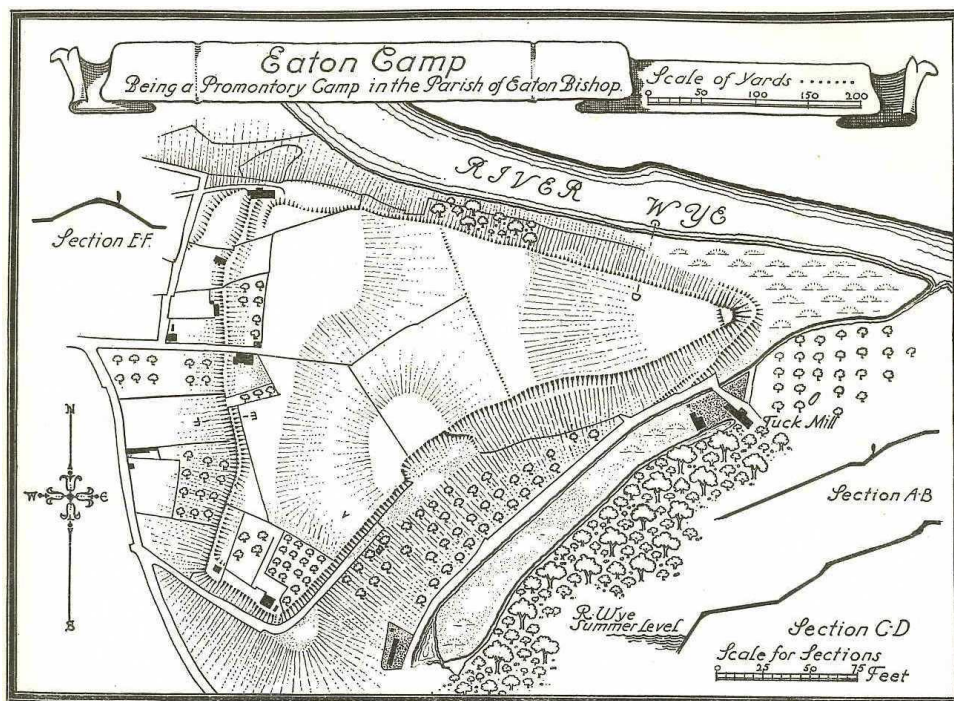


**Eaton Camp, Ruckhall,
Eaton Bishop, Herefordshire**
A Summary Report on Excavations in May 2012

July 2012



**Report prepared for the Eaton Camp Historical Society by
Peter Dorling**

With a specialist contribution by Michael J Allen

**Herefordshire Archaeology Report No. 313
Event No. EHE 2006**

Herefordshire Archaeology
Economy, Environment and Cultural Services Directorate
Herefordshire Council



Eaton Camp, Eaton Bishop, Herefordshire

A Report on Excavations in 2012

July 2012

Scheduled Monument No: 10

SMR No: 907

NGR: SO 4538 3933

Event No: EHE 2006

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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 presents the preliminary results of small scale excavations within the interior of Eaton Camp promontory hillfort. The work was carried out as part of the Eaton Camp Conservation Project a Heritage Lottery funded project organised by the Eaton Camp Historical Society. A final report will be prepared and further interpretation possible following full analysis of the ceramics, soil samples and radiocarbon dating.

Two trenches 5.00m x 5.00m were opened to test the nature and significance of two apparently substantial ditches that were detected within the interior of the fort following a comprehensive geophysical survey. In each case the ditch terminals were targeted as these were expected to give the best chance of recovering datable artefacts and deposits.

Both trenches contained ditches that are provisionally dated to the late Bronze Age or Iron Age. That within Trench 1 in the western part of the hillfort was found to be a continuous length of ditch comprising two deeper sections connected by a shallower stretch. Within the one deeper section excavated there was evidence of either ditch cleaning or the former presence of a large post. An upper deposit of burnt clay, stone and charcoal is likely to be late in date, possibly post-medieval. A single sherd of probable Iron Age pottery, part of a shale object and fragments of bone were recovered from the lower ditch deposits. Stony secondary deposits may derive from an associated bank.

The ditch in trench 2, at the eastern end of the promontory, contained a laminated primary fill laid down partly under standing water and then subsequently in wet conditions. The upper (tertiary) fills comprised apparent midden deposits containing large quantities of middle Iron Age pottery, briquetage, crucible fragments, fire-cracked stone, burnt bone and charcoal. In-situ occupation deposits adjacent to and partly overlying the upper ditch fills are preserved by colluvial material; these again contained middle Iron Age ceramics.

Charcoal and bone from both ditches are expected to give a good sequence of radiocarbon dates for the primary fills and later deposits.

Introduction and background

Project Background

The excavations described in this report are part of the on-going Eaton Camp Conservation Project, developed by the Eaton Camp Historical Society and funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund. The core aims of the project as set out in the project proposals document were:

- To add to knowledge of the prehistory of Herefordshire and the United Kingdom through archaeological study to determine: when, how, and by whom Eaton Camp was built; its use over time; and its importance strategically and socially.
- Involve the local community and schools in ways that encourage them to view Eaton Camp as an important part of their history and heritage.
- To promote development of a Conservation Management Plan for the site in conjunction with local landowners and residents, The National Trust, English Heritage and Herefordshire Council.
- To research, record and disseminate information on other aspects of local history that help to place Eaton Camp in perspective.
- To impart new skills to local residents, students, and project volunteers that enable them to support the conservation of Eaton Camp in the future.
- To work toward the removal of Eaton Camp from English Heritage's "At Risk" list.

Herefordshire Archaeology is working in partnership with the Eaton Camp Historical Society providing training, guidance and advice to the project and also organising a number of the practical elements of the project including survey, excavation and the provision of the Conservation Management Plan.

As part of the current project a detailed topographic survey has been carried out (Atkinson, 2012). This included study of the Lidar data for the site and the immediately surrounding landscape. Geophysical survey has been carried out by ArchaeoPhysica Ltd (Roseveare, 2011 and 2012).

A detailed project design for the excavation work was submitted to English Heritage and Scheduled monument consent was obtained in April 2012

The work was carried out between the 12th of May and the 25th of May 2012.

Location and geology

Location

Eaton Camp is a Scheduled Ancient Monument (SM Herefordshire 10) located at SO 4538 3933 in the hamlet of Ruckhall in Eaton Bishop parish, Herefordshire (figure 1). It is recorded as an Iron Age hillfort and is located on a promontory defined on the north by the River Wye and to the south by Cage Brook (figure 2). The highest point of the promontory stands at 90m OD, with steep north and south facing slopes. To the west the topography comprises gentle slopes, across which the Iron Age ramparts were constructed in order to enclose the promontory. The interior is roughly triangular, the eastern point overlooking the confluence of the Wye and Cage Brook, the western end (the base of the triangle) defined by massive bivallate defences now denuded in parts by later development.

Geology

The geology underlying the Eaton Camp and Ruckhall area consists primarily of mudstones and siltstones of the Old Red Sandstone Raglan Mudstone Formation. Later drift deposits include the second terrace deposits of the River Wye. These are exposed in the steep scarp slopes above the river Wye flanking the eastern end of the enclosure. Underlying the western ramparts and the settlement of Ruckhall are glacial deposits, which include moraine sandy tills, gravels and clays. These support typical argillic brown earths of the Escrick 1 Association (Findlay *et al.* 1984).

The interior of the monument is permanent pasture within three fields. These are divided by established hedges. The rampart lies for the most part in private gardens and is also overlain in part by houses and outbuildings.

Archaeological and survey background

Prior to the current project very little archaeological work had been carried out at the site. Some small scale development related work took place just outside the north-west corner of the hillfort in 1985 at the Ancient Camp Inn. The inner rampart of the hillfort was exposed in section and found to be a simple dump construction of clay, stone and river boulders. The bank sealed a horizon containing fragments of burnt bone and charcoal stratified above the contemporary ground surface. Mention is made in the short entry in West Midlands Archaeology of the intention to obtain a C14 date for the burnt material (Bond, 1985). Recent enquiries suggest that this was not carried out.

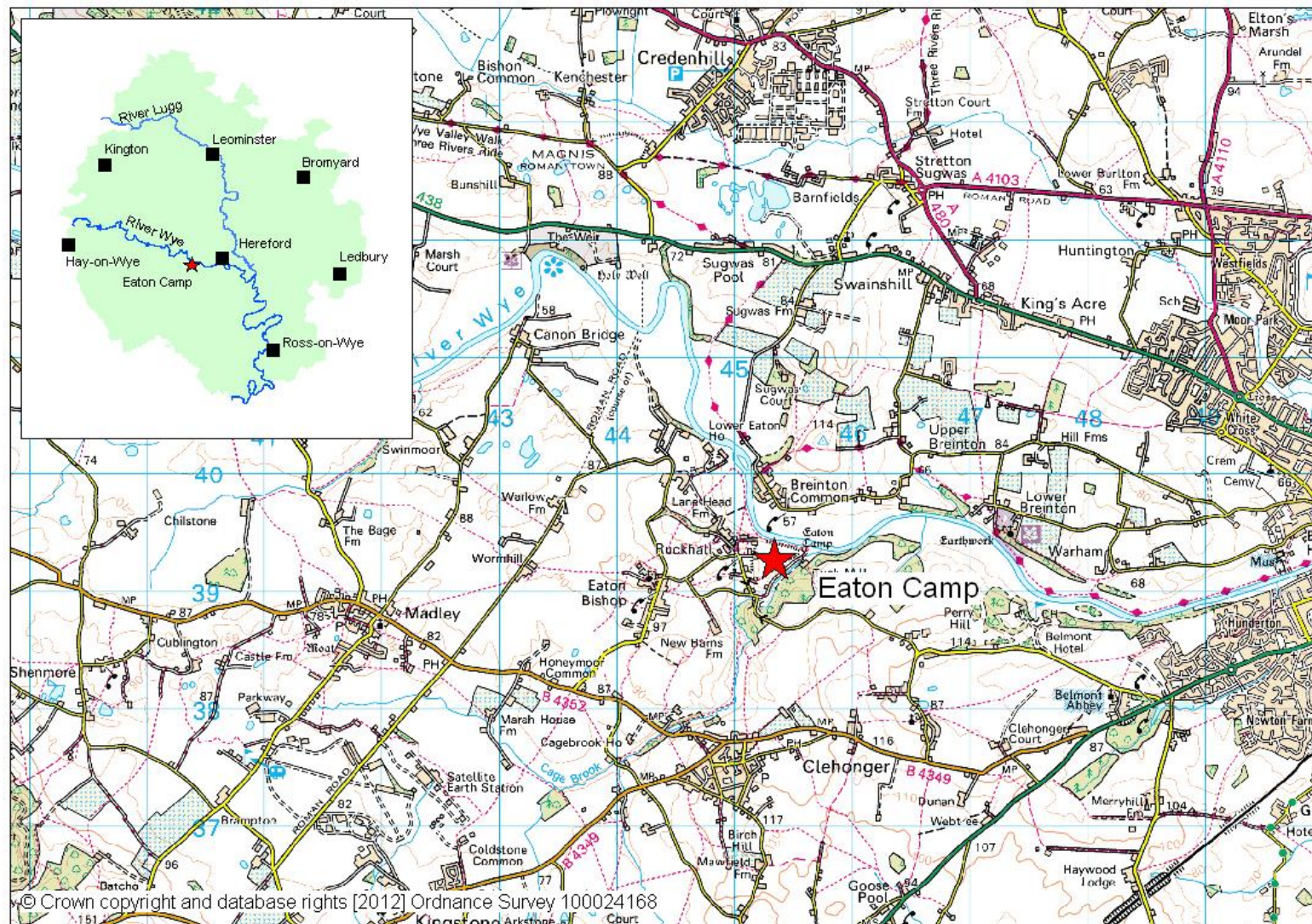


Figure 1: Location of Eaton Camp

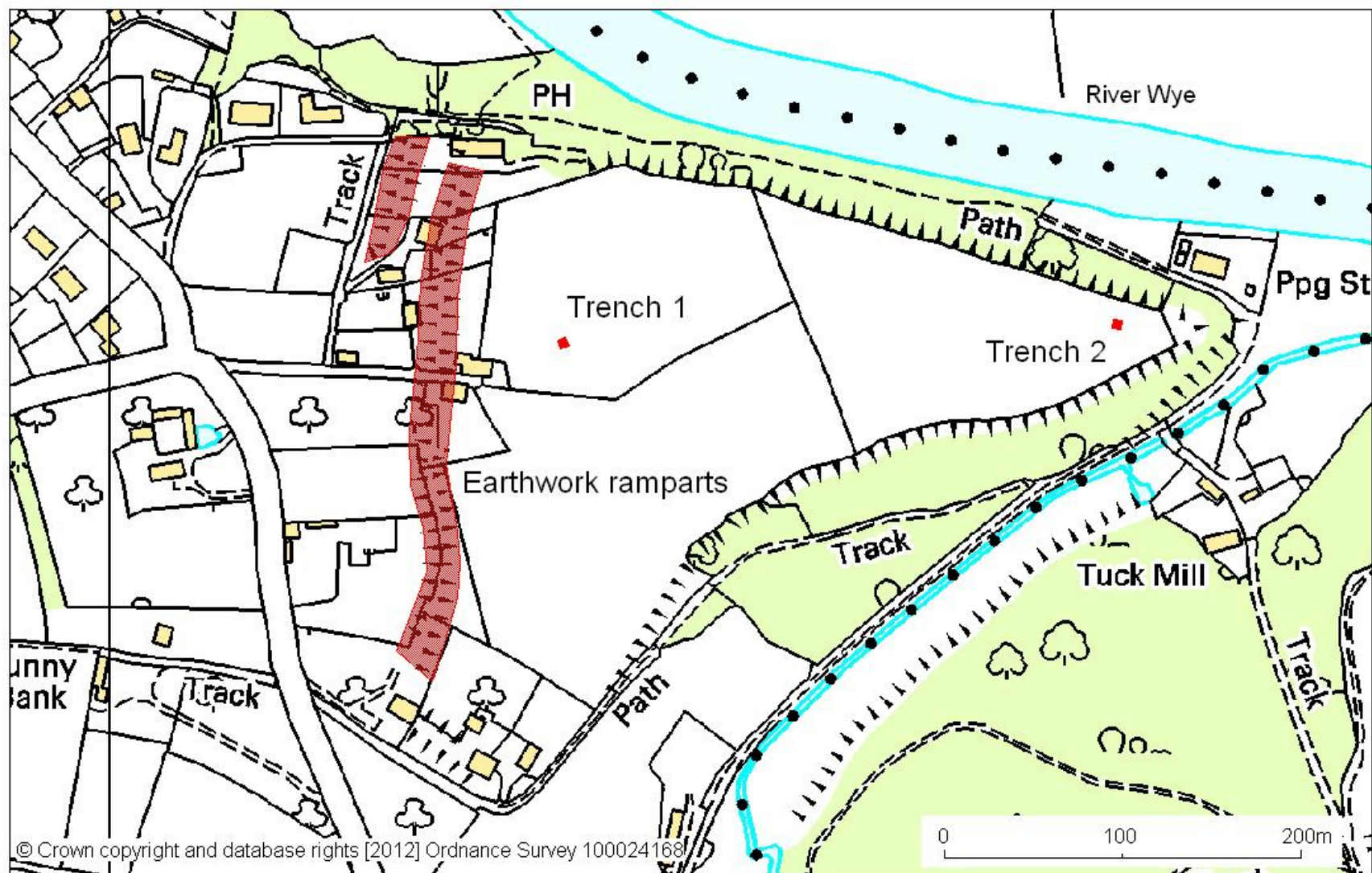


Figure 2: Site and trench location plan

Two particular areas within the interior of the site had been drawn attention to by previous recorders. The eastern end (the point or nose) of the promontory is occupied by a stony mound. This does appear to be artificial in origin and it has been suggested that it may be an additional strong point or the site of a belvedere. The other feature is a large mound in the southern part of the south western field. It has been suggested that it may be a castle tump (motte) though it appears to be a natural feature.

As part of the current project the monument has been the subject of a detailed survey by Herefordshire Archaeology (Atkinson, 2012). A number of features recorded relate to Medieval and post-Medieval boundary division and arable agriculture. Gravel extraction has severely affected the southern scarp slope and may have removed or altered Iron Age features in this area. Apart from the rampart no definitive prehistoric features were identified though it was suggested that earthworks at the southern end of the rampart may be associated with an original entrance. A single sherd of Palaeozoic limestone tempered ware (an Iron Age Malvernian ware fabric) was recovered from a mole hill in the interior.

Study of the Lidar data for the site by Herefordshire Archaeology (Atkinson, op cit) has revealed more detail within the interior. Relict field boundaries and ridge and furrow are clearly visible, the latter covering virtually the whole of the site and supporting the evidence from field survey that the site has been subject to extensive cultivation. Perhaps of more significance is the identification of a low broad earthwork bank located about 60m to the west of the surviving ramparts (i.e. outside the current enclosure) and seemingly running parallel to them. Although some of this feature has been destroyed by landscaping and cultivation enough survives to show that in running from the top of the north facing scarp of the promontory to the top of the south facing scarp it appears to isolate the promontory in the same way as the ramparts and may define an annex area or perhaps be the rampart of an earlier larger enclosure.

Geophysics

Magnetometry and selective Electrical Resistance survey was carried out within the interior of the hillfort by a specialist contractor in 2011 and 2012 respectively (Roseveare, 2011 and 2012).

Much of the interior shows numerous small discrete anomalies typical of irregularities in glacial till (Roseveare, 2011, page 11). A number of features clearly of artificial origin are also visible (figure 3). In the western half of the site three linear anomalies run north to south across the site although two are only apparent in the southern field. The most westerly one is interpreted as a "probable field boundary ditch with a debris rich fill, perhaps slightly spread by subsequent cultivation". The other two appear to be parallel associated ditches though only the most easterly (12) runs across the whole width of the

promontory. Both are recorded as around 3.00m wide and therefore interpreted as possible defensive ditches rather than field boundary ditches. Feature 12 (figure 3 in this report) has a clear break and two ditch butt ends on the highest point of the north-west field. Another ditch (42), about 2.00m wide, cuts off the tip of the promontory. There appears to be an entrance gap of about 6.00m in the northern section of the feature. The location of this feature suggests it is unlikely to be a field boundary and again a defensive or definition function is a possibility given the presence of the mound on the tip of the promontory.

The excavation strategy was set out in the Scheduled Monument consent application. In short it argued that the two major ditches 12 and 42 (figure 3), being protected from disturbance by activities such as cultivation, had the potential to provide information about the pre or early hillfort use and possibly about the later use of the site. By excavating one of the ditch terminals in each case it was anticipated that the chances of artefact recovery would be high and that these areas provided the best potential for surviving stratified deposits and material that would help date the features.

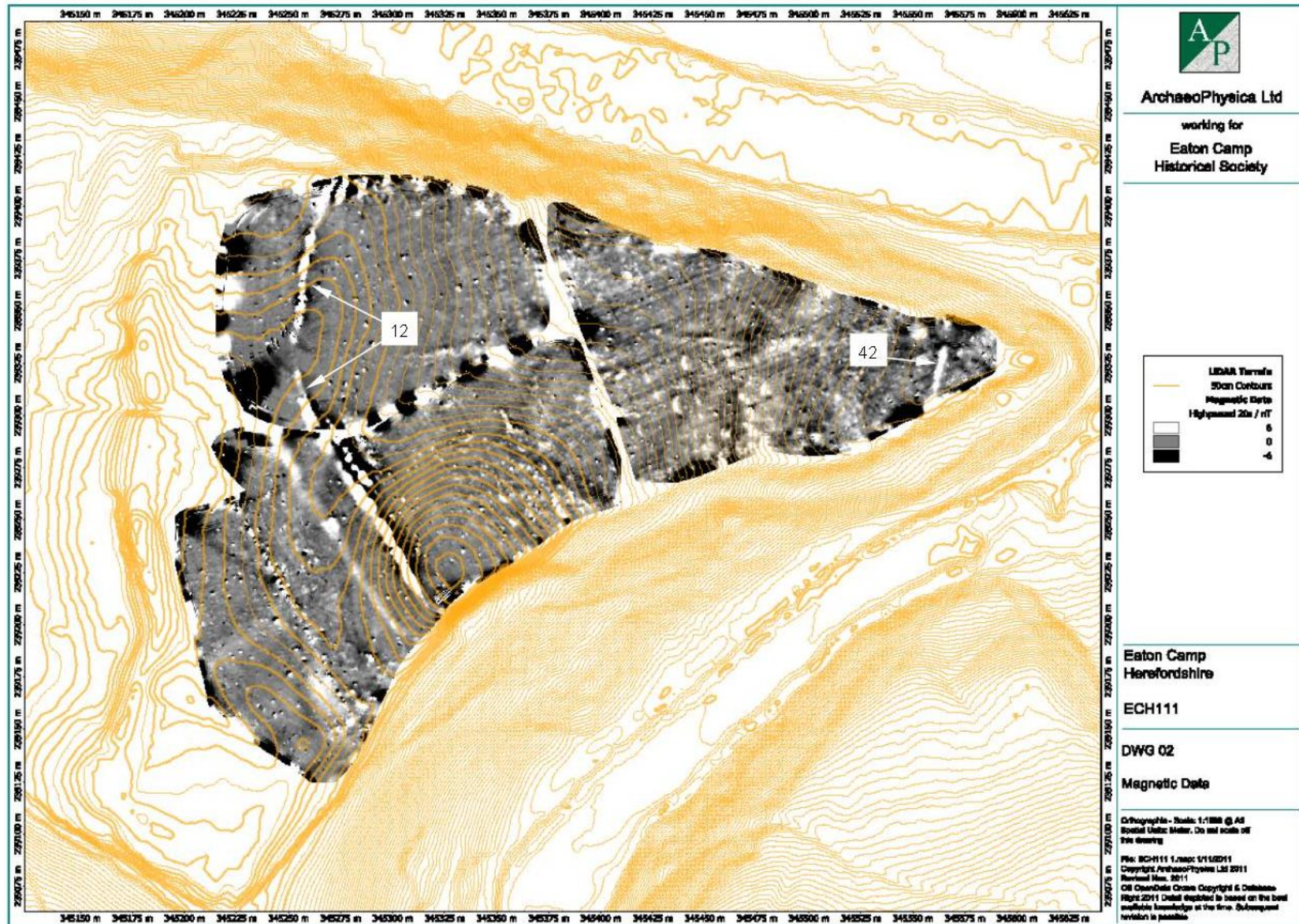


Figure 3: Magnetometry survey results (© ArchaeoPhysica Ltd)

Excavation results

Trench 1

Trench 1 was located to examine the northern terminal of the southern length of ditch 12 recorded by the magnetometry survey in the north-western part of the hillfort interior (figure 3). The trench was 5.00m by 5.00m and was accurately located by GPS from the geo-referenced geophysical survey plot. All excavation was carried out by hand. On completion the trench was backfilled by mechanical mini-digger and the turves re-laid by hand.

Rather than finding a ditch terminal a large ditch was revealed running north to south across the entire excavation area (figure 6, cut 1005). An initial section dug at the north end of the trench revealed a broad U shaped ditch c4.00m across and 1.20 to 1.30m deep below the surface of the natural subsoil (figures 4 and 6). However on cutting back and cleaning the section for detailed recording it was discovered that within less than 0.10m of the section the ditch fills dropped away to the north (i.e. beyond the limits of the excavation) into a deeper section of ditch (cut 1017).

A further section within the trench was excavated 2.50m to the south of the initial section to confirm the nature of the ditch here and in an attempt to recover further artefactual or dating evidence. This revealed a ditch of a quite different character (cut 1018), a flat bottomed V-shaped ditch 3.90m wide and 1.90m deep below the surface of the natural subsoil, the base of which at this point was only 0.30m wide (figures 5 and 6). It seems likely that the profile of the ditch to the north of the excavation would be similar to this second profile.

The fills of the ditch are relatively straight forward comprising primary natural fills, secondary stone dump and colluvial deposits and tertiary colluvial deposits (for a detailed description see Geo-archaeological Observations below).

Primary fills (1012, 1013, 1014, 1015, 1016, figures 4 and 5)

Of the primary fills 1014 is re-deposited natural subsoil representing rapid ditch-side weathering and slumping. The sharp inner profile of this deposit appears to represent re-cutting or cleaning of the ditch base at an early stage (though an alternative interpretation is suggested below). Contexts 1012, 1013, 1015 and 1016 represent rain-wash deposits, though 1012 and 1013 were only recorded in the northern section.

Charcoal samples were recovered from 1012, 1014 and 1016 and these will be assessed to provide one or more radiocarbon dates. Apart from a small bone from 1015 no other artefacts were recorded from these primary fills.

Secondary fills (1004, 1007, 1008, 1008a, 1009, 1010, 1011, figures 4 and 5)

The secondary fills comprised a series of alternating colluvial in-wash and stony dump deposits. All are present in both sections, though in the southern section 1008 could be subdivided hence 1008a. The colluvial deposits (1011, 1009 and 1007) comprise silty clay and silty clay loams. The stony deposits (1010, 1008 and 1008a) are angular and sub-angular green-grey sandstone and eroded grey mudstone within a silty clay matrix. These latter deposits in particular appear to be accumulating mainly from the east side of the ditch. The origin of the stone in the deposits is uncertain. Such a sandstone formation is not known to outcrop within the hillfort interior and therefore appears to have been imported to the site. This reinforces an impression that it may be derived from a former bank associated with the line of the ditch that would have stood to the east.

The final (upper) secondary fill 1004 was different in character. It was a dump deposit of angular stone, abundant burnt clay/soil and large (oak) charcoal fragments again deposited from the east side. It had been deposited on an incipient soil developing on the top of the underlying colluvial horizon (1007) suggesting stabilisation and vegetation cover within the ditch at this time. The burnt nature of this deposit is suggestive of the demolition of a structure that burned down, or perhaps of a field kiln. Its position at the top of the ditch and overlying lower levels of the plough-soil may indicate a comparatively recent date (i.e. medieval or post-medieval).

Finds again were few but context 1011 contained what appears to be a large animal horn and a single sherd of pottery in what has tentatively been identified as an early Iron Age mudstone tempered fabric (both these await definitive identification). Context 1010 contained part of a shale object, possibly a bracelet or armlet, with incised decoration and perforations at each (broken) end. It might also be a decorative plaque or plate attached to an object in a different material (eg wood).

Contexts 1011, 1009 and 1004 all produced sufficient charcoal to provide radiocarbon dates if appropriate.

Tertiary fill (1003, figures 4 and 5)

The final fill of the ditch (1003) is another colluvial deposit about 0.30m deep below modern plough-disturbed soils another 0.30m deep.

Two small sherds of a Malvernian ware fabric were recovered from the uppermost ditch fill context 1003.

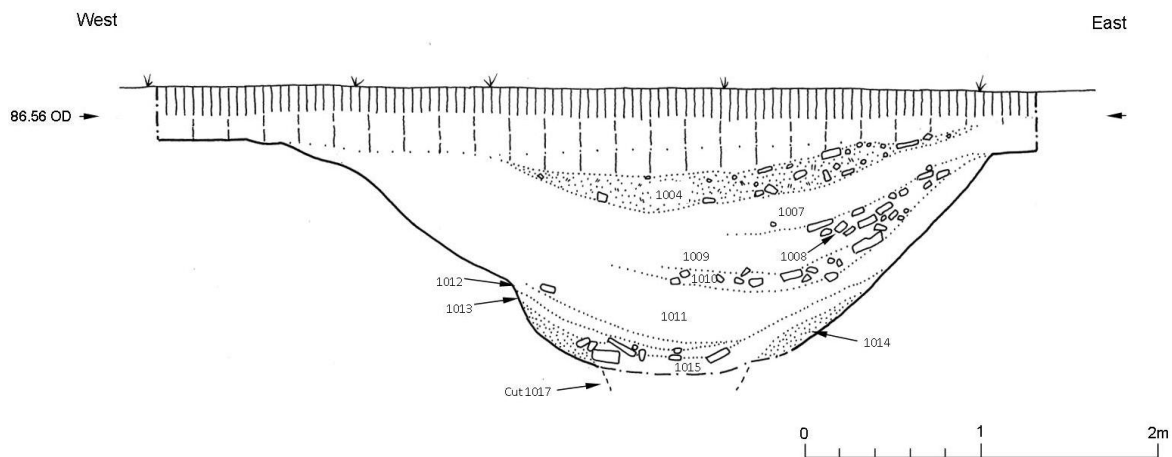


Figure 4: South facing section of ditch 1005, trench 1, (A – A on figure 6)

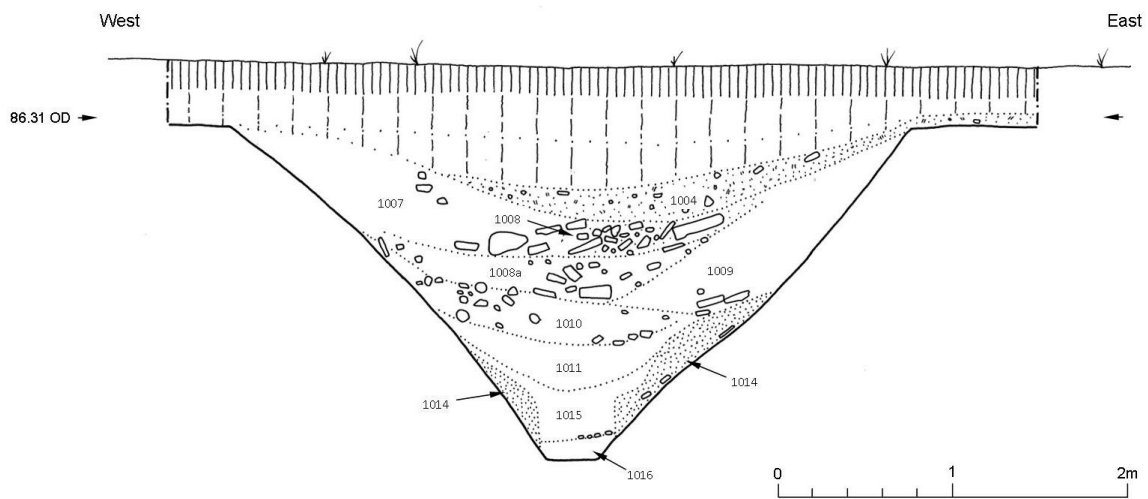


Figure 5: North facing section of ditch 1005 trench 1, (B – B on figure 6, mirror image)

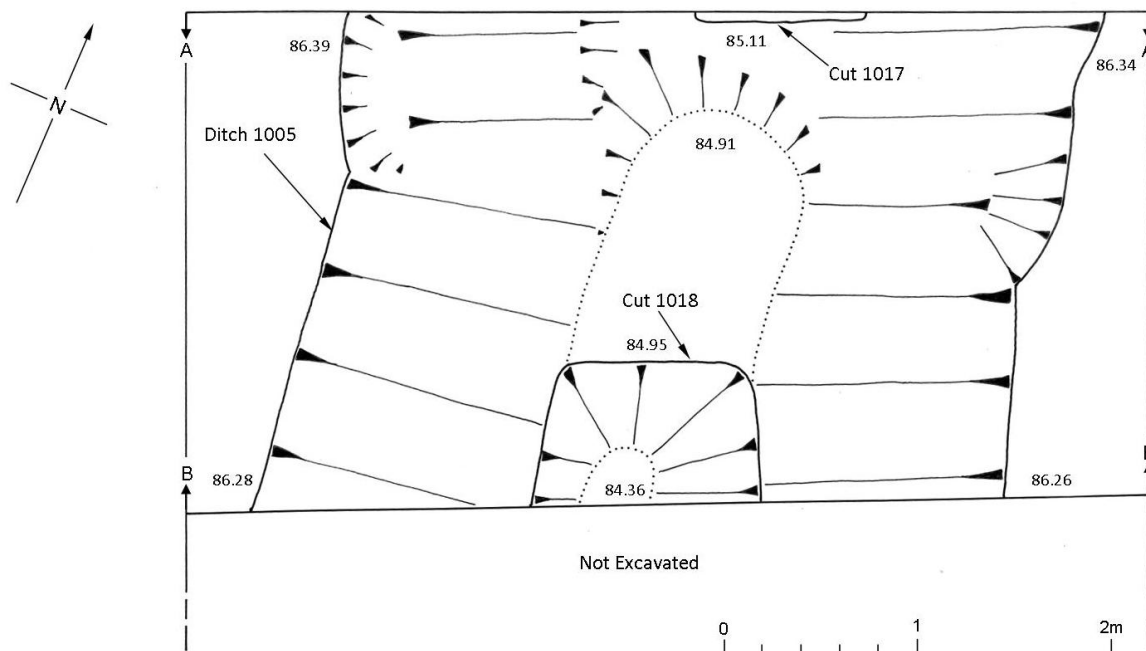


Figure 6: Final excavation plan of trench 1 (heights shown are above ordnance datum)

Trench 2

Trench 2 was located to examine the apparent terminal of the ditch (12) cutting off the tip of the promontory (figure 3). As with Trench 1 it was located by GPS coordinates in relation to the magnetometry survey. The trench was 5.00m x 5.00m and was again excavated by hand and backfilled in the same manner as Trench 1.

A ditch terminal was identified here and a section excavated across it 2.00m from the end of the terminal (figure 8). At this point the ditch was a broad U shape in profile, 4.08m wide and 1.50m deep below the top of the natural subsoil (figure 7). The west side of the ditch was a more or less even slope whereas the east side was stepped. This in part coincided with natural stony river terrace deposits that were cut through by the ditch at this point. The primary, secondary and tertiary fills were made up of a series of very distinct but contrasting deposits. The primary fills had accumulated with very little disturbance or inclusions and in wet conditions. The secondary fills represent colluvial in-wash and the tertiary fills comprised artefact rich deposits for the main part dumped into the top of the, by then, nearly completely silted up ditch. Colluvial deposits made up the remainder of the tertiary fills.

Primary fills (2013 and 2014, figure 7)

The primary fills all represent deposits that had formed in very wet conditions and with apparently very little disturbance. The lowest of these (2014) is a highly laminated deposit of alternating medium and fine silts that probably formed under standing water. It represents differential settling out rates of the sediment within the water. Whilst the entire deposit is only a maximum 0.20m deep it is made up of hundreds of laminae. These vary widely in depth with some being less than 1mm thick (see figure 4 in Geo-archaeological observations below). This may be a wind-blown material from locally broken or cultivated ground. Above these are a series of further broadly-banded deposits (2013) again up to 0.20m deep but of mud and soil in-wash and with more biotic mixing and disturbance (ie the action of root growth) and inclusions of rotted stone.

An articulated bone (humerus or femur) and fragments of skull were recovered from within 2014 close to the base of the ditch. If suitable for radiocarbon dating the former will provide a potentially useful date for the initial ditch construction. A single flint flake was recovered from the same context.

Secondary Fills (2010, 2011, 2012, 2016, figure 7)

The secondary fills appear to have accumulated in dryer conditions and comprise broad bands of silty clay loam soils with zones of sandy infill, rotted stone and stonier lenses accumulating from the west, the four deposits have a combined maximum depth of 0.55m. This is a plough-wash, or colluvial, material but was still affected (leached) by periodic episodes of standing water.

Occupation deposit (2003, figure 7)

On the east side of the ditch and overlying the secondary infill 2010, and the natural subsoil to the east, is what appears to be an in-situ occupation horizon or deposit. It is a dark loamy soil deposit containing stamp decorated middle Iron Age ceramics and charcoal. It is not clear how far it survives beyond the trench edge to the east. It appears to have originally continued to the west and perhaps to have sealed the top of the ditch before being cut by later activity.

Midden deposits (2004, 2008, 2009, 2015 and 2017, figure 7)

The clear cut through horizon 2003 (cut 2018) and the irregular surface of 2010 indicate activity in the top of the almost completely filled ditch. This cut is filled by a series of dump deposits. These comprised three identifiable major deposits. 2009 is a concentrated deposit of fire cracked pebbles, 2008 and 2004 are further deposits rich in ceramics (Malvernian wares, Droitwich briquetage and crucible fragments), burnt bone fragments, charcoal and fire cracked pebbles. An iron object and three flint flakes were also recovered from context 2004.

Tertiary fill (2002, figure 7)

The main ditch deposits are covered and sealed by a deep colluvial deposit (2002) that accumulated to a depth of 0.60m above which is the modern plough-soil and turf.

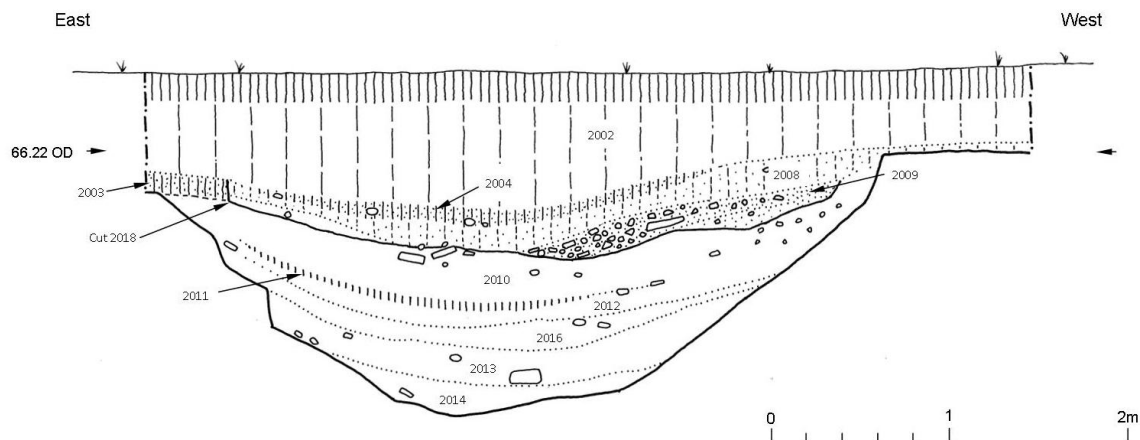


Figure 7: Detail of north facing section of ditch 2019, trench 2 (A – A on figure 8)

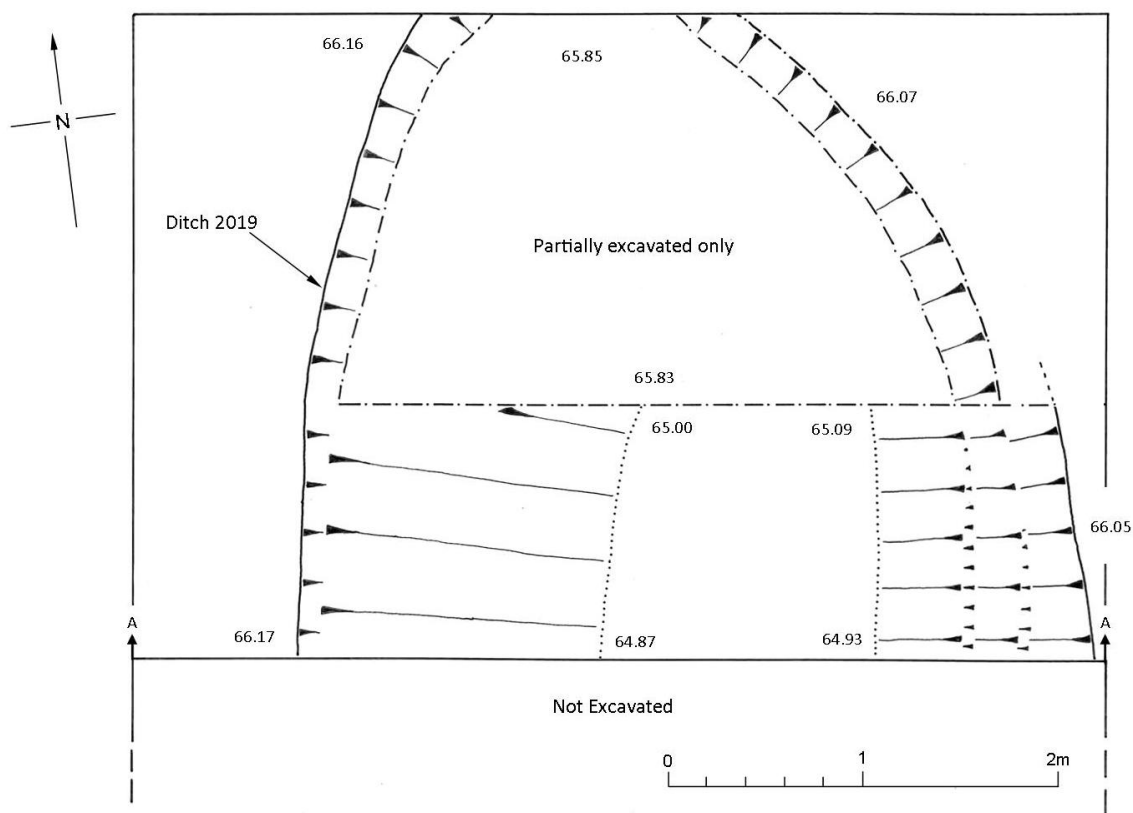


Figure 8: Excavation plan of trench 2 (heights shown are above ordnance datum)

Preliminary discussion

A more informed discussion must necessarily await specialist reporting and the results of radiocarbon dating. It is possible however to make a few observations at this stage.

Trench 1

It would appear that, at this point at least, the ditch in Trench 1 was formed by two deeper sections joined by a shallower stretch of ditch. Why this should be the case is unclear. The fills of each section were comparable enough to suggest that this was not due to substantial re-cutting of the two deeper sections during the life time of the ditch and that the configuration as observed was therefore probably deliberate.

The deeper (southern-most) section of ditch revealed within the excavation area (cut 1018) would appear to be that showing as an apparent butt end or terminal in the magnetometry survey. Why neither the less deep continuation nor the potentially similarly profiled ditch to the north show on the geophysics is unclear. It may be that reworking of the original geophysics data will show this continuation.

The nature of the re-deposited natural (1014), interpreted as ditch-side slippage, suggests re-cutting or at least cleaning of the ditch. However, the original profile of the ditch was not modified at this point, suggesting that the difference in adjacent sections was an original feature and not due to later differential re-cutting or cleaning activity. One possibility, if a relatively unlikely one, is that these deeper areas are in fact pits or postholes and that the re-deposited natural is packing material around posts that were subsequently removed. This might indicate a bridged entrance at this point or that the ditch consisted of a series of deeper pits/postholes perhaps representing a palisaded enclosure. The line of the ditch is not entirely what might be expected of a conventional Iron Age enclosure ditch. In continuing to the south it runs obliquely up the side of the large natural tump in the south-western part of the interior (see figure 3) rather than continuing across the lower ground to the west. Prior to excavation the suggestion had been made that the ditch might represent enclosure or definition of the promontory during the Neolithic period (Keith Ray, pers comm). It is expected that the results of radiocarbon dating will assist with the interpretation.

Trench 2

The lower fills of the ditch in trench 2 were clearly laid down with very little disturbance and seemingly little or no in-wash of coarse material from the ditch sides. Given the apparent time period over which this must have formed this is surprising. There was clearly standing water in the bottom of the ditch though

given the location of the ditch the source of this may have been ground water rather than direct rainfall. The original purpose of the ditch might therefore have been to drain this low lying area of the site. There was evidently some disturbance of the primary deposits from either roots or penetration by a stake. Otherwise however, there was no indication of trampling or mixing and this suggests that there was little activity in this area of the site and certainly no stock were present or allowed to access what is a relatively shallow ditch. Apparent biotic disturbance of the upper primary and secondary fills again suggests little human or animal interference and a reasonable level of vegetation growth within a boggy ditch. The ditch is in what is effectively the lowest-lying area of the hillfort interior and at the base of a long slope which would have drained to this area. It was noted during the excavation that the area was still distinctly damp.

The date of the original cut of the ditch will hopefully be established by radiocarbon dating but the fact that the upper deposits contain middle Iron Age material indicates that the ditch was cut substantially earlier, possibly in the earlier Iron Age or even in the Bronze Age. The probable midden deposits indicate a variety of activities in the near vicinity. Burnt bone and fire cracked stones suggest cooking, the pottery and briquetage normal domestic activity. The crucible indicates the practice of metalworking nearby.

The presence of an apparent occupation horizon in the form of deposit 2003 suggests that well preserved in-situ deposits may be present over a reasonably wide area here where they have probably been protected from later ploughing by an accumulation of colluvial material. This is obviously an important resource and given the agricultural history of Herefordshire is likely to be rare within the county.

Post excavation assessment

The Finds

Small finds

Part of a shale object with incised line decoration and small perforations at either broken ends came from trench 1 context 1010.

An iron object was recovered from trench 2 context 2004.

Both the above are being conserved by Cardiff University Conservation Department.

Ceramics

Prehistoric pottery (some 60 sherds) was recovered from a number of contexts, mainly from the top of the ditch in trench 2. Preliminary examination suggests that the majority is middle Iron Age Malvernian ware. Diagnostic sherds include a

number of decorative schemes that appear to be consistent with this date. A number of reasonably large sherds of Droitwich briquetage (21 sherds) came from the midden deposits within trench 2. Definitive comment on the ceramics will await the full pottery report being carried out by Jane Evans of WHEAS. There were also three sherds of what appear to be crucible and if confirmed as such will provide important evidence for metalworking on the site.

Flint

Four flint flakes were recovered from Trench 2. Three came from context 2004 and one from 2014. None shows any signs of secondary working.

The bone finds

Context	Type	Weight gms	Note
1004	tooth		
1011	?horn	280	
1012	tooth		
1015	?bird bone		
2004	burnt bone	20	2 bags
2004	tooth		
2008	assorted bone	220	
2014	articulated bone	355	Humerus or femur
2014	skull	25	

The bone will be examined and reported on by Sheila Hamilton-Dyer

Bulk soil samples

The following bulk samples were taken for analysis for charred plant and insect remains. This will be carried out by Dr Mike Allen

Trench 1 – context 1009

Trench 2 – context 2004

Radiocarbon Assessment

A number of contexts produced good quantities of charcoal and or bone that may be suitable for radiocarbon dating (figures 9 and 10). An assessment of these will be carried out by Dr Mike Allen prior to submission for dating.

Tr1

1004x2 charcoal

1009 charcoal

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1011 charcoal and bone

1012 charcoal

1014 charcoal

1016 charcoal

Tr2

2004 charcoal

2014 articulated bone

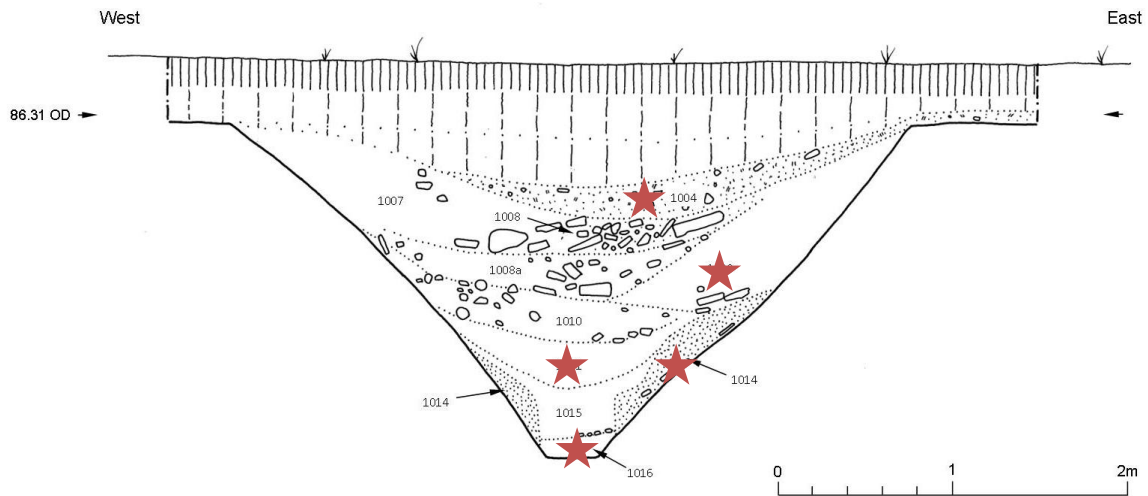


Figure 9: Trench 1 radiocarbon samples

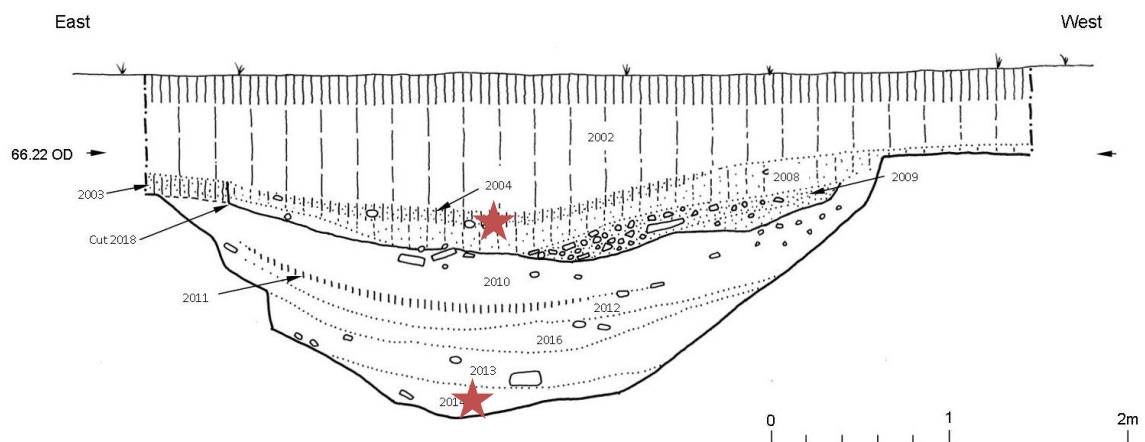


Figure 10: Trench 2 radiocarbon samples

Acknowledgements

Thanks must go first and foremost to the Eaton Camp Historical Society and most especially Nancy Saldana for their support throughout the project and without whom the work at Eaton Camp would not have taken place. The landowners, the National Trust in particular Janine Young and Iain Carter and Mr and Mrs Eckley supported the excavations and allowed access. Thanks are also due to Tony Fleming, Lisa Moffett and Judith Leigh of English Heritage for their advice on the conduct of the work. Special thanks must go to Anne and Martin Roseveare of ArchaeoPhysica Ltd for accurately locating our trenches and also to Mike Allen for his advice and work on the geo-archaeological aspects of the project including a site visit.

The excavation was assisted by a number of volunteers, their dedication and hard work contributing in no small part to the amount of work achieved. Over the course of the two weeks this included Colin and Sheila Archer, Julie Bowen, Rupert and Sarah Chatwin, Kathee Coonerty, Jane Cusworth, Claire Dickinson, Caroline Hanks, Gary Harding (cider maker), Andrew Lifely, Malcolm Lilley, Annie and Paul Konig, Tony McVeigh, Claire Metcalf, Viv Nugent, Sian Rees, John Robinson, Nancy Saldana, John Smith and Richard Snead. David Williams of Herefordshire Archaeology was the supervisor during the excavations and Tim Hoverd, Chris Atkinson, Nigel Baker and Moira Cassidy all of Herefordshire Archaeology generously contributed at various stages of the site work. Keith Ray also provided guidance and advice throughout the project.

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Eaton Camp, Eaton Bishop; Geo-archaeological Observations and preliminary interpretations

Michael J. Allen

The excavations at Eaton Camp conducted by Herefordshire Archaeology were visited on 25/5/12. The enclosure (hillfort) is at Ruckhall in Eaton Bishop parish, Herefordshire, on a clear promontory overlooking the confluence of the River Wye to the north and by Cage Brook to the south. The underlying geology is principally mudstones and siltstones of the Old Red Sandstone Raglan Mudstone Formation. Localised deposits of sand and gravel terrace deposits on the western heights of the promontory hill and on the nose of the promontory. These support typical argillic brown earths of the Escrick 1 Association (Findlay *et al.* 1984).

Sections were excavated through two ditches within the interior of the site that had been discovered by geophysics. Each was examined and described. The sections were cleaned where necessary, and the profiles described following standard pedological notation following Hodgson (1976). Primary, secondary and tertiary ditch terminologies follow Evans (1972) and Limbrey (1975).

Trench 1

The broad U-shaped ditch was exposed in trench (Fig. 1).



Figure 1: Trench 1 ditch section

Ditch Section 1

Depth	context	Profile/deposit	Description
0-18cm	1	Ah	Reddish brown (5YR 4/4) stone-free silt loam with weak small crumb structure giving way to clear small to medium blocky structure under grass, clear to diffuse boundary
18-32cm	2	A	Reddish brown (5YR 5/4) silt loam with large sub-angular blocky structure, rare medium coal fragment, clear boundary
32-c. 50cm	3	Tertiary – plough-wash	Reddish brown (5YR 5/4) essentially stone-free silt to silty clay loam, very firm, gradual to diffuse boundary with context 7
	4	Upper secondary Dumped burnt deposit	Zone of stones derived from the east. Some large, common medium sub-angular stones with clear boundary above, and abrupt boundary below containing many large branch wood/heartwood charcoal fragments- some ring porous – hand lens - (oak), and common small and very small burnt reddish brown (2.5YR 5/4) reddened soil fragments, and other small and medium charcoal fragments. Lens peters out to the centre of the ditch
c. 90cm	7		Reddish brown (5YR 5/4 to 4/4) stone-free and charcoal-free firm to stiff silty (clay) loam with some coarse silt (no sand), and large blocky structure, sharp contact under stony context 4, but gradual to diffuse boundary under context 3. (Below context 4 this displays a weak medium sub-angular blocky structure not seen elsewhere in this context indicating some incipient <i>in-situ</i> pedo-genesis prior to the rapid deposition of context 4)
	8	Secondary fill	Zone of large sub-angular block greenish grey (Gley 1 6/1) imported sandstone, clearly dumped from the east, in a reddish brown (5Y 5/4) stiff silty clay loam matrix, clear boundary.
95-105cm	9	In-wash	Reddish brown (5YR 4/4) reddish brown massive silty clay with common fine flecks of charcoal, common fine degraded sandstone pieces
	10	Stony in-wash	As above but with rare large sub-angular stones, some eroded/weathered greyish mudstone

110-138cm	11	In-wash	Reddish brown (75Yr 5/4) massive silt loam with common fine degraded stone. Primary/secondary fill including greenish grey and red/reddish brown small inclusions and rare fine charcoal fragments
	12	Weathered sides	Lens or band 8cm (but 7-9cm) of massive mixed deposit – as 11 but with degraded mudstone, weathered mudstone from west, with rare very small charcoal pieces
	13	Primary wash	Slime a: firm reddish brown (5Yr 4/4) stone-free silty <u>clay</u> wash from mudstone/siltstone sides (washed Rw material)
	14	primary	Mixed massive deposit of slumped mudstone/siltstone on both sides – primary weathering
	15	Primary wash	Slime b: moist stone-free reddish brown (5YR 5/4) silty clay fine wash infill with some large tumbled stones from edges
	16	Cut fill - wash	Massive fine-grained reddish brown silty clay loam

The infill history of this ditch is relatively straight-forward. The initial cut below context 15 was not clearly observable to record, however context 15 is reminiscent of rain-wash sorted deposits typical of the initial primary fill (*sensu* Evans 1972; Limbrey 1975). There is some rapid ditch side weathering and slumping (context 14), and further 'rain-wash,' deposit (context 12) constituting the primary fill.

The secondary fill includes

- massive fine-grained stone-free in-fills which include
 - occupation debris
 - ditch side weathering becoming less pronounced over time
 - dumps and deposits of imported stone
 - plough-wash

Weak soil formation is indicated prior to the dump of context 4

The final secondary fill is the clear dump of burnt soil and charcoal (context 4) which is clearly deposited on a stable ditch infill, overlain by the tertiary fill comprising plough-wash (context 3) and brown earth soil development (contexts 1 and 2), with a weak stone lens suggesting a young pasture soil.

The lack of buried soils indicates no long periods of stasis and soil formation or the rapid burial of soils forming in the ditch in-fills.

Trench 2

This broad U-shaped ditch (Figs 2 and 3) displays clear laminations and banding relating to the sedimentation and infilling process of the ditch. Five primary zones can be detected.

Zone A: Clearly banded deposits (Fig 4) alternating light yellow medium silt and reddish brown fine silt, with clear evidence of disturbance (possibly root or physical insertion of an object such as a stick or stake which was then withdrawn). The deposits are formed as a result of intense rain-wash, and may have settled in part under temporary stands of water as each sediment input is represented by two bands indicating differential sedimentation during settling. Or the lighter finer silt represented by the lighter colours may have been aeolian (windblown) in origin.

Very basal deposit is 38mm of reddish brown (5Y 4/4 to 7.5YR 4/4) silty loam, above which there is 16cm of alternating bands of reddish brown silt loam and pale yellow (2.5YR 7/3) well sorted silt (possibly aeolian or setting in water).

Zone B: Broadly banded zone (23cm) with and of rotted stone and indurated coarse banding indicating mud and soil in-wash, and deposits disturbed by biotic activity (vegetation and soil biota) including rooting. In-filled ancient root voids are present.

Trench 2



Figure 2: Trench 2 ditch section, note the fine banded laminations at base of ditch (see also figure 4)

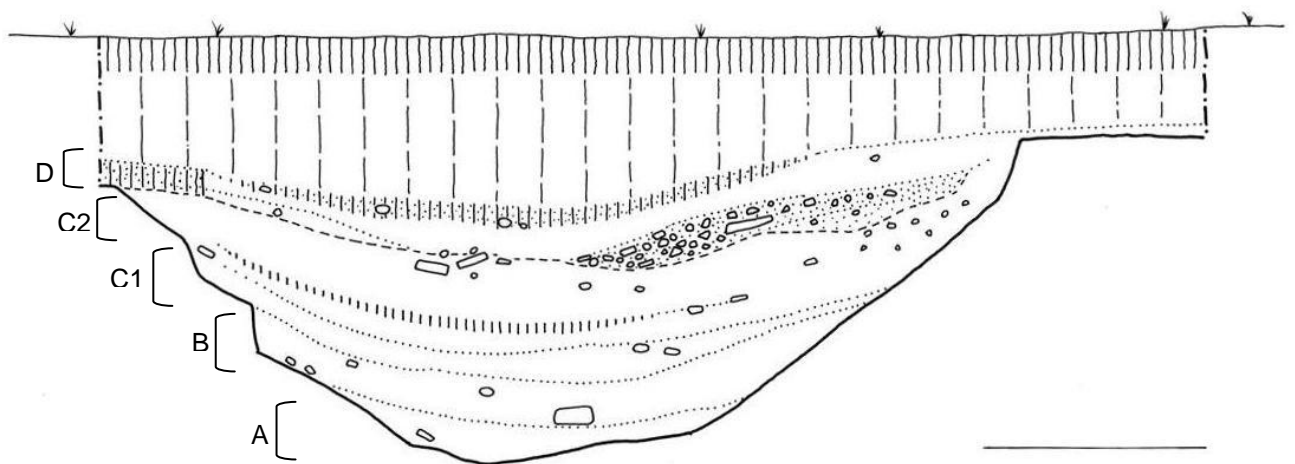
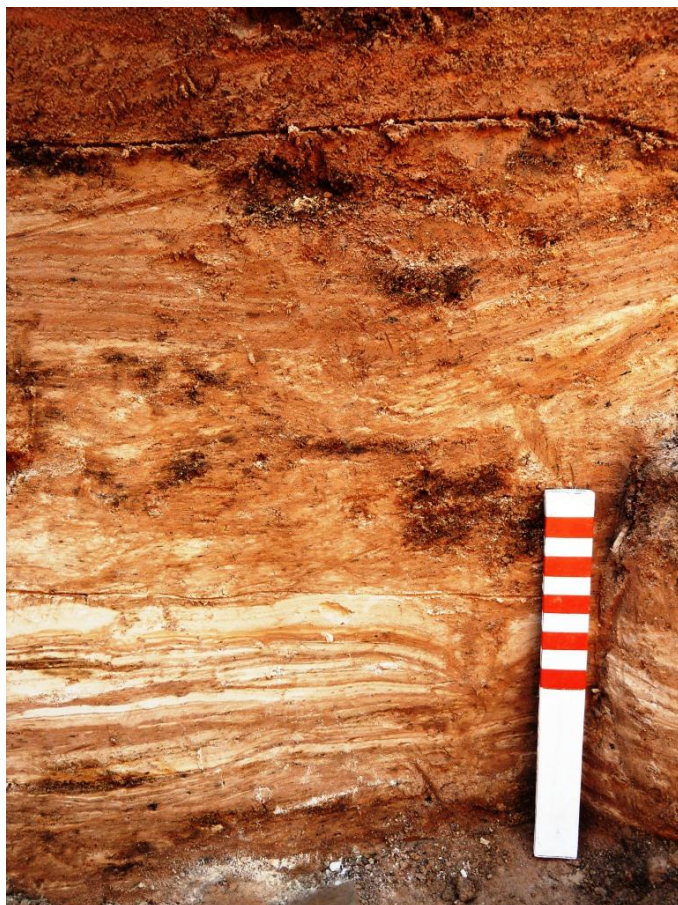


Figure 3: Trench 2 draft section drawing



Weakly banded / laminated deposits

vertical biotic mixing

Strongly banded / laminated basal deposits with vertical biotic intrusion

Figure 4: Detail of the lamination and banding in ditch section in trench 2

Zone C: Zone (56cm) of broader diffuse in-wash of soil material deposited in dryish conditions (secondary fill and plough-wash); comprising light brown (7.5YR 6/3) silty clay loam soil material in broad bands with zones of dark brown (7.5YR 3/3 to 3/2) sandy infill with small stone grits (C1); becoming stonier with dumped lenses from the west (C2).

Zone D A brown (7.5YR) loam with patches of reddish brown fine inclusions and fine charcoal – very weak small block structure suggesting incipient soil formation very late in the infill sequence. Between 12 and 27cm below datum the brown massive silty clay loam represent eroded soil material, typically B horizon material of a typical brown earth. Localised standing

water (?seasonal) is indicated by evidence of *in-situ* gleying as seen by fine mottling

The ditch is covered by colluvial plough-wash.

Summary

We can see this ditch changing from an infill under standing water (A), to one with some standing water and flushes of soils input washed down slope (B), to a more terrestrial and colluvial plough-wash infill (C) and finally locally damp tertiary plough-wash (zone D and E).

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Eaton Camp Summary Excavation Report 2012

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 Keith Ray, County Archaeologist

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

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