



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

**The Venn Farm,
Bishops Frome
Earthwork Survey and
Archaeological Field Reconnaissance
Herefordshire Archaeology Report No.6**

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.

The Venn Farm, Bishops Frome

Earthwork Survey and Field Reconnaissance

Herefordshire Archaeology Report No.6, December 2000,(revised April 2004).

Summary:

Previously unrecorded earthworks were potentially threatened with disturbance as result of a proposed planting scheme. The site is located at NGR: SO 669 504 approximately 0.5 km north of Paunton Mill and is currently under pasture. An earthwork survey of the affected area was undertaken, together with field reconnaissance of additional areas of farmland.

The earthwork survey identified and recorded remains directly affected by the scheme, and located them accurately so that planting could avoid direct damage to them. The earthworks are interpreted as having been associated with a mill race and the practice of seasonal flooding of water meadows. The field reconnaissance identified a number of further features of archaeological and/or historical significance. These are not situated within the area of the planting scheme.

Disclaimer: It should not be assumed that land referred to in this document is accessible to the public. Location plans are indicative only. NGR's are accurate to approximately 10m. Measured dimensions are accurate to within 1m at a scale of 1:500, 0.1m at 1:50, and 0.02m at 1:20.

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

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The Venn Farm, Bishops Frome.

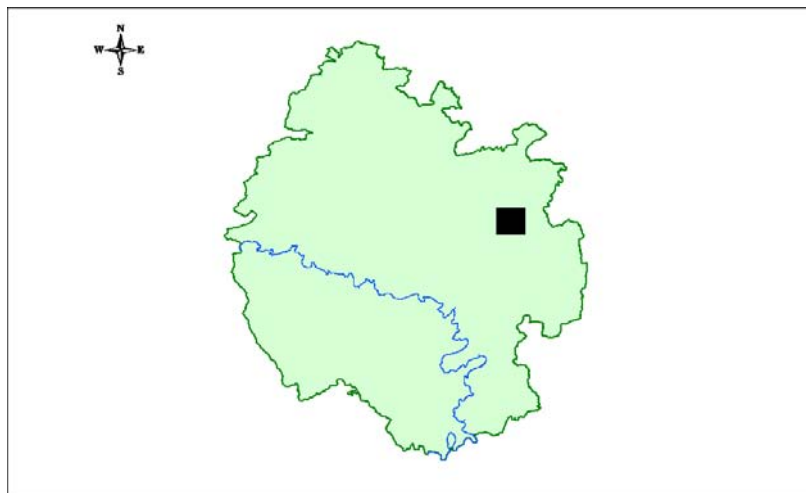
Earthwork Survey and Archaeological Field Reconnaissance

Herefordshire Archaeology Report No.6

Herefordshire Archaeology, December 2000.

Introduction

In November 1998 an application by the Forestry Commission was submitted for a woodland grant scheme at The Venn Farm, Bishops Frome (No. 015003844). A site visit to assess the impact of the scheme on the surrounding landscape led to a realisation that the scheme could affect earthworks of potential archaeological significance. It was agreed that the earthworks should be recorded by survey by Herefordshire Archaeology prior to any planting, and that recommendations would be made to avoid planting over important earthworks.



The site is located at NGR: SO 669 504 approximately 0.5 km north of Paunton Mill and is currently under pasture. To the east of Paunton Mill (NGR: SO 6687 5006) lies the site of the deserted medieval village known as Stanford Regis (SMR No. 11153).

Figure 1: Site Location

Method

Survey Objectives

The principal objective of the survey was to produce an accurate record of the earthworks within the areas potentially affected by the planting scheme. Additionally, efforts were made to link the earthworks to other features recorded during a brief walk over survey of the surrounding area. Through this process, it was hoped that a basic understanding of their nature, date and use would be established.

The earthwork survey was undertaken using a plane table and the area was planned at a scale of 1:500. The earthworks extended over a wide area and it was only feasible to

survey the area containing the most complex features in any detail. For this reason, the plane table survey was limited to an area of approximately 6000 square meters (see Figure3).

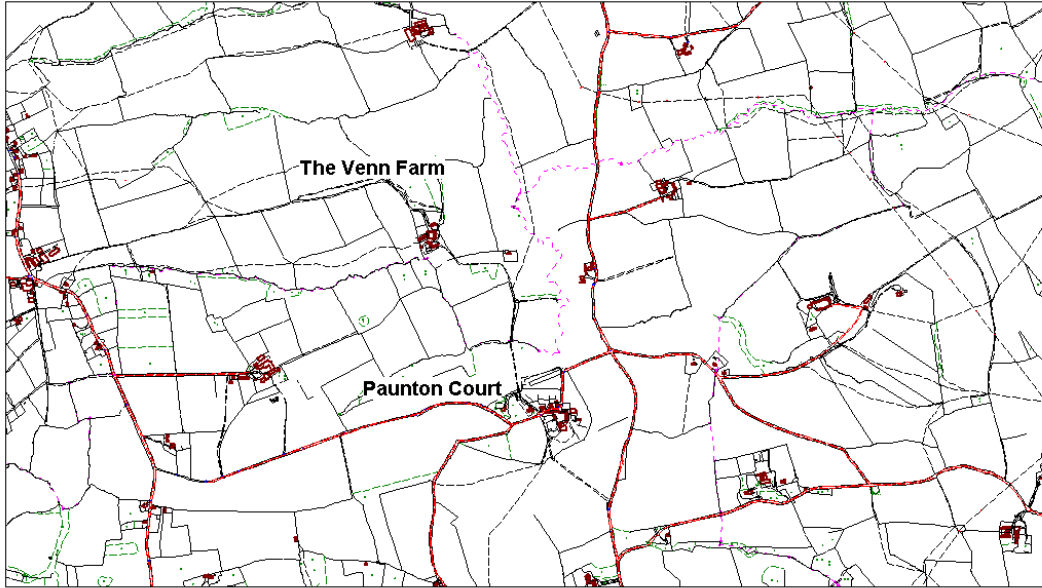


Figure 2: Site location plan

To complement the plane table survey a measured sketch plan was produced tying in the survey area with its environs and other earthworks. Any other features recorded during the walk over survey were noted and recorded on a map extract.

Results The earthwork survey (Figures 3 & 4)

Mill race

The most obvious feature associated with the site is the course of the mill race. This leaves the River Frome at NGR: SO 6685 5578 and runs in a southerly direction for approximately 1 km. to Paunton Mill. The main access to The Venn Farm follows much of its course. The mill race is approximately 2.5m wide and 1.1m deep and is spanned by two stone bridges providing access into fields to the east of the race (the race was presumably considerably deeper but has silted up over time). Whilst being primarily fed by water from the Frome, the mill race is also supplied by a small tributary. This runs down a side valley on an east/west axis, and its lower reaches of have been canalised. This now forms a field boundary.

Drainage / overflow channels

Four main channels run east from the mill race to the Frome. It is presumed that these represent overflow channels to get rid of excess water when the river is high. Certainly channels A, C and D (Figure 3) all have weirs at their western ends providing a certain degree of water regulation. Channel B is shallower and therefore may not have needed a weir to restrict water flow. Alternatively, it may have been regulated by a sluice gate for which no evidence survives.

Bridges and weirs

The two bridges and three weirs associated with these channels are well constructed, using roughly worked, but well coursed, local stone. Both bridges consist of a parapet over a single, half round archway. The weirs however, differ in size and shape. The weir for channel D has been largely destroyed by recent drainage and only slight evidence for its location survives. The weir on channel C is approximately 4m wide and has a stone lined channel with a 2m drop. The weir has well defined side walls which splay in a curve on the down stream side. The weir at the end of channel A is smaller than that on channel C and has been faced in concrete. The mill race at this point has largely been filled in. A modern drainage ditch has been cut to take the water from the tributary along the course of the mill race, but in the opposite direction and down a channel cut through the southern side of the weir.

Linear ditches

Between channels B and C are a considerable number of earthworks. The majority of these are linear ditches, running on an east/west axis from the mill race to the Frome. These are approximately 1m wide and 0.2m deep but would presumably have been deeper prior to silting. The ditches are fairly regularly spaced, averaging 15m between each ditch.

Approximately midway along their length all the ditches are cut by, or fall into, a larger ditch on a north/south axis, (feature E, figures 3 & 4). This feature varies in width from 1m at its northern end to approximately 4m at its southern end, at which point it joins channel C. It increases in depth as it runs southwards, reaching a maximum depth of approximately 1.4m.

Earthwork hollows

Approximately 50m to the east of this feature is a sub-rectangular depression, aligned north-south, (feature F, figures 3 & 4). This feature is approximately 6.5m wide and 15m long, joining channel C at its southern end.

Immediately to the north-east of the junction between the mill race and channel C is a roughly square depression covering an area of approximately 25m by 20m (feature G figures 3 & 4). Whilst its shape may suggest the remains of an artificial structure, it is possible that the depression was formed by scouring of excess water flooding from the mill race, running around the weir as well as over it.

Earthwork Terrace

Running parallel to and 26m east of the mill race is a low terrace. This is cut by the drains and may well be a natural river terrace.

Results: The field reconnaissance (<i>Figure 5</i>)

This was restricted to fields under pasture on either side of the small east/west tributary valley. Significant features were recorded photographically and by descriptive text only.

NGR: SO 6687 5060

Two semi-detached, stone built, labourers cottages of likely mid 19th century date.

NGR: SO 6680 5050

A small quarry, recently filled in using imported topsoil and building rubble. This may have been the source of stone during the construction of the weirs, bridges and/or the two labourers cottages.

NGR: SO 6675 5048

An area of well preserved ridge and furrow, cut by the quarry. The ridge and furrow is on a roughly north/south axis with approximately 2m between ridge peaks. At its eastern extent this had been overplanted by orchard. The orchard has since been removed.

NGR: SO 6660 5045

Within the area of ridge and furrow affected in the past by orcharding are three 2.5m diameter circular structures. These have small banks on their down-slope edges, whilst their up-slope edges are cut into the hill slope, forming level platforms. At the centre of each structure is a low, circular mound approximately 0.7m in diameter. It is suggested that these structures represent the remains of field kilns possibly used in the production of bricks or tiles, such as were noted at Great Walkmill Farm at Ewyas Harold earlier in 1999 (see Herefordshire Archaeology Report No. 5). The central mound is thought possibly to represent the remains of ash after firing, or a raised internal firing platform.

NGR: SO 6609 5049

Earthworks associated with a clay pit on the northern bank of the stream. These works include one very pronounced mound (possibly representing a dump of quarrying waste) with an oak tree growing from its top. It stands in apparent association with a number of lower, more subtle earthworks.

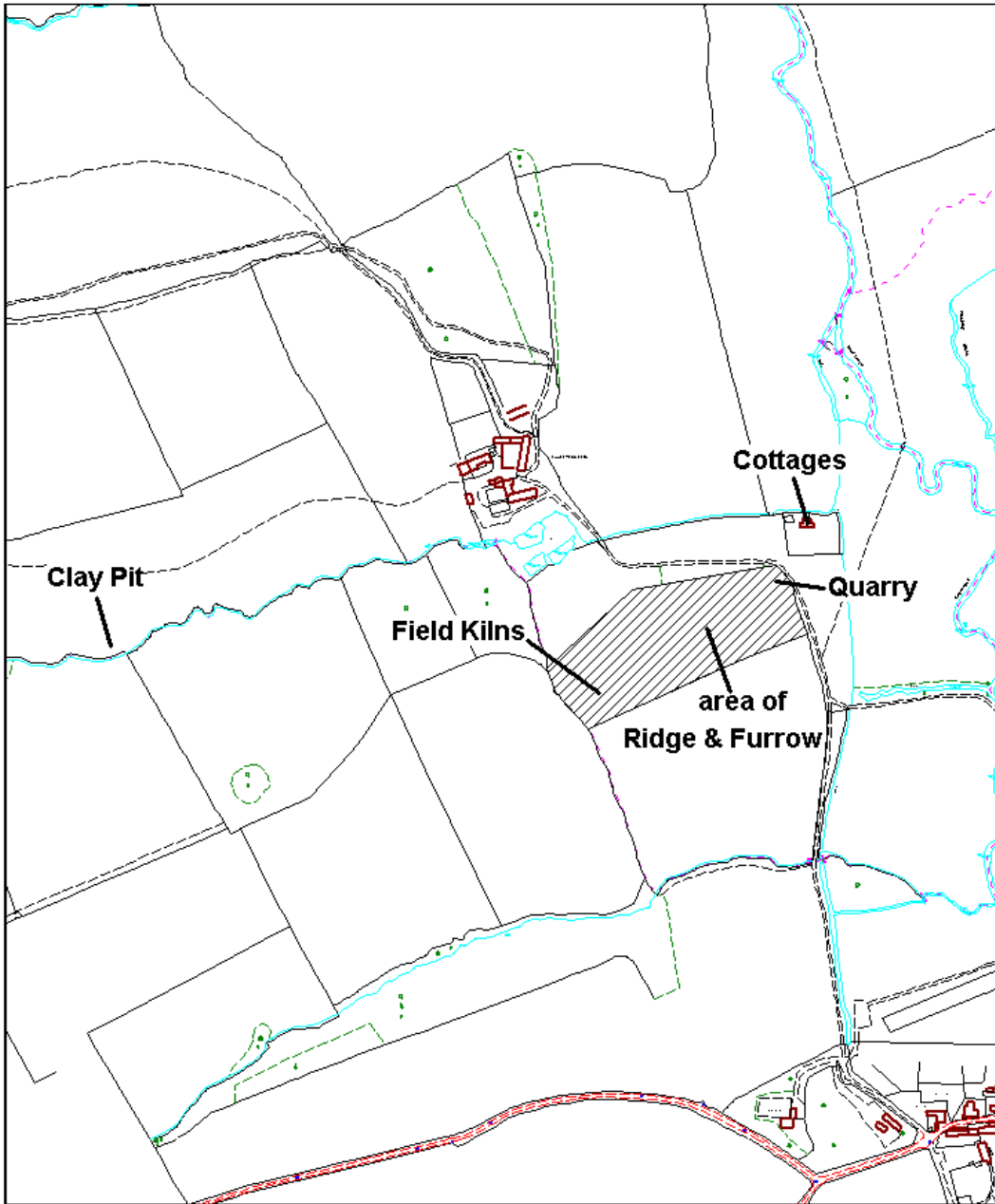


Figure 5: Features recorded during the walk over survey



SCALE 1:10,000

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Discussion

From this survey it has been concluded that the earthworks affected by the planting scheme fall into two categories.

- A) The mill race and its associated channels.
- B) The channel and drainage ditches associated with the seasonal flooding of the meadow.

Both categories are obviously linked, the flooding of the water meadow having made use of the water from within the mill race. All the features in this area are therefore considered to be contemporary. Although these represent an important landscape feature, it was not felt that they would disappear as a result of the proposed planting, and if not directly damaged by the planting and harvesting of trees, would in due course reappear as a visible landscape feature.

A mid 19th century construction date for the bridges and weirs and the labourers cottages would seem appropriate. It is however unclear whether the mill race etc. predates this. Features F and G do not appear to be associated with water management and may represent areas where topsoil has been removed or, in the case of feature G scouring by flood water.

None of the features identified by the archaeological field reconnaissance are affected by the planting scheme. Their apparent association together as features of historic land and resource management is of considerable potential interest, and for this reason they would repay more detailed survey at a later date.

Archive

- 1 Site Notebook
- 1 Sheet of field drawings
- 1 Sheet of inked drawings
- 1 Colour print film
- 1 Correspondence file
- This document.

Further Publication

A note on the work reported here will be published in the CBA publication *West Midlands Archaeology*, 43, for 2000.

Validation

Herefordshire Archaeology operates a validation system for its reports, to provide quality assurance and to comply with Best Value procedures.

This report has been checked for accuracy and clarity of statements of procedure and results.

Dr. K. Ray County Archaeologist.