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Fig 1: Leading down to the Springs from the NT carpark

The Breinton Springs, a short distance from the city of Hereford, is a popular destination for walkers, part of a five mile circular route promoted by Herefordshire Council. The Spring itself lies below Breinton Camp, an earthwork enclosure which archaeological excavation has yielded evidence for buildings apparently occupied by the Cathedral Treasurer during the medieval period. Association of the spring with the site and adjacent Deserted medieval village in the National Trust orchard next to St Michael's Church is likely. Its veneration implied by stonework forming a niche around the issues although the date of its lintel and support pier structure is unknown.

Below the site of the Spring a steep-sided gully, some 2.5 metres deep, had been formed by erosion during very wet weather. This gully had in summer become very overgrown so that it presented a concealed hazard to visitors.



Fig 2: Landslip shortly after it occurred, 20th Dec 2012 (view from above)



Fig 3: The site in winter 2012/3
(view from the south)

Method

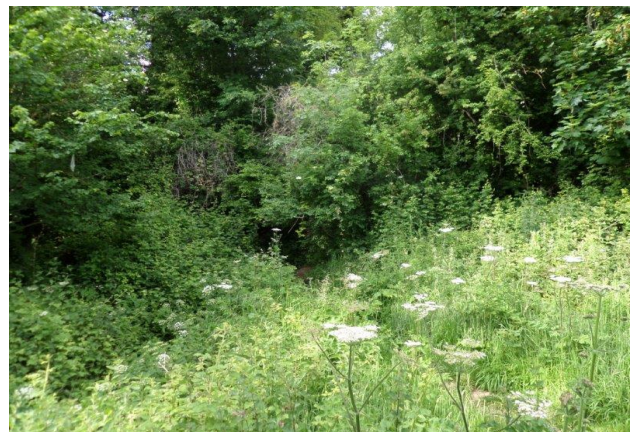
Following discussion with Iain Carter, the National Trust's manager for the Herefordshire Countryside properties, a plan of reinstatement was agreed:

- Fallen and damaged trees to be felled using a chainsaw and cleared by hand. This comprised a tall ash of moderate size (ring count 35 years) lying at an angle at the base of the landslip, a young sycamore and some elder. Three or four smaller sycamore were also removed using bow saws. Hawthorn and young elm present at the site was left.
- Slumped sub-soil material was excavated using a small tracked mechanical digger operated during a spell of dry weather while the flow of the Spring was low and the ground around firm, so as to avoid collateral damage.
- Sub-soil and soil material excavated from the land-slip was used to form a causeway (see below) and to augment the bank areas to the west and south of the Spring. A small number of stones were recovered and these have been re-used to form a small step close to the Spring. Finally all areas of bare ground was seeded using wild fescue grass gathered from the adjacent pasture.
- Archaeological supervision was carried out throughout. The objective was to remove only the 2012 slumped material back to pre-existing levels and to fully restore visibility of the attractive spring feature itself. No finds of an 'archaeological' nature were recovered. However the opportunity was taken to remove and properly dispose considerable quantities of modern rubbish and litter.

Fig 4: Site before work started 9th June 2015 (r)

Fig 5: Spring before landslip, February 2011 (below)

Fig 6: Spring after re-excavation, July 2015 (below r)



Causeway

A causeway was formed to allow dry, safe access to both sides of the Spring where access had latterly been only to its east side. This was done using cordwood log and brash from the tree work placed at the base the erosion gulley close to the Spring. Arisings from the excavation were placed on top of this and layered with further brash to resist slumping and to 'filter' muddy water before entering the river. A 'pipe' was formed using a quantity of cordwood set together vertically so as to take the surface water of the Spring to the now buried cordwood drain under the causeway. The idea of the causeway is not to pool the water of the Spring, rather to allow it to drain away underneath in a controlled manner as well as improve access at the site generally.

West Path restored

Latterly it has been possible to approach the Spring only from the east so that visitors have had to double back to the track. Until about ten years ago it was possible to approach it from the west as well along a well-marked, if steep, path through the woods. This made the Spring part of a short circular route; a point of interest along its way. This had however become impenetrably overgrown with bramble and hawthorn. The opportunity was taken to clear the bramble etc and the path can now be used again.

Notes:

1. Ecology No specific issues for ecology were advised or encountered and no consent was required under the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981. It is likely the work, which includes the recreation of a small pool below the spring in a re-opened sunny glade, will be of ecological benefit. However it is noted that Himalayan Balsam *Impatiens glandulifera* and Giant Hogweed *Heracleum mantegazzianum* are present locally on the banks of the River Wye and this will need to be monitored against the possibility they may invade the site
2. Breinton Monument (SMR No 928) Breinton Spring is overlooked by a moated site in the form of a ringwork at SO 4727 3951, SW of St Michael's Church. Excavation of the monument in 1959-62 demonstrated occupation c1150- c.1250 when it was held by the Dean and Chapter of Hereford, probably for a grange having a stone gateway. The possibility that removal of the land-slip over the site of the Spring might affect the monument was considered. The Spring lies comfortably outside the area of the monument and the view was expressed by Dr Keith Ray (then County Archaeologist) that SAMC would not be required.
3. Local consultation Formal public consultation about the work at Breinton Spring was not held to be necessary. However several visitors commented appreciatively including local historian Heather Hurley (author of the *Wye Navigation*, Logaston 2014). Reference is made to the terms and spirit of the *Breinton Neighbourhood Development Plan 2011-2013 Consultation Draft* November 2014 in planning the recovery of Breinton Spring, see <http://www.breintonparish.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/141201-BreintonNP2HC.pdf>

Fig 6: General view of site after re-excavation with the Spring to the right and the West Path to the left
20th July 2015

