanding of the relative dating of structures.
- Investigate the relict field boundary as a demarcation of the former extent of farmland encroaching on the common from the south. An assessment of the field pattern to the south of this boundary will give an indication of the period in which this boundary was established.

Figures

Figure 1: Location Map, © OS Crown Copyright (OS Licence 100024168)

Acknowledgements

I would like to acknowledge the help and co-operation of Herefordshire Nature Trust for assistance with access for this survey, and to the Herefordshire Community Commons Project for their commitment to this scheme.

Dr. Keith Ray, County Archaeologist, for his editorial input.

Dr. Neil Rimmington, Countryside Advisor, for his editorial input.

Archive

1 Dictaphone tape
1 Transcription Record
1 Excel Database
1 Mapinfo data file

Bibliography

British Geological Survey; England & Wales sheet 181, Ludlow. Solid & Drift Geology, scale 1:50 000 Provisional Series. 2000.

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.

Appendix 1: Database of features recorded during this survey.

HSM	Easting	Northing	Site type	Period	Description
44543	347788	271716	Common Boundary	Medieval	Common boundary aligned north south forming the eastern edge of the long funnel entrance onto the common. The bank measures 1-2m wide and 1m high. The interior ditch is 1.5m wide and 1m deep. The scale of the feature points toward a medieval date for its construction.
44543	347759	271848	Common Boundary	Medieval	Redirects north east.
44543	347772	271931	Common Boundary	Medieval	Continuation
44543	347874	272125	Common Boundary	Medieval	Continuation of boundary though it is slightly wider at 3m.
44544	348108	272261	Spoil	Post-medieval	Spoil associated with quarry (clay?). Spoil mound measures 2-3m high and c.7m diameter.
44545	348125	272279	Quarry (Clay?)	Post-medieval	Possible clay pit measuring 15m diameter and 3m deep.
44546	348187	272359	Relict Common Boundary?	Unknown	North-south aligned boundary running from the corner of the current common boundary. This boundary may represent an earlier common boundary. The bank measures 3m-3.5m wide and 1m-1.5m high. The ditch is on its western edge and measures 1m wide and 0.5m deep.
44546	348230	272423	Relict Common Boundary?	Unknown	Continuation
44546	348280	272491	Relict Common Boundary?	Unknown	Boundary cut by a modern track aligned east-west.
44546	348312	272513	Relict Common Boundary?	Unknown	Continuation of boundary as it turns toward the north east. From this point the ditch is less apparent measuring 0.7m wide and 0.4m deep. The bank appears as a terrace 2m high.
44546	348330	272513	Relict Common Boundary?	Unknown	Continuation of boundary at a point where it runs over the top of an earlier boundary aligned north-south.
44546	348345	272503	Relict Common Boundary?	Unknown	Continuation of relict common boundary as it starts to turn south.
44546	348350	272488	Relict Common Boundary?	Unknown	The boundary turns east continuing to appear as a terrace, the ditch survives up to 1.2m wide 0.5m deep.
44546	348378	272480	Relict Common Boundary?	Unknown	Continuation
44546	348413	272475	Relict Common Boundary?	Unknown	Continuation of the relict common boundary.
44546	348447	272433	Relict Common	Unknown	It meets with the modern common track appearing as a lynchet 1m high.

			Boundary?		
44546	348456	272423	Relict Common Boundary?	Unknown	Continuation toward modern common boundary.
44546	348462	272411	Relict Common Boundary?	Unknown	Boundary comes to an end as it runs, joining with the surviving common boundary at an intersection of field boundaries outside of the common.
44547	348333	272518	Pillow mound?	Medieval	The north-south aligned bank comes to an end at this point having covered a distance of 7m. It measures 2m-2.5m wide and 1.5m high. May be a pillow mound though no ditches were present?
44548	348386	272500	Levelled Track	Post-medieval	Trackway cut into the north-facing slope aligned east-west. It measures up to 5m wide. Overgrown with bracken.
44548	348403	272489	Levelled Track	Post-medieval	Continuation
44548	348490	272440	Levelled Track	Post-medieval	Continuation
44548	348511	272433	Levelled Track	Post-medieval	Continuation
44548	348563	272415	Levelled Track	Post-medieval	Continuation
44548	348635	272406	Levelled Track	Post-medieval	Trackway joins with the modern track through the common. Until this point the track was overgrown with bracken.
44548	348207	272537	Levelled Track	Post-medieval	Reappearance of the levelled trackway to the west. The track remains cut into the north facing slope and over grown with bracken. The track is much wider forming a lynchet c.6m wide.
44549	348068	272273	Levelled Track	Post-medieval	Levelled trackway cut into the east facing slope of the common. The track way connects with the area recorded as a possible clay pit and the entrance to the common at that point. It measures 3m-4m (some modern vehicle use).
44549	348031	272254	Levelled Track	Post-medieval	Continuation
44549	347992	272237	Levelled Track	Post-medieval	Continuation
44549	334794	272210	Levelled Track	Post-medieval	Continuation
44549	347906	272208	Levelled Track	Post-medieval	Track joins with the modern common boundary trackway.
44549	347838	272138	Levelled Track	Post-medieval	Reappearance of the levelled track way. It measures 4m wide and 1m high above the modern track. It runs parallel to the common boundary.
44549	347819	272093	Levelled Track	Post-medieval	Levelled track widens at this point forming a terrace or platform c. 6m wide.
44549	347810	272062	Levelled Track	Post-medieval	Joins with the modern track at this point the terrace is less apparent.
44549	347783	272025	Levelled Track/ hollow way	Post-medieval	Track reappears to the west of the modern track and runs parallel to the common boundary. It appears as a holloway for a distance of 7m. It

					measures 5m wide and 1.5m deep.
44549	347777	271999	Levelled Track/ hollow way	Post-medieval	Hollow way returns to form a level track. The track covers what may have been the interior ditch of the common boundary. The boundary survives as a bank 2m high and 3m wide.
44549	347755	271952	Levelled Track	Post-medieval	Continuation of track, appears more as a terrace c.7m wide.
44549	347762	271916	Levelled Track	Post-medieval	Track narrows to c.4m wide.
44549	347756	271889	Levelled Track	Post-medieval	Continuation
44549	347750	271831	Levelled Track/ hollow way	Post-medieval	Track forms into a hollow way. It measures 3m wide and 1m deep.
44549	347764	271786	Levelled Track/ hollow way	Post-medieval	The hollow way merges with the ditch of the common boundary creating a hollow 6m wide and 1m deep
44549	347771	271753	Levelled Track/ hollow way	Post-medieval	The hollow way separates from the common boundary ditch.
44549	347766	271648	Levelled Track/ hollow way	Post-medieval	Hollow way levels to form a levelled track parallel to the common boundary.
44549	347763	271618	Levelled Track/ hollow way	Post-medieval	Levelled track exits the common becoming lost within the modern intersecting track ways.
44550	347828	272101	Quarry?	Post-medieval	A 4m diameter pit, possibly due to quarrying or maybe the cause of an up-rooted tree. The pit is c.1.5m deep. Some spoil on its eastern edge measuring 3m diameter and 1m high.
44551	347768	271916	Platform	Post-medieval	Sub-rectangular levelled platform cut into east facing slope. Its eastern edge opens on the modern track through the common. Its aligned north-south measuring c.8m and is c.5m wide. Its cut into the slope by 1m. the upturned spoil from the platform lies on its southern edge and measure 1.5-2m high and 4m diameter.