

DRAFT STAGE

7.0

Archaeology



Figure 14. British Camp Hill Fort 1948 showing the Monument free from scrub.

7.1 Description

While there are many individual archaeological earthworks on the Malvern Hills Conservators' land there are only two that are considered of enough importance to be classified as Scheduled Ancient Monuments; The Shire Ditch and the British Camp Hill Fort. Both these and the non-scheduled earthworks are well described by local archaeologists.

The Shire Ditch is a linear archaeological feature almost running the length of the Malvern Hills. This "Ditch", also known as the Red Earls Dyke, is thought to have been built in the 13th Century by the Earl of Gloucester (the "Red Earl") to separate his land from the Bishop of Hereford's land. The ditch is rumoured to have acted as a "deer diode" to let deer pass only one-way across the ditch. There was conjecture that the Ditch was prehistoric in the mid 19th Century and recent studies have supported this theory.

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The British camp is an Iron Age Hill fort built circa 200 BC. Popular legend has it that the British Chieftain Caractacus held his last stand at the Camp before being captured by the Romans. It is thought that the initial fort was the uppermost 3 ha of the Hill and that this was expanded to 13.5 ha at some time in the Iron Age to incorporate the spurs to the south and northeast.

The condition of these features varies across the two monuments as both cover a large area. There are two main threats to all monuments and other earthworks on the Hills. These are scrub encroachment and erosion.

As with many other features of interest on the Hills they have suffered from the encroachment of scrub. The shallow depth of the soil means that the roots/rhizomes of all trees, scrub and bracken can quickly break up the buried soil horizon that was sealed at the time of construction and could hold information about the time of construction. When trees, scrub and bracken are shading out the monuments they not only reduce their visibility but they also cause the features to silt up, further reducing the visibility of the monument. There has been some considerable scrub clearance from both the Shire Ditch and British Camp and the reintroduced grazing has the valuable impact of preventing regeneration of the scrub and also reducing the strength of the Bracken growth.

The erosion that impacts on the monuments varies from recreational pressure to the water bowsers that are put out for the cattle. Small mammals, in particular Rabbits, also cause localised damage to the earthworks through their burrowing behaviour. All these pressures work alongside the weather to damage the integrity of the earthworks on the Hills. Walkers, mountain bikers, and machinery all have their impacts on the surface. The heavy storms that have characterised recent weather patterns then worsen the initial damage along with the inevitable formation of rills and Gullies that the run off creates. These factors tend to be localised to where visitor pressure is highest, where livestock collect or where water collect and runs at speed down the Hills.



Figure 15. The Shire Ditch near the Worcester Beacon showing signs of erosion.

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7.2 Objective for Archaeology

Both the Shire Ditch and the British Camp will be free from Scrub and the erosion apparent will have decreased from 2006 levels. The monuments will be covered with short turf or weak/patchy bracken habitats that will provide ample visibility of these features. Bare and/or eroded ground will not be obviously evident.

Scrub clearance further down the slope will have further enhanced the condition of the other earthworks on the Hills while the grazing in these areas will have prevented any scrub re-growth from causing further damage. The grazing will have also weakened the areas of Bracken and increased the visibility of the earthworks in these habitats.

The direct recreational pressure on the archaeological earthworks will have lessened and visitors will be encouraged to avoid using the monuments themselves by using different identified routes for their recreational purposes.

Livestock fences and water will, where possible, be sited away from the monuments but localised damage will be balanced with the necessity to provide grazing to keep the monuments in good condition. Small mammal populations will be such that damage to the archaeology is balanced with the valuable grazing resource they offer.

Where erosion causes damage it will be repaired as quickly as possible to protect the features before too much damage takes place.

There will be a regular fixed-point photography survey of the monuments to highlight any damage and therefore guide management.

7.3 Factors

- Grazing pressure. (Upper and Lower Limits).
- Visitor pressure. (Upper and Lower Limits).
- Area of bare eroded ground on monuments. (Upper limit).
- Legal. (Malvern Hills Acts, SSSI, & Commoners rights).

7.4 Attributes

- % of monuments clearly visible. (Lower limit).
- % of monuments covered in Short turf and/or sparse bracken. (Lower limit).

7.5 Management Actions

- Scrub Clearance
- Encouraging recreational users away from the Monuments
- Quick repair of archaeological features

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7.6 Monitoring and Recording Actions

- Fixed point photography.
- Grazing Pressure. (Upper and lower limits).
- Visitor Pressure. (Upper and lower limits).
- Area of bare eroded ground on monuments. (Upper limits).
- All attributes.
- Define all limits.