

# **An Exploratory Excavation at The Knapp, Bredwardine**



**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

This report discusses the results of a detailed survey plan, geophysical survey and trial excavation led by Herefordshire Council's archaeological service and Manchester University at the hilltop site of The Knapp within the parish of Bredwardine, Herefordshire; SO 32430 44670.

The project forms part of an ongoing joint partnership investigating prehistoric activity within the southwest of Herefordshire. The investigations aim to improve the knowledge of early migrations, in particular ritual and settlement sites associated with Neolithic activity. The investigations at The Knapp form one aspect, of the second year stage investigations into this period. Previous to this year's study (**2011**) investigations were centred on the English/Welsh border within the Olchon Valley where the Herefordshire Council/Manchester University partnership identified a Late Neolithic/Early Bronze Age ring cairn.

Following the discovery of a substantial flint tool assemblage at the prominent hilltop site of The Knapp during ploughing in the 1970's there was a high probability for the presence of buried archaeological remains associated with Neolithic activity. Over the course of June and July 2011 the site was targeted for trial excavation which would witness the excavation of five trenches.

Prior to the investigation, small scale geophysical survey, employing a Resistance Meter was carried out across the summit with the intention of identifying buried archaeological features. This was supported by an above ground archaeological detailed survey of standing earthworks.

A total of five trenches were investigated each ranging in size from 4m x 4m to 3m x 15m. Archaeological features and artefacts were identified that indicate the multi-period use of the site.

Disclaimer: It should not be assumed that land referred to in this document is accessible to the public. Location plans are indicative only. National Grid References 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 1:20m

Figures contained within this report contain material from the Ordnance Survey. The grid in this material is the National Grid taken from the Ordnance Survey map with the permission of the Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office (OS Licence 100024168). This material has been reproduced in order to locate the site in its environs.

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## **1. Introduction**

This report provides an account of investigations at The Knapp, Bredwardine, Herefordshire. This site was selected for excavation as part of a joint project between Herefordshire Council's Archaeology Service and the University of Manchester, investigating evidence for Neolithic activity in southwest Herefordshire. The project focus this year (2011) was hilltop sites and a total of four sites were investigated (Herefordshire Archaeology Report numbers 300, 301, 302). These were selected due to evidence of earthworks and crop marks identified from aerial photographs. With the exception of Dorstone Hill the sites investigated had not previously been subject to systematic archaeological investigation and so the date and exact nature of the probable features was unknown. They could only tentatively be suggested to be prehistoric hilltop enclosures and the fieldwork this year was intended to test this suggestion and evaluate the nature of these sites.

The Knapp was considered likely to provide evidence of Neolithic activity due to the discovery, during ploughing in the 1970s, of a large flint assemblage on the southern slope of the hill as well as earthworks and crop marks suggesting an encircling ditch. Its prominent position in the landscape was also considered relevant.

The investigations comprised a geophysical survey, detailed earthwork survey and excavation of five trenches. The geophysical survey focused on the hilltop area, with the aim of identifying possible areas of interest for excavation. The earthwork survey focused on the hilltop but also included some earthworks on the northern and southern slopes of the hill. This survey provided a record of the topography before it was disturbed by excavation and aided in identifying areas of interest for excavation. Trenches one, three and four were located on the hilltop in locations that were identified by the earthwork survey. Trench two was located on the steep southern slope of the hill, again with the aim of investigating earthworks identified in the survey. Trench five was located at the base of the eastern slope of the hill in order to intersect a possible ditch identified from aerial photographs.

The excavation took place between Monday 27<sup>th</sup> June and Tuesday 26<sup>th</sup> July 2011.

## **2. Aims and Objectives**

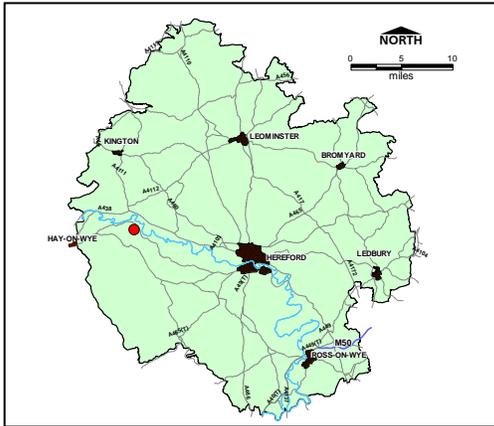
The aims of the investigation were to identify any above and below ground archaeological features and associated artefacts to ensure their professional recording and interpretation in order to further understand Neolithic society within the southwest of Herefordshire. The investigation consisted of the excavation of five trial trenches, the purpose of which was twofold; uncovering our prehistoric past and as a training exercise for students of Manchester University and the public local to the village of Bredwardine. Training was provided by Herefordshire Archaeology and Site Supervisors from Manchester University.

This was accomplished by:

- Creating a drawn measured plan of earthworks across the summit of The Knapp in order to produce a point-in-time reference of conditions at the site as well as to aid in identifying locations for test trench excavations.
- Geophysical survey employing an earth resistance meter RM15. The survey sought to identify the presence of any buried archaeological features that would suggest Neolithic activity at the site.
- The excavation of five trial trenches, with the intention of uncovering evidence for Prehistoric activity at the site and as a training exercise for students of Manchester University as well as local volunteers.
- Each deposit encountered was investigated fully and recorded in full through a paper record using context/unit sheets of a professional archaeological standard. This data was then imported onto an Excel spread sheet and used to update and provide data for Herefordshire's SMR/HER.
- Within deposits that had the potential for high preservation and datable materials, a sample strategy was implemented in order to ensure the full extent of the site was investigated.
- Both characteristic, individual artefact and group assemblages were recorded providing an x and y axis within the associated deposit as well as a height above sea level. The artefacts were catalogued onsite and entered into a database by Manchester University where the artefacts were identified and processed.
- Each archaeological deposit/feature was recorded and drawn to a scale of 1:20. Trench section-plans were drawn to a scale of 1:10. These accompany the report and database into the archive.

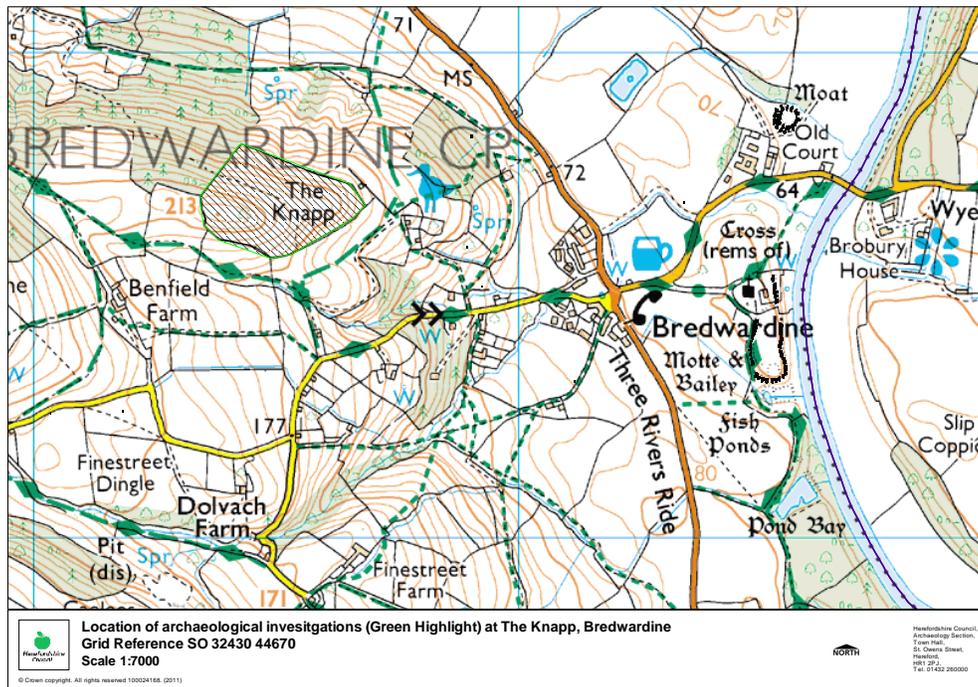
### 3. Location and Geology

Located within the County Parish of Bredwardine; The Knapp occupies the summit of a narrow spur protruding eastwards from a ridge that forms the southern edge of the Wye Valley. The Knapp overlooks the village of Bredwardine to the east as well as the River Wye which is visible to the north as it sweeps east. At its highest point the promontory stands 213m above sea level with steep north, south and east-facing slopes. To the west the topography is dictated by a steep incline onto the summit of Bredwardine Hill (291m spot height).



**Figure 1:** Location of The Knapp (indicated by red dot) within the context of Herefordshire. © Herefordshire Council

The underlying geology consists primarily of the Raglan Mudstone Formation entailing mudstone and siltstones with minor sandstones. At approximately 50m below the summit of investigations there is a seam of Townsend Tuff Bed.<sup>1</sup>



**Figure 2** Scale 1:25 000 extract indicating the location of The Knapp in conjunction with the village of Bredwardine. (OS crown copyright 100024100 & Herefordshire Council)

<sup>1</sup> British Geological Survey, England and Wales Sheet 197, Hay-On-Wye.

#### **4. Methodology**

An initial site survey was made (Appendix 1) to a Scale of 1:500 employing a Leica TC(R)110. The plan was drawn on site and later reproduced to publishing standard by Herefordshire Archaeology. The survey also served as an opportunity to establish a site grid orientated east-west along the summit of The Knapp, each grid measured 20m x 20m.

Geophysical survey was carried out across three 20m x 20m grids. The survey employed a RM15 Resistance Meter. The results of the survey were plotted in relation to the site survey plan and site grid.

The location of each trench was recorded in relation to a site grid. The sighting of each trench was chosen so as to avoid damage to the surrounding tree coverage and to prevent undue disturbance to nesting wildlife. In order to comply with Health and Safety Regulations the excavation would not exceed a depth of 1.2m. The excavation was carried out by hand employing the use of spades, shovels, mattocks and trowels. The spoil was located at least 1m to the northwest of the trench. At the end of the investigation, each trench was backfilled by hand.

Each deposit encountered was ascribed an archaeological context number and recorded in the field using a paper record that was later transferred to a digital EXCEL spread sheet (Appendix 2). Each archaeological feature and deposit encountered was photographed to provide a visual record. A measured record drawn to a scale of 1:20 was made of each deposit and feature encountered and a record kept both in original drafting film format and digital format (Appendix 3). Section plans (Appendix 3) were produced at a scale 1:10.

Any artefacts recovered were geographically recorded, adequately labelled listing the site code, date, and context number. Artefacts were appropriately cleaned depending on type and condition and sent for specialist interpretation with Manchester University.

## 5. Past Fieldwork

There is one current Sites and Monuments Record entry relating to features within and around The Knapp, Bredwardine, Herefordshire. This is reproduced in full here.

### ***Castle? The Knapp, Bredwardine***

SMR Number: 15706

Grid Reference: SO 325 447

Parish: BREDWARDINE, HEREFORDSHIRE

Suggestion that may be 3rd castle site in Bredwardine on The Knapp, small tower foundations. (1)

### **Monument Type(s)**

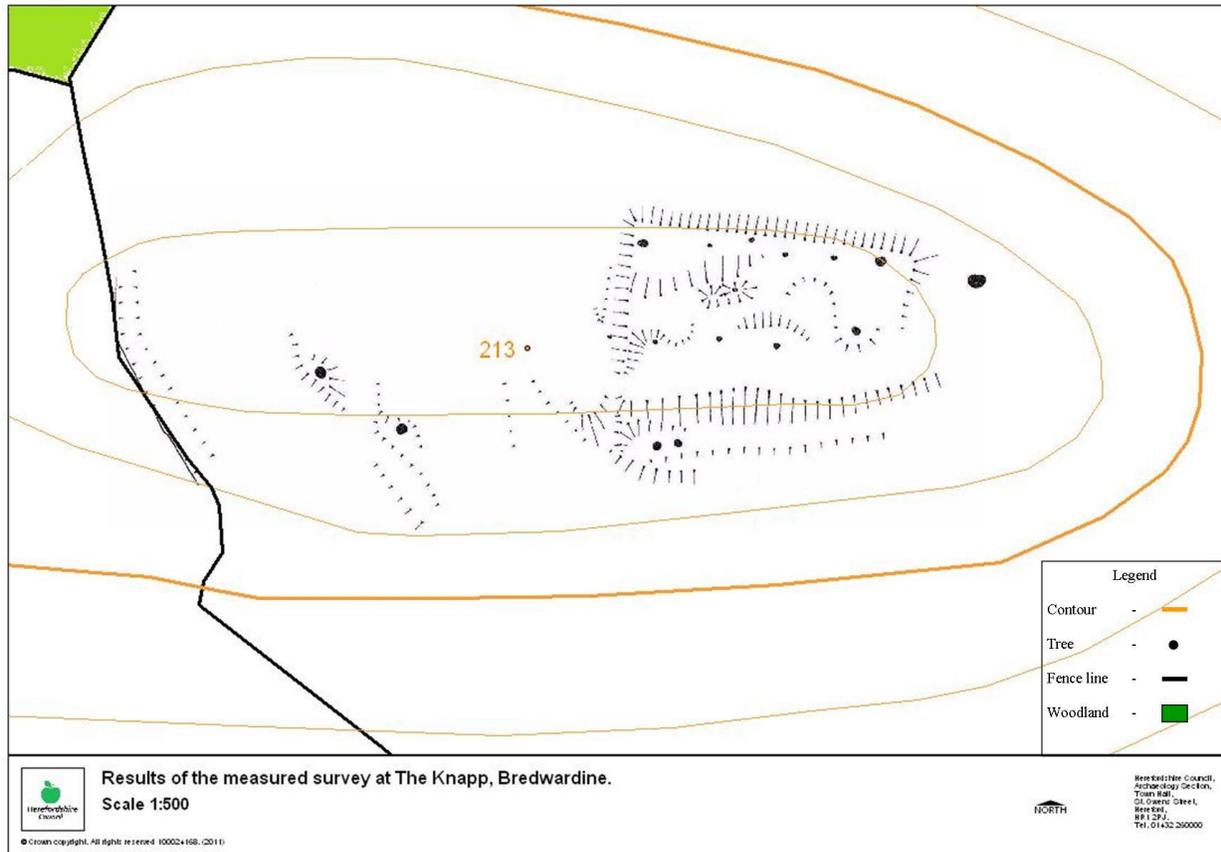
CASTLE? (Medieval - 1066 AD to 1539 AD)

### **Sources and Further Reading**

<1>[SHE8755 - Verbal communication: White, Hilary. 10/1992. Conv with Stirling Brown. SMR Card.](#)

## 6. Detailed Survey

Prior to any ground disturbance it was essential to record the extent and condition of earthworks at the summit of The Knapp. The results of the survey dictated the location of the planned five trial trenches as well as aided in producing a site grid, from which the geophysical survey was plotted.



**Figure 3:** Measured survey plan of earthworks at the summit of The Knapp. © Herefordshire Council

The survey was confined by the field boundary to the west and the naturally occurring descent to the north, south and east. Associated with the field boundary to the west (a fence line) was a ditch upon its eastern edge. The U-shaped ditch measured a c.2m wide and 0.2m deep. Running parallel to the west of the ditch, underlying the modern fence was a subtle bank not recorded during the survey; it measured 1m wide at its base and up to 0.3m wide at its summit. It stood 0.4m high.

Across the survey area numerous earthworks were identified, the majority of which can be attributed to the result of past root action and tree removal. The features were largely concentrated within the east of the survey area where a plantation of oak, pine and birch remains. The plantation was confined within a sub-rectangular area dictated by a low terrace standing tallest upon the northern

edge at 0.6m high. The southern edge of the enclosure was difficult to identify but likely followed the current break in slope from the summit. Upon the west face of the terrace was a subtle ditch that may one have encompassed the entirety of the plantation but had since silted or eroded. The ditch measured 0.7m wide and 0.2m deep; it stretched 5m on a north-south axis.

Traversing the south-facing slope were a series of narrow terraces, the widest of which measured c.2m and located directly beneath the summit. Each of the remaining terraces to the south uniformly measured c.1m wide, and were spaced c.2m apart.

The larger of the terraces was of particular interest due to its prominent nature directly beneath the hill summit. To the east the terrace continued until the south-facing slope of the spur redirected north forming the east-facing slope. To the west the terrace was cut by a possible track/ditch that runs down slope to the south-east. Beyond the track/ditch the terrace was difficult to trace further.

Approximately 22m west of the plantation enclosure a secondary track/ditch was identified aligned northwest – southeast. The feature was visible along the summit of the hill as well as to the south where the feature continued down slope to the southeast before redirecting east to follow the foot of The Knapp spur.

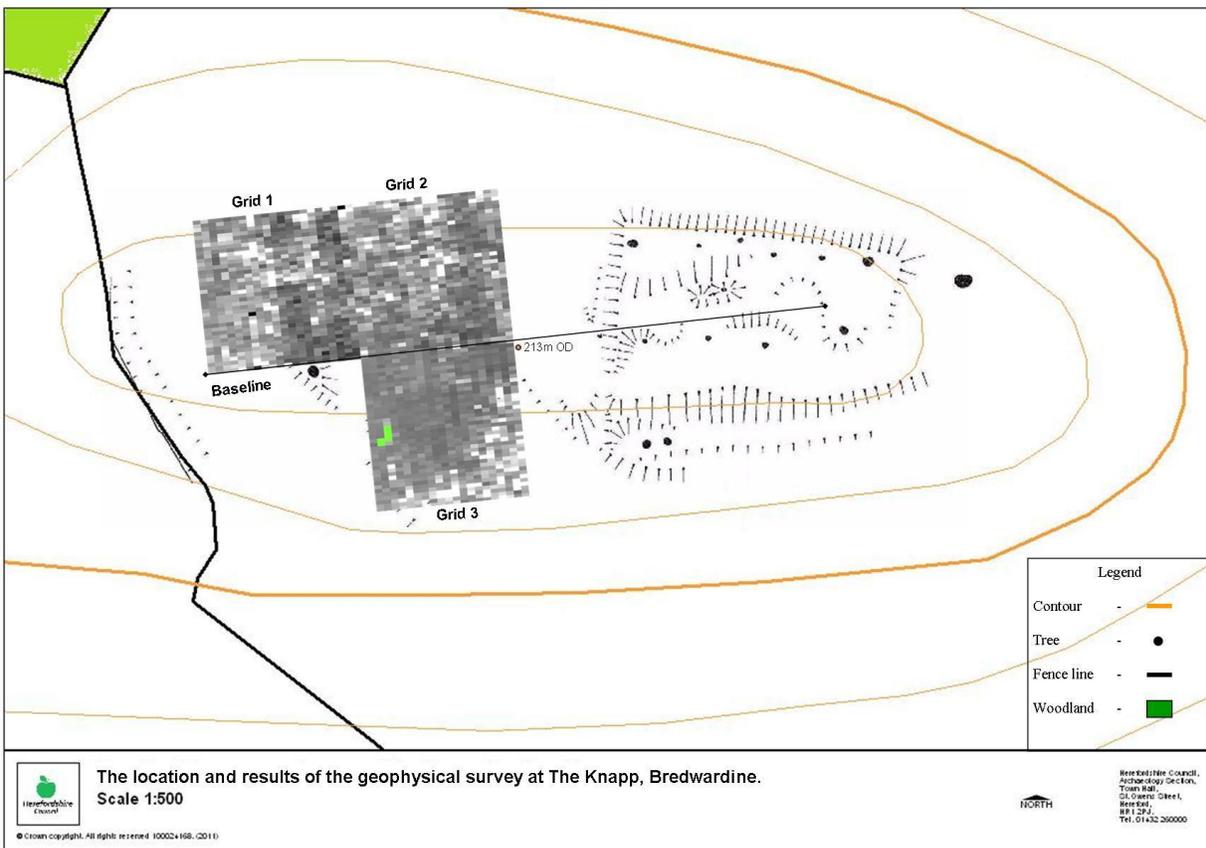
Considering the numerous prehistoric, in particular Neolithic flint tool assemblages discovered along the slopes of The Knapp; there was very little to suggest the presence of Neolithic earthworks at the site. The only exception was the larger terrace identified along the south-facing slope, indicative of perhaps a silted ditch or deliberate berm construction.

## 7. Geophysical Survey

The geophysical survey employed the use of an earth resistance meter RM15. The data was analysed using Geoplot 3.00 V, obtained through Geoscan Research.

Each 20m<sup>2</sup> grid was surveyed, commencing from the southwest corner, from where the grid was walked in 1m transects orientated north-south with a reading obtained every ½m. This process involved the penetration of the topsoil with two probes (electrodes) supported on a frame. A controlled electric current passed between the two probes was measured in ohms and the results stored within the memory of the RM15. The technique measures levels of electrical resistance within the soil, which allows for the identification of buried solid geology and manmade deposits such as floors, roads and wall foundations, the results may also indicate ditch/pit features depending on the moisture retained within the soil.

Three 20m<sup>2</sup> grids were established along the summit of The Knapp in order to investigate the possibility for buried features such as pits or ditches associated with Neolithic activity at the site. Due to the shallow depth of the underlying bedrock it was determined that any features substantially cut into the underlying natural would be clearly identifiable.

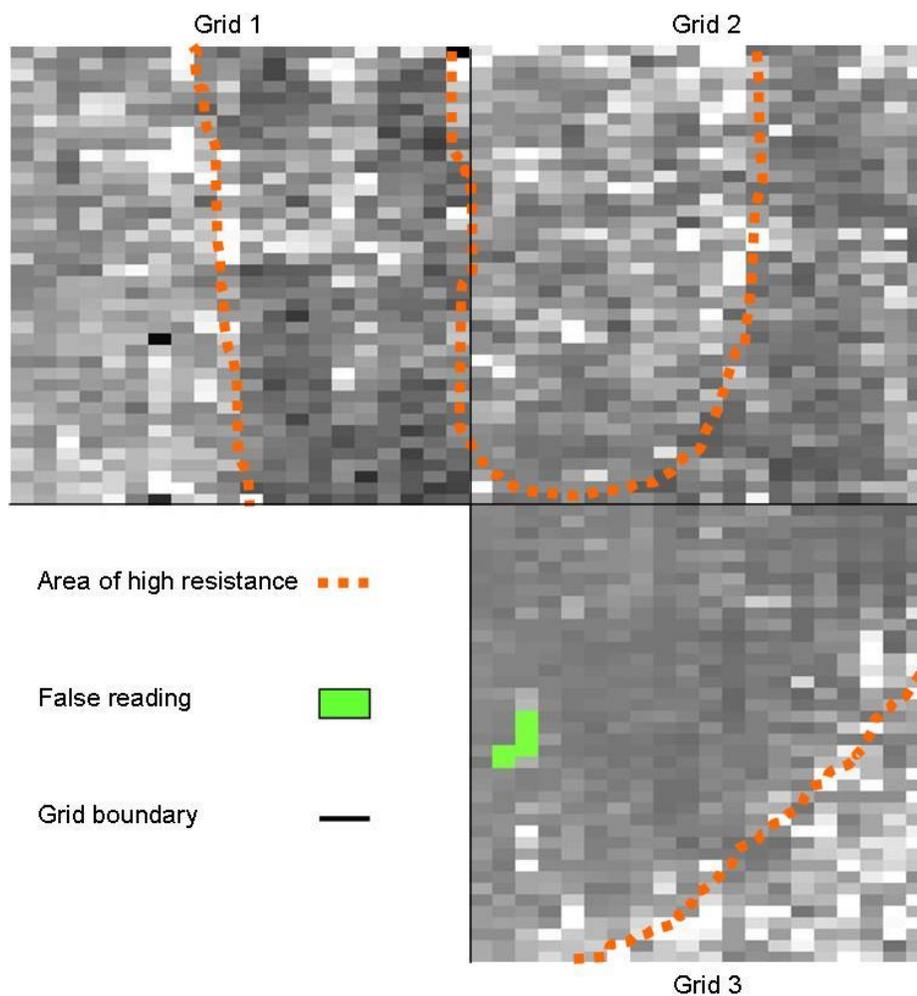


**Figure 4:** Location of resistance survey at The Knapp. © Herefordshire Council

The grids were sighted with the hope of identify buried archaeological features associated with the past Neolithic occupation of the site. The site was chosen due to the relative absence of evidence for modern ground disturbance, both manmade and natural.

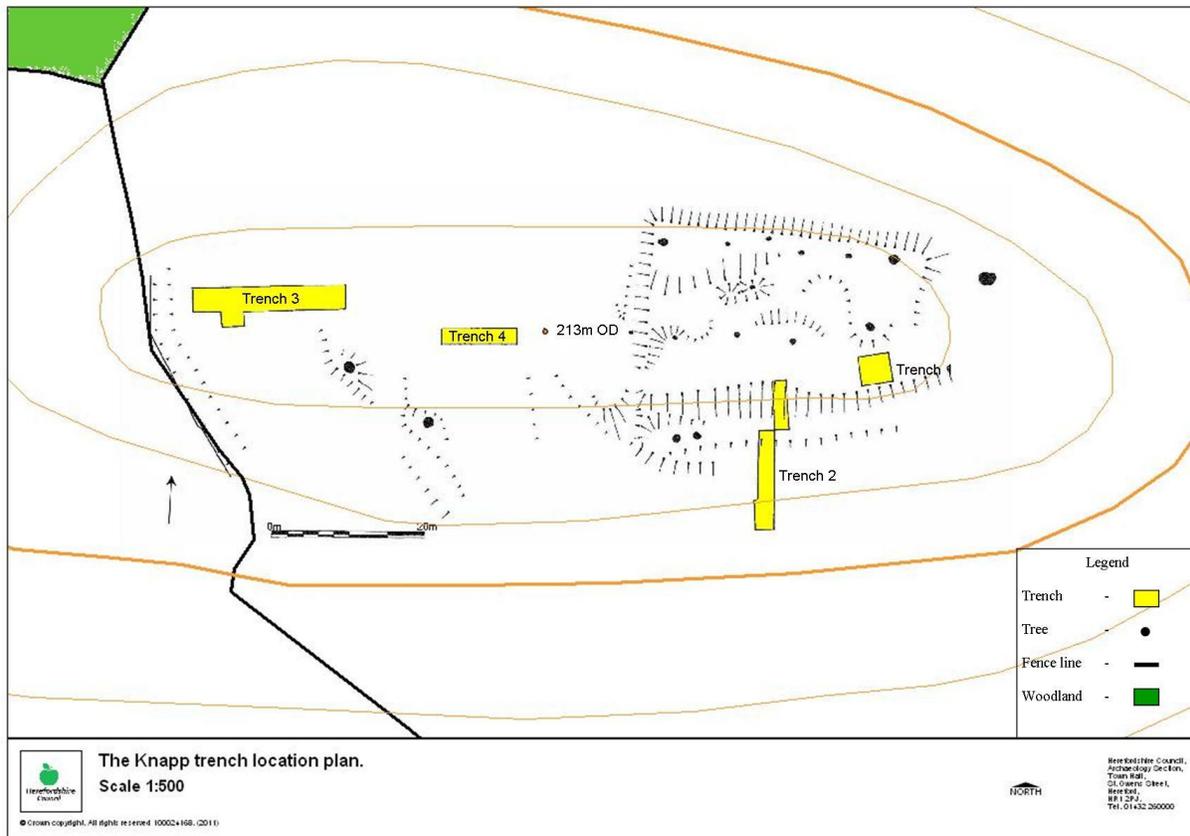
Within Grid 1, Grid 2 and Grid 3 the relatively dry climate conditions prevented the identification of any potentially buried archaeological features. The results were dominated by the underlying geological bedrock, as indicated by the roughly broad 'U'-shaped area of high resistance (darker area) outlined in **Figure 5**.

The readings of low resistance (lighter areas) did not appear to indicate any buried features of archaeological significance; however this may be due to the dry weather conditions at the time of the survey.



**Figure 5:** Results of the resistance survey at The Knapp. © Herefordshire Council

## 8. Trial Excavation Results



**Figure 6:** Trench Locations at The Knapp. © Herefordshire Council

### Trench 1

An area for investigation was identified at the eastern summit of The Knapp from which there are views to the village of Bredwardine to the southeast. The trench measured 4m<sup>2</sup> and was located upon a level platform apparently cut into the summit which rises to the north and west approximately 0.3m above the location of Trench 1. The intention of the investigation at this location was to test for archaeological evidence relating to potential Neolithic activity, either ritual or domestic as identified through the substantial tool assemblages discovered during the 1970's.

As identified through a search of Herefordshire Sites and Monument Record (SMR) there was also the suggestion of a medieval structure at this location due to the prominence of the hill overlooking the medieval village to the southeast.

The topsoil, context/unit (001) consisted of a light grey brown loam of moderate compaction with occasional inclusions of small rounded pebbles. The topsoil measured c.0.1m thick and overlay deposits (002) (003) (004) and (005).

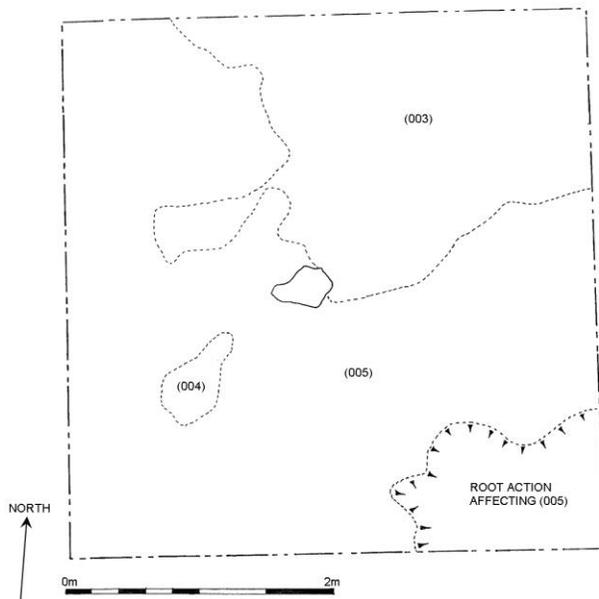
Context/unit (002) represented the latest sequence and consisted of a fine light brown gravel deposit of moderate compaction. From within the horizon a fragment of post-medieval pottery was identified along with one flint flake and a small nodule of slag. It was determined that the gravel horizon was the creation of post-medieval activity associated with the work of Moccas Estate and the establishment of a wooded landscape feature that dominates the summit of The Knapp.



**Figure 7:** The gravel horizon (002) is evident within the foreground of the image with the underlying natural bedrock (005) exposed within the remainder of the trench. © Herefordshire Council

The gravel horizon (002) overlay a deposit of compact light orange brown clay (003) measuring 0.18-0.19m thick with inclusions of rounded stone (0.02m x 0.01m max). The horizon was interpreted as likely

representing a natural deposit onto which the gravel surface (002) was laid. This deposit is likely the same as an isolated patch of similar soil (004) which like (003) fills a number of hollows, the result of root action into the underlying bedrock (005). The bedrock (005) consisted of a grey brown fractured mudstone/sandstone, the result of glacial freeze/thaw action.



**Figure 8:** Trench 1 plan prior to the removal of deposits (003) and (004). © Herefordshire Council

## Trench 2

A trench measuring 20m long and 2m wide was excavated by hand on the steep south facing slope of the Knapp. The trench was staggered due to the extreme steepness of the slope with the northern, upper section of the trench measuring 9m by 2m and the southern, lower section of the trench offset to the west and measuring 11m by 2m. The trench was positioned in order to investigate an area of the hill that was thought to have been unaffected by ploughing in the mid-twentieth century and in which a slight terrace was visible. It was thought that this terrace might be evidence of a ditch encircling the hill top.

Immediately below the turf the topsoil (001) contained a number of flint flakes and worked flint. In the upper/northern end of the trench the topsoil overlay a stone spread (002), comprised of angular sandstone and mudstone the largest of which measured 0.1m x 0.7m x 0.2m. The stone spread extended south and down slope approximately 3m from the north end of the trench.

**Figure 9:** Stone spread (002) located within the north of Trench 2 extending south at the break in slope. © Herefordshire Council



In the rest of the trench the topsoil overlay moderately compact clay, silt and sand hill wash (004), which was disturbed by burrowing and root activity at the southern end of the trench. This horizon also contained a number of flint flakes, flint tools and sherds of prehistoric pottery. This overlay a very compact clay hill wash (003/005), from which flint flakes and tools were recovered. This hill wash was partially overlain by the stone spread (002) at the northern end of the trench and was cut by a large animal burrow (006). The burrow cut through the trench on an east-west alignment and was filled by loose material including leaf mould, root material and flint flakes, presumably derived from the hill wash (003/005). The burrow also cut the natural subsoil (007). This was very compact with inclusions of degraded sandstone and devoid of finds. The natural subsoil was partially overlain, at the northern end of the trench by bedrock (008). This was slightly green grey sandstone/mudstone bedrock close to the summit of the hill and was slightly fragmentary due to freeze-thaw and post-medieval activity, probably relating to the stone spread (002).

The other activity in trench 2 appeared to result from human activity. Two pits, [011] and [012] were identified at the southern, down slope end of the trench. Pit

[011] was approximately circular in plan, measuring 0.43m wide by 0.48m long and 0.29m deep, with concave sides and a rounded base. This feature cut (003/005) and (007) and was filled by dark grey brown clay silt (010) with inclusions of charcoal and occasional small stones. This deposit contained flint, prehistoric pottery sherds and small amounts of burnt bone and was covered by hill wash (004). The second pit [012] was an irregular oval cut measuring 1.57m east-west by 1m north-south and 0.33m deep, with gently sloping sides and a flat base. This feature cut (003/005) and was truncated on its southern edge by animal burrowing activity. It was filled by a similar deposit to the other pit (010); a dark grey brown clay silt (009) with inclusions of charcoal and occasional stones, the largest measuring 0.23m by 0.23m by 0.04m. This deposit contained flint, prehistoric pottery sherds, a small amount of bone and glass; this last was in the southern end of the pit and was probably connected with the burrowing activity. The deposit was overlain by hill wash (004).

**Figure 10:** The partially excavated pit [012] (left) and pit [011] viewed from the east. © Herefordshire Council

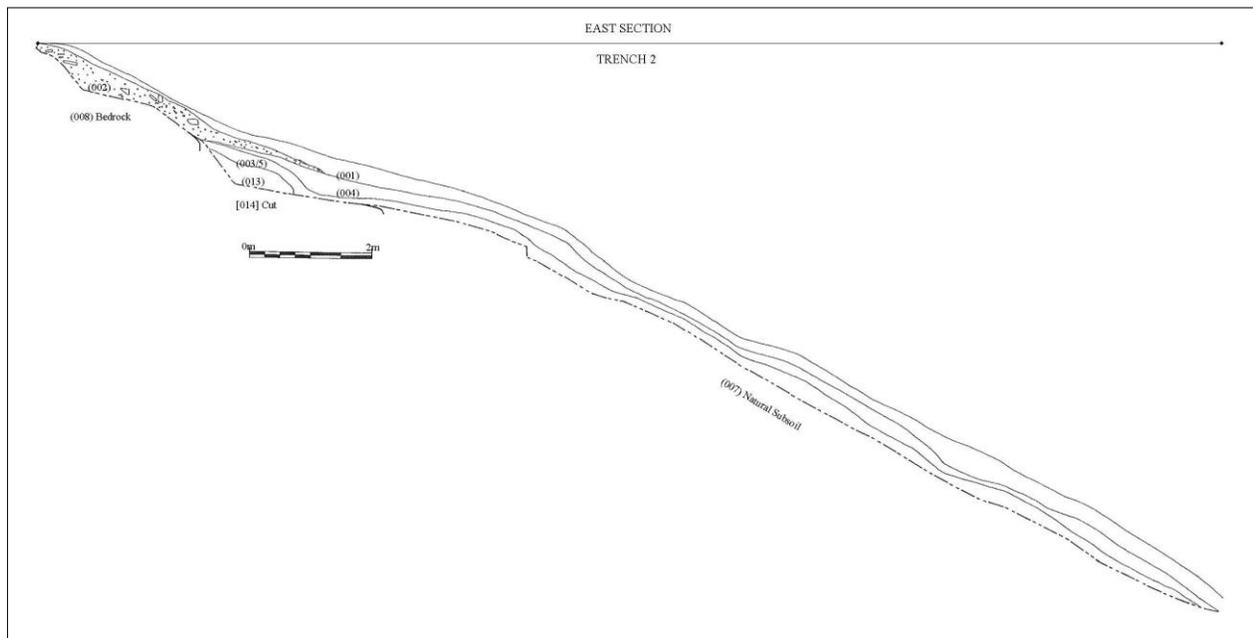


The other feature within the trench was a linear cut [014] in the natural hill slope, cut into the subsoil (007). This was aligned east-west and located at the northern end of the trench, down slope from the stone spread (002) and bedrock (008). At the foot of the cut was a level area/berm approximately 3m wide. Sealing the cut face was a slump of red brown silt clay (013), which was very compact with occasional stone inclusions and consisted of the same material as the natural subsoil (007) into which the cut was made. It appears that the slump occurred soon after the cut was made, due to the similarity of the material and lack of material between the cut and the slump. The slump was covered by hill wash (003/005).

The location of the linear cut [014] in relation to the rest of the hill is interesting; it is very close to the summit of the hill and this may explain the reason for its construction. It may have been intended to enhance the steepness of the slope and the shape and appearance of the hill top. The other possibility is that the level area below the cut was the motivation for its construction as this area could have functioned as a sheltered working area. Unfortunately there is no dating evidence from either the face of the cut, the level area below it or from the slumped material (013) making it difficult to develop the interpretation. The two

pits, [011] and [012], definitely appear to be prehistoric in date due to the pottery recovered from both of them. It is possible that the pottery, and therefore the pits, are Neolithic but the pottery was very fragmentary making further study necessary to determine this. The fill of both pits, (009) and (010), contained burnt material, including charcoal and small amounts of burnt bone. However, no burning occurred in situ. There was no evidence to suggest that either pit had contained a post or stone; the stones within the fill appeared to be randomly distributed rather than forming packing material.

The stone spread at the north of the trench (002) was initially thought to represent collapsed material from a stone bank or wall but local information suggested that tree planting and landscaping activity on the summit of the hill was the more probable explanation. Processes of natural erosion may also have contributed to this, leading to the gradual spread of the material down slope. The occurrence of worked flint and prehistoric pottery throughout the top soil (001) and hill wash deposits, (004) and (003/005), suggest that this area has been subject to disturbance; possibly the agricultural activity in the mid-twentieth century extended over a larger area of the hill than was previously thought. However, the occurrence of these artefacts does suggest that the Knapp was the location of prehistoric activity, most likely during the Neolithic.



**Figure 11:** Section plan of the east face of Trench 2 drawn to a scale of 1:10. © Herefordshire Council

### **Trench 3**

The location of Trench 3 was determined by two subtle features visible at the western end of The Knapp. The first of these features consisted of a north-south aligned ditch, measuring c.0.6m wide and 0.06m deep. As the ditch descended down slope to the north and south the feature redirected to the east, presumably enclosing the summit of The Knapp. Due to the past discovery of flint assemblages indicative of Neolithic activity, there was a possibility that the ditch represented part of an associated structure.



**Figure 12:** Trench 3 viewed from the east. © Herefordshire Council

To the east of the ditch a shallow, hollow/platform was identified with similar features extending to the north-east where they traversed the north-facing slope. The hollow/platform measured 6m east-west by 2.5m north-south, it had a level base measuring 0.2m deep. If the feature represented a ditch/pit with an association to those lying to the northeast then there was potential for the feature to relate to a possible site similar to a causeway enclosure, indicative of the Neolithic. Alternatively the feature may be representing a platform of unknown use, or simply a feature of natural form.

The objective of the investigation at this location was to determine the reason for the visible earthworks as well as to identify features indicative of Neolithic settlement/activity. The trench measured 20m east-west by 3m north-south.

The topsoil (001), a grey brown loam with occasional inclusions of small angular and rounded stone (0.1m x 0.6m x 0.5m max) measured c.0.1m thick. Through the process of de-turfing numerous flint flakes and tools were discovered along with post-medieval artefacts. The topsoil sealed contexts/units (002) (003) and (004).

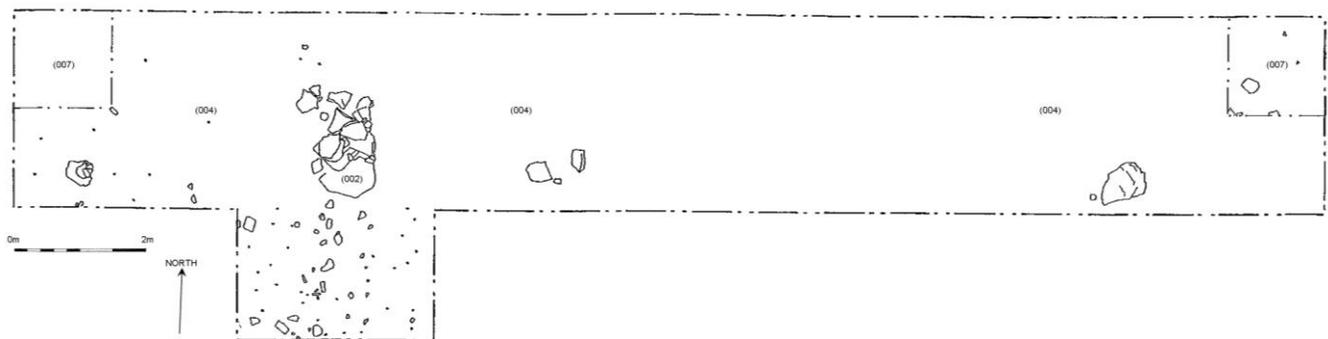
Within the west of the trench directly beneath the topsoil was a large stone deposit (002), which was initially thought to represent a wall/wall-footing extending to the south. However, further investigation determined that the stone initially formed a single slab measuring 2m north-south by 1m east-west that had subsequently been fractured and spread through the process of ploughing. Mixed amongst each of the sandstone fragments was a fine silt clay (003). No finds were identified associated with the stone spread (002).



**Figure 13:** Stone spread (002) viewed from the north. © Herefordshire Council

The underlying deposit (004), a horizon of relatively compact, orange brown silt clay loam with charcoal flecking overlay the very compact (007) red brown natural clay subsoil. Through the process of excavation a substantial number of flint tools and general debitage were retrieved indicative of Neolithic activity at

the site. Unfortunately the features identified through the initial survey were relatively modern in date; the ditch was found to be a shallow drainage ditch and the possible pit/platform was a silted tree throw [006] that was recorded cutting the horizons (004) and (007). The tree throw was subsequently filled by brown silt sand loam (005).



**Figure 14:** Trench 3 plan, drawn to a 1:20 scale. © Herefordshire Council

## Trench 4



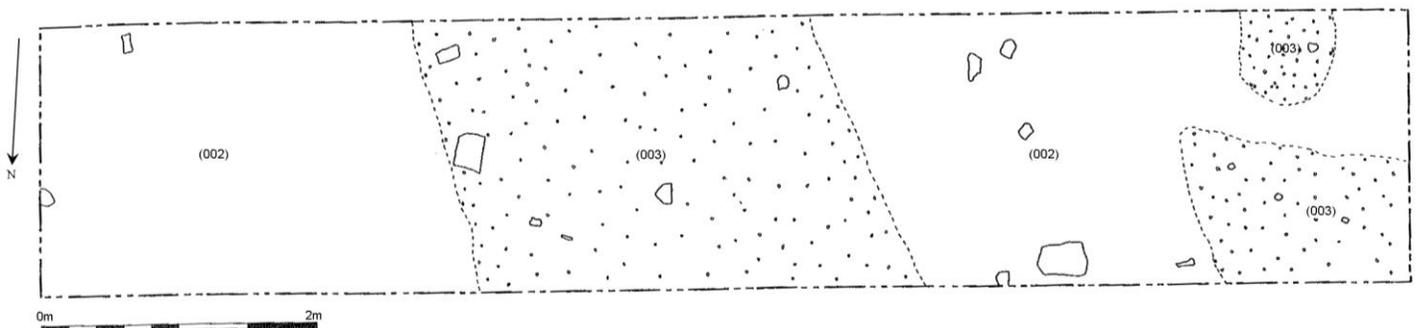
Trench 4 was located directly west of the spot height 213m. The intention was to identify evidence relating to the potential interior of a prehistoric site. The trench was aligned east-west and measured 10m long by 2m wide.

**Figure 15:** View east along Trench 4 at the end of excavation. Note the sondage along the southern edge. © Herefordshire Council

The topsoil (001) consisted of light grey brown sandy silt loam topsoil, compact with occasional stone (0.03m x 0.03m max) and tree root inclusions. Flint artefacts and flakes were retrieved from this context. The topsoil sealed (002) a very compact light orange brown clay loam with charcoal flecking and pebble inclusions. The horizon

overlay gravel deposit (003).

The gravel deposit (003) measured 3.3m east-west and ran the width of the trench north-south. The deposit measured 0.05m thick and is likely attributed to post-medieval landscaping on the site as it sealed multiple post-medieval deposits (004) (005) (006) (007) (008) (009). There were also two small discrete areas of the same material at the west end of the trench. The regularity of this band of material was investigated by the excavation of a 0.7m wide slot along the south side of the trench.

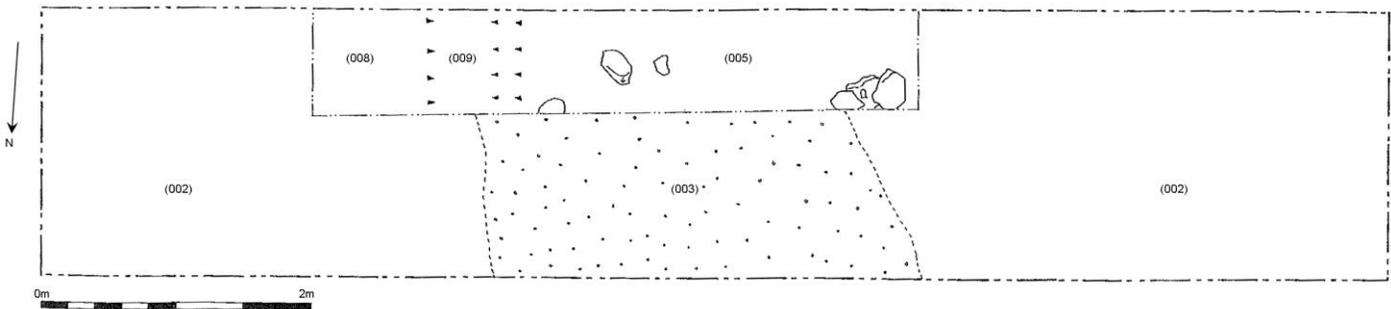


**Figure 16:** Trench 4 plan, drawn to a 1:20 scale. © Herefordshire Council

The *sondage* measured 4.4m east-west with the intention of identifying any underlying deposits or features relating to the gravel deposit (003). The gravel spread (003) overlay a thin horizon/lens of green/grey silt (004) measuring 0.04m thick. The colour and composition of this fill suggested it was a water lain deposit. The underlying horizon (005) consisted of a possibly re-deposited

natural of red/orange brown silt clay with inclusions of rounded stone. It was moderately compact and likely to be attributed to the deliberate process of back filling during the post-medieval period.

The underlying horizon of (006) was of a similar water lain deposit as (004), it measured 0.03m thick and consisted of a green grey silt. The underlying deposit consisted of dull red brown silt clay gravel (007) of moderate compaction from which a possible pot sherd was recovered. The horizon retained considerable moisture.



**Figure 17:** Plan of Trench 4 showing the sondage. © Herefordshire Council

The underlying deposit consisted of a thin water lain lens of grey green silt (008) no more than 0.02m thick. This deposit overlay a grey brown sandy silt (009) horizon with inclusions of degraded sandstone and charcoal. The deposit retained considerable moisture in comparison to the overlying deposits. This deposit was not fully investigated due to project constraints.



**Figure 18:** Maximum excavation of the slot in trench 4 © Herefordshire Council

It is possible that the deposition of (003) and all the underlying layers may have been the result of post-medieval landscaping of the hill top. The need for this re-deposition of material is interesting as it could indicate a possible ditch or an area of quarrying that was filled in to improve the aesthetic appearance of the hill. There is therefore the potential that prehistoric deposits may be preserved below these horizons.

### ***Trench 5***

Trench 5 measured 2m wide by 10m long and was located at the eastern foot of the summit to The Knapp. The trench was orientated east-west. The intention of the investigation was to identify a potential boundary associated with the Neolithic occupation of the site. However the boundary, visible as an earthwork on the ground and through aerial photography could also be assumed to relate to a later field division. Due to a shortage in time the trench was not fully investigated.

The topsoil (001) consisted of grey brown sandy silt, moderately compact with small stone inclusions (0.02m x 0.03m max). Unstratified artefacts of flint, glass and pot were retrieved from this horizon. The underlying deposit (002) consisted of compact, dull red brown silt clay with charcoal fleck inclusions. The deposit was identified as a hill wash and contained numerous flint artefacts. The horizon measured 0.14m thick and overlay a very compact deposit of red brown clay hill wash (003). This horizon (002) was not fully excavated, a slot measuring 0.5m wide was excavated the full length of the trench. The underlying hill wash (003) showed no evidence of artefacts, charcoal or features. It was thought that because the feature visible on aerial photographs was linear and the trench had been located perpendicular to it some indication of the feature might have been visible at this depth.

## **9. Discussion**

In summary, the aim of the investigation was to identify any above and below ground archaeological features and associated artefacts to ensure their professional recording and interpretation in order to further understand Neolithic society within the southwest of Herefordshire. The investigation consisted of the excavation of five trial trenches, the purpose of which was twofold; uncovering our prehistoric past and as a training exercise for students of Manchester University and the public local to the village of Bredwardine.

The Investigations at The Knapp were carried out in three phases commencing with a measured survey of standing earthworks, geophysical survey and finally trial excavation, which involved the investigation of five trenches.

### ***Detailed Survey***

The measured survey highlighted the extent to which post-medieval landscaping has impacted the summit of The Knapp. This was notable primarily within the east of the site where the constructed bank/terrace enclosing the area of plantation remains visible. The interior of this area has been greatly effected by the past uprooting of trees (either through natural or deliberate action) leaving multiple tree-bowls. With the exception of a terrace traversing the south-facing slope no clear indication for the potential Neolithic occupation of the site was evident from the surface.

### ***Geophysical Survey***

Due to the dry climatic conditions prior to the commencement of the geophysical survey, the results obtained through the use of a RM15 resistance meter were largely inconclusive in regards to identifying any buried archaeological features. The results of the survey highlight primarily the underlying bedrock geology.

### ***Trial Excavation***

Within all of the trenches investigated evidence for Neolithic activity was recorded in the form of artefacts consisting of pottery sherds, flint *debitage* and flint tools. Most of the artefacts were identified within either the topsoil or hill wash, with the exception of two pits located upon the south-facing slope of The Knapp site. The results of each excavation are summarised here:

- Trench 1 - Excavation uncovered a scattering of flint flakes, along with post-medieval pottery fragments and clay pipe within the topsoil. The primary feature identified within the trench consisted of a layer of post-medieval 'hard-standing' presumably associated with the establishment of the plantation. Directly beneath this lay the natural bedrock.

- Trench 2 - The trench was positioned in order to investigate an area of the hill that was thought to have been unaffected by ploughing in the mid-twentieth century and in which a slight terrace was visible. It was thought that this terrace might be evidence of a ditch encircling the hill top. The discovery of a linear cut [014] in relation to the rest of the hill is interesting; it is very close to the summit of the hill and this may explain the reason for its construction. It may have been intended to enhance the steepness of the slope and the shape and appearance of the hill top. The other possibility is that the level area/terrace below the cut was the motivation for its construction as this area could have functioned as a sheltered working area. No dating evidence from either the face of the cut, the level area below it or from the slumped material (013) was identified making it difficult to further develop the interpretation. The two pits, [011] and [012] are apparently prehistoric in date due to the pottery recovered from both of them, initial interpretation is that the pottery, although fragmentary was Neolithic in date. There was no evidence to suggest that either pit had contained a post or stone; the stones within the fill appeared to be randomly distributed rather than forming packing material
- Trench 3 - The location of Trench 3 was determined by two subtle features visible at the western end of The Knapp. The first of these features consisted of a north-south aligned ditch; the second a hollow/platform was identified with identical features extending to the north-east where they traversed the north-facing slope. Although flint artefacts and *debitage* were retrieved throughout the excavation, the artefacts were not identified within a secure *in-situ* context. The identified north-south aligned ditch was more modern in date and the subtle hollow/platform represented the former site of a tree.
- Trench 4 - The trench was located directly west of the spot height 213m. The intention was to identify evidence relating to the potential interior of a prehistoric site. A number of post-medieval deposits were identified extending to a depth beyond 1.2m. By the end of the investigation the underlying natural had not been reached. The need for this re-deposition of material is interesting as it could indicate the location of a buried ditch or an area of quarrying that was filled in to improve the aesthetic appearance of the hill. There is therefore the potential that prehistoric deposits may be preserved beneath.
- Trench 5 - The intention of the investigation was to identify a potential boundary associated with the Neolithic occupation of the site. However the boundary, visible as an earthwork on the ground and through aerial photography could also be assumed to relate to a later field division. Due to a shortage in time the trench was not fully investigated.

## **10. Acknowledgments**

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## 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.



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