



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

**Herefordshire Woodland
Pilot Scheme: Phase 1
Rodd Wood
Herefordshire Archaeology Report
No.54**

Herefordshire Archaeology,
May 2002, revised 2004.

Report prepared by
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Herefordshire Archaeology is Herefordshire Council's county archaeology service. It advises upon the conservation of archaeological and historic landscapes, maintains the county Sites and Monument Record, and carries out conservation and investigative field projects. The County Archaeologist is Dr. Keith Ray.

Herefordshire Woodland Pilot Scheme: Phase 1 Rodd Wood

Herefordshire Archaeology Report No.54, May 2002.(revised 2004)

Summary:

The survey described in this report, (HSM. 32627), formed part of a pilot study conducted in partnership with the Forestry Commission. A rapid walk over survey was carried out in the wood concerned. A hand held G.P.S. unit was used to record the location of features encountered. Structures were recorded within Rodd Wood that illustrate the intensive use of the woodland resource in the late and post medieval periods, i.e. Saw pits, charcoal burning platforms, quarries and woodland management boundaries were observed.

Evidence for medieval agriculture, in the form of ridge and furrow in a area now under woodland, was recorded. A fragmentary series of medieval woodland boundary banks and internal divisions was noted.

It is clear that much of the woodland included in this survey has been intensively managed for many centuries. However one area contains well preserved ridge and furrow which has only been preserved as a series of upstanding features because it has been covered in woodland.

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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Introduction

This report provides an account of a rapid survey of Rodd Wood, (HSM. 32627). The survey was undertaken as part of a pilot study undertaken in partnership with the Forestry Commission in order to document the archaeology of woodlands in the county. Woodlands are areas of high archaeological potential in that they have seldom been subjected to the types of disturbance associated with intensive modern agriculture. Relatively little information concerning archaeological sites within woodland has been recorded in the past. Access is often difficult, aerial photographs are of little or no use and until recently recording an accurate location within woodland was often not practicable.

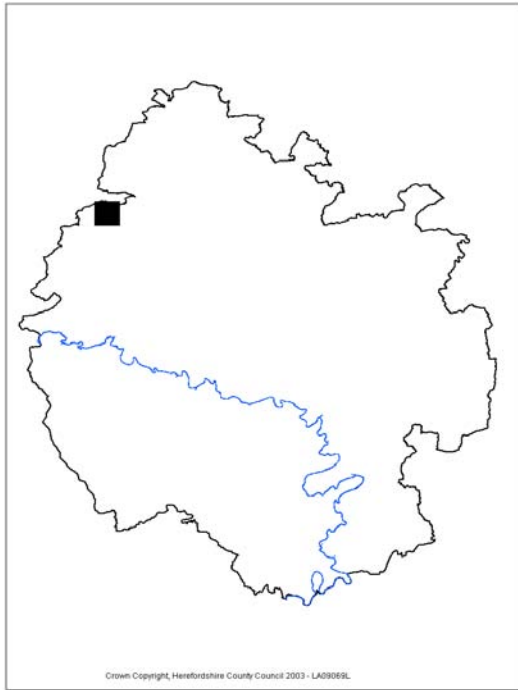
Since 1999 Herefordshire Archaeology has been involved in regular discussions with the Forestry Commission concerning the lack of archaeological data available when management plans are being prepared and applications for Woodland Grant Schemes are submitted. As a result of these discussions, the Forestry Commission has grant aided Herefordshire Archaeology to undertake a two phase pilot study. Phase one took place in 2001-2 and involved the rapid survey of eight areas of woodland in different areas of the county. These woodlands were split into those that are owned and managed by Forest Enterprises, those owned by large private estates, those that have recently been the subject of Woodland Grant Scheme applications and those for which Native Woodland Plans have been or are in preparation.

The survey for each woodland area in the pilot study identified the potential for the survival of archaeological features and sampled the types of features present. The stage two survey will re-visit woodlands identified in the phase one study as being of high archaeological potential and a more detailed survey undertaken. This will illustrate the density of archaeological sites within the woodland and record the relationships between features to enable some degree of understanding concerning the evolution of the woodland. The phase two survey will also expand the stage one survey and subject additional woodlands to rapid survey.

It is only when the changes throughout history within a wood have been documented and understood and put together with ecological information that a well informed management strategy can be implemented. Woodland boundaries have often moved over the centuries, sometimes expanding to encapsulate and preserve evidence of alternative land-use, e.g. field systems and on other occasions shrinking and being subject to differing forms of woodland management. These variations in land-use within a woodland influence the ecological data from that woodland. As such archaeological survey can contribute significant data concerning woodland history, management history and sequential development. This can provide independent verification of historical change from ecological study.

Location

Rodd Wood is located at NGR SO 320 620, approximately 3km. south of Presteigne. The woodland comprises the top and sides of an east / west limestone ridge.



The Historic Landscape Characterisation Study for Herefordshire describes Rodd Wood as woodland surrounded by fields derived from the enclosure of former common arable fields.(Ray and White, 2003).

Figure 1: Site Location

Previous Fieldwork / Records

Prior to the survey taking place the county Sites and Monuments Record was consulted, eight entries were listed. Rodd Wood was included within the Nash Transect of the Marches Upland Survey, Hereford and Worcester County Archaeological Service, Report 132, October 1995.

HSM 13974/6	Lynchet running ENE/WSW from SW corner of Rodd Wood.
HSM 13982/01	Hollow within Rodd Wood.
HSM 13982/02	Double ditch and bank in Rodd Wood.
HSM 13982/03	Holloway in SE of Rodd Wood.
HSM 13982/04	Bank, SW corner of Rodd Wood.
HSM 13982/05	Holloway, SW corner of Rodd Wood.
HSM 13982/07	Tracks in Rodd Wood.
HSM 13982/08	Pond in NW corner of Rodd Wood.

Field Conditions

Rodd Wood covers the top and upper slopes of a Limestone ridge. Approximately 30% of its area is relatively level comprising the plateau of the hill top. The wood is predominantly under mixed deciduous woodland but areas in the north and east are under conifer.

Method

Rodd Wood was surveyed on March 5th 2002. The survey comprised a rapid assessment of the potential of the woodland to contain well preserved archaeological features. Features were mapped using a hand-held Garmin 12 XL Global Positioning System, enabling a ten figure grid reference to be recorded for each feature. This system is accurate to within approximately 10m under tree canopy.

The wood was walked in transects aligned roughly north / south and approximately 50m apart. If a large feature was encountered and no other features of archaeological significance can be seen, then this feature was followed and features 50m either side of it recorded. Field observations and grid references were recorded on a dictaphone and transcribed at a later date.

The survey examined only a sample of the woodland and should not be taken as exhaustive or its results definitive. It is intended to record the type of features present, their state of preservation and their relationships to other features within the woodland.

Results (Figure 2)

The recorded data from the survey is described in detail within the results section. This latter section is concluded by a brief discussion highlighting the historical development of the woodland as understood using the 2003 survey results. The significance of recorded features and management implications are then commented upon within the discussion section. Appendix 1 contains a simple data base which cross references each site to the Ordnance Survey National Grid, (NGR), and the series of unique Sites and Monuments “Primary Record Numbers” (PRN), allocated following the transcription. These numbers are referred to within both the text and illustrations. They are prefixed by HSM, these initials relating to Herefordshire Sites and Monuments Record unique numbers.

Woodland management features

A total of fourteen charcoal burning platforms were recorded. These ranged in size from 6-15m in diameter and in the main comprised a level, circular platform with a pronounced down-slope lip. These were often recorded in small clusters of three or four, usually also associated with saw pits and possible storage platforms. The size of some of these charcoal burning platforms, (HSM 32667), would suggest prolonged use.

Three saw pits were recorded. Their earthwork remains comprise an oval depression between 4 and 6m in length, 1.5m wide and 0.3-0.5m deep with spoil on their down-slope sides. These were predominately located on the northern slopes.

Six levelled platforms were recorded within the wood. These appear to fall into two categories:

Large, regular platforms probably used to store timber or processed charcoal, (HSM 32644, HSM 32651). Both platforms are in close association to charcoal burning platforms suggesting that it was either used as storage.

Platforms associated with seasonal or more permanent settlement. These are of ten square or rectangular and are usually present in groups of two or more, (HSM 32663-32666).

The building platforms recorded within Rodd Wood comprise two pairs of earthworks, a small 5m square platform (HSM 32663 and HSM 32665) in close association with a larger, rectangular platform, (HSM 32664, 15m long and 8m wide) and (HSM 32666, 10m long and 8m wide). Both sets of earthworks were noted close to a small stream in a sheltered location on gentle, a south facing slope approximately 50m to the south-west of a number of charcoal burning platforms. Their topographic position together with their location away from other woodland management features would suggest that this was some form of at-least semi-permanent settlement.

Former Land Use

A localised area of ridge and furrow was recorded during the survey, HSM 32629. This is located close to the north-western corner of the wood. It comprises an area of approximately 35m wide and 20m long surrounded by woodland boundary banks on all side to form a triangle. It would appear that the corner of a furlong on the edge of the medieval common field was taken into the wood and a late or post-medieval woodland boundary bank constructed on its northern side to effectively straighten this part of the woodland boundary. The ridges are over 3m wide and aligned on a NNW/SSE axis. The area to the north of the latest woodland boundary bank which directly overlies the ridge and furrow has been improved and there are no features surviving which can be identified as ridge and furrow. The original woodland boundary bank, HSM 32643, now 20m inside the wood is much larger than the present woodland boundary bank.

Woodland boundaries

In general woodland boundary banks were found to be well preserved on all edges of Rodd Wood. They did however vary in form and scale and represent a number of phases, (as noted above in association with the ridge and furrow). HSM 32643 appears to be the medieval woodland boundary bank and at one point runs right up to the edge of well preserved ridge and furrow, (HSM 32629). Tracing this boundary proved problematical due to a number of phases of ditch re-cutting and re-definition of the bank which have changed both its form and character. It is probable that HSM 32661 represents a length of the southern medieval woodland boundary bank and that HSM 32662 represents a compartment boundary associated with the medieval phase of woodland management.

A very substantial bank and ditch was recorded running along most of the length of the crest of the hill within Rodd Wood, (HSM 32656). The bank is 3m wide but very eroded

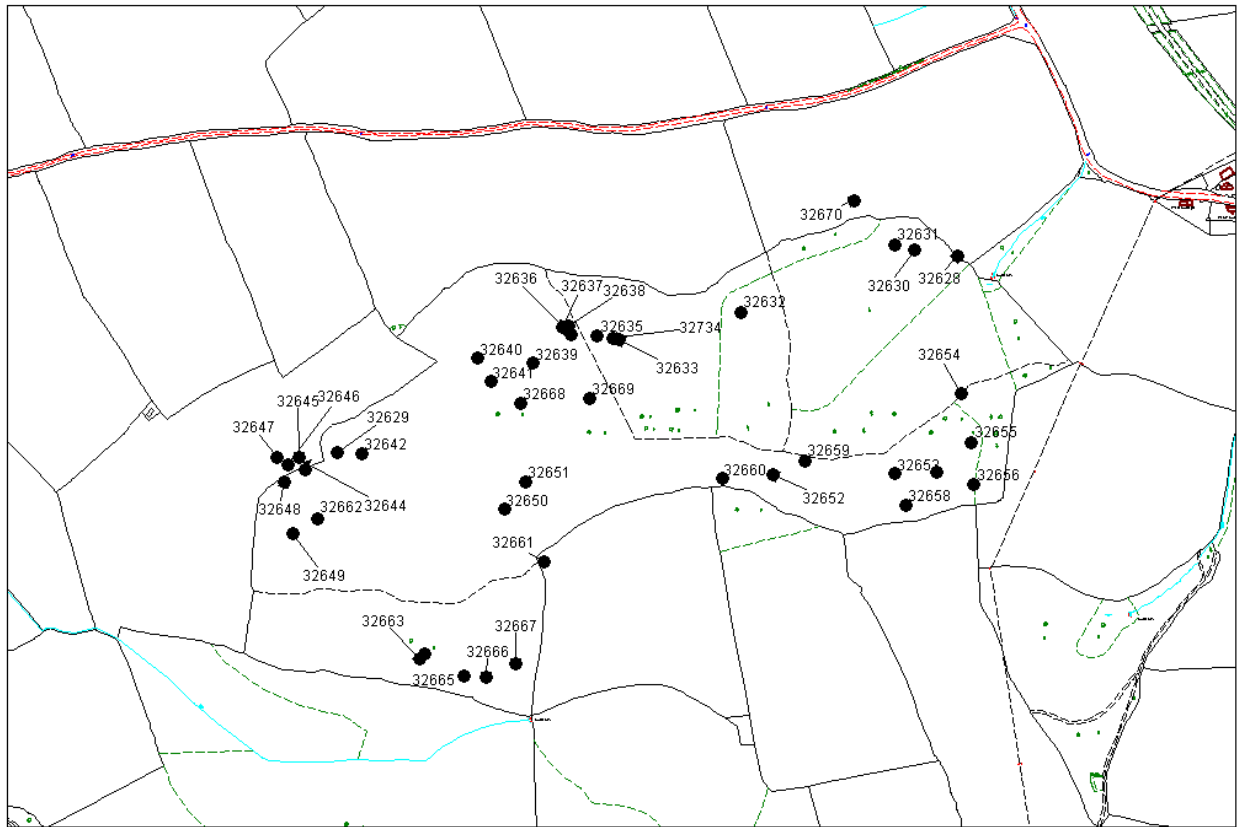


Figure 2: Location of earthworks recorded during the survey.

and it is constructed on the northern slope of a natural gully. This feature appears to follow, or be followed by a holloway. Its relationship with other linear boundaries is uncertain and it may relate to medieval woodland management or an even earlier phase of land division.

Three compartment boundaries were identified, HSM 32632, HSM 32633 and HSM 32634. These all appear to relate to the post-medieval period and occur in the north-eastern portion of the wood. Each comprises a bank and ditch aligned NNW/SSE. Each bank is between 1m and 1.5m wide and 0.3m high with a correspondingly wide ditch. All three boundaries appear to run parallel to each other suggesting that in this area of the wood there was a different emphasis or management regime when compared to the apparent internal organisation of the rest of Rodd Wood.

Industrial features

A single small scoop quarry was noted during the survey, HSM 32645. This was approximately 6m long, 3.5m wide and 1.2m deep.

Communication routes and other route-ways

Five lengths of holloway were recorded within Rodd Wood. It is unclear how these relate to one another or past woodland management. Holloway HSM 32639 may run into holloway HSM 32658 to form a holloway running most of the length of the wood just below the ridge top and using a natural gully over some of its length. Both lengths of holloway appear to have a large but eroded bank on their northern side, (HSM 32656), but whether this feature is directly associated with these route-ways or is a woodland bank could not be ascertained. The three other lengths of holloway, HSM 32630, HSM 32653 and HSM 32631 appear to link into this providing access to other parts of the wood.

Discussion and Implications

Indications of former land use

It appears that only a small area within Rodd Wood can be shown to have been under arable during the medieval period and that the medieval wood may have had roughly the same footprint as the present woodland.

Site and feature condition

The survey recorded a wide range of features dating from the post-medieval and medieval periods. These included features associated with woodland management, industry, settlement and previous land use. The majority of features recorded were well preserved and coherent. Relatively subtle earthworks such as the ridge and furrow show up well even on level ground. Two areas of Rodd Wood have been subjected to recent thinning and clear felling. Each area was approximately 100m square. Due to the damp nature of the soil, the type of heavy plant used and time of year, these works have had a considerable impact on the survival of any surface features. As a consequence no features of archaeological significance were noted within these areas.

Implications regarding the archaeological resource

The survey of Rodd Wood provides an important insight into past woodland management and land-use. The woodland management features recorded suggest an intensively managed, mixed woodland with both coppice and an over-storey of standards. The large size of some charcoal burning platforms indicate prolonged use

Implications regarding site condition

Woodland boundary banks and compartment boundaries generally survive well as do other woodland management features and features relating to former land-use. Some relationships can be established between the woodland management features and earlier features.

Implications for future management

Existing access routes should be used for future management and extraction of the woodland. The density and overall state of preservation of such a wide range of features suggest that; with the exception of the two areas of recent felling and extraction, little

damage has occurred in recent years. Care should be taken to avoid further damaging areas containing woodland management features, particularly those located on the more level, and therefore wetter, ground or in close proximity to the present woodland boundary.

Implications for future field work.

This area of woodland has potential for the presence of well preserved archaeological features and it should be possible to recognise at least rudimentary relationships between many features and hence produce a basic phasing illustrating the changing management of the woodland and the extent of former land use. A more detailed survey may detect more subtle relationships and provide greater clarity concerning the organisation of both internal boundaries and route-ways in addition to the phasing of the woodland boundary banks.

<i>Discussion</i>

This survey has identified a range of well preserved features within the wood reflecting woodland management and land-use change since the medieval period.. It appears that much of this wood was managed as woodland in the medieval period and that minor changes to the woodland boundary banks were made in the late or post-medieval period.

The distribution of charcoal burning platforms is interesting. There appears to be a relatively even spread of charcoal burning platforms throughout the wood. Usually there is some disparity between their location on opposing side of a hill due to wind direction. It can only be assumed that in this case Rodd Wood is relatively sheltered from the strongest wind by the substantial ridge to the north-west.

This rapid survey has identified features associated with most industries commonly associated with woodland. Evidence of quarrying, charcoal burning, saw pits and woodland management boundaries were recorded. Evidence for the migration of the woodland edge was also noted and the medieval woodland boundary bank recorded. Where the wood had expanded medieval ridge and furrow is still present within the wood, surviving as well preserved earthworks.

Features within Rodd Wood were on the whole well preserved except in the areas of recent woodland clearance and extraction. The western half of the wood seems to have been subjected to a far less mechanised form of management regime, hence the preservation of even subtle earthworks like the ridge and furrow.

The south-western portion of the wood contains a number of square and rectangular platforms. This is the most sheltered aspect of the hill and closest to a water source so it would seem reasonable to interpret at least some of these as house platforms. It has been documented that charcoal burners, and other woodland workers lived in woods either on a seasonal basis or throughout the year right up until the early 20th century. The other platforms would have been used for the stacking of sawn or cut timber and charcoal..

The substantial bank running along the top of the hill is intriguing and would require a more detailed examination in order to better understand its relationship with other features present. This appears to comprise, a bank and ditch running along much of the hill crest which either utilises an existing natural gully and / or possible holloway.

Acknowledgements

Herefordshire Archaeology would like to acknowledge the help and co-operation of the Forestry Commission and the land owner.

Archive

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

Appendix 1: Database of features and grid references.

SMR No.	East	North	Site type	Period	Description
32628	32320	62183	Woodland boundary bank	Post-medieval	c.2.5m wide and 1m wide.
32629	31653	61971	Area of ridge and furrow	Medieval	Area c. 35m by 20m enclosed by woodland boundary bank.
32630	32274	62189	holloway	Post-medieval	c.4m wide and 0.5m deep.
32631	32253	62195	holloway or large ditch	Post-medieval	c.3m wide and 0.5m deep running NE/SW.
32632	32087	62121	Compartment boundary	Post-medieval	c.2m wide and 1m high.
32633	31956	62093	Compartment boundary	Post-medieval	c.2m wide and 0.3m deep.
32734	31950	62094	Compartment boundary	Post-medieval	0.75m wide and 0.25m deep running SW/NE.

32635	31933	62097	Saw pit	Post-medieval	c.2m wide and 4-5m long. Possible Saw Pit?
32636	31904	62098	charcoal burning platform	Post-medieval	c.10m in diameter facing north.
32637	31895	62106	charcoal burning platform	Post-medieval	c.10m diameter.
32638	31902	62107	saw pit	post medieval	aligned E/W c.6m long and 2.5m wide with spoil on its northern side.
32639	31863	62067	holloway	Medieval?	c.8m wide and 2m deep on a SW/NE axis.
32640	31804	62072	bank and ditch	Post-medieval	bank is c.0.5m high and 2m wide, the ditch is c.1.5m wide.
32641	31818	62047	Charcoal burning platform	Post-medieval	c.15m in diameter.
32642	31680	61970	Charcoal burning platform	Post-medieval	c.10-12m in diameter
32643	31653	61971	Woodland boundary bank	Medieval?	runs into wood for c.15m.
32644	31619	61952	platform	Post-medieval	c.20m long and 12m wide.
32645	31612	61965	small scoop	Post-medieval	possible remains of saw pit with spoil to the north.
32646	31600	61957	charcoal burning platform	Post-medieval	
32647	31588	61966	lynchet	medieval	runs on an E/W axis and is only 0.5m high.
32648	31597	61939	Charcoal burning platform	Post-medieval	10-12m in diameter.
32649	31606	61884	charcoal burning platform	Post-medieval	c.8m in diameter and facing North.
32650	31833	61910	charcoal burning platform	Post-medieval	c.8m in diameter and facing north.
32651	31856	61939	platform	Post-medieval	c.15m long and 8m wide.
32652	32121	61947	saw pit	post medieval	c.6m long E/W and 2m wide with spoil to the north.
32653	32252	61948	holloway	Post-medieval	c.4m wide and 1m deep.
32654	32324	62034	Possibly modern but uncertain area of uneven ground	unknown	heavily disturbed area to east and north. No features visible.
32655	32335	61982	charcoal burning platform	Post-medieval	c.8m in diameter and north facing.

32656	32337	61936	wood bank	medieval	c.3m wide and ditch on its northern side.
32657	32298	61950	charcoal burning platform	Post-medieval	just on top of scarp and facing north.
32658	32264	61914	gully with holloway	unknown	c.10m inside the wood and turns west.
32659	32156	61961	Woodland boundary bank	medieval	
32660	32067	61943	charcoal burning platform	Post-medieval	c.7m in diameter and facing north.
32661	31875	61853	Woodland boundary bank	Medieval?	c.20m inside the wood.
32662	31632	61900	bank	Medieval?	runs for c.25m fading away c.10m inside the wood.
32663	31742	61749	platform	Post-medieval	5m square
32664	31747	61754	platform	Post-medieval	south facing and 15-18m long and 8m wide.
32665	31789	61730	platform	Post-medieval	c.5m in diameter and south facing.
32666	31814	61729	platform	Post-medieval	c.10m long and 8m wide and south facing.
32667	31845	61743	Charcoal burning platform	Post-medieval	c.15m in diameter, roughly circular.
32668	31851	62024	charcoal burning platform	Post-medieval	c.8m in diameter, facing north.
32669	31924	62029	charcoal burning platform	Post-medieval	c.10m in diameter and north facing.
32670	32209	62242	Woodland boundary bank	medieval	continues inside the wood by c.15m for c.50m to the east.

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.

