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LITTLE DOWARD, GANAREW, HEREFORDSHIRE
ANALYTICAL EARTHWORK SURVEY OF THE HILLFORT AND RAPID LANDSCAPE INVESTIGATION

Mark Bowden

ARCHAEOLOGICAL
SURVEY AND INVESTIGATION

ENGLISH HERITAGE

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Research Department Report Series 72-2009

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NGR: SO 539 160

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SUMMARY

The earthworks of Little Doward hillfort and its associated landscape were surveyed in January to March 2009, at the request of and with the assistance of Herefordshire Archaeology. Woodland was cleared from the interior of the hillfort in 2008 by the owners, the Woodland Trust, in association with the Wye Valley AONB. Survey was required to inform future conservation management of the site and presentation to the general public. The hillfort was surveyed in detail at a scale of 1:1000, the surrounding landscape summarily at 1:2500. The late prehistoric hillfort occupies a limestone massif on the north bank of the Wye, which includes dramatic landforms such as cliffs and caves. It comprises two parts, an upper NW enclosure and a lower SE enclosure; it is argued here that the latter is the primary site of activity and the possible significance of Bronze Age burial in the locality is discussed. Within the fort are the remains of a rabbit warren, of medieval or post-medieval date, and traces of iron mining. The surrounding landscape was transformed from common land in the early 19th century into a private deer park and pleasure grounds. Remains of landscaping works undertaken in the second quarter of the 19th century are striking and abundant.

CONTRIBUTORS

Fieldwork was undertaken by the author with: Deborah Cunliffe, Trevor Pearson and Phil Sinton of EH Imaging Graphics & Survey team; Chris Atkinson, Natalie Preece and Neil Rimmington of Herefordshire Archaeology; Andrew Burn and Anna Komar, EH EPPIC placements with Archaeological Survey & Investigation team; and Edward Bowden.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

EH is grateful to its partners the Woodland Trust, the Wye Valley AONB and Herefordshire Council; in particular thanks are due to Paula Keen (Woodland Trust), Kate Biggs and Sue Middleton ('Overlooking the Wye') and Neil Rimmington (Herefordshire Archaeology). Neil Rimmington helpfully commented on a draft of this report.

ARCHIVE LOCATION

The archive is deposited at the NMR. Swindon.

DATE OF SURVEY

January-March 2009

CONTACT DETAILS

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Background

The principal archaeological components of Little Doward (SO 539 160; Fig 1), Ganarew, Herefordshire, are an Iron Age univallate hillfort (NMR no SO 51 NW 6), a medieval or later rabbit warren and a 19th-century parkland landscape attached to the country house at Wyastone Leys (SO 530 157), with additional evidence of other prehistoric, medieval and post-medieval activity. The hill, owned by The Woodland Trust, was covered by a mixture of coniferous and deciduous woodland; the conifer, which had been planted in the 1950s, and some scrub was removed from the hillfort during the summer of 2008. The intention is to transfer the land to more open pasture management with retention of stable mature broadleaf trees. The hillfort will then, from August 2009, be grazed by small numbers of cattle (and perhaps sheep) to maintain this open pasture, though it is anticipated that continued manual scrub management will be required. As a result of this programme Little Doward has been cited as an example of good conservation practice (Taylor 2009).

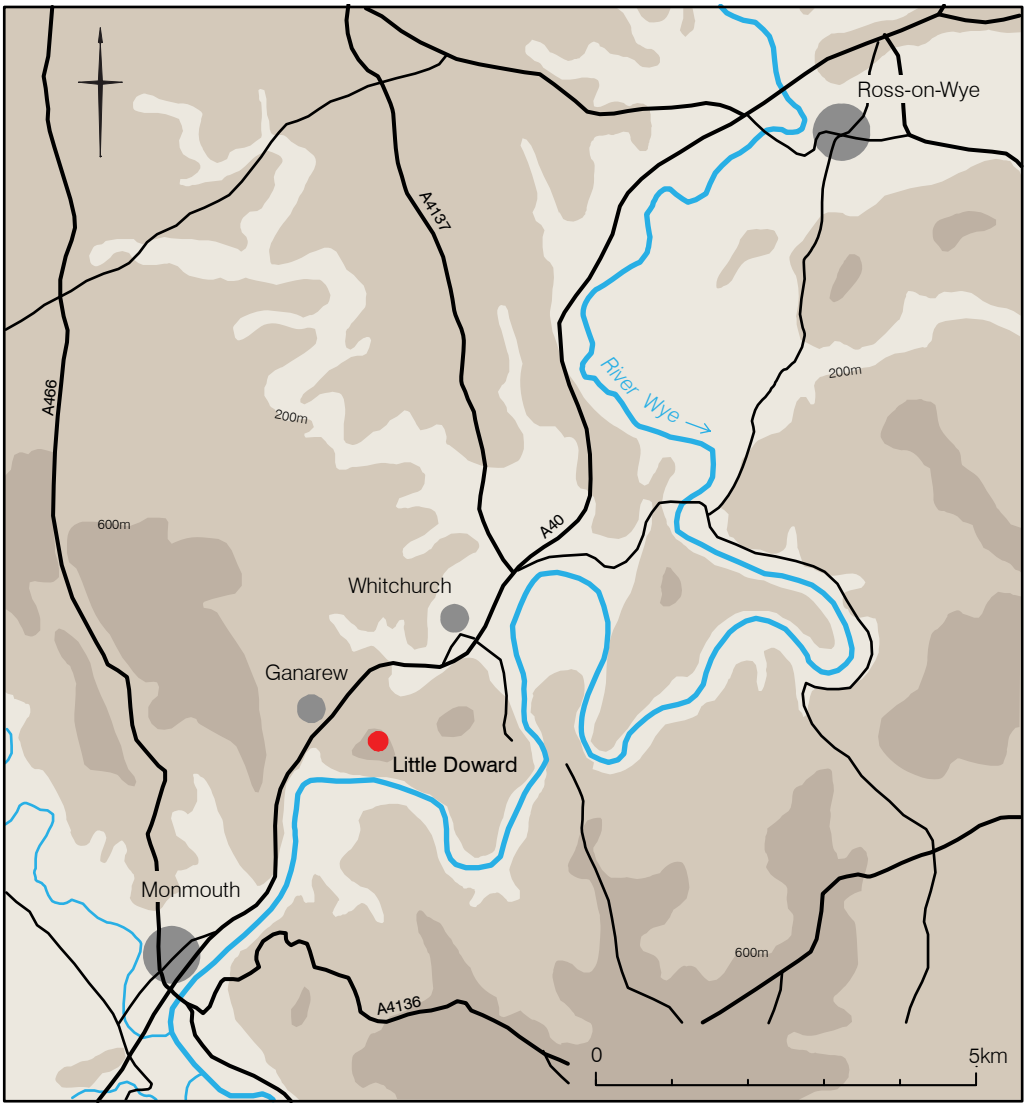

Fig 1: location map

English Heritage's Archaeological Survey & Investigation team were invited by Herefordshire Council to undertake a detailed survey of the hillfort and investigation of the surrounding park with the intention of providing interpretation and informing the conservation management plan following the conifer removal.

This forms part of the Council's wider research programme examining the local landscape and provides support for the Wye Valley AONB's Heritage Lottery Funded project, 'Overlooking the Wye', building upon the initial survey work already undertaken (Rimmington 2008).

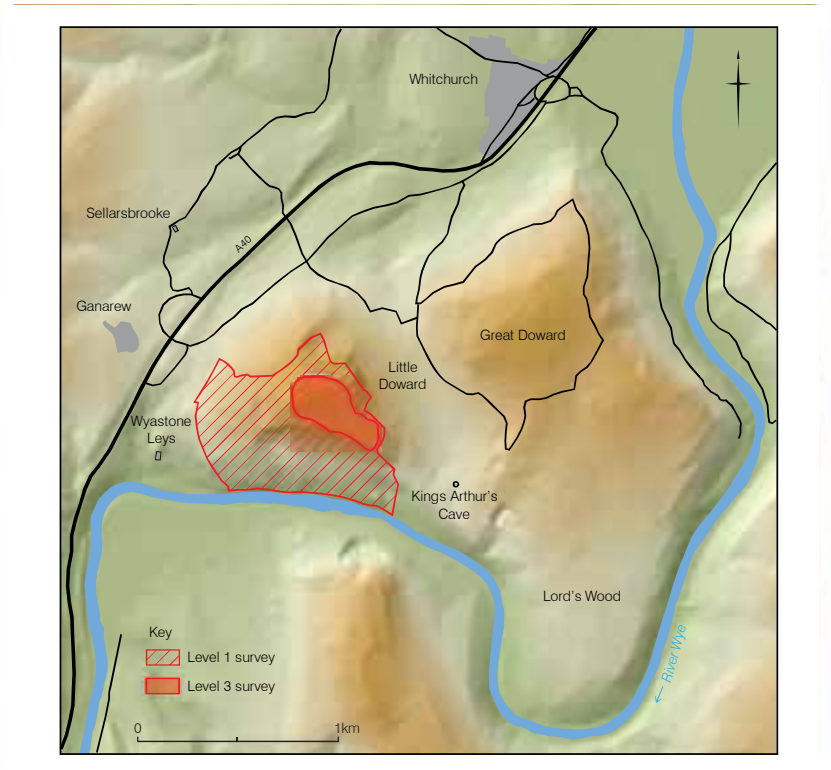

Fig 2: areas surveyed, and other places mentioned in the text

The principal aim of the project was to provide data and interpretation for future conservation, public access (physical and intellectual) and research on Little Doward hillfort and its surrounding landscape (Fig 2) and in particular, to provide a sound knowledge base for land managers to manage the historic environment value effectively alongside other interests. This aim was met through a Level 3 earthwork survey at 1:1000 scale of Little Doward hillfort utilising survey grade GPS, total station EDM and graphic survey data capture techniques (*see* Methodology statement, below); this was complemented by a Level 1 survey of the north, south and west slopes of Little Doward using mapping grade hand-held GPS (for a definition of Levels of Survey, *see* English Heritage 2008, 20-9). This work was undertaken during January and February 2009. The project was seen as a partnership between English Heritage, Wye Valley AONB, The Woodland Trust and Herefordshire Council. The intention had been that following tree felling all brash would be baled and removed from site. However, due to the wet conditions prevailing in 2008, this proved impossible. Instead the brash was mulched on site. Therefore, at the time of the survey much of the surface was covered by brash, which could have masked some slight earthworks.

Geology and topography

Little Doward occupies a substantial hill, up to 221m high at the trig pillar which occupies the north-west corner of the ramparts, on the north bank of the River Wye; it is an outlier of the larger but lower Great Doward and Lord's Wood massif to the east and south-east. This is formed of Old Red Sandstones and Carboniferous Limestone Series strata, mainly (in ascending order) Brownstones, Quartz Conglomerate, Tintern Sandstone Group, Lower Limestone Shale and Lower Dolomite. The south-eastern part of the hillfort, often referred to as an 'annexe', consists of a cap of Crease Limestone. This geological formation has resulted in a dramatic landscape of steep slopes, cliffs and caves. Recently Little Doward has been under mixed woodland, though the interior of the hillfort has now been cleared, as mentioned above. A few veteran standard trees suggest that the area, which was unenclosed common until the mid 19th century, has been wood pasture historically.

History and previous archaeological work

Relatively little is known of the history of this area. Several caves in the vicinity have yielded early prehistoric remains: King Arthur's Cave (SO 51 NW 7), to the south-east of the hillfort, contained animal remains and flint tools of Middle and Upper Palaeolithic date, late Mesolithic knapping debris and Neolithic and Early Bronze Age material; Madawg Rock Shelter (SO 51 NW 35), also east of the fort but closer to the river, contained an Upper Palaeolithic blade and some Late Mesolithic remains, including perforated cowrie shells (Barton 1994, 68), as well as Bronze Age and Romano-British items, including a probable Early Bronze Age burial (*ibid*, 70; *and see* below); the nearby Cavall's Cave (SO 51 NW 34) also contained Bronze Age and Romano-British remains; King Arthur's Hall Cave (SO 51 NW 33), which is in the foot of the cliff directly below the south-eastern corner of the hillfort, is the supposed site of the discovery, at the beginning of the 18th century, of an inhumation accompanied by a bronze spearhead (Edmunds 1874; *Trans Woolhope Club* 1884, 216); this will be discussed below. Casual finds include a Neolithic arrowhead (SO 51 NW 12) and a Late Bronze Age leaf-shaped spearhead (SO 51 NW 9; Chitty 1952), both to the east of the hillfort.

Geoffrey of Monmouth recounts the death of Vortigern by burning in a hillfort, which has often been identified as Little Doward. Woolf (2008), the most recent commentator on this story, accepts the identification of Geoffrey's hillfort as Little Doward, only 5km from Monmouth. Geoffrey's version of the story differs from earlier versions, however, which suggest other locations for Vortigern's death.

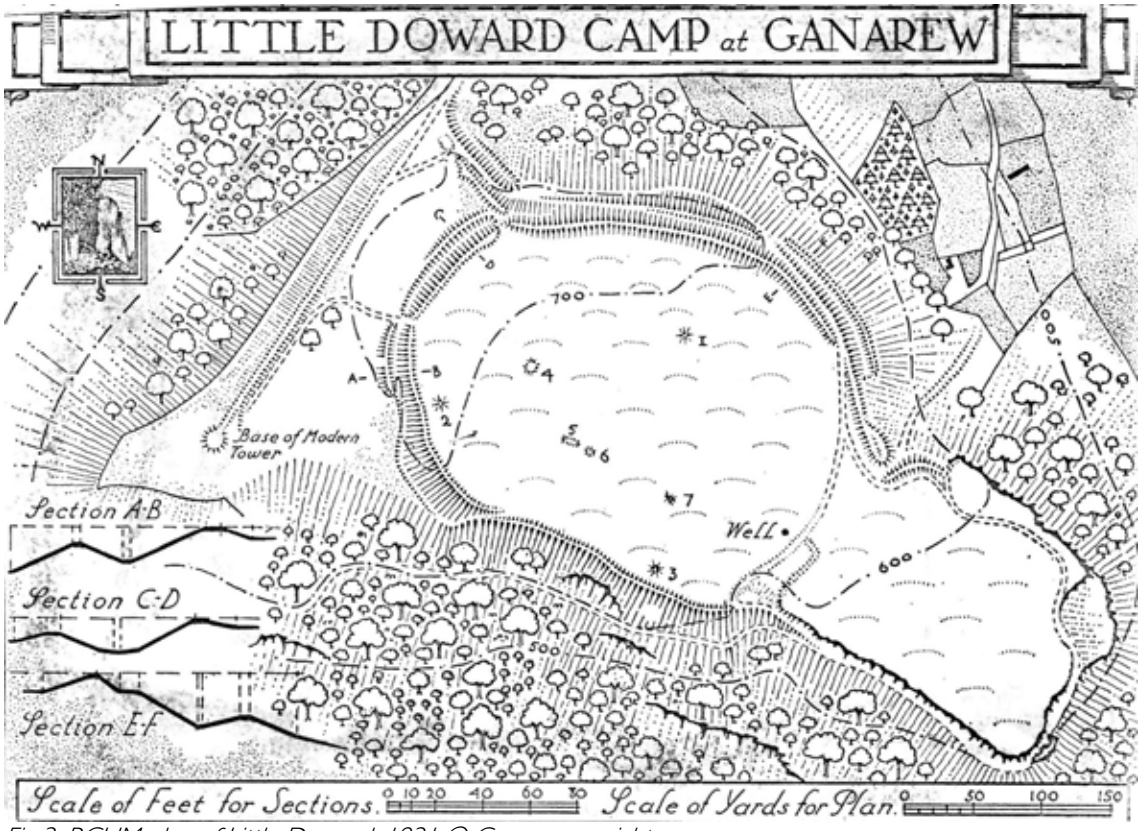

Fig 3: RCHM plan of Little Doward, 1931 © Crown copyright

Until the mid 19th century Little Doward was unenclosed common land and, as noted above, probably wood pasture. However, in 1820 the land was purchased by Richard Blakemore MP, an ironmaster whose main commercial interests were in Wales but who was related to the Partridges, a family of Wye ironmasters. Blakemore re-built the house at The Leys, now Wyastone Leys, above the river on the south-western side of Little Doward; he cleared away several cottages and smallholdings, and in 1833 enclosed the hill, later turning it into a deer park, prior to laying out an elaborate picturesque designed landscape on and around the hill. This involved, unfortunately, a considerable amount of damage to the hillfort. As the *Victoria County History* records, 'But for the mutilation to which it was subjected in the middle of the last

century this would be one of the most perfect of Herefordshire camps, but at that time Mr Blakemore, then the owner, not only erected an incongruous iron structure as an outlook, but also, to level the land around it, destroyed the outer guard of the court, then existing on the north-west of the main camp, throwing the material of the rampart down the steep hillside' (1908, 211). In fact Blakemore's landscaping was possibly even more damaging in other areas, such as the northern defences, where he cut drives and paths obliquely through the ramparts.

In August 1884 the Woolhope Club and the Malvern Naturalists' Field Club visited Little Doward (*Trans Woolhope Club* 1884, 210-19). The Rev TW Webb, who had been curate at Ganarew in the 1850s, was unable to attend but sent a letter and extracts from his notebook relating to Little Doward and Blakemore's works there. He described how Blakemore, 'being entirely unacquainted with the antiquarian interest attached to his property, had been making such alterations in the entrenchments as at any rate elicited a feeling of thankfulness that his activity had not proceeded further in that direction' (*Trans Woolhope Club* 1884, 214). Blakemore had apparently run out of money and this alone had brought an end to what Webb described as the 'mischief'. Blakemore had died in 1855 and been succeeded by his nephew, Thomas Booker Blakemore, who did not long survive him; the estate was sold in 1861 to John Bannerman.

The Royal Commission on Historical Monuments visited Little Doward in about1930 and recorded the hillfort and interior mounds briefly (RCHM 1931, 68-9; Fig 3). The Ordnance Survey depiction of the fort was revised by Alan Phillips of Archaeology Division in 1972; unfortunately the Antiquity Model resulting from his work does not survive in its entirety. The site was subject to a 'walk-over' survey by Border Archaeology in 1999 and was then surveyed in the winter of 2007 by Herefordshire Archaeology (Rimmington 2008).

Description

The letters and numbers relating to the hillfort, mounds and mineshafts refer to Fig 4 (inside back cover). The numbers preceded by a **B** refer to Fig 7.

The Hillfort

The hillfort is in two parts which, since the RCHM description, have been designated the 'main enclosure' and the 'annexe'. For the purposes of the current report the terms NW enclosure and SE enclosure are adopted, as the former terms no longer seem appropriate (*see* Discussion). There was possibly a third element to the hillfort, an outwork to the north-west, which is discussed below.

The hillfort lies on the dip slope of the massif so that its north-western extremity, though it is also on the oldest rocks, is the highest part of the fort. From 220m OD here it falls to 190m OD at the east end of the NW enclosure and 165m OD at the far eastern end of the SE enclosure. This considerable height difference of more than 50m from west to east within the fort is a striking and unusual feature of the site. It is also notable that the NW enclosure is 'dished', the southern and northern ramparts lying along slight natural ridges.

Though the fort has sometimes been erroneously described as multivallate (e.g. Hogg 1979, 184), it is univallate, though it has a very substantial counterscarp bank along much of the northern circuit and there seems to have been an outwork to the north-west, where there is also a slighter counterscarp. It is notable that the counterscarp on the north faces the only sector where there are relatively shallow slopes outside the fort. The north-western outwork, if it is genuine, would have brought the hillfort defences to the lip of a very steep slope. There are several gaps through the ramparts but only that to the north-east, at the junction of the NW and SE enclosures, seems to be an original entrance. There are numerous circular or sub-circular platforms within the fort, the majority of which are in the SE enclosure; these are probably late prehistoric roundhouse platforms. Along the northern edge of the NW enclosure are some quarry scoops, which are probably prehistoric in origin, though possibly modified later. Other features within the fort are the result of later activity.

Defences and entrances

The SE enclosure is defended on three sides by sheer natural cliffs, up to 12m high. The NW enclosure is largely open to the SE enclosure and they are divided only by a sunken drive of 19th-century date, part of Blakemore's landscaping. This drive is up to 1.2m deep and leads to a junction of routeways at (**k** – *see* below); it has been cut near its northern end by a more recent forestry track. There are, however, two short lengths of rampart which may have served to delineate the north-western side of the SE enclosure. The southern of these (**a**) is up to 1.0m high internally and is fronted in part by a slight ditch, 2.1m below the crest of the rampart and 0.4m deep externally. The small mound occupying the northern end of this ditch is almost certainly spoil from shaft (**t** – *see* below), cut off from it by the sunken drive. The northern rampart (**b**) is described below. The cliff along the eastern side of the SE enclosure has been extensively modified by one of Blakemore's carriage drives, which has been cut diagonally down its face. The extreme south-eastern corner of the fort has been detached from the rest by this carriage drive, which is blasted through the cliff to form a picturesque chasm (Fig 5). Shot holes can be seen in the rock faces. The entrance to King Arthur's Hall cave, though obviously changed radically by Blakemore's work, can also be seen here. As it emerges from the chasm the driveway has had to be massively revetted in stone.

Fig 5: the chasm, with the detached section of the hillfort to the right

The ramparts of the NW enclosure are substantial, even though the Rev TW Webb warns us of Blakemore that '… he had everywhere taken off the summit of the rampart to make a walk upon it – a fact which has to be allowed for in estimating the original strength of the position' (*Trans Woolhope Club* 1884, 214). On the south side of the NW enclosure the ramparts are up to 1.0m high internally; externally they merge with the steep natural slope down to the river, which is interrupted only by Blakemore's 19th-century drives and walks. The uppermost of these routes, from (**c**) to (**k**), could be following the original base of the rampart. At its western end, where the ridge forms level ground outside the ramparts, this walk occupies the bottom of a ditch (**c**, **c**) (now divided into two parts by a later causeway at (**n**) – *see* below); the base of the ditch is nearly 10m below the rampart top at its southern end though it rises steeply and is generally about 2m deep; it is 1.5m deep externally. There are two lengths of counterscarp bank in this western sector, up to 2.6m high.

At the north-western extremity of the hillfort a spur (**d**) runs forward from the main rampart for a distance of about 40m. It now ends on a track but there is no evidence that it was ever any longer. It is 2.7m high to the south-west and 4.5m high to the north-east. On this side one of Blakemore's drives has been cut along it and beyond this is a deep hollow (**e**), almost certainly natural in origin, though perhaps modified in later prehistory to form a ditch; this runs beyond the rampart spur and turns to the north where it rapidly widens (not surveyed). It is not possible to determine the relationship of the spur to the main hillfort rampart. Superficially, it looks integral to the rampart and of one build with it but this may be due to the smoothing effect of Blakemore's landscaping and other recent disturbances. The crest of the spur is at a much lower level than the main rampart. There is no indication that the main hillfort ditch (**c**) to the west has been filled in to accommodate the spur. The mounds on top of the spur are presumably due to Blakemore's landscaping; he possibly built a wall along the top of the spur as well but the remains are very fragmentary and disturbed by tree roots.

To the east of the spur the hillfort rampart is up to 3.0m high internally and 6.7m high externally; the rampart top has been modified to provide a path and a curious mound of stones has been constructed on the rampart top (**f**); the outer face of the rampart has been terraced to accommodate two branches of Blakemore's drive. The material thrown forward from the lower terrace is partly overlying a slight bank (**g**), which emerges from beneath it at an angle. Immediately to the east of this a large scoop (**h**) has removed much material from the rampart between the two branches of the drive; this was possibly a grotto or similar feature of Blakemore's landscape design, rather than simply a quarry.

To the east of (**h**) is the large counterscarp bank, with the two branches of the drive lying on either side of it. At this point the main rampart is 3.0m high internally and 6.7m externally, though the ditch has been partly filled in for the drive; the counterscarp bank is 1.0m high internally but externally it merges with the natural slope, though again it has been modified by the lower branch of the drive. 70m to 90m to the east of (**h**) the two branches join, the lower one cutting obliquely through the counterscarp and then through the main rampart. Despite the degradation of the main rampart here its crest is 6.5m above the base of the ditch; the counterscarp here is up to 1.9m high internally and 2.7m externally.

At (**j**) there is an entrance which is certainly original and possibly the only original entrance. The rampart on the north-west side has been severely mutilated but seems originally to have been enlarged to form a club end. The counterscarp ends 40m from the entrance and the ditch here is reduced to merely a terraced path. The rampart on the south-east side of the entrance (**b**) is inturned but in fact it only continues for about 25m beyond the inturn, ending where it meets the top of the cliff that forms the defence of the SE enclosure. The inturned section of rampart is about 2.0m high. Beyond the inturn the rampart is on a rock outcrop, making it a much more formidable obstacle. At the terminal of the inturn there is a fragment of what appears to be an earlier, slighter bank, no more than 0.3m high, extending towards the south-west but cut off by one of Blakemore's drives.

There are other gaps through the defences. One lies in a natural bowl on the southern side of the fort at (**k**), in an analogous position to (**j**). This could be the site of an original entrance but there is no surviving evidence to support this possibility, this area having been very heavily disturbed by Blakemore's landscaping; several of his routes meet at this point and the steep natural slopes have been modified accordingly. At (**m**) is a very unusual oblique cut through the ramparts which is difficult to explain. It opens onto a small platform on the steep natural slope below the rampart, which shows the remains of at least two stone-built structures. These seem to bear the hallmark of Blakemore's work and could be picturesque shelters on a

viewing platform. Alternatively, (m) could be an attempt at iron extraction (it lines up with shaft (u) – *see* below). At (n) a causeway across the ditch and a breach through the rampart now forms the main western entrance to the hillfort but this is clearly a recent route, probably having its origin in Blakemore's scheme. There is another slight breach through the ramparts 20m to the north of (n).

Quarry scoops and circular platforms
There is a series of shallow scoops (p) around the interior foot of the main rampart on the north side of the NW enclosure. These are generally up to 1.0m deep though in one or two places as much as 1.5m. They are probably late prehistoric internal quarries, dug to obtain material for the ramparts. There is every possibility, however, that they have been re-used in more recent times, by Blakemore's workmen, for instance.

There are approximately 40 possible or definite circular, sub-circular or semi-circular platforms within the fort, part terraced into the natural slope and part built out from it. Apart from half a dozen more doubtful examples these are all within the SE enclosure. The earthworks of these platforms are no more than 0.7m high and they range from approximately 6m to 16m in diameter. Several of them are aligned in short rows or terraces. Though there are many instances where the earthworks of adjacent platforms are very close or touching, there is no instance of a clear relationship suggesting that there is more than one phase of activity represented. The most likely explanation for these platforms is that they are the sites of houses and other buildings contemporary with the hillfort.

Mounds

Within the hillfort are two round mounds (RCHM nos.1 and 2) and three rectangular mounds (RCHM nos 4 and 5 and no 8) while a slight isolated scarp may mark the side of another (RCHM no 3). Outside the hillfort to the west is a square mound (9) and in the northern corner of the SE enclosure is a slight rectangular mound (10). (RCHM recorded a further mound, 7, which is no longer visible, and a mound 6 which is the upcast from a mine shaft (*see* below).)

No 1 is a large mound with a ditch around its northern arc; it stands 1.2m high but has been badly mutilated by a rectangular trench cut from the south-eastern side to the centre, with a slight extension to the south. No 2 is a smaller mound but stands to a height of 1.5m; like no 1, this mound has been cut into by a rectangular trench extending from the southern edge to the centre; a ditch is visible around much of the circumference of the mound; unfortunately this has no clear chronological relationship to the hillfort rampart, the tail of which is very close. This ditch is interrupted by the terminal of a narrow bank or collapsed wall (q), 0.3m high, which runs from this mound to the eastward. A small isolated stony lump (r) may be another part of this bank.

No 3 can be seen on aerial photographs of 1946 (e.g. RAF verticals 106G/UK/1355/5041-5042) as a rectangular mound with a slight cut in its southern end but is now barely visible on the ground; one slight scarp perhaps marks its eastern side. Mound 4 is sub-rectangular and 0.8m high; it is surrounded by a ditch which forms an extended hollow at the south (downhill) end. Mound 5 is somewhat similar to 4, in that the mound does not fill the ditched area which has been cut out for it; the mound, which is only 0.6m high, occupies part of the southern side of the rectangular ditched area. Mound 8 is nearly square, 0.8m high, and is surrounded on its north and west (uphill) sides by a slight ditch. Mound 9 is square and up to 1.0m high; it is entirely surrounded by a slight ditch; the whole feature is very regular (Fig 6). There are other slight and amorphous earthworks to the north of (9), partly obscured by brash at the time of survey, which are difficult to interpret (but *see* below). Mound (10), which is cut by one of Blakemore's drives, is up to 0.8m high; there is no sign of a ditch.

Fig 6: Mound 9 with the hillfort counterscarp, ditch and rampart beyond

The two round mounds have been interpreted in the past as barrows and this accounts for the trenches cutting them, which appear to be the result of antiquarian excavations (unrecorded). Now that they can be seen more clearly in relation to the other mounds it is possible to suggest alternatively that they are, like the rectangular mounds, 'pillow mounds' or rabbit buries of medieval or early post-medieval date. The members of the Woolhope Club suggested that the square mound (9) was a Roman signal station (*Trans Woolhope Club* 1884, 213). The mounds are discussed further below.

Shafts and quarries

There are four mine shafts within the hillfort and three further possible examples. There is also a deep rock-cut gully or quarry. Shaft heads (s) and (t) are open and are fenced; both have small spoil tips on their south-eastern (downhill) sides. Shaft (t) is labelled erroneously on early maps as a well. Shafts (u) and (v) are backfilled and are now 1.8m deep; they also have small spoil heaps to south and east (the spoil heap of (v) was RCHM mound 6). The spoil heaps are no more than 1.0m high. Two smaller hollows (w) and (x), about 0.4-0.5m deep, are possibly also shafts but neither of these has any visible spoil. A larger circular hollow at (k) might also be an abandoned shaft but again there is no sign of spoil. The quarry (y) is 2.6m deep with vertical sides; there are traces of a fallen stone wall immediately to its east and it is possible that this wall is on a spread of material derived from the quarry but this does not form a surveyable earthwork. This feature may be part of Blakemore's designed landscape. The mines will have been dug for iron ore but the small amounts of spoil suggest that they were not very successful or long-lived, though 19th-century oral evidence suggests that one shaft was at least 18m deep (*see* below).

19th-century landscaping and other late features

Richard Blakemore's landscaping of Little Doward hill in the middle of the 19th century was extensive. Bradney states that before Blakemore's time the area of the park at The Leys and on Little Doward 'was dotted with cottages' (1904, 25). Having purchased and demolished these, Blakemore cut numerous carriage drives and walks, some of which have been mentioned above, and created polite landscape features, such as grottoes, seats and a 'hermitage', and erected picturesque stones as way-markers or eye-catchers. There are also more mundane structures, such as quarries and charcoal burning platforms and the limekiln near the river in the south-eastern corner of the deer park.

As well as extensive damage to the hillfort ramparts, described above, the interior of the hillfort was also affected to a small degree by Blakemore's works: several boulders were placed upright or in prominent positions, mainly in the northern part of the NW enclosure, mostly between mounds (1) and (4) and extending to the quarry scoops (p, p) behind the northern rampart. One group of stones, to the north-east of mound (8), may have been set in a circle, though the coherence of this arrangement has been lost through subsequent disturbance.

A more recent feature is a concrete bowl, 1.1m in diameter and 0.1m deep, set into the ground on a level platform 20m to the west of mound (1); this was a water bowl for pheasants, which were bred on the hill in the later 19th and early 20th centuries.

The carriage drives and walks which impinge directly upon the hillfort have been described above. The one which skirts the southern side of the fort immediately below the rampart incorporates a tunnel immediately below (m). This tunnel, which was cut through bedrock but also incorporates some complex stone structures, is now largely collapsed (Rimmington 2008, 16). Its eastern end is marked by a massive boulder set upright. At its full length the tunnel incorporated a slight change of direction but it also had a side opening, presumably to afford a glimpse of the view down to the river. In places the carriage drives and walks are flanked by drystone walls.

The 'Hermitage'
Cut into the counterscarp bank of the hillfort at the west end is a stone-built structure (z); it is rectangular, with wing walls extending from its entrance. There is a crude fireplace immediately opposite the entrance. This building was a 'hermitage', according to local tradition (Rimmington 2008, 16). Its walls survive to a maximum height of 2.6m but are in very poor condition. The 'hermitage' looked out across the head of a

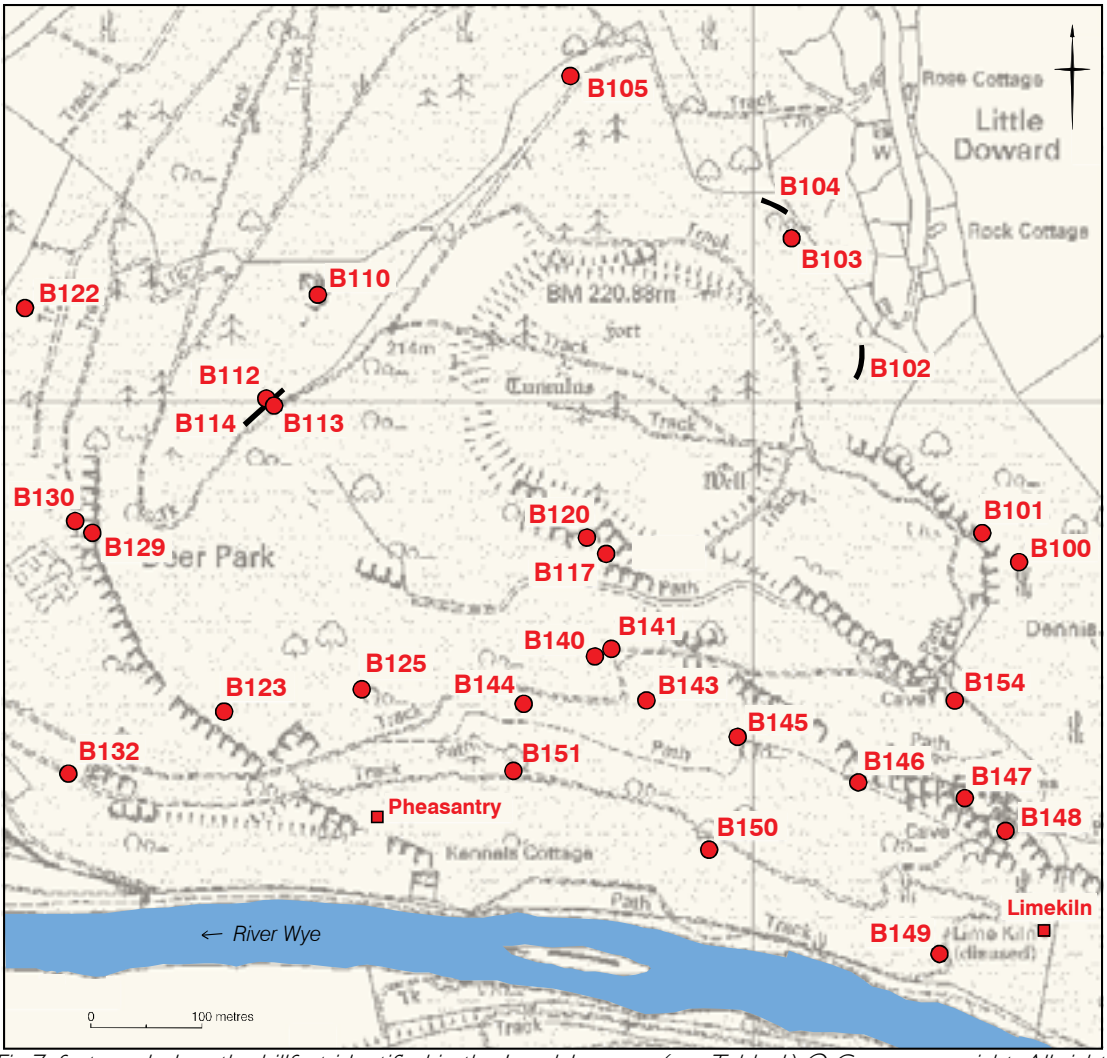

Fig 7: features below the hillfort identified in the Level 1 survey (see Table 1) © Crown copyright. All rights reserved. English Heritage 100019088. 2009

dry valley towards the iron tower. In the head of the dry valley are two 2m-high rectangular stony mounds with, between them, another low stony structure enclosing a platform. There is also a small semi-circular stone structure 40m south of the 'hermitage'. The function of these features is unclear but they probably relate to Blakemore's landscaping works.

The iron tower

The iron tower was built by Blakemore to observe the deer in the park and enjoy the views. It was described in 1884 as being 'easy of ascent, and affords very fine views on all sides. It was intended to be twenty feet higher than it is, but the force of the wind upon it was too great, and the surrounding belt of beech trees had to be planted to protect it' (*Trans Woolhope Club* 1884, 213). The tower itself, of open 'trestlework', was demolished in the 1920s but some of the stone footings remain upon the platform which supported it. Several of the beech trees also remain. The engineered drive leading up to the tower also survives as a substantial earthwork up to 1.4m high, straight and level, with a circular enlargement at the end to support the tower. This is supposed to have been built over the remains of an outwork to the hillfort, which Mr Webb's informant, Furber (a former employee of Blakemore), remembered: 'it was merely a continuous mound to the end of the hill where the tower stands, without any tumulus at the end' (*Trans Woolhope Club* 1884, 215). There is no trace of this 'outwork', though it might have been expected to survive between the north-eastern end of this raised drive and the end of the rampart spur (**d**). Blakemore's elaborate scheme of drives and walks in this area has been simplified and the main forestry road which enters the hillfort at (**n**) now cuts across his raised drive to the tower.

Features below the hillfort

About 30 features outside the immediate environs of the hillfort were recorded by Rimmington (2008, fig 14, 35-50). These were mostly on the western and northern slopes. The present survey included these areas but also extended coverage by including the southern slopes down to the river. These areas were not surveyed in detail but only at Level 1. Feature positions were recorded by hand-held GPS units (Trimble GeoXT or Trimble Juno). The results are therefore presented in tabular form and are shown by symbols on Fig 7.

No	Grid ref	Description
B100	SO 5422 1585	Rectangular 'trough' in limestone bedrock
B101	SO 5419 1587	Natural limestone pillar – possibly partly modified
B102	SO 5410 1603	Track
B103	SO 5403 1614	Quarry
B104	SO 5402 1617	Track
B105	SO 5384 1629	19th-century viewing platform
B112	SO 5356 1598	Quarry or mine shaft
B113	SO 5355 1598	Finger dump from B112, cut by B114
B114	SO 5355 1598	Track, overlying B113
B117	SO 1386 1582	19th-century grotto consisting of massive placed boulders
B120	SO 5385 1588	Upright stone
B122	SO 5334 1608	Possible charcoal burning platform, disturbed by animal burrows
B123	SO 5353 1572	Possible charcoal burning platform
B125	SO 5365 1573	Possible charcoal burning platform
B129	SO 5340 1588	19th-century 'shrine' or seat
B130	SO 5340 1589	19th-century iron gate to B129
B132	SO 5338 1567	Stone carved bench
B140	SO 5386 1577	Upright stone
B141	SO 5387 1577	Upright stone (and quarry?)
B143	SO 5390 1573	Large upright boulder
B144	SO 5379 1573	Veteran yew tree
B145	SO 5399 1569	Triangular upright stone
B146	SO 5409 1566	Stone pillar
B147	SO 5419 1564	Cave system
B148	SO 5423 1562	'Balcony' alongside path, consisting of large placed boulders
B149	SO 5416 1550	Upright stone
B150	SO 5396 1560	Upright stone
B151	SO 5378 1567	Large N-S boundary bank aligned on B144, cut by 19th-century track
B154	SO 5418 1572	Rock-cut seat

Table 1

The limekiln (SO 5425 1552; Fig 8), one of several in the area, survives to full height and is generally in good condition, though there are some issues and conservation is in hand. There are extensive quarries behind the kiln and tracks from quarries to the kiln and beyond were modified into a loop walk in the 19th century, though this is now difficult to discern on the ground. The deer park wall survives for much of its length to full height. Other features encountered were those already noted by Rimmington (2008) and other previous surveys.

Fig 8: the limekiln

Discussion

Little Doward presents a classic palimpsest landscape in miniature, with the 19th-century designed landscape intimately interwoven with the late prehistoric hillfort, earlier prehistoric activity and the medieval or early post-medieval rabbit farming, mining and quarrying, and slighter evidence of the use of the land as common, for pheasant rearing and for forestry. Although the Doward massif itself had been common land, much of the land around Ganarew has historically been in arable (Howard 1994, 19-20) and there is no reason why this land use should not have stretched back into the later prehistoric periods, though direct evidence is lacking.

Early prehistory

The evidence for early prehistoric activity is as abundant at Little Doward as anywhere. The caves and rock shelters were in use intermittently over several millennia, though the nature of that use may be unclear. Though much of the evidence points to food preparation and craft activities, it is unlikely that the caves were used for 'normal' domestic life.

The hearsay evidence from King Arthur's Hall (Fig 9), directly below the south-eastern corner of the hillfort, is of key importance if it is true. The Bronze Age burial with a spear (Edmunds 1874; *Trans Woolhope Field Club* 1884, 216), points very strongly to a funerary and therefore ceremonial aspect to the caves, at this period at least. Unfortunately, the accounts of the discovery are unreliable and there is even doubt over whether the name King Arthur's Hall has migrated from cave to cave over time; ApSimon's attempt (1994) to resolve this issue is marred by the fact that he mis-quotes one source, placing the cave below, rather than above, the lime kiln. Though the veracity of the account of this 18th-century discovery in this particular cave may be in doubt, it finds some general support in the discovery of another bronze spearhead (SO 51 NW 9) a short distance to the east; this spearhead was found in a quarry and may plausibly therefore have come from another cave deposit. Another slight support comes from the discovery of bones, including two skulls, from one of the mines in the hillfort, a mine which might have penetrated a cave; the description (*see* below) seems to infer that the skulls were human, though it is not explicit and indeed the evidence in its entirety might be thought unreliable. Much stronger support comes from the recent discovery of fragments of an Early Bronze Age food vessel with human remains in the Madawg rock shelter (Barton 1994, 70). This tradition of Bronze Age burial lends some support to the interpretation of the two round mounds within the hillfort (1 and 2) as burial mounds but this remains inconclusive (*see* below).

Fig 9: the entrance to King Arthur's Hall

Later prehistory

The hillfort is unusual and, though it is possible to suggest its history, the evidence is in many ways problematic. The suggestions put forward below should therefore be regarded as tentative.

There are reasons to suggest that the SE enclosure, traditionally referred to as the 'annexe', is in fact the site of primary settlement, perhaps even in a Bronze Age rather than an Iron Age context. First, there are its

natural defences of cliffs on three sides which mark it out both practically and, perhaps, phenomenologically as a key location in the landscape; its current surroundings of mature woodland mask what would be, in a more open landscape, a striking natural formation. The cave or caves beneath it, whether or not traditionally used for human burial, would only add to its importance. Secondly, the vast majority of the house sites now visible are within this part of the hillfort; this in itself is not such strong evidence of primacy, perhaps, as the concomitant *absence* (comparatively speaking) of house platforms in the NW part of the fort. Thirdly, there are the two short lengths of rampart (**a**) and (**b**); the former, with its ditch to the west, can certainly be read as defending the SE enclosure; the latter, including the inturned rampart at the entrance, can be read in the same way and a slight fragment of what appears to be an earlier bank protruding from beneath its terminal, but truncated by one of Blakemore's drives, might add weight to this suggestion by demonstrating the presence of more than one phase to this earthwork. The rampart terminal on the other side of the entrance (**j**), though disturbed, is clearly of a very different form and could therefore be of a different build and date. Fourthly, the NW enclosure is open to the south-east and there is no indication in the earthworks that there has ever been a defence facing in this direction; this suggests strongly that the NW enclosure is contemporary with or later than the SE enclosure.

The NW enclosure forms a nearly circular space, complete except for the gap, more than 60m wide, to the south-east; it had one entrance facing north-east and possibly another at its southern extremity, facing east. The form of its rampart, ditch and counterscarp is that of a typical Iron Age hillfort, despite considerable later damage, but its location and relation to the SE enclosure are noteworthy. An important aspect of the topographic location is that the western end of the enclosure, while it lies at the highest point on the hill, excludes an area of nearly level ground about 50m wide. It might be expected that the ramparts would have been built to include this plateau, beyond which is an extremely steep slope, and the spur (**d**) does seem as if it was designed to fulfil this function. This can be coupled with the oral evidence for a pre-existing bank beneath Blakemore's iron tower drive and the slight linear earthworks to the north of mound (**9**); these might represent an outwork, as suggested by previous authorities, or an attempt at multivallation in this sector. However, the fact remains that a decision was made to place the main rampart well short of the natural, and dramatic, break of slope.

There is no dating evidence. Morphologically, the earthworks fit a conventional phase of massive rampart construction in the early to middle part of the first millennium BC, but such dating by analogy is being stretched increasingly thin from the very few reliably dated sites. A programme of scientific dating for the British Iron Age is urgently required (Barrett *et al* forthcoming).

The circular platforms are interpreted as prehistoric house platforms, contemporary with the ramparts. The only other possible explanation for these features would be as charcoal burning platforms, some examples of which certainly survive elsewhere within the woodland at Doward; however, the examples within the hillfort, especially those within the SE enclosure, are too numerous and too closely spaced to be for charcoal burning. The placing of house platforms in rows along the contours, which is clearly seen here in the SE enclosure, is also a feature at British Camp and Midsummer Hill (Bowden 2005, 21, 22, figs 2.12 and 2.13). On the steep slopes of Midsummer Hill this might almost have been a necessity but on the relatively gentle slope within the SE enclosure here it is more clearly a matter of choice on the part of whoever laid out the settlement.

There is no evidence of a Roman presence on the hillfort (Howard (1994, 9) claims that a hoard of coins dating to AD267 was found in the fort during the 19th century but gives no reference and this hoard is otherwise unrecorded), though there is Romano-British material in several of the caves and a Romano-British site in Lord's Wood has been excavated (Hart 1967, 19); iron smelting slags were found here and it has been suggested that 'iron ore outcrops on the Doward would have been the logical source of supply' (Walters 1992, 79). There is also supposed to have been a Romano-British villa on the boundary of Ganarew and Whitchurch parishes to the north of Great Doward but the location is unknown (SO 51 NW 1), though a Roman hypocaust is said to have been discovered at Sellarsbrooke (SO 5317 1685) in 1977 (Howard 1994, 11). As mentioned above, the suggestion was made in the 19th century that mound (**9**) might be a Roman signal station. This idea can be discounted; the most likely explanation for this mound is that it is part of the rabbit warren, though why it was made outside the hillfort, unlike the rest of the mounds, is unexplained; it might be accounted for by the existence of the 'outwork', which would have enclosed it (and *see* below).

The rabbit warren

The most convincing explanation for the mounds on Little Doward is that they are artificial rabbit buries. They could be of medieval or early post-medieval date. In the medieval period the keeping of rabbits was a manorial privilege but later it became a more widespread commercial activity. Mounds **4**, **5** and **8** are fairly typical 'pillow mounds' in terms of their overall shape, though the former pair are either unfinished or, possibly, damaged; the mounds do not equate to the ditched areas that have been dug out for them. Mound **9**, as mentioned above, also looks like a pillow mound, though its nearly perfect square shape is unusual and its separation from the other mounds requires explanation. However, among the earthworks 20m to its north is another small mound which, though it looks amorphous on the ground now, appears rectangular on aerial photographs (e.g. RAF 106G/UK/1355/7045-7046) and might be another pillow mound. Mound **10** is problematic too, in that it appears to be slighter than the others and has no sign of a surrounding drainage gully, an essential adjunct to these structures as the mounds must be kept dry. This mound forms a level terrace and could be a platform for a small rectangular building. Whatever its function, it clearly pre-dates Blakemore's landscaping. The round mounds **1** and **2** have in the past been interpreted as prehistoric burial mounds. While this cannot be ruled out, it is perhaps more likely that these are also rabbit buries. About one fifth of pillow mound groups include at least one circular mound (Williamson 2007, 60); examples include Minchinhampton Common, Gloucestershire (Smith 2002, 27-30) and Dolebury, North Somerset (Bowden 2009, 7-8, 15). Williamson lists further examples and suggests that the round mounds performed a distinct function, either as homes for vulnerable breeding does or as supports for vermin traps (*ibid* 56-8, 62). There is no sign of a warrener's lodge at Little Doward; a lodge is most likely to have occupied an elevated position, near the west end of the hillfort, so that the warrener could keep a look out over the rabbits and any approaching predators.

Mining

Blakemore 'cleared out' one of the iron mine shafts; at a depth of twenty yards [18m] a quantity of bones was found, 'two skulls amongst them, but many appeared to be the bones of sheep'; Thomas Webb recorded that an old windlass was still standing at this mine in the 1850s (*Trans Woolhope Club* 1884, 215). This gives some indication of the date of these mines, presumably in the late 18th or early 19th centuries. No traces of stances for winding gear were noted during the survey but the main shafts, (**s**), (**t**), (**u**) and (**v**), are all on relatively flat areas of the fort. Rimmington (2008, 14-15), however, noted the presence of level platforms near these features; it is possible in the cases of (**t**), (**u**) and (**v**) that these were obscured by brash at the time of the present survey. The shaft at (**s**) is surrounded by fairly dense scrub. Outside the hillfort another possible mineshaft, complete with a small finger dump of spoil, lies close to the main forestry road (**B112**/**113**). This is overlain by a track (**B114**), though whether this was part of Blakemore's works is not clear. Quarries at SO 5361 1609 and SO 5359 1568, which are marked on the 1st edition OS 25 inch map (published 1889) and therefore could pre-date Blakemore, were also noted.

The designed landscape and park

No definite traces were noted during the survey of the cottages, or their gardens and other adjuncts, which Blakemore had demolished to make way for his designed landscape. Possible exceptions include Mound **10** (*see* above) and a structure above the Keeper's Lodge (now Kennels Cottage) at SO 5367 1562; this consists of the footings of a rectangular building, with later structures overlying it, terraced into the steep south-facing slope above the river. On the 1st edition OS map it is labelled 'Pheasantry' but the fact that it is of more than one phase suggests the possibility that it might have earlier origins. Other elements of the pre-existing landscape do survive, however, such as a substantial boundary bank running north-south across the contours, cut by one of Blakemore's walks at (**B151**) and aligned on a veteran yew tree (one of several on the hill) at (**B144**). Other trees on Little

Fig 10: the 'grotto' (B117)

Doward Hill include field maple and there are other indicator species of ancient woodland; there are also some pollards (Howard 1994, 20), which support the view that the common was run as wood pasture.

The 1861 sale catalogue described the nearly 1000 acre estate, emphasizing that the 'walks on the Little Doward Hill are formed with great taste, and command most extensive and varied views of the surrounding counties, and of the lovely scenery of the river' (quoted by Whitehead 2001, 420). The walks largely survive and many of them are still in use as tracks and paths. At many points, particularly at junctions or prominent bends, the walks are marked by upright stones. Most of these stones have been carefully chosen: some have contrasting smooth and textured faces, presumably having been taken from suitable junctions in the local geological strata (e.g. **B120**); others have distinct shapes (e.g. **B145** and **146**). At several points there are more elaborate structures, such as the 'grotto' of massive boulders just below the southern rampart of the hillfort (**B117**; Fig 10); the immediate surroundings of this are currently cloaked in impenetrable woodland but aerial photographic evidence (e.g. RAF 106G/UK/1355/7045-7046) suggests that this grotto may have been set within a pre-existing quarry. There is also a curious 'balcony' further to the east (**B148**), an arrangement of stones projecting forward from the side of a path, which would have provided a magnificent view down the river, and the possible gated 'shrine' to the west, at which a stone has been set up like an altar with another behind it like a reredos (**B129**; Fig 11) – more prosaically this arrangement of stones might have been intended as a seat. Two iron gateposts survive to the west (**B130**; Fig 12), marking the entrance to this 'shrine' or viewpoint.

Fig 11: the 'shrine' from above; the ranging rod is lying on the 'reredos'-like vertical stone

Fig 12: the gate to the 'shrine'

The designed landscape also incorporated and exploited elements of the natural landscape in general and in particular. The steep slopes, cliffs and rock outcrops were all part of the package, but the extensive and impressive cave system visible at (**B147**) was clearly a focal point for the routes around the landscape.

Views out into the surrounding landscape were an integral part of the experience, as shown by the construction of the iron tower, which afforded views down the valley to the south-west. At the other end of the engineered track to the tower was another viewing platform (**B105**), which gave matching views up the valley to the north-east through the gap at Whitchurch.

Conservation issues

Management and conservation of Little Doward is now well in hand. However, it is interesting to note the comments of the members of the Woolhope Club who visited the site in the summer of 1884 and found bracken obscuring the ground surface: 'If the young shoots or fronds of the bracken … were but mown off in the spring after they have shot about a foot from the ground, and once again afterwards for a couple of years, several acres of good fresh herbage could be secured for the deer, and the camp itself would regain much of the interest which is now so sadly obscured' (*Trans Woolhope Club* 1884, 213). The centre of the fort is now clear of trees, though scrub remains in some areas, and a grazing regime is established. Considerable parts of the ramparts are still obscured by scrub, dense in places, and they support a number of mature trees. It would be desirable for the visibility of the monument if the scrub could be further cleared. The trees should be monitored so that they can be safely felled in due course, rather than being allowed to fall and thereby causing damage to the ramparts.

Fig 13: western ramparts of the hillfort partly cleared of scrub

Methodology

Detail was surveyed using a Trimble [R8/5800] survey grade GNSS receiver working in Real Time Kinematic mode (RTK) with points related to an R8 receiver configured as an on-site base station. The position of the base station had previously been adjusted to the National Grid Transformation OSTN02 via the Trimble VRS Now Network RTK delivery service. This uses the Ordnance Survey's GNSS correction network (OSNet) and gives a stated accuracy of 0.01-0.015m per point. The survey data was downloaded into Korec's Geosite software to process the field codes and the data transferred to AutoCad software for plotting out for graphical completion in the field.

Additional detail was surveyed using a Trimble 5600 Total Station theodolite with the readings adjusted for errors using Korec's Geosite software and transformed to Ordnance Survey National Grid by reference to the co-ordinates of the stations given by the Trimble R8 survey grade GNSS receiver.
In areas of complex or subtle earthworks, detail was supplied using tape-and-offset and a plane table with a Wild RK1 self-reducing alidade referenced to a temporary network of survey markers previously located with the GNSS receiver and Total Station theodolite. The measurements were plotted on to polyester drawing film at the elected scale of 1:1000. All earthwork heights expressed in this report were measured by pocket level.

The Level 1 survey for the area around the hillfort was undertaken at a scale of 1:2500 using Trimble GeoXT and Trimble Juno hand-held GPS with data held in tables held on the GPS in Korec's FastMap Office software.

The survey plan (Fig 4) was completed at 1: 1000 scale using digital drawing techniques in AutoCad/Adobe CS2 software. Additional report illustrations (Figs 1, 2 and 7) were prepared using Adobe CS2 software.

Fig 14: using the Trimble GeoXT

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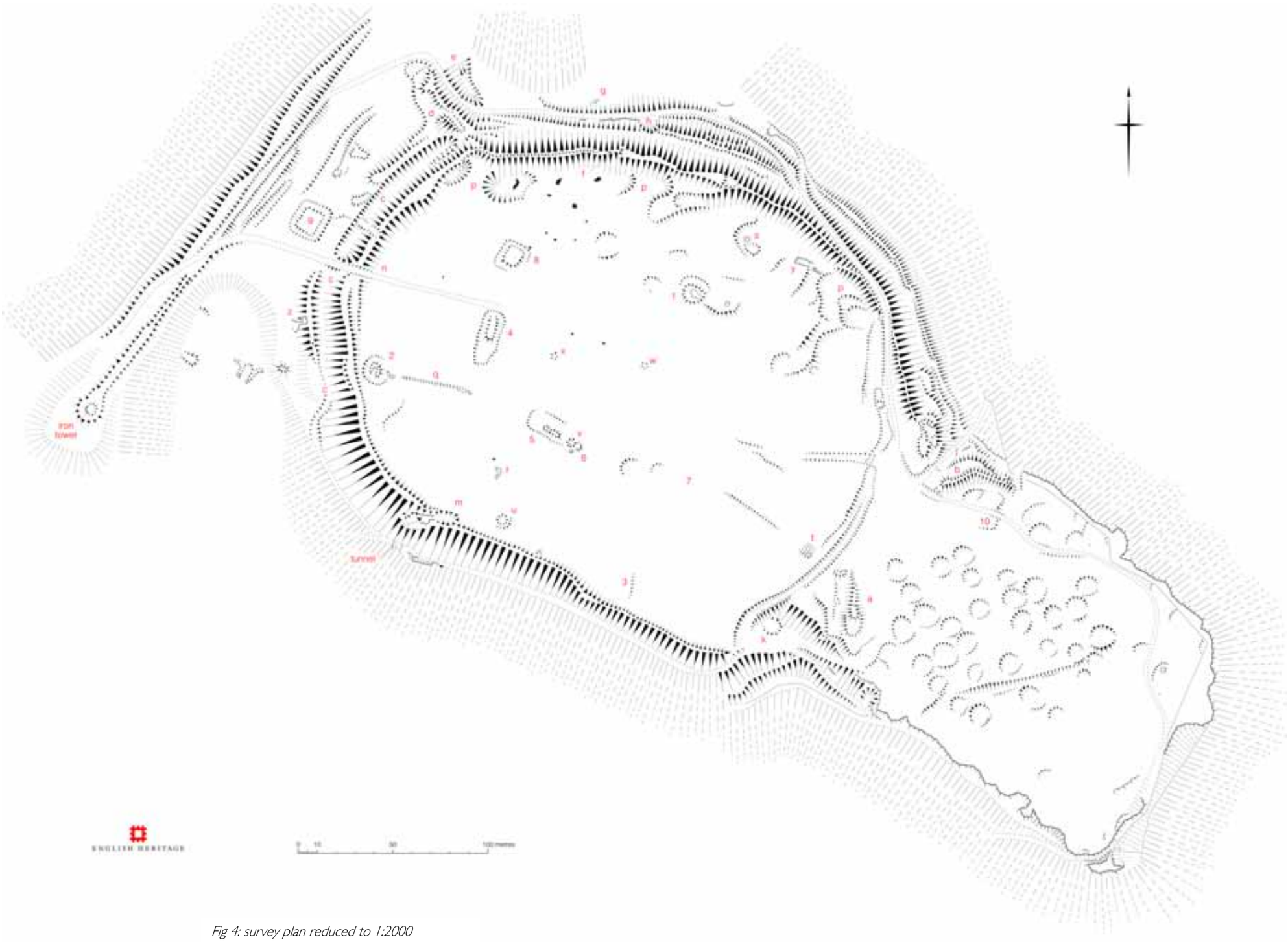

Fig 4: survey plan reduced to 1:2000






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