

This advice forms part of a series of notes for farmers and landowners that will increase the awareness of, and the opportunities for, biodiversity, wildlife and heritage on farmland. It forms part of the Bedfordshire and Luton Biodiversity Action Plan to increase awareness of, and involvement in, the conservation of our wealth of wildlife.

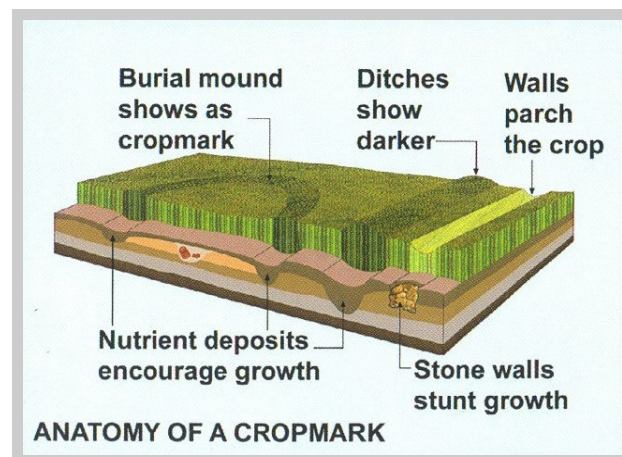
What is the historic environment?

The historic environment comprises the whole of the landscape that has been shaped by man. We will appreciate and enjoy our landscape more if we understand the historic environment.

Features such as hedgerows, ridge and furrow and moated sites are all components of Bedfordshire's important historic landscape. They show where people have lived and worked and how they shaped the landscape with their activities. Within the landscape there are many archaeological sites which vary in size from slag patches (the evidence for small scale Saxon and mediaeval iron working) to large earthworks (deserted settlements, moats and motte and bailey castles). They include linear features (hollow ways or wood-banks) and extensive features such as the unenclosed landscape of Yelden Wolds (a relic of medieval times) and the enclosure landscape around Dunton and Millow largely dating from 1799.



A man-made historic landscape



Archaeological sites are often hidden from view and their presence is only indicated by scatters of artefacts or by crop marks that reflect past settlements, field patterns and ritual sites such as those illustrated on the left.

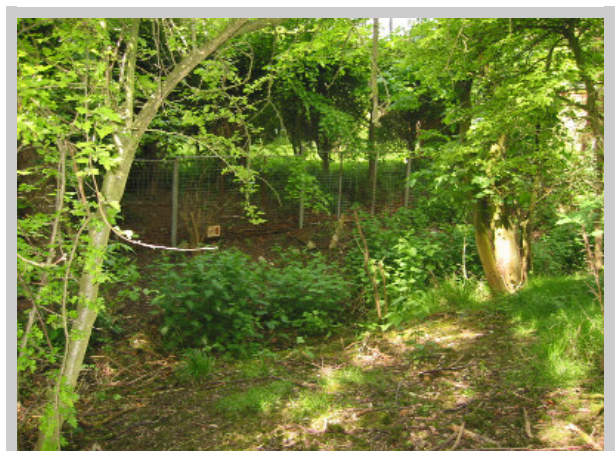
All known archaeological sites in Bedfordshire are entered onto the **Historic Environment Record (HER)**, which now contains more than 18,000 records; however, there are still many unrecorded features like the ridge and furrow shown overleaf.

Sites of national importance (like the unusual rounded moat below) are designated as **Scheduled Ancient Monuments (SAMs)**. The HER and details of SAMs can be consulted at County Hall in Bedford (01234 228072).

Farmers and landowners are encouraged to improve the landscape through the Entry and Higher Level Schemes. The Single Farm Payment and Cross Compliance helps to retain or reduce damage to many features and the improvement of the historic landscape is one of the criteria used to assess the quality of an application to ELS and HLS.

If you are lucky enough to have a SAM on your land there may be money available for management of the site from English Heritage through simple management agreements.

Much can also be done without entering any scheme or agreement by making apparently minor changes to farming decisions as detailed overleaf.



A SAM (an unusual rounded medieval moat),

For more information, help or advice with the historic environment please do not hesitate to contact **Martin Oake**, County Archaeological Officer. Tel: 01234 228074, email: martin.oake@bedscc.gov.uk. For any other farming and wildlife queries please contact **Matthew O'Brien**, County Countryside/ FWAG Officer. Tel: 01234 831052, email matthew.obrien@bedscc.gov.uk.

But you may ask "Why should we conserve archaeological sites and our historic landscape?"

Archaeological features are irreplaceable; once destroyed they are lost forever and cannot be re-created. Many such features are appreciated for their value by local people as well as helping to inform us about how people lived and worked in the past. Such historic features as parish boundary hedges have been present for many hundreds of years and are immensely valuable in wildlife as well as landscape terms. They will normally be species rich and look beautiful with their varied flora and different blossoms and fruits.



A row of Pollard Willows

How can sites be managed? The main aim of archaeological site management is to minimise disturbance to deposits and other features. Disturbance can arise directly from cultivations, natural activities such as burrowing animals or by deliberate human activities including metal detecting and removal of artefacts.

What can I do?

Identifying unknown sites. Many sites are still absent from the HER, contact the County Archaeological Officer if you think you may have a site not on the register. The 'humps and bumps' in a field could be marking the site of a former settlement; the area where you notice odd bits of pottery in the plough soil may not be just a rubbish tip but be something much older or more interesting. You may know of war time remains – perhaps an aircraft crash site or a pillbox that could be valuable information for the HER or you may have some ridge and furrow that no-one else has noticed.



Some Ridge and Furrow that wasn't on the HER

Managing known sites and areas . Here are some simple suggestions that will help to protect the historic environment:



An ancient tree and a restored hedge

- Re-pollard neglected trees that may mark a parish boundary and retain very old trees within the farmed landscape.
- Restore hedgerows in enclosure landscapes or on parish boundaries.
- Avoid planting hedges in old enclosed or historically un-enclosed landscapes, unless replacing recently removed or neglected ones.
- Where archaeological sites are under cultivation revert them to permanent pasture to prevent soil disturbance and damage to buried landscapes and features.
- Where it is not possible to revert archaeological sites to pasture, implement minimum tillage or reduced cultivation techniques to protect vulnerable remains from plough damage.
- Avoid ploughing right up to earthworks and archaeological sites already under pasture to reduce accidental plough damage.
- Undertake careful and agreed vegetation management or scrub clearance on earthworks.
- Locate set aside, where possible, on areas of known archaeological interest in order to minimise ground disturbance.
- Maintain wood-banks around the ancient woods on your farm.

Metal detecting can make a useful contribution to archaeology if practised responsibly;

- Don't allow access to protected sites (SAMs), or land known to contain archaeological remains.
- Only allow responsible enthusiasts onto your land who:
 - Always follow the provisions of the Treasure Act.
 - Limit searching to ground already disturbed i.e. the plough soil.
 - Accurately record and report finds to the Portable Antiquities Scheme Finds Liaison Officer.