Beacon Ring Hillfort 08/09

■ *Work-experience students being shown around Beacon Ring hillfort in July 2008. Photo CPAT 2603-0029*

Report prepared for

Ruud van Beek Foundation

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A PDF of this report is available following the link given on www.cpat.org.uk/beacon/index.htm

Introduction

Beacon Ring was acquired by the Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust (CPAT) on 25 July 2008 with the aim of ensuring the long-term, sustainable management of the hillfort and its environs for the benefit of the general public. This first annual report summarises things that have been done in the year up to the anniversary.

A useful start has been made during the year on the short, medium and longer-term objectives set out in the *Beacon Ring Action Plan* which relate to the the management of the site, education and outreach activities, and research potential. It has been stimulating to identify how wide the range of issues about a single site can be!

This is very much a report on work in progress, which has involved quite a lot of 'thinking time'. A fair amount has been achieved during the year, however, with voluntary input and help from work-experience students and with advice from a range of professional bodies. Vital funding has been made available from the *Ruud van Beek Foundation* in the Nederlands, which has commissioned an ongoing study to provide information about the issues involved in the management of rural archaeological sites in Wales as a comparison with the Nederlands. Funding for education and outreach work has been made available from CPAT's own *Educational Fund*.

The management team during the year has comprised David Rowlands, Bill Britnell and Chris Martin.

■ *Distant view of Beacon Ring hillfort on the skyline from High Street Welshpool. Photo CPAT*

■ *Visit to Beacon Ring with Forestry Commission staff who have provided helpful advice on the best way of going about removing the woodland from the interior of the monument. Photo CPAT 2893-0010.*

■ *Visit with staff of the Montgomeryshire Wildlife Trust who have kindly provided advice on the potential wildlife value of the hillfort once the trees have been removed from the site. Photo CPAT 2891-0001.*

■ *Party of walkers crossing the stile on the south side of the monument, on the course of the Offa's Dyke National Trail. The National Trail Officer based in Powys County Council has provided advice on the maintenance of stiles and fences on the path. Photo CPAT 2903-0003.*

Seeking adviice other bodies

Contacts made about various issues to do with the monument with the following: Nederland partners and colleagues (Hemmi Clevis and other Trustees of the Ruud van Beek Foundations, and Pim Alders and Mark Spanjer of Saxion Universities, Deventer); neighbouring landowners (Mr Davies, Mr Corfield; Cadw (Sian Rees, Ancient Monuments Inspectorate); Powys County Council/ CCW (Stuart Macintosh, Countryside Services Manager, and Rob Dingle, Offa's Dyke National Trail Officer); Montgomeryshire Wildlife Trust, (Living Landscapes Manager, and People and Wildlife Officer); Forestry Commission (Patrick Greene, Woodland Officer and Ken Smith, Private Woodland Officer); Nigel McDonald of No Nonsence – Interpretation, on behalf of Shropshire County Council, Powys County Council, CCW and Natural England, engaged in the drafting of an interpretation strategy for the Offa's Dyke path along the Powys/ Shropshire border; staff of Herefordshire Archaeology, involved with the management of Credenhill Hillfort, Herefordshire.

Maintenance issues

Public Liability insurance cover was taken out for visitors walking along the Offa's Dyke National Trail and for staff, students and volunteers engaged on projects at the site. Risk assessments are prepared for activities at the site.

Advice has been sought from staff of Powys County Council/Countryside Council for Wales (CCW) (Offa's Dyke National Trail Officer) on whose responsibility it is to maintaining stiles and footpaths across the monument. Stiles are apparently the landowner's property though in practice Powys County Council/CCW have both supplied and fitted replacements. At some stage there may be a proposal to change the stiles to self-closing wicket gates. We are anticipating discussing with the National Trail Officer the question of the route the footpath takes. This was diverted around the western perimeter a number of years ago.

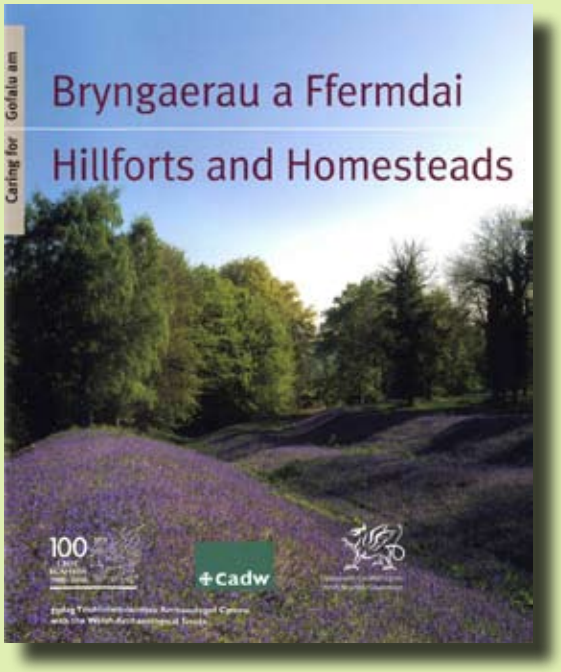
Scheduled Monument Consent was applied for and granted for the repair and replacement of fencing and some other works on the northern side of the monument. The fencing was carried out under contract and at the same time a small fenced enclosure for holding sheep was removed, a sheep pen was reduced in size and a former sheep dip was refilled with stone.

An illicit encampment inside the hillfort was taken down. The timber used to construct is has been stockpiled and rubbish removed from site.

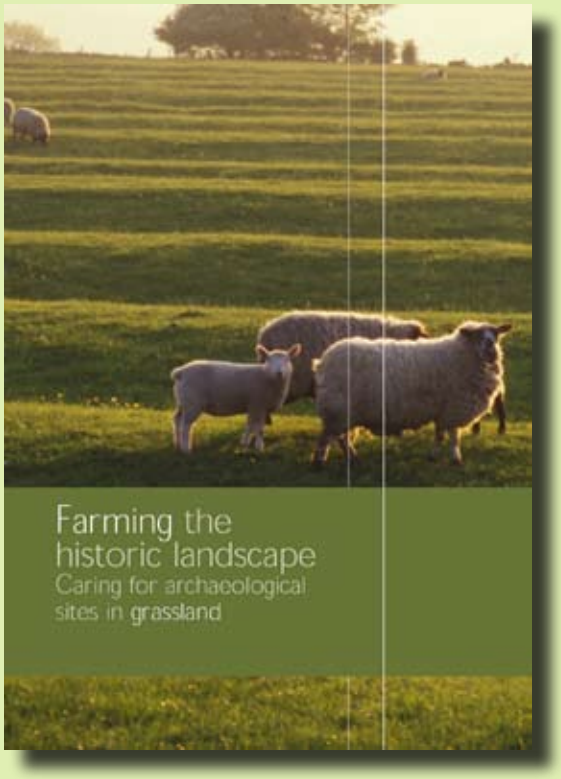
■ *Fencing in progress on the northern side of the monument. The fencing was carried out as part of the original purchase agreement with Leighton Estates and was carried out with Scheduled Monument Consent. Photo CPAT 2830-0017.*

■ *Part of the illicit encampment that had been constructed inside Beacon Ring over a number of years as a 'holiday camp' by a small group coming from some distance away. Photo CPAT 2629-0004.*

■ *The illicit encampment inside the hillfort has now been demolished and the timber stockpiled pending its eventual removal from the site. Photo CPAT 2825-0006.*



■ *Cadw booklet in the 'Caring for' series which provides advice and guidance on the management of hillfort and enclosure sites in Wales.*



■ *English Heritage leaflet designed to help farmers, land managers and farm advisers identify archaeological sites that are under grassland and achieve best practice in their management*

Earthwork management

We have yet to carry out a detailed monument condition survey to identify at risk or potentially vulnerable parts of the monument to identify where erosion or other activities are currently or might in the future be an issue. An informal review suggests that the monument as a whole is in reasonably good condition and that there are no immediate concerns about damage caused by visitors or animals for example though in the longer terms these might be of concern.

Vegetation and wildlife

Advice on the present and future habitat potential of the monument has been discussed in on-site meetings with staff of the Montgomeryshire Wildlife Trust (MWT) who have wide experience in managing their own reserves, including Roundton Hillfort.

MWT staff advise that the existing conifer and deciduous woodland inside the hillfort only has a low habitat value. It will therefore be much better from a wildlife point of view to remove all the trees and encourage the establishment of an acid grassland flora that is currently restricted to the rampart and ditch.

MWT staff have kindly expressed their willingness to continue to provide advice on various matters on which they have experience, including the provenancing of seed for the reestablishment of grassland and the negotiation of an appropriate grazing regime by neighbouring farmers to optimise the sites habitat value. MWT are also keen to take advantage of the site's amenity value for education and outreach initiatives now and in the future.

A number of issues relating to the existing vegetation on the earthwork defences have been identified which though not of serious concern will require management. Firstly, there are a number of trees and larger shrubs on the defences that need to be taken down before they present a problem. Secondly, gorse is beginning to take over the footpath in places and needs to be thinned. Thirdly, it is apparent that dense gorse encourages burrowing animals.

The best approach seems to be to establish a rolling programme of vegetation management with voluntary input, to be tied into an appropriate grazing regime in future. This work will need to be undertaken outside the period 1 March and 31 August to avoid disturbing nesting birds. How best to dispose of cut vegetation needs to be looked at.

■ *Trial gorse clearance in progress at east terminal of south entrance. Dense gorse can be seen to encourage burrowing animals. Photo CPAT 2891-0001*

■ Close-up view of *Western gorse (Ulex gallii) that covers parts of the rampart at Beacon Ring.*

■ *Guidance on the Better Woodlands for Wales scheme is available on the Forestry Commision's website. Entering the scheme should enable the Trust to obtain grant aid from the Forestry Commission for felling and removal of the woodland cover, before the site is returned to grassland.*

■ *The northern entrance to Bury Ditches, Shropshire. Until the 1970s the defences and interior of the hillfort. were covered in dense conifer woodland that was damaged by wind-blow which left gaping tree-holes across the site. Over the last 30 years the hillfort has been gradually managed back to grassland though the vestiges of some of the tree-stumps still survive (see photos on next page). Photo CPAT 2647-0074.*

Removing the woodland cover

The biggest potential threat to the monument is undoubtedly posed by the woodland planted inside the defences, both from the point of view of potential windblow as the trees mature and from the eventual harvesting and removal of the timber. It is anticipated that these issues will be addressed by a management plan to be drawn up for the removal of the woodland.

The key to success of this operation will be to remove all the trees in one go and then establish grassland as quickly as possible. Removal of the trees will require a Felling Licence from the Forestry Commission and Scheduled Monument Consent.

Damage to the monument during felling by machinery can be averted by agreeing set routes for traffic to use, using appropriate machinery, carrying out the work during dry weather and laying down brush mats for vehicles to travel on.

Stumps could be cut as low as possible but would actually rise up after felling. Rotting of the stumps will take longer than if the site were to be replanted since they will dry out and become more resistant to decay. Stumps can be cross-cut to accelerate rotting, but this and other treatments would add to the cost.

Removal of brash after felling (either by chipping or stockpiling elsewhere offsite) is desirable on a number of grounds: to improve the access and amenity value of the site; to reduce soil enrichment; to help reduce and manage scrub regeneration by species such as birch; and to inhibit burrowing animals which would otherwise be encouraged to the site. Advice on brash management is available from the Forestry Commission.

The most critical period will be in the first 5 years after felling when scrub management and appropriate grazing will need to be established to hasten the establishment of grassland. Reseeding with an appropriate seed mix can be undertaken by hand following felling and probably after the wind has blown away the loose leaf litter.

Although grassland should become established fairly quickly, the experience of sites like Bury Ditches in Shropshire suggests that it might take 20-30 for all trace of tree stumps to disappear (see photo).

A rough estimate by Forestry Commission staff suggests that the site might contain up to about 600 tonnes of timber, which would normally cost in the region of £10 per tonne to harvest, which is almost certainly more than the commercial value of the timber. The laying down of brush matting, the treatment of stumps, removal of brash and reseeding would all represent additional costs.

The Forestry Commission advise that the best approach would be to develop a *Better Woodlands for Wales Management Plan*. For this purpose we will need to engage the services of an approved Forest Planner. Grant aid would be available from the Forestry Commission for various aspects of the work involved in the felling and removal of the trees which will hopefully meet as much as possible of the costs involved.


Forestry Commission

Managing Brash on Conifer Clearfell Sites

PRACTICE NOTE

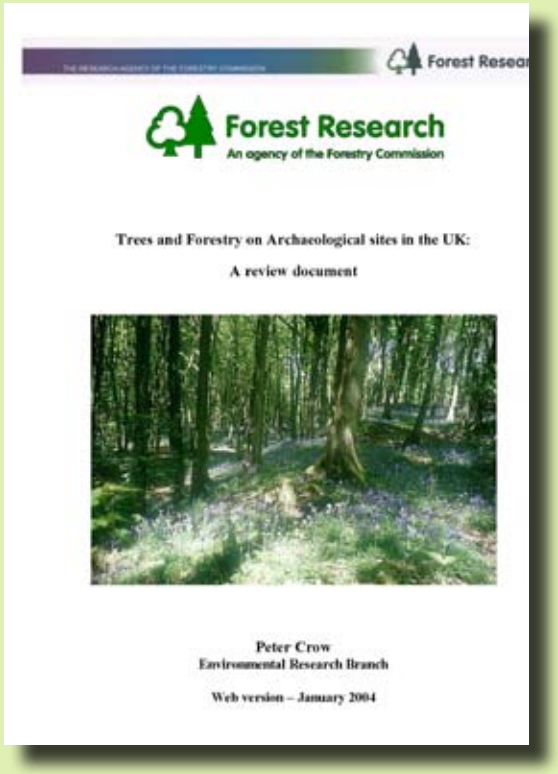
INTRODUCTION

POLICY AND REGULATORY CONTEXT

■ *Advice from the Forest Research branch of the Forestry Commission on handling brash.*

■ *Part of the interior of the Bury Ditches hillfort in 2008, showing stumps of trees felled after wind-blow in the 1970s. Photos CPAT 2647-0029, 2647-0070.*

■ *Excavations in the interior of Credenhill Camp by Herefordshire Archaeology in 2008. Photo CPAT 2598-0002*

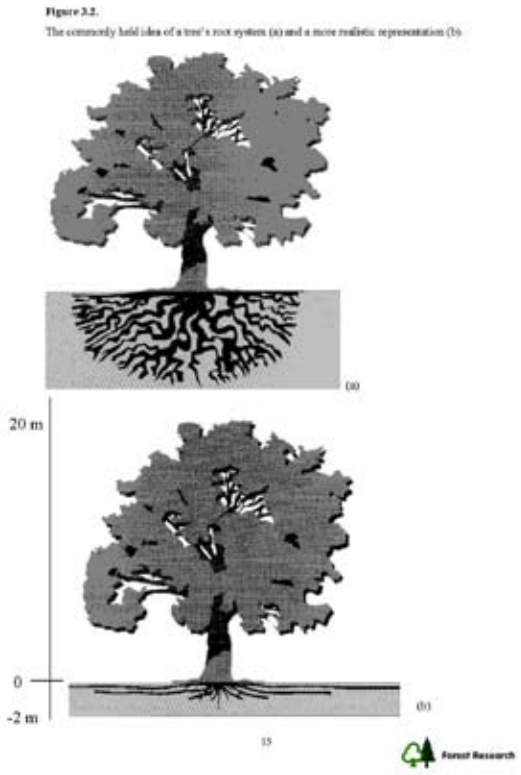


■ *The Forestry Commission's 2004 review of forestry and archaeology.*

The impact of trees on archaeology

Felling and removal of the trees at Beacon Ring will provide an ideal opportunity for studying the effect of woodland planting on the site. A similar opportunity though on a smaller scale was recently provided by clearance work in Credenhill Hillfort, Herefordshire (see photo).

Earlier studies of the effects of tree planting on archaeological sites have been somewhat ambiguous. A review published in 2004 concluded that 'the effect of forest cover on archaeological remains depends upon many variables' and that the reports produced so far on this topic identify 'need for further research on a wider range of tree species, soil types and archaeological evidence'.



Site interpretation

During the year we were consulted by Nigel McDonald, acting on behalf of Shropshire County Council, Powys County Council, CCW and Natural England, on the drafting of an interpretation strategy for the Offa's Dyke path along the Powys/Shropshire border. The consultation draft of *Interpretating Offa's Dyke Path on the Shropshire Powys Border*, was subsequently issued in April 2009.

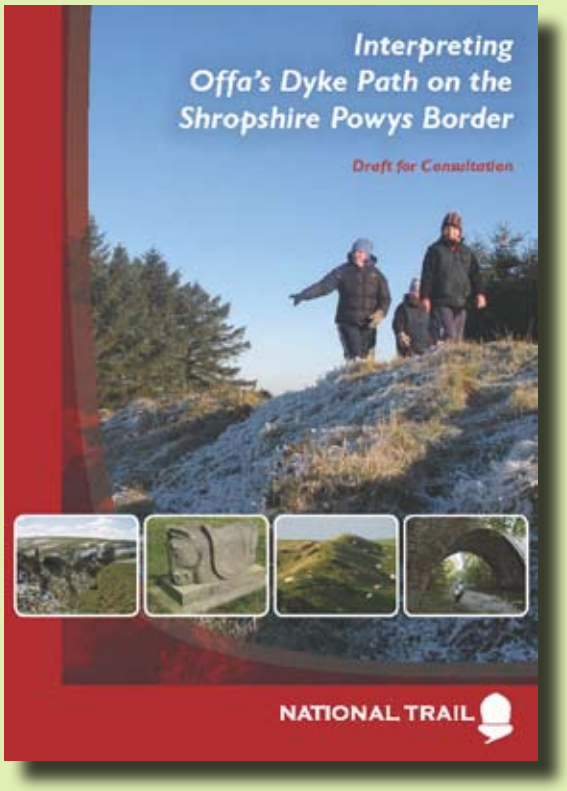
The report focuses on Offa's Dyke itself, but it contains a number of recommendations that are relevant to Beacon Ring. Visitor surveys have shown that National Trail walkers would welcome more interpretation, and emphasises a significant theme in the history and archaeology of the dyke and other monuments of defence and control which help to define the Welsh Borderland. As stated by the report:

> *The border is rich in features that span people's time in this landscape. The ancient trackways, Roman and drover's roads criss-cross the hills bypassing Iron Age and earlier hill top settlements. The towns and villages are dominated by Anglo-Saxon and Norman earthen mottes, stone castles and fortified churches.*

Visits have been made to a number of other local open-access hillforts to get ideas about site interpretation that might be appropriate for Beacon Ring. The sites visited so far include Bury Ditches (Forestry Commission), Gaer Fawr (Woodland Trust) and Roundton (Montgomeryshire Wildlife Trust).

A number of different approaches can be identified at the different hillforts including both fixed and temporary installations. Bury Ditches has a wide range of different fixtures including a textured interpretation board at the car-park below the hillfort, way-markers, a panoramic table on the summit of the hill and an interpretation panel at the hillfort entrance with a drop-down panel showing a reconstruction of interior.

Gaer Fawr again has a fixed interpretation panel at the car-park below the hillfort, together with a ceramic seat in the form of a Celtic boar, way-markers, and some 'softer' installations including a conceptual roundhouse represented by a circle of loose stones and a number of unfixed carved wooden sculptures of leaves etc.



■ *Draft interpretation strategy commissioned by Shropshire County Council, Powys County Council, CCW and Natural England*

■ *Part of an interpretation panel at Bury Ditches hillfort, Shropshire. Photo CPAT 2647-0076.*

■ *Panoramic table on the highest point of Roundton Hillfort, Montgomeryshire. Photo CPAT 2824-0003*

■ *The Gaer Fawr ceramic boar, based on Iron Age helmet fitting found near the hillfort. Photo CPAT 2644-18*

■ *Conceptual roundhouse at Gaer Fawr. Photo CPAT 2644-0014*

■ *Draft sign for Beacon Ring under discussion with National Trail Officer.*

The display at Roundton again has an interpretation panel at the car-park below the hillfort with an illustration of Celtic warriors, as well as a panoramic table at the highest point of the hill.

Things will potentially change dramatically when the trees are removed from Beacon Ring. For the time being, however, it looks as though the best approach is to think of installing one or more fairly discrete signs (see mock-up below) with a brief description and dating of the site, and directing walkers to the CPAT website for information.

Hopefully the signs could be fixed to existing fences or posts to avoid putting in more fixtures on site (for which Scheduled Monument Consent would be needed). It is hoped to discuss proposals of this nature with the Offa's Dyke Path National Trail Officer in the near future and to see whether CCW will meet or contribute to the cost.

Other interpretation strategies can be developed in the longer term, as the site is gradually opened up and made more accessible. Although it has been envisaged that all the trees would be felled it might, for example, be worthwhile considering whether to leave one or more of the beech trees (if there are suitable ones in a sufficiently sheltered location) to represent a conceptual roundhouse like the one created at the Woodland Trust's Gaer Fawr.

Survey and recording

A start has been made in July 2009 on a programme of topographical, geophysical and vegetation survey with the help of work-experience students from local schools.

The project successfully combined a number of different goals – introducing students to a working environment, giving them the opportunity of finding out what archaeology is, and at the same time learning more about the site and contributing to developing a monument management strategy. The work was carried out as part of the *Festival of British Archaeology 2009*, coordinated by the CBA and also attracted a number of other volunteers. The survey work carried out in July 2009 was supervised be Jeff Spencer, Wendy Owen, Abi McCullough and Sophie Watson of the staff of CPAT.

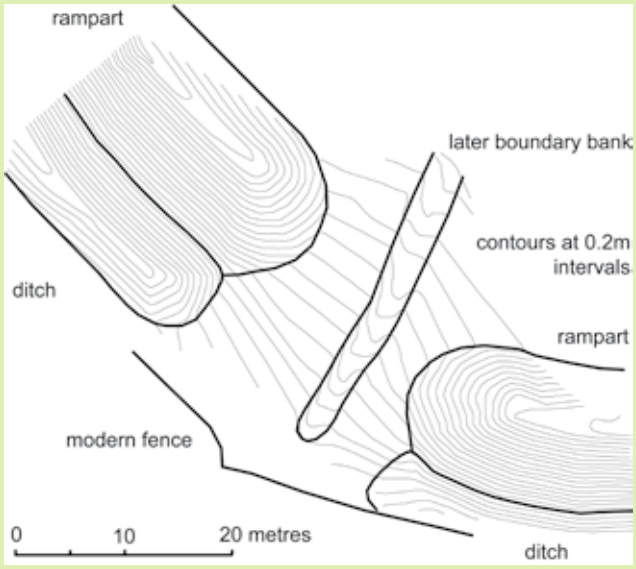
The focus of the work in July 2009 was the southern entrance to the hillfort largely because this is one of the largest areas of the site which is relatively clear of vegetation.

The entrance is also intriguing in having an original gap of almost 20 metres between the ends of the rampart and ditch. It is hoped that survey work here could begin to tell us something about how this gap was originally defended.

At present, the most likely interpretation seems to be that the gap was blocked by a substantial timber facade to either side of a much narrower gate, similar to the arrangement identified at the Trust's excavations at the Collfryn Iron Age hillslope enclosure in the 1980s. A timber facade was indicated here by a deep, stone-packed slot either side of the original gateway.

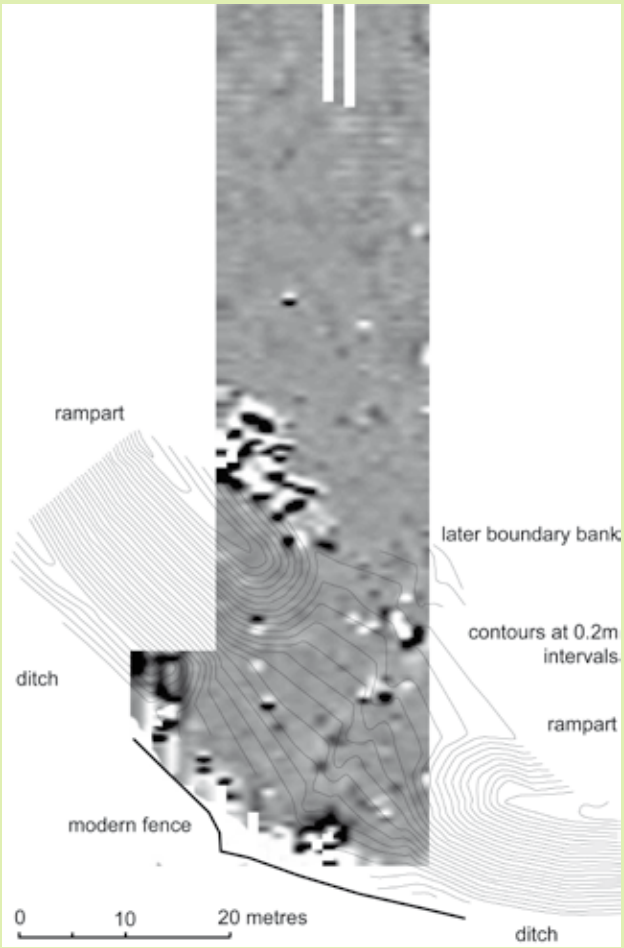
Detailed survey of the entrance gap and the terminals of the rampart was carried out with an EDM attached to a portable computer which generates an image of the survey as it progresses. Each of the students was given an opportunity to use both the EDM and the survey staff, giving them first-hand experience in how a topographical survey is carried out.

A preliminary plot of the topographical survey is shown alongside. It is hoped that in the coming years it will be possible to gradually build up a detailed topographical model of the entire hillfort in this way.



■ *Topographical survey of the southern entrance to the hillfort being carried out by EDM with the help of work-experience students in July 2009. Photos CPAT 2831-0024, 2989-0040.*

■ *Geophysical survey in progress at the southern entrance to Beacon Ring by one of the work-experience team in July 2009. Photo CPAT 2898-0095.*



■ *Preliminary results of the geophysical survey of the south entrance to Beacon Ring in July 2009.*

Geophysical survey

The EDM was also used to set out and locate the position of a grid used for geophysical survey of the south entrance again carried out with the help of work-experience students and volunteers. Scheduled Monument Clearance was applied for and granted by Cadw to enable the geophysical survey to be carried out.

A preliminary plot of the results obtained by using a magnetometer is shown below. The results are not as clear as had been anticipated, possibly because ground conditions were not ideal for this kind of survey technique. However, it is hoped to try further geophysical survey work on a future occasion, perhaps using other survey techinques such as resistivity survey, to see whether this produced better details of the Iron Age hillfort entrance and internal structures such as roundhouses.

One of the main anomalies which shows up clearly on the plot of the magnetometer survey is a series of high readings just inside the rampart, to the west of the hillfort entrance. The explanation of this is uncertain, but it could represent an area of intense burning.

Geophysical survey work was carried out with the with the on-site help and expertise of John Burman and off-site assistance of Dave Hopewell of Gwynedd Archaeological Trust.

Vegetation survey

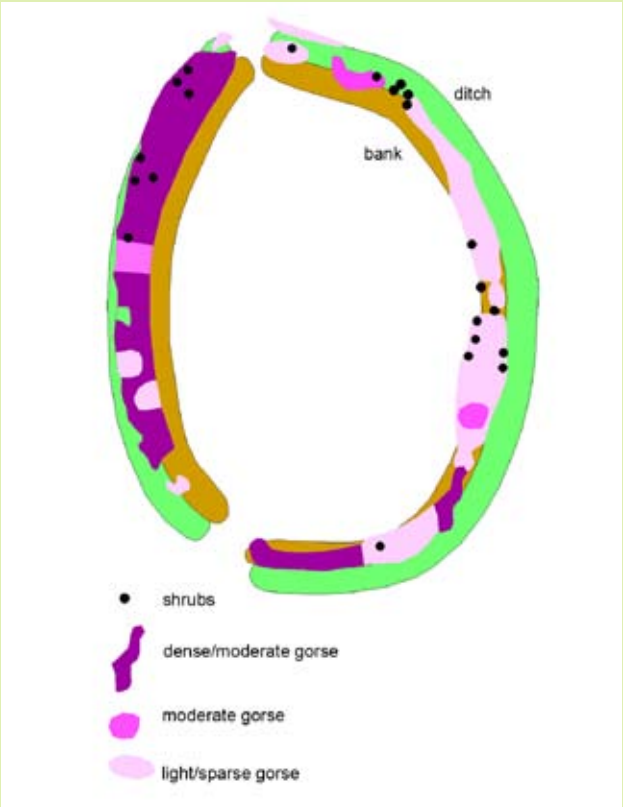
A survey of the gorse and shrubs covering the hillfort defences was carried out with the help of work-experience students using a GPS and tape-measure in July 2009, summarised in the plan below. It is hoped to use this plan as a basis for setting up a rolling programme of vegetation management. The data collected has been entered into a GIS workspace set up for the monument.

A good deal of practical advise on gorse and scrub management is available on the internet of sources online such as the Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group (FWAG), RSPB, English Heritage and Natural England websites.

Trial clearance of a small area of dense gorse has been carried out on the eastern terminal of the bank at the southern entrance to see what is involved. This was also done to make it easier to carry out the survey work undertaken by work experience students in July 2009.

Once a vegetation management plan has been formulated it will be worthwhile considering whether to come to a 'management agreement' with Cadw. Under such a scheme, owners are given financial help towards such protective measures as fencing, scrub clearance, erosion repair, and prevention of encroachment on the monument by ploughing.

Vegetation survey being carried out by work-experience students from local schools with GPS and tape measures in July 2009. Photo CPAT 2989-0034.



■ *Vegetation survey carried out with the help of work-experience students in July 2009.*

■ *Work experience students in July 2009 learning how to use EDM equipment for surveying the hillfort defences. Photos CPAT 2898-0044, 2898-0046, 2898-0081.*

Education and outreach

The Trust's acquisition of Beacon Ring and our broad aims for managing the monument for the benefit of the general public were highlighted in the Autumn 2008 *Newsletter*.

In July 2009 we were able to start to use the hillfort as a base for outdoor activities involving a group of work-experience students from local schools as well as a number of volunteers.

As noted above, the focus of activity in 2009 was the southern entrance to the hillfort where we carried out a topographical survey with an EDM and geophysical survey with a magnetometer. A rapid vegetation survey of the whole of the defences was also undertaken with the use of GPS and also tape measure.

These activities proved very successful and gave students the opportunity of learning something about Iron Age hillforts, how to use survey equipment, and experience in working together to achieve something worthwhile.

Preliminary results of some of this work is shown on previous pages with the exception of the results of the geophysical survey, which are still being processed. It is hoped to return to the site to carry out similar projects on future occasions.

We are also currently exploring with our colleagues from the Saxion Universities at Deventer the possibility of taking a group of students on secondment to work on a number of assignments about the hillfort - providing them with training in various aspects of archaeology and at the same time carrying out some of the tasks identified in our *Action Plan*.

The particular topics we currently hoping to develop, which relate to our monument management, education and outreach, and research objectives, include the following questions

- **vegetation management** – what are the most appropriate strategies for enhancing access and biodiversity whilst minimizing damage?
- **archaeological potential** – what is the archaeological potential of the monument and what stategies can be adopted for learning more about it?

- **interpretation and display** – what are the most appropriate ways of interpreting and displaying the monument to different audiences?

- **historic landscape analysis** – what can be learnt about the social and economic history of the site from an analysis of present-day landscape and field pattern?

- **viewshed analysis** – what can the views to and from the hillfort tell us about the significance of the monument in the past and today?

Visits to the site were arranged with a number of groups including a visit by staff of the Herefordshire Archaeology, which is currently involved on a similar project involving the removal of trees from part of the interior of Credenhill Camp in Herefordshire.

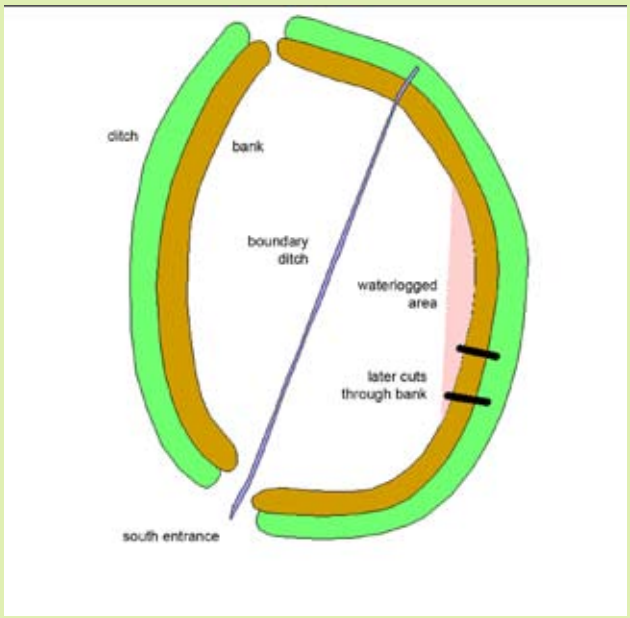
When we meet visitors on site we are trying to keep an informal record is what they say about it. Most of the visitors seem to be small groups walking over longer distances of the National Trail or as part of a day's outing, but there is also a trickle of local people taking one of their regular walks or taking the dogs for a walk. Visitors are impressed by the scale of the defences, by how well preserved it is, and by the all-round view.

Some visitors have expressed disappointment that the trees will be removed, though seem to be less concerned when the reasons for this are explained. Some visitors have welcomed the idea of an information board of some kind, although the like the idea of the site being remote, and with not too many visitors. The vegetation can make some of the paths that people take difficult. Most visitors are clearly pleased to be told something about the form of the monument, how old it is, and what it might have been like.

■ *Meeting with our Nederland colleague Mark Spanjer in December 2008. Photo Pim Alders*

■ *Visit to Beacon Ring by staff of Herefordshire Archaeology in June 2009. Photo CPAT 2892-0006.*

■ *CPAT's Autumn 2008 Newsletter carried an article about Beacon Ring hillfort and some of the things we are planning to do there.*



■ *Sketch plan of Beacon Ring highlighting opportunities for non-intrusive ways of finding out more about the site's archaeological potential.*

■ *Work by Severn Trent Water in the compound just to the north of the site showed the depth of natural clay which caps the top of Long Mountain at this point. Photo CPAT 2641-0011*

Archaeological potential of the hillfort

Walking around the hillfort at different times over the last year has prompted an informal review of the site's archaeological potential.

It is hoped to report upon this more fully on a future occasion but a number of things are worth noting at this early stage. See also elsewhere in this report what we can hope to learn from remote sensing techniques such as geophysical survey and the potential for testing the impact of forestry upon archaeological monuments.

Waterlogging seems to be a significant feature of the site, and has a potential bearing upon the survival of organic remains. Parts of the hillfort ditch hold standing water during the winter months, for example, and a boggy area inside the rampart on the north-west side suggests that waterlogged deposits may also survive within the interior.

An old boundary ditch cuts across the interior of the hillfort and there appear to be several former cuts through rampart, probably dug for drainage. Re-emptying some or all of these ditches might provide a useful and non-intrusive means of finding out more about the nature of the archaeological deposits preserved at the site.

Keeping an eye on things happening around the site is also beginning to provide some useful information about the site. A deep trench in the compound just beyond the defences to the north of the site, for example, has shown that parts of the hilltop at least are capped by a thick band of clay and stone of glacial origin over a metre thick, which as well as its effect upon hydrology also has an important bearing upon the nature of the archaeological evidence inside the hillfort and the way in which the hillfort defences were constructed.

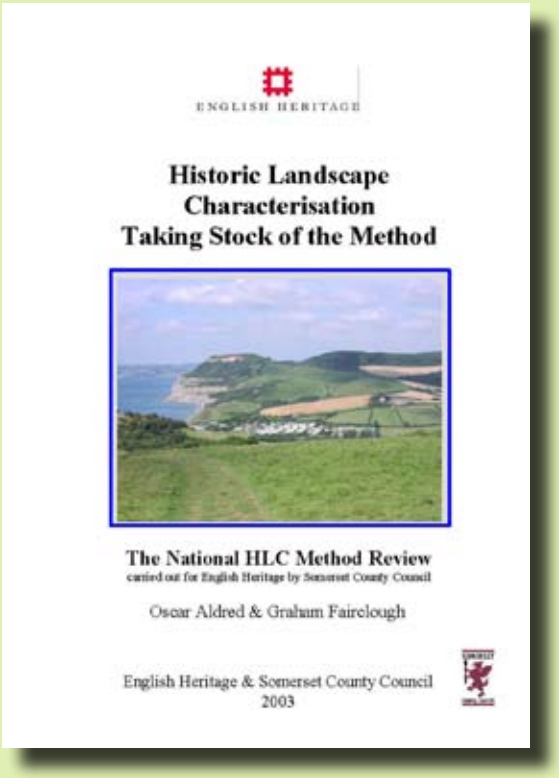
The hillfort's landscape context

We have begun to think about the wider landscape context of the hillfort and its relationships with the present-day field pattern.

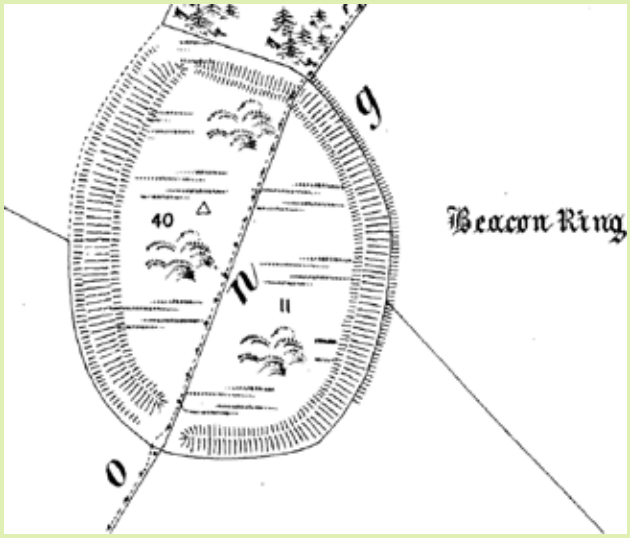
Further research needs to be carried out on any early estate records, enclosure awards, tithe survey, and place-name evidence, but the initial impression is that there is some potential for historic landscape analysis along the lines of the methodology promoted by English Heritage.

The initial impression is that until perhaps the early 19th century the monument probably fell within an area of unenclosed upland common running along the top of Long Mountain.

■ *The field pattern around Beacon Ring suggests that it formerly fell within unenclosed upland common along Long Mountain*



■ *Review of historic landscape characterisation methodologies published by English Heritage in 2003.*



■ *Beacon Ring as shown on the 1st edition of the 1:2,500 Ordnance Survey, 1883.*

■ *Aerial photograph of the site in 2008 by Nigel Jones. Photo CPAT 08-C-0316*

■ *Stone erected by the Ackers family, commemorating the tree planting in 1953. The question of what to do with the memorial once the woodland is felled will need to be considered! Photo CPAT 08-C-0316*

Researching the later history of the site

Some informal research has been undertaken on a number of aspects of the later history of the site.

The origin of the place-name 'Beacon Ring' is intriguing. Until the early 19th century the monument appears to be known as 'Caer Digoll' or 'Cefn Digoll Camp' (*cefn digoll* being 'long mountain' in Welsh). The most likely context is in the wake of the Napoleonic Wars at the beginning of the 19th century, a period when 'beaconmania' took hold of the country.

The earliest reference found to date is in the title 'Sketch from the Beacon Ring, Long Mountain, Montgomeryshire, shewing Powis Castle and Mountains of the Principality' which appears to have been exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1827.

The last time a beacon was fired may have been as one of the great chains of beacons lit to mark Queen Victoria's Golden Jubilee in 1887. These spread out across the country starting at Herefordshire Beacon on the Malvern Hills, Herefordshire, commemorated in the first poem of A. E. Housman's A Shropshire Lad (1896) entitled '1887', which begins

> From Clee to heaven the beacon burns,
> The shires have seen it plain,
> From north and south the sign returns
> And beacons burn again.

It seems that Beacon Ring is one of the few surviving areas of woodland planted to commemorate the coronation of Elizabeth II in 1953. The only Welsh examples that have come across so far are ones at Ross-on-Wye and at Knighton, though we are not certain that both of these still survive.

The Beacon Ring planting is unusual in only being visible from the air. It is hoped to research the background to the Beacon Ring planting in greater depth, perhaps by searching papers of the Leighton Estate.

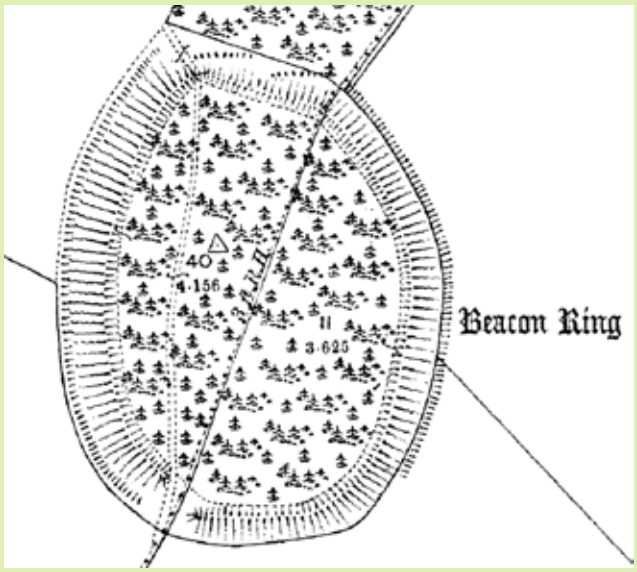
Fortunately, both generations of tree planting were by heeling in rather than ploughing, which has hopefully lessened the damage to the site.

It had been thought that this was the first time the hill had

been planted. Searching older maps has shown that the hill was first planted in conifers some time between the publication of the 1st edn 1:2,500 in 1883 and the 2nd edn published in 1902.

David Rowlands kindly spoke about his family's associations with Beacon Ring which began with his grandfather (also David Rowlands) a joint founder of the Montgomeryshire County Times in 1893 and whose ashes were scattered here. A note on David's reminiscences about the site are included in the 'Beacon Ring Diary' section of the CPAT website, at www.cpat.org/beacon/brdia.htm

The location and siting of hillfort is one of a number of themes that can be developed about the Beacon, not only in the past but also in the present day in terms of the historical beacon, the Ordnance Survey trig point and the two transmitter masts next to the site, one of which relays television signals to a wide area of mid Wales and shortly due for digital switchover.



■ *Beacon Ring as shown on the 2nd edition of the 1:2,500 Ordnance Survey, 1902.*

■ *David Rowlands recalled his family's associations with the Beacon Ring hillfort. Photo CPAT 2641-0011*

■ *One of the two Beacon Ring transmitter masts. Photo CPAT 2561-0046*

Farming & Wildlife Advisory Group
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TECHNICAL INFORMATION

Permanent Grassland

Grassland makes up a significant proportion of land use throughout the UK. All grassland needs regular management to maintain productivity and avoid regression to coarse grasses and, eventually, scrub and trees. Modern farming techniques have improved the majority of grassland over the years in order to increase yield and hence profitability. Reseeding, drainage and the increased use of fertilisers and pesticides have led to most grassland being dominated by a few high yielding grass species and therefore not providing a diverse habitat.

Grass fields in mainly arable areas can be particularly important for wildlife as they provide variety of conditions

Improved grassland

Although it is not as species diverse as unimproved grassland, simple management changes can dramatically enhance improved pasture fields for wildlife. In predominantly arable areas any grass fields can be particularly beneficial to wildlife as they offer a different type of habitat and attract different species.

Management advice to benefit wildlife

- Try to retain grassland in areas that are dominated by arable crops.
- Create wildlife corridors between areas of grassland by developing extended hedges or buffer zones around field edges.
- Leave a 1-2 m uncut or ungrazed strip alongside the boundary.
- Try to encourage nectar and pollen sources to grow in field margins e.g. red clover, knapweed, etc.
- When applying fertiliser or pesticides, stop well short of the boundary or field margin strip.
- Try to spot treat, or weed wipe injurious or invasive weeds. Prophylactic spraying of herbicides will reduce the number of species in the sward.
- Avoid overgrazing and poaching.
- Try to delay cutting, or restrict stock access during flowering times.
- When cutting grass fields, be aware of the potential threat to wild animals in the sward. Follow wildlife friendly mowing patterns – cutting from the centre outwards, to allow escape routes.
- Uncut grass margins will provide seed sources and over-wintering cover for insects.
- Allow a mat of dead grass to build up, it will be cover for small mammals and provide nest sites for bumble bees.

Uncut margins provide an important wildlife corridor in grass fields

TS11

■ *FWAG advice note for the management of permanent grassland and wildlife.*

Objectives for 2009/10

The following objectives for 2009/10 suggest themselves from the work carried out in 2008/09. It is hoped that there will be the opportunity to discuss these and other proposals with of colleagues in the Nederlands in the coming months.

- **vegetation management** – devise a management strategy for vegetation on the defences.
- **earthwork management** – devise an earthwork management strategy for the monument.
- **survey and recording** – extend the survey and recording work undertaken in 2008/09 with work-experience students.
- **tree felling** – consider proposals for tree-felling and the return of the interior of the hillfort to grassland.
- **education and outreach** – develop further initiatives focused on the monument.
- **fencing and access** – address the question of fencing around the north-eastern side of the monument.
- **signage** – put up some signage at the site.

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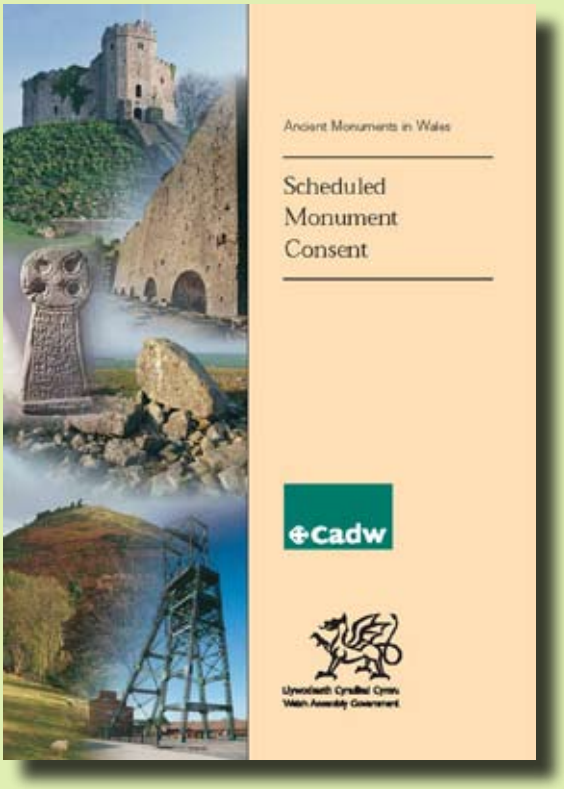
■ *Natural England's Scrub Management Handbook provides advice on vegetation management techniques sympathetic to wildlife.*



■ *Guidance on Scheduled Monument Consent is available from Cadw. Consent is needed for any activity at the site that results in ground disturbance, such as fencing operations, tree-felling, or excavation.*