

Introduction

This report provides an account of a rapid archaeological survey of Garway Hill Common, (HSM No. 43843). A total of twelve commons have been targeted as part of the Community Commons Project. The project was created by Herefordshire Nature Trust with the support of the Heritage Lottery Fund. The overall aims of the Community Commons Project is to record and measure the level of biodiversity upon the common land in order to form a management plan for each common to improve and promote the habitat of local fauna and flora as well as improvements to public access. The project also provided the opportunity to document and record known and previously unknown archaeological features within the common landscape through a series of rapid survey assessments.

Commons 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 common land in Herefordshire has been recorded in the past. The rapid survey assessment centres on the recording of archaeological features and their position within the landscape.

When the visible archaeological traces within each common have been documented and understood, the results can be combined with the ecological records. From these, a well-informed management strategy can be developed to preserve and interpret the archaeological record alongside the other aims of the Community Commons Project.

Location

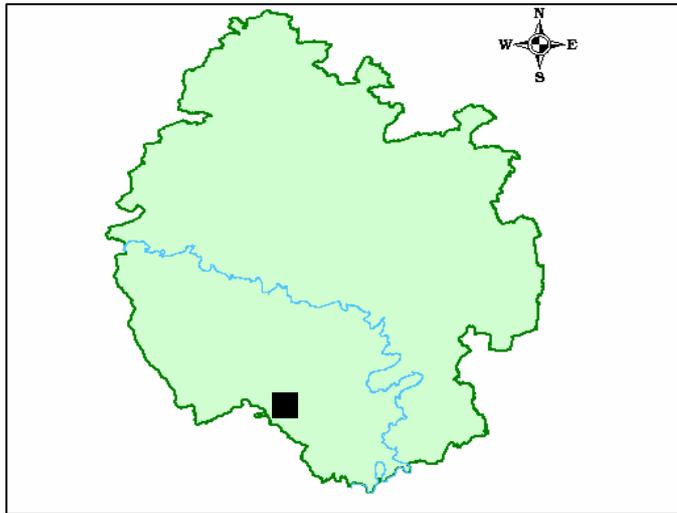


Figure 1: Location of Garway Hill Common within Herefordshire

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Garway Hill Common is located at NGR: 343807 224876, 2.7 miles north of Garway Village within the parish of Garway. The common sits on the top of Garway Hill at a maximum height of 366m above sea level. The topography stretches down to the north, east, south and west. To the north and west of the common is the parish of Kentchurch. To the east the common boundary forms the parish boundary between Garway and Orcop. At its lowest the common lies at a height of 230m above sea level.

Method

Garway Hill Common was surveyed on 2nd May 2006. The survey comprised a rapid assessment of the potential of the Common to contain well-preserved archaeological features. The survey therefore approximated a 'Level 2' survey (RCHME 1999) and as such it has identified most of the more prominent traces. It should not be regarded as definitive in its results however, given that survey coverage, although systematic was not total. 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.

The common (84.5 hectares) was walked in transects aligned roughly south/north and approximately 50m to 100m apart. If a large feature was encountered and no other features of archaeological significance could 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 following survey recorded a sample of features present and should not be taken as exhaustive or its results as definitive. It is intended to record the type of features present, their state of preservation and their relationships to other features throughout the common.

Field conditions

Garway Hill Common occupies the summit of a conical rise. The geology of the area consists of the Breconian, Brownstones formation belonging to the Lower Old Red Sandstone series. The underlying geology is built up of mixed sandstone, drab red-brown, pebbly in the upper part; minor red-brown mudstone and calcretes.

Survey Conditions

The rapid walkover survey was conducted on 2nd May 2006. The weather was predominantly clear with strong westerly winds. Vegetation upon the common consists predominantly of bracken with very little or no open grasslands. Tree coverage within the northwest of the common consists of a mixed hawthorn, beach and ash.

Results

The recorded data from the survey is described in detail within the results section. The present section is concluded by a brief discussion providing an interim assessment of the historical development of the common. 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.