

Illustrated guide to managing historic environment features

The historic environment is an important and non-renewable resource. It allows us to understand the cultural landscape in which we live, work and play and gives a 'sense of place' and local distinctiveness to our landscapes. This guide concerns historic environment features on farmed land, in grassland, arable and moorland locations.

Notes

Historic environment features are very varied and range from:

- large areas of historic landscape such as the prehistoric field systems across Dartmoor or the areas of ridge and furrow in the Midlands;
- upstanding monuments such as hill forts and barrows; to
- hidden below-ground features that may be ploughed flat but can still contain much important and unique information.

The key to caring for historic environment features is to know where they are on your land. This will allow you to plan farming tasks to manage them well and prevent damage occurring.

All known archaeological sites are recorded on Historic Environment Records (HERs) which are maintained by local authorities. However, many sites have yet to be discovered and you may be aware of sites that are not listed.

Some archaeological sites, known as Scheduled Monuments are protected by law. You will need permission from English Heritage before starting any work on Scheduled Monuments.. More details on this can be seen below.

To help avoid accidental damage to any archaeological site or feature make sure all workers and contractors are aware of the historic environment features on your farm and of their value.

Remember! The historic environment is irreplaceable. Once lost it can never be regained!

Historic environment features in grassland

Grassland is a highly beneficial form of land management for archaeological sites. However, damage can still occur as a result of:

- livestock poaching or erosion;
- careless use of farm vehicles;
- grassland improvement or land drainage works;
- scrub or bracken encroachment;
- burrowing animals including rabbits and badgers;
- new fencing, ponds or scrapes and tree planting.

Historic features in grassland

Ideal



Ideal management of historic features in grassland is a short, dense sward with no bare earth, animal burrows, trees or scrub

Avoid



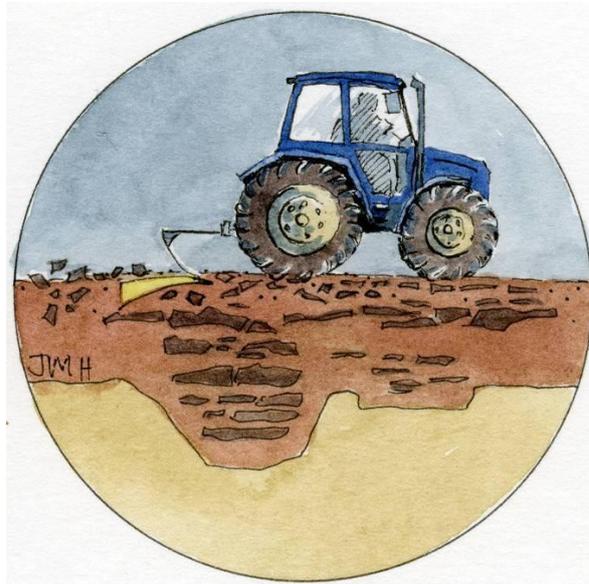
Poor management of historic features in grassland

- Ploughing old pasture where there are 'lumps and bumps' that are signs of historic features, such as ridge and furrow.
- Soil erosion, compaction and all other types of ground disturbance including rutting or poaching. Where necessary move tracks and access points to avoid historic features.
- Sub soiling, pan busting and mole ploughing.
- Planting trees or letting scrub develop.
- Placing feeders on features or allowing patches of bare earth or poaching.
- Stone picking and cleaning.
- Installing new drainage or altering existing drainage systems.
- Allowing animals to dig burrows or other holes.
- Removing historic boundaries or creating new boundaries, including fences, across features.

Historic environment features in arable

Many archaeological sites cannot be seen and can be buried below the level of normal ploughing, surviving as pits, ditches and walls and finds in the subsoil. The following are some of the most common indicators of presence of archaeological remains on arable land:

- Pottery, flint tools, bone, plaster and other fragments appearing on the soil surface after ploughing
- Soil colour changes or patches of stony ground and building material on the field surface.
- Crop growth differences across archaeological sites. For instance, crops will grow higher and ripen later over ditches which contain more earth and are damper. Crops grow shorter and ripen earlier over walls which have less earth and are drier.



Historic features below the plough line

Even regular cultivation to the same depth can result in damage to archaeological sites, particularly where the management of a field is combined with factors such as slope and soil types.

Ideal



Ideal management of historic features in arable

- Revert the area of the historic feature to permanent grassland.
- Revert a large enough area to enhance the setting of the feature.

Where this is not possible

Consider other options to minimise the risks of damaging below ground archaeology, for example, direct drilling or non inversion tillage.

Avoid



Poor management of historic features in arable

- Ploughing any deeper than usual.
- Planting root crops, short rotation coppice or turf stripping.
- Ploughing close to upstanding monuments and earthworks.
- Sub-soiling, pan busting and mole ploughing
- Altering or creating new drainage.
- Stone picking or cleaning.
- Erecting new fences, planting hedgerows, tree planting or scrub growth across the site.
- Soil erosion and compaction by following good soil management practices.

Historic environment features in moorland



English moors and heaths are internationally important for their historic environment and landscape interest because, in general, they have not been changed or damaged by many hundreds of years of agriculture or development.

They are particularly rich in prehistoric features, including stone hut circles, trackways and remnants of ancient field systems. They are also rich in industrial remains, such as peat cutting and lead mining.

Over one fifth of all Scheduled Monuments are found in upland moorlands.



The scale of the uplands means that there are a great number of historic environment sites still to be recorded.

Those that are known will be on the Historic Environment Record, but you can also look out for:

- Circular walls - these may indicate the remains of prehistoric houses.
- Linear earthworks or low walls- these may be field or property boundaries.
- The remains of peat digging - including areas where turves were dried and where cutters temporarily lived.

Ideal



Ideal management of historic feature on moorland. Low dwarf shrub or grassy cover with no bare soil or poaching

Avoid



Poor management of historic feature on moorland

- Do not remove or move stone from historic boundaries or structures.
- When undertaking moorland restoration do not disturb the ground on archaeological sites.
- Do not allow bracken to grow on archaeological features.
- Do not install new drainage which could affect an archaeological site.
- Do not burn or have fires on features.

Further information

Natural England publications are available to download from the Natural England website at www.naturalengland.org.uk. In particular see:

- NE229: *Farming for the historic environment*
- TIN001: *The historic environment and woodland management*
- TIN047: *Bracken management: ecological, archaeological and landscape issues and priorities*
- TIN054: *Guidance on protecting soils and the historic environment when restoring or re-creating lowland heathland*

For enquiries please contact the Natural England Helpline on 0300 060 0863 or email enquiries@naturalengland.org.uk

In addition, a series of leaflets on *Farming the Historic Landscape* are downloadable from English Heritage on their Historic Environment – Local Management website at

www.helm.org.uk/server/show/nav.19661, including

- *Caring for archaeological sites on arable land*
- *Caring for archaeological sites on grassland*
- *Caring for farm buildings*
- *An introduction for land advisors*
- *Farming the historic landscape: parklands*

Details of your local Historic Environment Record can be found at:

www.algao.org.uk/members/fs_memb.htm or on the [Heritage Gateway](http://www.heritagegateway.org.uk/Gateway/CHR/)

The location of scheduled monuments, registered parks and gardens and battlefields can be found on www.magic.gov.uk.

If you are unsure what your legal obligations are, please contact English Heritage or visit its website at www.english-heritage.org.uk.

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This guidance has been developed to support Environmental Stewardship agreements. It does not replace an agreement and you must continue to follow the prescriptions and specifications.

The outcomes shown may not be appropriate or suitable for all sites. Please consult scheme handbooks or your Natural England adviser for further information.

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