

# Habitats and Hillforts

The "Habitats and Hillforts of Cheshire's Sandstone Ridge" is an exciting new Landscape Partnership Scheme which will help to:

- understand and conserve the natural and historic heritage of the Ridge
- increase people's awareness and appreciation of its special assets
- provide opportunities for people to access and enjoy its heritage.

The Project will run for three years (2008-11), and is led by Cheshire County Council with the support of the Heritage Lottery Fund Landscape Partnership Scheme.

The Project will focus on the areas surrounding the six Iron Age hillforts stretching along 25km of the Sandstone Ridge. The six hillforts are: Helsby, Woodhouse, Eddisbury, Kelsborrow, Beeston and Maiden Castle

The Scheme will deliver a wide range of outputs including:

- Archaeological investigation and management of 6 Iron Age hill forts
- 40 hectares of new/restored habitats
- 1300 metres of restored hedgerows; 700 metres of sandstone walls restored
- 700 metres of footpath improvements
- 4.1 kms of permissive access
- A range of promotional material, including booklets and on-site interpretational panels
- A range of events & activities including a guided walk programme, reminiscence workshop and community workshop
- Over 350 training and education days

## The Four Programmes....



**Habitats of the Ridge**  
- conserving woodlands, heathlands, meres and mosses to create a habitat network.



**Hillforts of the Ridge**  
- investigating and managing the hillforts through archaeological survey and management plans



**Access and Interpretation**  
- improving access and interpretation and links to the Sandstone Trail



**Training and Volunteers**  
- opportunities for volunteering and training in archaeological and habitat survey techniques and practical conservation



Habitats and Hillforts



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# Habitats and Hillforts

## Woodhouse

This fort is part owned by the Woodland Trust and part by a private owner and is located close to Frodsham. The Sandstone Trail runs along the summit which is surrounded with woodland. The fort itself has been colonised by trees and there are significant new woodlands planted nearby. To the north east there are large agricultural fields leading to a golf course. To the south west is Foxhill Arboretum which is linked to the hillfort by further woodland. There are good views from the summit towards Helsby Hill and to Wales and Manchester. The Beacon Hill Hotel with its large car park is located nearby to the north.

## Helsby

Helsby Hillfort is owned by the National Trust and overlooks Frodsham and Helsby at the northern end of the Ridge. There are also fine views towards Woodhouse Hill. To the north of the summit area on the scarp is semi natural woodland through which there passes an old carriage way. The fort itself is rough grassland, somewhat obscured by gorse, which it is planned to remove. Half of the fort is under agricultural use. The hill is popular with visitors and there are many footpaths. Helsby quarry managed by Vale Royal Borough Castle is located to the south.

## Beeston

The castle is owned by Peckforton Estate and leased by English Heritage who operate it as a heritage attraction. There are panoramic views, particularly to the north and east towards the Gowy River and beyond. The fort is wooded on all sides with broad-leaved woodland and beyond this there are agricultural fields managed by the three farms of Castle Side, Castle Gate and Home Farm. There are the remains of the castle walls and gateways and there are visitor facilities provided. The site has many footpaths and is well known as a local visitor and educational attraction.

## Kelsborrow

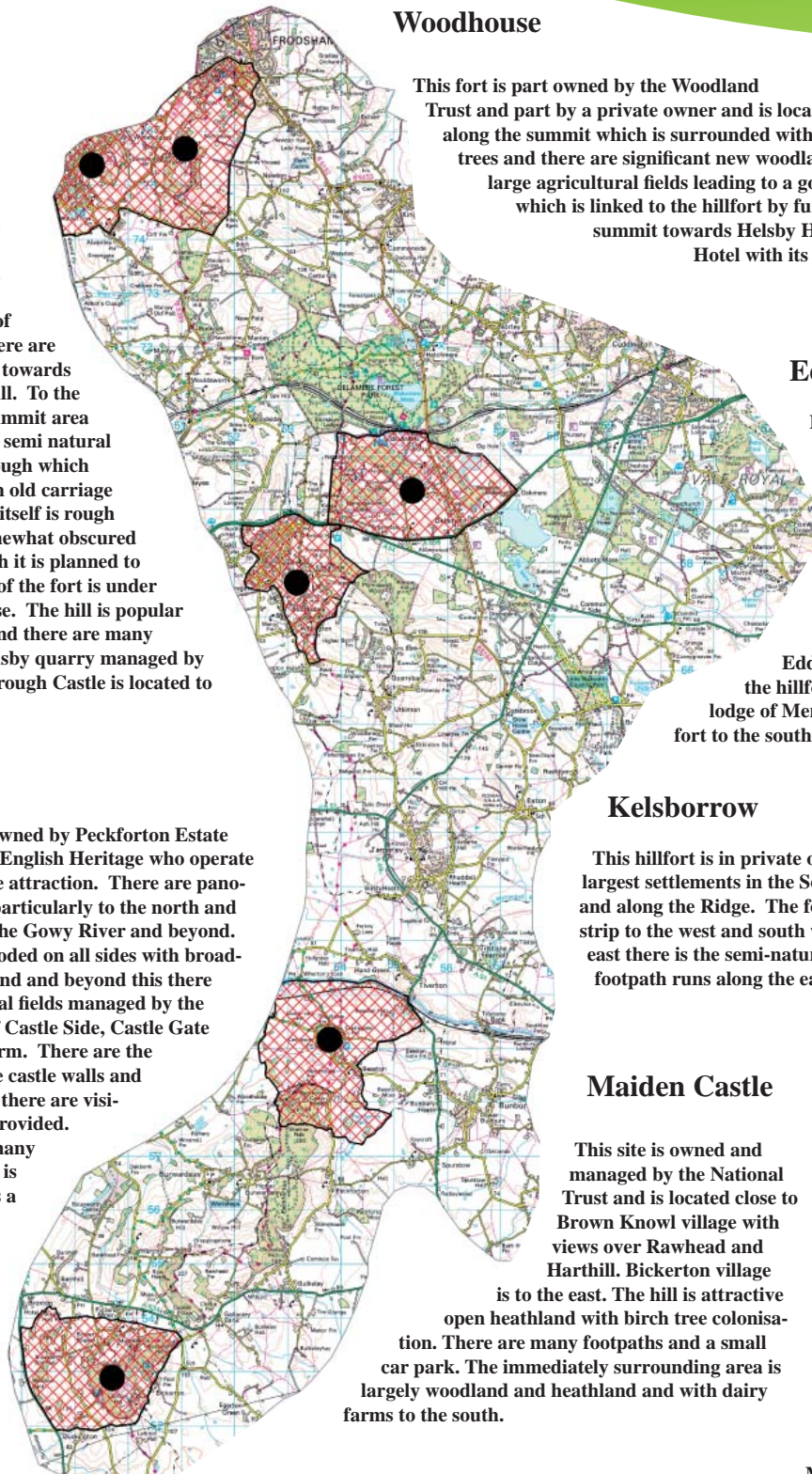
This hillfort is in private ownership and is located close to Kelsall, one of the largest settlements in the Scheme area. There are panoramic views to the west and along the Ridge. The fort itself is a grassland field. There is a woodland strip to the west and south west which it is planned to enhance. To the south east there is the semi-natural broadleaved woodland of Birch Hill. A public footpath runs along the eastern edge of the hillfort.

## Maiden Castle

This site is owned and managed by the National Trust and is located close to Brown Knowl village with views over Rawhead and Harthill. Bickerton village is to the east. The hill is attractive open heathland with birch tree colonisation. There are many footpaths and a small car park. The immediately surrounding area is largely woodland and heathland and with dairy farms to the south.

## Eddisbury

Eddisbury Hillfort is located close to the Forestry Commission estate at Delamare and there are fine views along the Ridge to the south. The fort is in private ownership and the field within the boundary of the Scheduled Monument is cultivated. The slopes are rough grassland and the surrounding land is agricultural fields with hedgerows and walls. To the immediate north west of the site is Old Pale Heights, a former farm now converted to residential uses, whilst Eddisbury Hill farm buildings are to the south east of the hillfort. The remains of the former medieval hunting lodge of Merrick's Hill are located immediately adjacent to the fort to the south east.



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Map of Sandstone Ridge showing hillforts and management zones  
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