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Butterley Mill, Wacton: A Whole Farm Archaeological Survey

**Herefordshire Archaeology Report
No. 179**

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.

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Summary

The survey described in this report (EHE34795) was carried out during February 2005 as one in a series of whole farm surveys. In turn, these formed part of the Frome Valley Archaeology, Landscape Change and Conservation Project.

Bythan is a good example of landscape change over time, and shows how it is possible to restore some historic aspects of this landscape. The earthworks identified during survey were mainly representative of small-scale management of landscape features such as field boundaries. Boundaries shown on the 1840 Tithe map of Avenbury, which had been removed, are now being re-established under the Countryside Stewardship Scheme. The present owners are aware of the importance of historic features and are keen to preserve them whilst still maintaining a good practical use for the land.

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.

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 whole farm survey of Butterley Mill, Wacton (EHE34795). The survey was carried out as part of the Frome Valley Archaeology, Landscape Change and Conservation Project during 2005. The project was part financed by the European Union (EAGGF) and DEFRA through the Herefordshire Rivers LEADER+ Programme and English Heritage, and was carried out in partnership with the Bromyard and District Local History Society. The idea behind the project was to try to learn more about the historical development of the Frome Valley (and especially the river environs) from the earliest continuous human occupation of the area 12,000 years ago, up until the present day. A core aim of the project was to involve the local community in a series of events and activities exploring the Valley's rich heritage and human impact on the landscape.

The farm surveys were an important part of the project as they helped to indicate how agricultural practices have altered the landscape over time, to raise awareness of archaeological features, and to provide an oral history element. The farm visits comprised of a rapid walkover survey and systematic observation of historical features. This was undertaken where possible with a hand-held Global Positioning System (GPS). Where possible, the farmer or landowner accompanied the surveyor, providing a first hand account of the history of land use and agricultural methods. The surveys were only possible through the kind co-operation of the landowners/farmers, permitting access to their holdings and devoting half a day or more of their time.

This report describes the location of Butterley Mill, the methods and field conditions of the survey, and any previous known observations regarding the historic environment. Results of the survey are given on a field-by-field basis, with comments provided on land-use and condition of the archaeological features. Finally, a synthesis of observed archaeological features is given in the discussion and the implications for their management is highlighted.

Location

Butterley Mill is located at NGR SO 666 530 within the parish of Wacton, approximately 2km southeast of Bromyard and east of the River Frome. It covers an area of around 58.5 acres over steeply sloping topography.

Method

The whole farm survey at Butterley Mill was undertaken on February 22nd 2005. Butterley Mill consists of 8 land parcels, covering 58.5 acres.

The survey progressed in three stages, and followed a format devised specifically for the Frome Valley project. Initially, a check was made of the Herefordshire SMR, and historic

maps were consulted, such as the 1880s first edition Ordnance Survey and the Tithe Apportionment Maps for Avenbury, dating to 1845. The second stage of the survey involved an interview with the landowner Mrs Hillier. This provided an opportunity to gain information on the current farming practices and how these may have changed over time, any farm management schemes that might be in place, as well as any known historical features on the farm, or oral histories. The interview would also provide insights into the farm's recent history and previous owners. The third stage was a systematic walkover of the landholding, accompanied by Mrs Hillier. Each land parcel was recorded individually and assigned a number or, where possible, the field name given by the landowner.

All visible archaeological features were recorded as well as information about current land usage, cover, boundary cover and any potential destructive factors such as root damage or erosion. The position of any identified archaeological features was recorded using a handheld SILVA Multi Navigator Global Positioning System (GPS). This enabled a ten-figure grid reference to be recorded for each feature. The system is accurate to within approximately 3m and to within 10m under tree cover. These records provided the basis for the database and synthesis in this report. During the third stage of the survey the general building material and usage of the farm buildings were recorded.

<i>Field conditions</i>

The survey was undertaken in February 2005. This meant that conditions were good for the recognition of earthwork features, as vegetation was low enabling excellent visibility. The weather was good on the day of the survey, making earthworks more clearly visible in low sunlight. Several of the land parcels were improved pasture, and earthworks were recorded in five of these. The eighth land parcel was a small area of woodland.

<i>Previous fieldwork / records</i>
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Farm	NGR SO 2930 5615	HSM 31395
Large farm yard, buildings on 3 sides of a square. House on eastern side. On the Tithe it is "New Barn".		

Cropmark	NGR SO 2938 5578	HSM 9905
'Enclosure north-east of Old Ashmoor. Small ovoid enclosure, almost touching field edge.' (Aerial Photograph, C. Musson, 7/1989, 89.1.8-9)		

Ridge and Furrow	NGR SO 2918 5574	HSM 36706
Found in SW corner of field, NW – SE orientated. (1993, RCHME)		

Ridge and Furrow	NGR SO 2890 5590	HSM 36707
Orientated NW – SE. (1993, RCHME)		

Results

Documentary sources

The investigation of documentary sources for this landholding has not been exhaustive. The main documentary evidence utilised for this survey has been the available Tithe and Ordnance Survey mapping, along with the relevant Sites and Monuments records.

Bythan is recorded as Bythen homestead and garden on the 1840 Tithe map of Avenbury. The field to the north of the house is shown as Bythen Field, and to the south is Bythe Pasture.

Recent history and current farming practices

The current landowners, Mr and Mrs Hillier, bought Bythan in December 2001, including the farmhouse and all of the current landholding apart from Burley Field. This was purchased at a later stage from Burley Farm. The previous owner bought Bythan during the 1960s, renovated the house from derelict, built a modern extension and re-roofed the barns. He then purchased the land from the Turners at Burgess Farm, and farmed it until the mid-late 1990s when he lost his herd during the Foot and Mouth scare and was forced to sell. During his ownership he rented some of the fields as pasture to a farmer from Bishops Frome, and made no changes to the land.

The Hilliers managed to successfully purchase the house and land from different owners, reuniting the former landholding. They have only sold a small strip of land on the southeast boundary of Burley Field to neighbouring residents. Mrs Hillier tells me the land has generally been worked as part of larger farms in the past. She has noticed that Burley Field has more modern grass species than the pastures that came with the original landholding.

The Hilliers do not farm the land themselves, but let out the grazing to a neighbouring farmer. They do have considerable involvement in the management of their land, however, particularly through the Countryside Stewardship Scheme in place since October 2003 (see below).

Cattle are grazed here at the beginning of the year, with some fields put aside for silage and hay. Fields 3, 5 and 6 are generally cut for fodder crops. After this all fields are used as cattle pasture until the end of October, or earlier if the weather is wet. The land is then used to graze sheep until mid December. All livestock are removed between December and early April, depending on the weather, and the Hilliers use this time to continue work under the Countryside Stewardship Scheme.

Buildings

There were four buildings recorded at Butterley Mill:

1. The original part of the house, built during the mid 18th century. Timber-frame building with brick infill and clay tile roof. The building is two storeys high and is currently lived in by Mr and Mrs Hillier. The previous owner renovated it from derelict during the 1970s and added the extension (2).
2. Modern extension to the house. Forms the section between the house and a barn. Brick, one storey building with clay tile roof.
3. Stone barn with clay tile roof. Open fronted with timber posts. Currently used for storage, but previous use certainly agricultural. Likely to be same date as house. Re-roofed by the previous owner during the 1970s.
4. As above, but there are plans to convert this building.

Field names and past farming practices

The present landowners plan to rename all fields as they were on the 1840 Tithe map. At present only three of the fields have names, but two of these may be changed. Those fields without names have been assigned numbers for the purpose of this survey. The previous owner did not use names for the fields.

Field 1/Big Field

Shown as Big Field on the 1840 Tithe map where it is marked as arable land. Currently used as pasture. The track leading to the house runs along the northwest boundary of this field.

Field 2/Front Field

Name may change. On the tithe map it is recorded as Bythe Pasture, with an area marked Foxley in the southeast part of the field. The northeast boundary of this field also forms the parish boundary.

Field 3

To be renamed Bythen Field as on Tithe. Used as arable land during this time, but currently improved pasture with a new plantation of standard orchard trees.

Field 4

Formally three separate land parcels (1840 Tithe map) called Lower Stoney Field (arable), Stoney Field (arable) and The Charl (meadow). No name at present.

Field 5

Tithe map shows this field divided into two meadows collectively named Little Foxley.

Field 6/Burley Field

Burley Field is one land parcel but a narrow strip of land not included in the holding separates the northern and southern areas of the field. On the 1840 Tithe map the northern part is shown as an arable field called Three Acres, with the southern part divided into two unnamed meadows. The Hilliers chose the current name when the field was purchased from Burley Farm. Mrs Hillier has been informed that the field was planted with beans at some stage prior to the previous owner.

Field 7

Part of a meadow marked The Sharl on the Tithe map, the field is largely occupied by an old stone quarry (see archaeological features). No current name

Home Wood

This is a small area of woodland to the west of the farmhouse. It is not marked on the 1840 Tithe map, but there are some mature trees. A new planting last year has increased the area of the wood to double its original size.

Archaeological features identified

Field 1

Field bank with oak trees along it, running parallel to and approximately 2.5 metres inside of southeast boundary. Does not form wide enough space between for a trackway. This shows small-scale re-organisation of the field boundary, sometime during the post-medieval period.

Field 2

Small, roughly circular depression near the front of the house, likely to have been a pond, with plans to restore it as such.

Field 5

Field bank as in Field 1, running parallel to and approximately 2 metres inside southern boundary. The inside bank is steep and up to 2 metres high in places.

Field 7

Stone quarry covering most of the field. Footings of a barn were seen within this area. Large ridges in the southwest corner of the field, approximately 5 metres wide, 2 metres apart, running roughly north-south.

Home Wood

Quarry in the old coppice.

Farm management schemes

The farm has been managed under the Countryside Stewardship Scheme since October 2003. Under the guidance of the scheme, the Hilliers have worked hard to restore aspects of the farm's landscape history, with excellent results. Many of the Tithe boundaries have already been re-established, and the Hilliers have begun to carefully manage the magnificent veteran trees. Mrs Hillier has a good understanding of trees and plants and recognises areas that need management. They are keen to rename the fields as they are shown on the Tithe map, once they have successfully restored all the boundaries.

Hedge planting/restoration:

The eastern boundary of Field 1 has recently been planted as a new mixed-species hedge. The northeast boundary of Field 2 has been replanted, and there has been hedgerow regeneration on the southwest boundary. Field 3 has a modern northwest boundary fence that follows the line of an older boundary. An old tithe boundary represented by a line of oak trees has been re-established in Field 4, so far only a fence, but this will be replaced by a hedge. The northwest boundary of this field is to be regenerated by new planting within gaps. The western boundary of Field 6 had been planted the day before this survey took place.

Tree management:

Major tree surgery is planned for some of the boundary oaks. Pollarding has been started on the old ash pollards along the parish boundary (western boundary of Field 2). The management is planned to happen over a period of three years in order to reduce stress to the trees. There are some old oaks in Home Wood that are to be managed, and a new plantation has been established next to part of the old coppice. The standard orchard in Field 3 was put in under the scheme.

Wildlife:

Bythan is rich in wildlife already, including maybugs and a colony of long-eared bats. The new hedges have been planted with diverse species to encourage a wide variety of wildlife. The Hilliers plan to increase the wildflower species in Field 3 around the orchard, and also possibly in Field 5. Areas of long grass are left along the driveway to attract wildlife.

Discussion

Bythan has a relatively small number of archaeological features, but those identified tell us something about how the landscape has been managed (former field boundaries) or used for industry (quarries). These features have now been recorded, and there is now a written record of Bythan's more recent history.

The current emphasis of the farm is grazing for livestock, but some of the fields were previously arable land. It is clear that the farmer (who rents the fields from Mr and Mrs Hillier) has a good understanding of how the land should be farmed in relation to the seasons, and the agriculture currently has a low impact on the landscape.

Bythan is a good example of landscape change over time, and shows how it is possible to restore some historic aspects of this landscape. The earthworks identified during survey were mainly representative of small-scale management of landscape features such as field boundaries. Boundaries shown on the 1840 Tithe map that had been removed are now being re-established under the Countryside Stewardship Scheme. The present owners are aware of the importance of historic features and are keen to preserve them whilst still maintaining a good practical use for the land.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Mr and Mrs Hillier for permission to conduct the survey, and particularly Mrs Hillier for giving up her time and for providing valuable information.

Archive

8 landscape record forms
4 building record forms
Field notes
This document

Appendix 1: Database of features and grid references.

HSM No.	Easting	Northing	Site type	Period	Description
34796	29780	56038	Holloway	Post-medieval	
34797	29562	56209	Bank	Post-medieval	Low bank, approx 0.2m high, 2m wide. Running N.
	29544	56252	Continued		Low bank ends here.
34798	29064	56302	Bank and ditch	Post-medieval	Low bank running N-S with shallow ditch on E side.
	29075	56290	Continued		S end of bank and ditch. Cut to south by leat 34801.
	29084	56282	Continued		Continuation of bank to the south of the leat. Approx 5m long.
34799	29001	56271	Bank and ditch	Post-Medieval	Low bank running N-S with shallow ditch on E side. Parallel with bank and ditch 34798 to the east.
	29032	56234	Continued		S. end of bank. Ends here. Cut by leat 34801.
34800	28980	56242	Hedgebank	Post-medieval	Hedgebank surviving in gap in the existing hedge, to the west of banks 34798 and 34799. Hedgebank curves to north and to south.
34801	29119	56330	Leat	Post-medieval	Leat faint here. Continues SW...
	29075	56290	Continued		Leat cuts bank 34798 here. Heads SW..
	29032	56234	Continued		Leat cuts bank 34799 here.
	29016	56213	Continued		Leat cuts NW-SE hedge. Curves to SW becomes more faint to the SW beyond this.
	28960	56129	Continued		Leat becomes very difficult to see here as heads to weir to SW.
	28952	56120	Continued		Point where leat is fed by weir.

34802	28954	56279	Mill Race/Overflow	Post-medieval	At the boundary with school playing fields to the east. Heads SW.
	28952	56274	Continued		Crossed by track at this point. Continues under track, heading SW.
	28944	59296	Continued		Continues to SW beyond track.
	28898	56233	Continued		Begins to curve to west.
	28886	56222	Continued		Curves to NNW, one side of the leat bank is eroded.
	28860	56242	Continued		Eroded. Overgrown by hedgerow. Can still be traced. Curves to WSW.
	28817	56277	Continued		Leat continues to this point although much of it is overgrown. Beyond this it continues to the west.
	28767	56202	Continued		Extends beyond boundary of Newburn Farm.
34803	28915	56045	Leat	Post-medieval	East extent of feature as seen. Very shallow and spread. Heads west.
	28903	36043	Continued		Small channel heads NE from this point for 5m. Leat continues west.
	28896	56040	Continued		Leat becomes stronger. Heads SW.
	28890	56034	Continued		Small channel heads N for 7m from this point. Leat continues SW.
	28852	56016	Continued		Leat cuts N-S hedge and ends here.
34804	28844	55995	Bank	Post-medieval?	Short 0.4m high bank running NNW – SSE
	28841	56004	Continued		Bank ends.
34805	28843	56018	Holloway/track way	Post-medieval	N. end of holloway. Very wide. Heads S uphill.
34805	28844	56011	Holloway/track way	Post-medieval	Holloway curves to SE. Bank on ? side of holloway starts
	28856	56000	Continued		Curves east.
	28864	56000	Continued		Heads ESE.
	28876	56000	Continued		Banks disappear. Heads ENE.
	28892	56007	Continued		Heads east.
	28924	56030	Continued		Heads east
	28933	56033	Continued		Curves to the south
	28942	56030	Continued		Heads south. Start of wide holloway.
	28988	55954	Continued		Holloway ends here. Very deep at this point. Hard to see if it continues beyond the boundary of Newburn Farm to the S.
34806	28802	56125	House Platform/ Ruins of house	Post-medieval	Platform for house the remains of which can still be seen, although very heavily overgrown.
34807	29330	56192	Ridge and Furrow	Medieval/ Post Medieval	Faint ridges seen aligned roughly N_S. Wide and straight. Surviving orchard trees in field.

34809	29369	56131	Hedgeline/ditc	Post-medieval	Wide grass mark heading S.
	29374	56043	Continued		Meets E-W Lynchet 34812 here. Continues S.
	29377	56019	Continued		Ends at E-W hedge.
34810	29368	56018	Drain?	Post-medieval	Running N-S, parallel to hedgeline 34809.
	29368	56033	Continued		Cuts E-W lynchet 34812 and continues N.
	29366	56054	Continued		Ends here at NW-SE drain 34811.
34811	29374	56043	Drain?	Post-medieval	Seen at SW corner of lynchet 34812. Heads NW downhill.
	29366	56054	Continued		Junction with N-S drain 34810.
	29347	56097	Continued		Drain ends here.
34812	29374	56043	Lynchet	Medieval/ Post-medieval	Strong lynchet approx 0.7-1m high. Heads west. Possibly cut to east by hedgeline 34809.
34812	29368	56033	Lynchet	Medieval/ Post-medieval	Cut by later drain 34810.
	29197	56022	Continued		Lynchet becomes less clear from here. About 0.6m high.
	29812	56019	Continued		Lynchet continues west of this point but is very unclear.
	29150	56012	Continued		Lynchet ends here.
34813	29198	56098	Drain?	Post-medieval/ Modern	Curving gently to the SE.
	29237	56070	Continued		Drain ends.
34814	29161	56050	Hedgebanks	Post-Medieval	Series of three roughly parallel hedgebanks. Very low. Running N-S. Possibly cut to the south by holloway 34815, although hedgebanks could in effect respect the holloway.
34815	29211	56073	Holloway	Medieval/ Post-medieval	Very wide and spread here. Holloway starts here and curves WSW.
	29819	56054	Continued		Junction with easternmost of three hedgebanks 34814. Holloway becomes more defined. Heads W.
	29175	56084	Continued		Junction with middle of three hedgebanks, 34814. Heads W
	29143	56041	Continued		Holloway is less defined here and becomes very wide.
	29095	56033	Continued		Holloway is very unclear here where it meets the N-S field boundary. However the field boundary shows a strong depression???m wide. Could not trace holloway west into next field.

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.

Paul White, Landscape Archaeologist.