

The Scheduled
Ancient Monuments
of *Leicestershire* and *Rutland*
Leonard Cantor

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Front Cover: Kirby Muxloe Castle. (photo: Leonard Cantor, 1972)

Back cover left to right:

Fenny Drayton prehistoric bowl barrow (photo: Robin Stevenson (2002)

Belgrave medieval bridge (photo: Leonard Cantor, 2002)

Anglo-Saxon Cross at Sproxton (photo: Miriam Gill, 2000)

Plan of Hallaton Castle by Robert F. Hartley

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The Scheduled Ancient Monuments of Leicestershire and Rutland

Dedication

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What are Scheduled Ancient Monuments?

Scheduled Ancient Monuments, or SAMs for short, are nationally important archaeological sites which, in the words of English Heritage, “have helped to shape the character of our landscape and are often familiar and cherished landmarks [which] teach us about our past and offer an important educational and recreational resource”¹

It should be noted, however, that in its current and recent publications, English Heritage is using the term “scheduled monuments”, thereby dropping the word “ancient”, presumably because an increasing number of them date from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, such as in Leicestershire the Foxton inclined plane and Snibston Colliery. However these form only a tiny fraction of scheduled monuments generally and as the term “Scheduled Ancient Monuments” is still being widely used and understood, it seems appropriate to use it in the title of this book.

“Scheduling” is a process which applies only to nationally important archaeological structures and sites and can only be conferred by the Secretary of State, acting on the advice of English Heritage, the national body charged by the government with the role of caring for the historic environment. Technically, scheduled ancient monuments are so-called because, when designated, they are added to a schedule which was first drawn up as a list of protected monuments attached to the first Act of Parliament dealing with such

matters in 1882. Almost a century later, in 1979, another Act, the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act, gave the Secretary of State powers to take decisions on scheduling. As we have seen, he acts on the advice of English Heritage, which is currently completing a major overhaul of the schedule of monuments, through a project entitled the Monuments Protection Programme which is reassessing all known archaeological sites with a view to confirming their status, de-scheduling them or redefining their boundaries.² This Programme was initiated in response to an urgent need to protect nationally important monuments which are often very vulnerable to damage, by the carrying out of unauthorised works or by vandalism. It is expected that once the Monuments Protection Programme has been completed, there will be an increase in the number of monuments that are scheduled. Once sites



¹ *The sign outside the ruins of the big house at Bradgate Park announcing it as an Ancient Monument.*

have been scheduled, damage to them is a criminal offence. Metal-detecting equipment may not be used on scheduled sites nor objects found by detecting equipment be removed from them without a licence from English Heritage. Works of repair or alteration to scheduled ancient monuments are also strictly controlled and before any work can take place consent must be obtained from the Secretary of State.

Scheduling alone, however, does not automatically protect monuments from neglect, if only because to maintain them in good condition can often be a costly business. Ruins, for example, like buildings, require maintenance. However, grants are available from English Heritage to cover part of the cost of repairs to monuments and for archaeological recording and consolidation. Moreover, English Heritage have a body of Inspectors of Ancient Monuments and Field Monument Wardens among whose tasks is to facilitate good management of the sites. Happily, the vast majority of owners of land containing scheduled ancient monuments are keenly interested in them and are anxious to ensure their well-being.

The local authorities also have an important part to play in the protection and designation of scheduled monuments. When formulating development plans and in their planning processes generally they are expected to give regard to their conservation and can put forward to English Heritage new sites for scheduling. In the case of Leicestershire, for example, much of this remit falls to the Heritage and Resources

Team within the Department of Planning and Transportation; in the City of Leicester to the Archaeological Officer; and in Rutland to the Conservation Officer.

England as a whole has a rich and varied heritage of scheduled ancient monuments. Across the whole country, the schedule contains about 18,000 entries representing around 31,000 sites. (A given entry may cover a number of adjacent sites). Of these, the two counties contain over 200 monuments. These include *prehistoric burial mounds, Iron Age hill forts, Roman remains, Deserted Medieval Villages, monastic and manorial remains, moated sites, windmills, bridges,* and more recent structures such as *collieries, blast furnaces* and *inclined planes* such as that at Foxton Locks on the Grand Union Canal in Leicestershire.

Although most monuments are well worth seeing and are often very evocative of the past, some are not visible above ground and may only be seen from the air while others, though they may contain buried remains, give no outward signs at all. This last group have been scheduled because of their historical significance and archaeological potential. Finally, although generally speaking scheduling can cover buildings as well as ruins, those capable of active use are “listed”, that is given another form of protection by English Heritage, rather than scheduled. This applies particularly to churches in ecclesiastical use. However, a number of *ruined churches* in the two counties are scheduled.

A Short History of Scheduled Ancient Monuments

The oldest scheduled monument in Leicestershire and Rutland dates to the *Neolithic Period*. An *enclosure* at Husbands Bosworth was first inhabited around 3000BC. The next oldest sites date from the *Bronze Age*, roughly the period from 1800 to 550BC in North-West Europe.³ During this time, the region was thought to be thinly populated as no important trade routes crossed it. Among the few scheduled sites are *bowl barrows*, burial mounds, such as those at Fenny Drayton, Misterton, Sproxton, Sutton Cheney and Wigston Parva, in Leicestershire. Also scheduled and probably dating from this time are the *earthworks*, known as King Lud's Intrenchments, at Sproxton, in north-east Leicestershire.

However, as a result of the considerable increase in archaeological fieldwork in the last decade or so, much more has become known about Leicestershire and Rutland in the late Bronze Age and the Iron Age which followed it, that is during the first millennium BC.⁴ For example, during the earlier part of this period, Bronze Age settlements are known to have existed at Glen Parva, Kirby Muxloe, Eye Kettleby and Melton Mowbray in Leicestershire and Ridlington in Rutland.

The second half of the first millennium BC ushered in the *Iron Age* and it is our knowledge of this period, more than any other, that has benefited from the above-mentioned archaeological fieldwork. For

example, it now appears that there were more than 220 locations of late Iron Age occupation in the two counties. However, the most conspicuous monuments of this era are the *hill-forts*, or camps, whose earthen banks and ditches encircle hill-tops as at Beacon Hill, near Woodhouse Eaves, Breedon-on-the-Hill, Burrough-on-the-Hill, and possibly Robin-a-Tiptoe Hill, near Tilton-on-the-Hill, all in Leicestershire, all of which are scheduled. Other enclosures of this period, probably built to contain stock and, therefore, not strongly defended, are at Belton and Thurlaston in Leicestershire and Ridlington, in Rutland.

The *Roman* conquest of Britain began in AD43 when Claudius invaded the country. Within a few years, the Roman army had occupied much of lowland England, establishing a western frontier based on the Fosse Way from Exeter to Lincoln. Four military sites were established in the two counties: Leicester (Ratae Corieltavorum), Mancetter (Manduessedum), near Witherley and High Cross (Venonis) near Wigston

Parva, in Leicestershire; and Great Casterton, in Rutland. Leicester fairly soon became a centre of local government, eventually covering an area of over 100 acres. The scheduled monuments of Roman origin in the city are the *Jewry Wall and Roman Baths* in the centre of



2 The Roman remains of the Jewry Wall and Roman Baths, Leicester.

the city, and the *Raw Dykes*, the remains of a Roman aqueduct by the Aylestone Road. Civilian settlements were also established at Mancetter, High Cross and Great Casterton, all of them scheduled, and smaller, unscheduled ones at Normanton le Heath and Ravenstone, both in North-West Leicestershire.

In the countryside, *villas* were built, ranging from palatial mansions to more simple dwellings. Evidence of at least six Roman villas has been found: three of them scheduled, at Cold Newton, Lockington-Hemington and Rothley in Leicestershire; and three unscheduled, at Drayton, Wycomb and Great Glen, also in Leicestershire.

When Britain was finally abandoned as a province of the Roman Empire by the middle of the fifth century, the **Anglo-Saxon** period began and lasted for some 600 years, until 1066 and the Norman Conquest. It was a period of constant upheaval, with the Saxons moving into the country and establishing kingdoms, of which Mercia covering much of Middle England was the largest. Our region was also greatly affected by Viking invasions in the late ninth and tenth centuries. Perhaps the finest Anglo-Saxon remains in the two

counties are the outstanding sculptures in the church on Breedon-on-the-Hill, Leicestershire, but as they are inside the church they are not a scheduled monument. The same applies to three Anglo-Saxon stones from a cross, situated in the south aisle of All Saints Church, Asfordby, Leicestershire. However, the Anglo-Saxon crosses outside the parish churches at Rothley in Charnwood and Sproxtton in north-east Leicestershire are scheduled. The other scheduled monuments of Anglo-Saxon origin in the two counties are the burial mound, or *hlaew*, at Stoke Golding, in Leicestershire, and the mount, on which a *moot*, or meeting house, was situated in the parish of Burley, in Rutland.

The Norman Conquest of 1066 ushered in the **Middle Ages** a period which is generally taken to have lasted for over 400 years until the defeat of Richard III at Bosworth Field and the accession of Henry VII, the first Tudor monarch, in 1485. In landscape terms, however, the end of medieval England is more specifically marked by 1540, following the Dissolution of the Monasteries. Over that long period, the population grew, towns and villages were consolidated, monastic buildings erected, communications developed, and buildings and parks were raised and created in the countryside. As a consequence, medieval remains of one sort or another make up the great bulk of scheduled ancient monuments in the two counties, including over 20 *castles* erected by the Norman barons and their successors, of which Leicester Castle was the most prominent. From the twelfth century onwards, monasticism flourished only to be brought to an abrupt halt by the Dissolution in the 1530s. Among the relatively few scheduled *monastic remains* in Leicestershire are those of Leicester Abbey, and Grace Dieu and Ulverscroft Priors.

Throughout the medieval period, villages were abandoned for various reasons and Leicestershire in particular has many *Deserted Medieval Villages*, 27 of



3 *Anglo-Saxon carved stones from a cross in All Saints Church, Asfordby, Leicestershire.*

A3 Prehistoric Enclosures

There are three Iron Age scheduled enclosures in the two counties. Situated on relatively low ground, they were more likely to have contained stock than to have been strongly defended settlements. The only causewayed enclosure, at Husbands Bosworth, is much older, and with more diverse uses.

The Belton enclosure (NORTH-WEST LEICS, O.S.129, SK451199) is a circular earthwork, about a kilometre south-east of the village of Belton, west of Shepshed. It stands on the summit of a small hill just over 80 metres high and is approximately 100 metres in extent east to west and 80 metres north to south. The original entrance was probably on the north-west side. An Iron Age type of quern has been found in the enclosure ditch and Roman pottery nearby. The area was cultivated in the Middle Ages and there are faint traces of ridge and furrow.

In the parish of **Husbands Bosworth**, 175 metres west of Wheler Lodge Farm (HARBOROUGH, O.S.140 SP640823), the buried remains of a large causewayed enclosure have been revealed by recent geophysical survey and excavations. Two concentric interrupted ditches survive well as a buried feature, and are likely to preserve artefacts such as pottery fragments and flint tools. Over 50 such enclosures have been recorded nationally, constructed in the Neolithic period, between about 3000 and 2400BC and continued in use later. They were used for various functions including settlement, defence and ceremonial and funerary purposes. Amongst the earliest field monuments to survive in the modern landscape, they are considered to be of national importance.

A4 Prehistoric Settlements

Two prehistoric settlement sites are scheduled in the two counties: Ridlington, in Rutland and South Kilworth in Leicestershire.

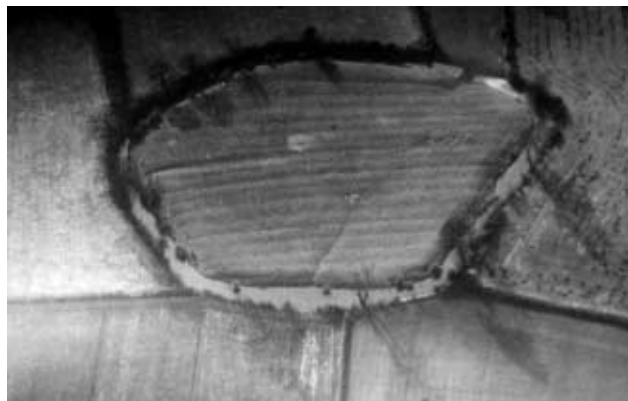


Photo: Leicestershire Museums Service

11 *The circular prehistoric enclosure of Belton, Leicestershire, from the air. Traces of ridge and furrow, medieval cultivation, can be seen within the enclosure.*

The Lockington enclosure (NORTH-WEST LEICS, O.S.129, SK478306) lies just north of Ratcliffe Lane and, discovered from the air, seems to have been a complex one containing some 20 hut circles, probably occupied at different times. In the next field is the site of a Roman villa (see p.24). The three western sides survive, the eastern edge having been removed, presumably when the village was extended in that direction. The bi-vallate, or double, earthworks vary in height and are most marked on the northern perimeter where the ground slopes steeply away to the Chater valley. The land is privately owned and not accessible to the public.

The Thurlaston enclosure is a small site in a field in the parish of Thurlaston (BLABY O.S.140, SK506006) occupying about 0.25 hectares in area. Sub-oval in shape, its entrance was on the east side.

Ridlington settlement site lies on the western edge of the village, four kilometres north-west of Uppingham (RUTLAND, O.S.141, SK846027). Located behind a bank and hedge on the west side of West Lane, it is roughly semi-circular in shape, with earthworks round the three western sides, the eastern side having been removed, presumably when the present village was extended in that direction. The bi-vallate earthworks vary in height and are most marked

on the northern perimeter where the ground slopes steeply away to the Chater valley. The land is privately owned and not accessible to the public.

The **South Kilworth** site lies 800 metres southwest of the village, five kilometres south-east of Lutterworth (HARBOROUGH, O.S.140, SP600814). However, no traces of it are to be seen on the ground.

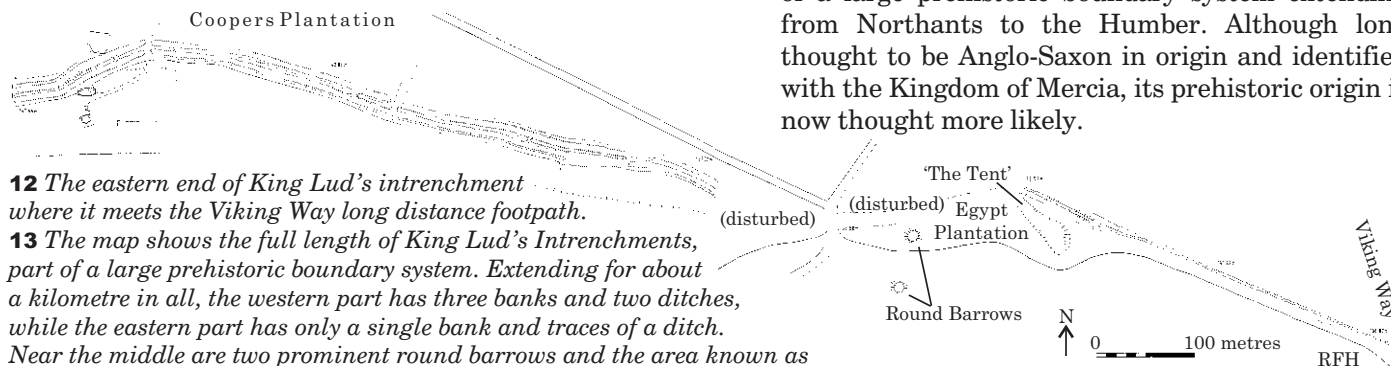
A5 Prehistoric Intrenchments

The site known as **King Lud's Intrenchments** (MELTON O.S.130, SK867279), presumably named after King Lud,

a mythical king of Britain, is situated on the parish boundaries of Sproxton and Croxton Kerial, in north-east Leicestershire, close to the Lincolnshire border. It consists of a multiple bank and ditch system contained within two long spinneys. It extends east to west for about a kilometre and is followed by a parish boundary for the whole of its length. Its construction involved the movement of huge quantities of earth and therefore the deployment of a great deal of manpower. The banks are up to 0.75 metres high and the ditches are on average 8 metres wide. They are best seen at their eastern end where there is a gap in the hedge close to where the minor road from Croxton Kerial joins that from Saltby. The purpose of such earthworks was to mark important boundaries in the landscape and King Lud's Intrenchments may have been part of a large prehistoric boundary system extending from Northants to the Humber. Although long thought to be Anglo-Saxon in origin and identified with the Kingdom of Mercia, its prehistoric origin is now thought more likely.



Photo: Robin Stevenson, 2002



12 The eastern end of King Lud's intrenchment where it meets the Viking Way long distance footpath.

13 The map shows the full length of King Lud's Intrenchments, part of a large prehistoric boundary system. Extending for about a kilometre in all, the western part has three banks and two ditches, while the eastern part has only a single bank and traces of a ditch. Near the middle are two prominent round barrows and the area known as 'The Tent', a small quarry where legend has it King Lud kept his horses.