

## TECHNICAL INFORMATION

### Archaeology on Farmland

Archaeology is the study of our past through the physical remains left behind. This includes everyday objects, monuments, landscape features and sites buried under ground. These physical remains can provide great insight to previous generations lifestyles. Archaeological sites need to be considered on a farm, as they can be vulnerable to modern agricultural methods and the development of the countryside. Unlike some conservation features, once destroyed, are not replaceable.

Some archaeological features are very obvious such as the ruins in this photograph (right) however, some less obvious features (such as the ridge and furrow in the background) can have great historical value and it is important that these historical features are retained wherever possible. Some archaeological sites can be easily damaged by ploughing or sub-soiling and their value lost. This is especially so on uncultivated or semi-natural land where an Environmental Impact Assessment may be needed before cultivation or intensification.



**Old ruins in the foreground with a good example of ridge and furrow in the background**

The presence of archaeological sites and historical features on farms can generate income. They are valued as part of the UK's agri-environment schemes both to facilitate entry and to potentially trigger payment for their retention and appropriate management.

#### Farming tips to look after ancient monuments



**Old farm buildings may be of historical importance**

#### For all farms

- ? Note all historical features on the farm with the help of your local FWAG Adviser and with reference to local records from your local authority. Most local authorities have an archaeology service.

## In arable

- ? Where possible use minimum cultivation techniques such as flexi-tine harrows or rotary cultivators. Probably the best technique is the use of direct drilling, particularly for winter cereals grown on heavy soils. Soil compaction can be lessened if tractors are fitted with low ground pressure tyres.
- ? Ploughing should be avoided where an ancient monument lies on a sloping site as this will gradually move topsoil downhill, uncovering remains hitherto safely buried. Much the same applies to ploughing on very light land where wind blow will uncover buried sites
- ? Avoid growing root crops on ancient monument sites.

## In grassland

- ? If possible, avoid grazing cattle on such sites, especially on steep sites.
- ? If the site cannot be grazed, prevent the encroachment of scrub by occasional cutting.
- ? Control rabbits, which are capable of causing considerable damage by burrowing.
- ? Site water troughs and feeding areas away from earthworks.



**Hadrian's Wall**

## Treasure Hunting

This activity damages archaeological sites, is illegal on all scheduled monuments (without permission from the Secretary of State for the Environment) and should be actively discouraged on all archaeological sites. Farmers should check that any treasure hunters belong to a recognised club and remember that any material removed without the knowledge or permission of the landowner constitutes theft.

Landowners should of course remember that finds of gold and silver may be deemed Treasure Trove, which is the property of the Crown. Such finds should be reported to the police.

## Environmental Stewardship Opportunities

The new Environmental Stewardship scheme offers opportunities for land with archaeological features. ELS (Entry Level Stewardship) contains options for taking archaeological features out of production and employing sensitive management practices and HLS (Higher Level Stewardship) contains opportunities for funding restoration and protection plans.

For further information see the ELS and HLS Handbooks at [www.defra.gov.uk/erdp/schemes/els/default.htm](http://www.defra.gov.uk/erdp/schemes/els/default.htm)

## Relevant legislation

Scheduled Monuments (SM) are protected by law and require owners to obtain permission from the Secretary of State for the Environment before undertaking certain activities. This law is reinforced by Cross Compliance regulations for the Single Payment Scheme (SPS). Ensure that SMs are identified on your land and managed sensitively to avoid damage. For further details refer to the Defra Cross Compliance Handbook for England 2005 or see [www.crosscompliance.org.uk](http://www.crosscompliance.org.uk)

Where uncultivated or semi-natural land is to be brought into intensive agriculture, there may be a need for an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) that will take into account historical and archaeological features. All farmers should have received an explanatory leaflet early in 2002. A more comprehensive guide (*Guidelines – Environmental Impact Assessment for use of uncultivated land or semi-natural areas for intensive agricultural purposes*) is available free of charge from DEFRA

## Further Information

Contact your local FWAG Adviser and visit the FWAG website: [www.fwag.org.uk](http://www.fwag.org.uk)

### Veteran Trees



Veteran trees form an important part of our cultural and historical heritage, greatly contributing to the landscape in many areas. They are often several hundred years old and have a unique style and form. Many veteran trees have inadvertently been cut down as they were thought to be diseased or dying, however old trees with some dead wood will survive several hundred years. Each tree can support a very wide range of species, including plants, insects, lichens, fungi and micro organisms, many of which only survive in these specialised conditions and are therefore amongst our rarest.

#### **Veteran trees can support a wide range of wildlife**

Rotten timber within veteran trees is an ideal habitat for many insects and hence beneficial to insect-eating birds, bats etc. Hollows and holes provide nesting and roosting sites for birds, bats, other small mammals and insects. Veteran trees can be the host for climbing plants such as ivy, providing nectar sources when no others are available.

Veteran trees are a UK National Biodiversity Action Plan priority habitat.

#### **Management to benefit wildlife**

- ? Leave climbing plants, such as ivy or mistletoe on the tree. They do little or no harm to the tree and provide a great source of nectar and berries.
- ? Where possible try to leave dead wood on the tree as this is hugely beneficial to a wide range of species. However be aware of the potential hazard of veteran trees, some dead wood may need to be removed for safety reasons.
- ? Always seek expert advice before undertaking any restoration work.
- ? In some cases partial or full pollarding of a veteran tree might be beneficial. This should only take place after an individual assessment has been carried out.
- ? If a tree has to be felled for safety reasons, try to leave the trunk and some of the dead wood remaining as it can support a wide range of organisms.



**An upland veteran tree – an excellent habitat for many species on moorland**

## Potential problem issues



**Veteran pollard willow tree**

Avoid:

- ? Cultivating underneath the crown of the tree can cause soil compaction and root damage.
- ? Allowing livestock access to veteran trees. Cattle especially, can cause physical damage and contribute to compaction problems and soil erosion, often exposing and damaging roots.
- ? Spreading fertiliser, pesticides and lime close to trees. These can cause great damage to veteran trees and their associated organisms.
- ? Siting a muckheap near the base of a tree.

## Recommendations

- ? Where possible exclude stock and refrain from cultivations close to veteran trees.
- ? In-field veteran trees should be considered priorities for protection buffer zones. These can be included in Entry Level Stewardship (ELS) and are worth 12 points per tree in arable fields and 8 points per tree in grassland. See the ELS Handbook from Defra for the full details.
- ? Alternatively you can use a block of set aside to create a protection zone. Ideally this should extend out from the canopy by 5m, or a distance from the trunk 15 times the diameter at chest height – whichever is the greater.



**Veteran oak tree**

## Relevant legislation

Under the Good Agricultural and Environmental Conditions (GAEC) requirements for Cross Compliance you must comply with Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs). Felling trees for safety reasons may require a felling licence from the Forestry Commission [www.forestry.gov.uk](http://www.forestry.gov.uk)

## Further Information

For further information including possible grant aid contact your local FWAG Adviser and visit the: Environmentally Responsible Farming and Farmland Biodiversity areas on [www.fwag.org.uk](http://www.fwag.org.uk)

Every effort has been made to ensure accuracy in the information sheet. However, FWAG cannot accept liability for any errors or omission. Photographs courtesy of English Nature, Richard Knight, Marian Wilby 6.3June 2005

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