

# **Chailey Commons Society**

## **Memorial Common – Notes on field walk and survey to inform sketch maps of track ways and landscape features**

**Undertaken by Cate Metheringham, final year BA (Hons) Archaeology, University of Bristol and Linda Ball, Chailey Commons Society**

**September 2009**

### **Background**

This project is part of a larger archaeological and historical landscape survey of Memorial Common, North Chailey, East Sussex (Ball, 2007).

This inquiry was devised as an opportunity to involve an archaeology student in our survey of Memorial Common. The focus was specifically on evidence of trackways and landscape features and how these evolved over time in relation to main communication routes through the area. The notes in this short paper are intended to inform decisions about specific lines of inquiry for the future. Preliminaries involved a literature survey of existing documentation, examination of the HER, maps and other sources, gathered by the Chailey Commons Society. A sketch map (Figure 1) was compiled from OS 1:6000, ESHER and aerial photograph (2006) (Figure 2) provided by East Sussex Archaeological Team.

This paper is to be read with a survey over the same site of WW2 remains (Seccombe, 2008), and surveys on adjacent sites on Chailey Common (Butler, 2008).

GPS was deemed unsuitable for use in the woodland area, so map references were approximated using OS: 1:6000 and the Explorer series, field measurement techniques and aerial maps. A series of photographs are available on the Chailey Commons website to accompany this paper.

### **Wooded area adjacent to A275**

The walk started at the NE corner of Memorial Common, adjacent to the A275 (TQ391209) and progressed in a southerly direction along a footpath through woodland of birch saplings, the occasional mature oak, oak saplings, ash and hazel. Gorse tended to be encroaching on the western extremity of the area and bracken was spread throughout, obscuring the terrain in places.

### **Parallel tracks**

Immediately visible were six parallel tracks each in its own hollow way, aligning N/S, and encroaching into the Common up to 100 metres W from the A275. Typical width for each: 5 metres x 60 cms (dip to dip). Approximate area and position of trackways are shown on sketch map (TQ391208).

A ditch and bank with a change in ground level was encountered running on a SW-NE axis (59 metres in length). It was observed that to the south of this ditch, the nature of the woodland changed to coppiced oak, ash and hazel, predominantly with little evidence of birch, indicating that this may have been a managed coppice woodland surrounded by a pale.

## **Quarries**

This enclosed coppice continued to the start of the sand quarry (TQ390206) and extensive earthworks, excavation and spoil heaps continued until 200 m from the Beggar's Wood Road junction (see sketch map). It was noted that this quarrying activity was likely to have been established at least 100-200 years ago, indicated by the ways in which mature oaks were growing from the quarry escarpments.

It was noted that the quarrying activity appears to have carried onto the eastern side of the A275, with further evidence of excavation and uneven ground with an escarpment on the eastern side of the shaw, bordering the field which was at a much higher level. The N-S A275 appears to dissect the quarry.

South of the quarrying activity, a footpath or bank and ditch aligning with the gate on the A275 (TQ390205) may be the southernmost border of the land available for quarrying, or the limit of the coppiced woodland, as there is little evidence of coppicing south of this point.

## **Hollow way**

A deep hollow way (100m west of A275, see sketch map, Figure 2) extends for a continuous length of 70 metres (N/S direction), and appears to merge at the northern end with the track-ways described earlier, and at the southern end disappearing into quarrying activity. The hollow way appears to mark the western limit of quarrying activity.

Two trackways appear to converge on the southern edge of the quarry/earthworks so trackways appear to be earlier or contemporary with the quarry. The woodland changes to birch saplings, some hazel and the occasional standard oak.

## **Parallel tracks**

Continuing in a southerly direction, (TQ390204) after the quarry area, the six parallel trackways appear as before, indicating that these trackways were more ancient than the quarry activity. Coppicing continues on the roadside flank of this area, with hazel, birch, oak towards the southern boundary of Memorial Common which becomes more waterlogged.

The walk continues to the shaw area on the south side of Beggar's Wood Road to see if there is a continuation of track-ways. There are no signs, but evidence of coppicing – hazel and an ancient specimen of a coppiced ash tree. (Note, this particular tree was estimated to be 5-600 years' old by David Brown, woodland archaeologist, on a previous occasion.)

## **Site by Memorial Stone**

Examination of the aerial map had thrown up strong visual evidence of trackways and hollow ways (N-S axis) adjacent to the site of the Memorial Stone (TQ389207). In particular, 5 – 6 parallel trackways (running N-S) with shallow rounded peaks and troughs occur at approx 8m apart and these undulations continue for a distance of 200 metres (N-S). There is evidence of continuation in a N direction into the scraped area. These features are different in nature to the trackways in the woodland, with the dips being further apart (approx 8m compared with 5m in the woodland).

## **Crossways**

Close to the centre of Memorial Common, it is possible to see the evolution of a crossing of ways over time by studying maps from 17<sup>th</sup> century through to 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> and later editions of the OS maps. One way appears from the Wivelsfield direction (SW), crossing Pound common and emerging by the stream and culvert at Beggar's Wood Road (TQ385206). It continues the line in a NE direction, crossing with another route from SE to N TQ388208. The modern Explorer shows this clearly as two crossing footpaths. Earlier maps appear to indicate these ways were more prominent, and have diminished in status to footpaths (OS 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> editions). A powerpoint presentation of maps is available on the website to inform this assertion.

The line of both paths is seen to continue beyond the boundaries of the Common, north to the Ouse crossing, south to the Downs, and most noticeably on the eastern side where one way continues into Downsview, just south-east of the King's Head. The south westerly route has already been mentioned. On the ground, there are remnants of hollow ways for both paths, particularly the SW to NE path, and these have been recorded photographically. It is worth noting the close proximity of Roman sites (HER: MES7237 and MS1273), evidence of early occupation and bloomeries, so these trackways could be associated with early settlements and industrial activity. The migration of livestock and the common practice of folding to fertilize the land between downland and weald may also account for regular traffic on these and on the N-S parallel tracks (Butler, 2008).

## **Next steps**

- Selection of specific areas for further inquiry, and accurate survey methods using GPS.
- Discussion on the direction of trackways in the context of the bigger picture referring to historical maps, HER, and constructing a map illustration of the evolution of main communication routes over time.

## **Contextual information and references**

Ball L (2007) 'Outline Proposal for an Archaeological and Historic Landscape Survey of Memorial Common, part of Chailey Commons, Chailey, East Sussex to be undertaken by the Archaeology Group of volunteers,' Chailey Commons Society. October.

Butler C (2008) 'An Archaeological Survey of Chailey Common,' East Sussex, Phase 1 and Phase 2, Chris Butler, Archaeological Services/East Sussex County Council.

Seccombe I (2008) 'Descriptive survey of second world war features on Memorial Common,' Chailey Commons Society.

## **Other sources**

Chailey Commons Society website: [www.chaileycommons.org.uk](http://www.chaileycommons.org.uk)  
East Sussex Archaeological Service, ESCC, Lewes, East Sussex  
Ordnance Survey, aerial maps

