

Stainborough Castle
Wentworth Castle, Barnsley
South Yorkshire

Archaeological Topographical Survey

Contents

1. Introduction
 2. Methodology
 3. Archaeological and Historical Background
 4. Survey Results
 5. Conclusions
- Bibliography
Acknowledgements
Figures
Plates

Authorised for distribution by:

.....
ISOQAR ISO 9001:2000

Cert. No. 125/93

© Archaeological Services WYAS 2006

Archaeological Services WYAS

PO Box 30, Nepshaw Lane South, Morley, Leeds LS27 0UG

List of Figures

- Figure 1.* Site location.
- Figure 2.* Location of the survey area in relation to Wentworth Castle.
- Figure 3.* Hachure plan of Stainborough Castle and the surrounding area (1:1000 scale).
- Figure 4.* Interpretative plan of probable pre-18th-century earthworks.
- Figure 5.* Interpretative plan of 18th and 19th century features.
- Figure 6.* Extract from a view of Stainborough Park estate 1711, showing the site of Stainborough Castle with Wentworth Castle in the foreground. Probably attributable to Knyff and Kip (British Library Maps, 599.1).
- Figure 7.* Extract from ‘A Prospect of Stainborough and Wentworth Castle’ c.1732, showing Stainborough Castle with Wentworth Castle in the foreground. (Published by Badeslade and Rocque 1739; British Library Maps, Ktop, 45.29.a).
- Figure 8.* Extract from a view of the east front of Wentworth Castle with Stainborough Castle in the background c. 1732 (Published by Badeslade and Rocque 1739; British Library Maps, Ktop, 45.29.b).
- Figure 9.* Extract from a map of Stainborough Park Estate 1730, showing Stainborough Castle, named ‘Castle Wentworth’ (Sheffield Archives VWM/Maps/63).

List of Plates

- Plate 1.* Probable upper ramparts to north of Stainborough Castle, looking east.
- Plate 2.* Probable upper ramparts to north-west of Stainborough Castle, looking south-west.
- Plate 3.* Bank with 20th-century tarmac path running along the top, looking south-east.
- Plate 4.* Section of Ditch 1, looking north-west.
- Plate 5.* Ramp to east of Stainborough Castle, looking west.
- Plate 6.* Stone in the ditch between the ramp to east of Stainborough Castle, looking north.

Plate 7. Part of the 19th-century rockery to the north of Stainborough Castle, looking north-west.

Plate 8. Remains of the circular summer house to the west of Stainborough Castle, looking east.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Archaeological Services WYAS (ASWYAS) was commissioned by Purcell Miller Tritton to undertake an archaeological topographical survey of Stainborough Castle and the adjacent earthworks, within the grounds of Wentworth Castle, South Yorkshire.
- 1.2 Wentworth Castle and Stainborough Park is an estate comprising of approximately 200 hectares of land, including the former estate residence, home farm complex, pleasure gardens and park land, situated 3km south-west of Barnsley (Fig. 1; centred at SE 320 032).
- 1.3 Stainborough Castle is an 18th-century garden folly, situated in the north-western corner of the Wentworth Castle estate. The folly sits on the edge of a natural promontory, sloping steeply downwards on its northern and western sides, at a height of approximately 200m OD. The northern and eastern sides of the promontory appear to have been remodelled to form a series of terraces, which may partly be the result of the 18th and 19th-century garden designs, but perhaps form part of an earlier defensive feature.
- 1.4 The survey area is bounded to the north-west by Lowe Lane, to the south by a disused quarry, and to the east by an area of formal lawns. The north-eastern side of the survey area comprises of 'The Wilderness', a naturalistic garden originally laid during the mid-18th century, which includes a 19th-century rockery. An avenue called Lady Lucy's Walk runs north-east from this area down towards Wentworth Castle itself. The area is largely wooded, with dense rhododendron growth obscuring significant areas of the site.
- 1.5 Wentworth Castle is owned by the *Northern College for Residential Adult Education*. The gardens and parkland are managed by the *Wentworth Castle and Stainborough Park Heritage Trust*. The estate is listed as a Grade I Park in English Heritage's *Register of Historic Parks and Gardens* (GD 1381), due to it being considered a site of national and regional heritage importance.
- 1.6 Stainborough Castle is a Grade II* listed building (ref. 1/50), and is included on the English Heritage *Buildings at Risk Register*.
- 1.7 The archaeological topographical survey was undertaken as part of a wider programme of landscape, garden and architectural restoration at Wentworth Castle and Stainborough Park. The survey was carried out to inform subsequent archaeological investigations of the site, and to aid the future management of the site.
- 1.8 The underlying geology of the survey area comprises shales and sandstones of the Coal Measures, overlying Millstone Grit (Institute of Geological Sciences 1979) with soils of clayey loams of the Dale Association, interspersed with loams of the Rivington 1 Association (Solid Survey of England and Wales 1983).
- 1.9 The survey was carried out from 27th February to 7th April 2006, with photographs taken on 23rd May 2006.

2. Methodology

- 2.1 The survey focused on recording the earthworks within the area surrounding Stainborough Castle and the adjacent area of The Wilderness, centred at SE 3155 0305 (see Fig. 2). This covered an area of approximately 2.5 hectares.
- 2.2 A detailed archaeological topographical survey was carried out and a hachure plan of the survey area produced at 1:1000 scale (Fig. 3), together with a schematic interpretative plan of the site (see Figs 4 and 5).
- 2.3 The survey area was subject to a systematic walkover prior to the detailed survey, with the aim of identifying any archaeological features surviving on the surface, and establishing their form and any possible stratigraphic relationships between them.
- 2.4 The survey was carried out using a Trimble GeodimeterPro 600 Total Station. The data was processed using GeoSite software and AutoCAD, and located onto the Ordnance Survey digital map base. Illustrations were prepared in Adobe Illustrator CS.
- 2.5 A number of semi-permanent survey control stations were established across the survey area, marked by wooden stakes painted blue with nails in the centre.
- 2.6 An initial cartographic analysis of historic and modern Ordnance Survey maps covering the area was carried out prior to the survey. A search was also carried out for any archaeological features or finds that may have previously been recorded in the area in the South Yorkshire SMR and the English Heritage NMR.

3. Archaeological and Historical Background

Previous archaeological work

- 3.1 There have been a number of archaeological and architectural investigations of Stainborough Castle and its immediate surrounding area. Much of the previous work has been aimed at investigating the probable defensive ditch thought to run around part of the north-eastern side of site. During the 1960s a 1m wide trench was excavated across the supposed line of the ditch to the north-east of the castle, revealing material from a ha-ha, superimposed on the bank of the ditch; a single Iron Age potsherd was also recovered. In 1991, the feature was subject to a limited investigation which interpreted the evidence as forming a north to south ditch. As part of this work a further section of this ditch, 8m wide and 5m deep, with a V-shaped profile, was identified in the quarry face to the south of Stainborough Castle (Ashurst 1991).
- 3.2 In February 2005, seven trenches were excavated within the centre of Stainborough Castle, but these failed to identify any evidence of activity predating the construction of the folly in the 18th century (Rose and Prudhoe 2005). In June 2005, three small trial pits were excavated close to the gatehouse of Stainborough Castle. These identified a made ground level of

compacted clay, with mortar and frequent brick. No further archaeological deposits were encountered (Major 2005).

- 3.3 In January 2006, magnetometer and resistivity surveys were undertaken over the area of the lawn to the south-east of Stainborough Castle (Gidman and Webb 2006). This identified a linear anomaly probably caused by an in-filled ditch, running on the same line as the probable defensive ditch identified in previous investigations.
- 3.4 Two find spots are located close to Stainborough Castle; an undated flint fragment discovered to its west in the 1960s and a sherd of possible medieval pottery found to the north-east of the castle.
- 3.5 A number of extensive reports have been produced on the development of the historic landscape and buildings at Wentworth Castle and Stainborough Park (e.g. Roberts 2004; Taylor *et al.* 2005). These include cartographic and documentary analysis of Stainborough Castle.

The survey area

- 3.6 Stainborough Castle was constructed by William Wentworth between 1727 and 1730 as a Gothic Folly, and was originally known as Castle Wentworth. It comprises of a roughly circular curtain wall with four square towers, and a quatrefoil gatehouse on its eastern side. The gatehouse may have been in disrepair as early as 1755, when part of it was rebuilt (Roberts 2004). By the mid-20th century Stainborough Castle was in a dilapidated state, and in 1962 part of the gatehouse collapsed (Taylor *et al.* 2005). Restoration works and the rebuilding of one of the towers were carried out during the 1970s.
- 3.7 Since at least the early eighteenth century it was thought that Stainborough Castle was constructed on the site of an earlier fortification. A range of writers have proposed the castle as the site of an Iron Age hill fort (e.g. Hunter 1831; Twigg 1853; Federer 1905; Page 1912; Preston 1954; Birch 1980; Ashurst 1991). Indeed, the scale of the existing earthwork banks and ditches around the site are consistent with those of hill forts of this period, and indeed, these earthworks appear to predate the construction of the folly. A view of estate produced around 1711 depicts the area containing a large flat-topped mound with a double rampart and a surrounding ditch (Fig. 6), and two engravings made c.1732 appear to show the promontory partially surrounded by a series of ramparts (Badeslade and Rocque 1739a and b; Figs 7 and 8). These are suggestive of a multivallate defensive arrangement, similar to those found on many Iron Age hill forts. The topographical position, surrounding the end of a natural promontory, would have provided an ideal natural defensive position, visible from all directions.
- 3.8 It is also possible that there was a medieval castle, or fortification on the site of Stainborough Castle. The name 'Stainborough' derives from the Old English and Old Norse *Stanburg* meaning 'stone fortification', which is listed in the Domesday Book of 1086 (Smith 1961, 312). This may imply the presence of a stone (Norman?) castle in the area. Variations on the place-name element 'Low', which derives from the Old English *Hlāw* or 'mound', occur in the area

surrounding Stainborough Castle. A mention is made in a will of 1545 to 'Stayneburghe Lawe' (Smith 1961, 313) and the Stainborough Manor Court Rolls for 1613 and 1615 mention 'castle ruins' on 'Staynbroughe Lowe' on two occasions (Walter-Hall 1924, 33, 35-6, 46; Ashurst 1991, 34). The field to the east of the site is named as 'Law Field' on the estate map of 1730 (Fig. 9), and the woods to the north and north-west of the castle have been known as Law Wood, Low Wood and Lowe Wood (1730 Estate Map; Ordnance Survey 1854; 1894).

4. Survey Results

- 4.1 The earthworks around Stainborough Castle appear to broadly consist of two different types; those that form part of the 18th and 19th-century garden landscape and those that pre-date these alterations, and may form part of an earlier feature, probably a medieval and/or Iron Age fortification.

Probable pre-18th-century features (Fig. 4)

- 4.2 Stainborough Castle is situated on an area of level ground at the highest point of a natural promontory. Extensive ground works and landscaping have been undertaken in this area in connection with the construction of the castle and the laying out of the gardens during the 18th century. These may have destroyed or truncated earlier features previously surviving on the ground.
- 4.3 The earthworks to the south and western sides of Stainborough Castle appear to have been formed by alterations to the natural slope of the promontory. These comprise of a series of steep scarps, forming a sequence of ramparts around the castle area (Plates 1 and 2). The ramparts vary in height from around 3m to 7m in height. The scale of these features is consistent with Iron Age, or perhaps medieval, fortifications. Indeed, it is clear from their scale and from the evidence of the cartographic sources, that such earthworks are not simply part of the mid 18th-century garden scheme, but existed in this area prior to this period (see Section 3.7). Observations to the south-west of the survey area to the north of the houses of 'Mow Cop' and 'The Beeches', have identified other possible terraces, which may form further sections of the ramparts down slope. These features are located outside of the estate boundary and may therefore have been part of an earlier monument that pre-dates the formation of the estate.
- 4.4 A section of bank and ditch is situated to the north of Stainborough Castle, within the area of The Wilderness (Plates 3 and 4). The bank is approximately 1.5m high and 9.5m wide, with a ditch (Ditch 1) about 2m deep and 9.5m wide on its eastern side. The size of the features appears to be inconsistent with the earthworks and rockery mounds that are known to form the 18th-century landscape in the area, and it seems likely that they pre-date the gardens. A less substantial section of ditch (Ditch 2) is located to the south-east of the castle, surviving as a slight depression around 0.1m to 0.3m deep and about 4m wide. This appears to be a stretch of infilled ditch, now overlaid by a formal lawn. It is probable that these two sections of ditch form part of the line of the (possible defensive) ditch investigated by Ashurst (Ashurst 1991; see Section 3.1).

18th and 19th-century features (Fig. 5)

- 4.5 A number of features have been identified in the survey area that appear to relate to the construction of Stainborough Castle and the design of the surrounding landscape. Three large ramps are located on the eastern side of Stainborough Castle, to the north-east of the gate house, which seem to cross a stretch of ditch (see Plate 5). In a section of ditch between two of the ramps lies a pile of stone, which may represent the remains of an associated structure (Plate 6). The ramps appear to overly the steep scarp that surrounds the level area on which Stainborough Castle was built. It is probable that the ramps were constructed to act as an elaborate entrance way up the slope and into the castle, perhaps aimed at giving the impression of crossing a bridge over a moat.
- 4.6 A section of scarp is located to the north-east of the castle, close to the boundary of the survey area (see Fig. 5 a). It is between 1m and 1.5m high, and appears to form part of the northern edge of a wide terrace running westward from the castle, with the entrance ramps located at one end (see above). To the west of this scarp a level area of ground appears to have been created by cutting into the natural slope (see Fig 5 b). This forms a rectangular area about 11m wide and 25m long. These features may have been constructed to form more level areas as part of the 18th century garden design, and may partially cover or cut through the line of the earlier possible defensive ditch (see Section 4.4).
- 4.7 A rockery is located on the western edge of The Wilderness, and consists of a number of mounds, comprising of stone, together with large pieces of slag, perhaps taken from a forge on the estate (Taylor *et al.* 2005; Plate 7). To the east of these mounds the natural slope has been quarried away and landscaped into a naturalistic cliff side (which may also have provided further stone for the rockery). Below the highest point of this rock face lays a depression, about 7.5m wide and 0.5m deep, which may have been the site of a former pond. The shape and erosion of the rock face above this probable pond, to its east, perhaps suggest that an artificial waterfall fed the pond. The rockery is thought to date to the 19th century. Further mounds, containing steps and occasionally with roughly reveted sides, are situated on the edge of the paths to the west of Stainborough Castle, which appear to be part of the garden scheme, but may be remodelled sections of earlier features (see Fig. 5 c).
- 4.8 A series of paths and steps wind through these features which were originally laid out in the 18th century, although some were re-surfaced with asphalt in the mid-20th century (see Plate 3). These paths are generally in a poor state of repair, and in a number of places the paths have disappeared completely, partly due to the movement of forestry machinery around the area. Indeed, there is a large amount of disturbance to the immediate north of the castle caused by recent garden works. Two sections of disused path were recorded on the upper scarp to the south of Stainborough Castle, surviving as earthworks, and now largely overgrown (see Fig. 5 e). Two wider platforms, running along the south-western edge of the same scarp may have been more substantial tracks (see Fig. 5 d).

- 4.9 A small circular structure, that appears to be the remains of a summer house, with views over the valley to the east, is located at the base of the slope, on the edge of the track to the south-west of the castle. It is 3m in diameter and built of worked stone blocks (Plate 8).
- 4.10 Large areas surrounding Stainborough Castle are obscured by dense rhododendron growth. These were planted during the 19th century, as a fashionable addition to the design of these gardens.

5. Conclusions

- 5.1 Whilst not conclusive, the results of this survey do give further reasons to believe that the extensive earthwork terraces, which run around the slope of the natural promontory on which Stainborough Castle is located, pre-date the construction of the castle and the associated landscape, laid out in the mid-18th century. Both the documentary and cartographic evidence suggests that there were an earlier series of earthworks on the site. The scale and size of the earthworks, particularly to the north-west of the castle, are inconsistent with the overall garden design and are suggestive of an Iron Age hill fort. It is possible that the site was re-used as a fortification, or castle, during the medieval period.
- 5.2 Only the most substantial pre-18th-century earthwork features appear to have survived in the survey area, and the 18th-century garden landscaping may have destroyed or obscured more ephemeral surface features, and truncated sub-surface archaeological deposits. This has made it difficult to ascertain a relative stratigraphic sequence or date for the surviving surface remains, beyond a distinction of features that are directly part of the 18th century garden and those that must pre-date it. This distinction is further complicated, however, by the probability that earlier earthworks were re-modelled to form flower beds, paths and rockery mounds.

Bibliography

- Ashurst, D., 1991, 'Stainborough Lowe', *Transactions of the Hunter Archaeological Society*, 16, 33-8
- Birch, J., 1980, 'Stainborough Castle', *Archaeological Journal* 137, 448-9
- Federer, C.A., 1905, 'Excursion Notes', *Bradford Antiquary* 2, 565-8
- Gidman, J. and Webb, A., 2006, *Wentworth Castle and Stainborough Park: Geophysical Survey*, ASWYAS report no. 1480
- Hunter, J., 1831, *South Yorkshire*
- Institute Geological Sciences, 1979, *Geological Map of the United Kingdom: South*
- Major, P., 2004, 'Wentworth Castle and Stainborough Park: Archaeological Watching Brief', ASWYAS report no. 1398
- Page, W. (ed.), 1912, *The Victoria History of the County of York Volume 2*
- Preston, F.L., 1954, 'Hillforts of the Peak', *Journal of the Derbyshire Archaeological and Natural History Society* 74, 14.
- Roberts, I., 2004, 'Wentworth Castle and Stainborough Park: Archaeological Desk-based Assessment', ASWYAS report no. 1295
- Rose, M. and Prudhoe, J., 2005, 'Stainborough Castle: Archaeological Evaluation and Fabric Survey', ASWYAS report no. 1360
- Smith, A.H., 1961, *The Place-names of the West Riding of Yorkshire. Part 1: Lower and Upper Strafforth and Staincross Wapentakes. English Place-name Society vol. 30, part I*
- Soil Survey of England and Wales, 1983, *Soils of Northern England*
- Taylor, H. *et al.*, 2005 'Wentworth Castle Gardens and Stainborough Park Conservation Plan', HTLA Historic Landscape Consultants
- Twigg, C., 1853, *Stainborough and Rockley. Their Historical Associations and rural Attractions*

Walter-Hall, T., 1924, *Descriptive Catalogue of the Edmunds Collection including Charters, Court Rolls and Estreats relating to Worsburgh, Stainborough and Barnsley etc.*

Cartographic Sources

- 1711 View of 'Stainborough in the County of York'. Probably attributable to Knyff and Kip. British Library Maps 5995,1.
- 1730 'A map of the manor of Stainborough'. Sheffield Archives WM/ Maps/ 63R).
- 1739a 'A Profile of Stainborough and Wentworth Castle', c. 1732. Published by Badeslade and Rocque 1739. British Library Maps Ktop, 45.29.a.
- 1739b 'Stainborough and Wentworth Castle in the County of York', c.1732. Published by Badeslade and Rocque 1739. British Library Maps Ktop, 45.29.b.

Acknowledgements

Project management

Mitchell Pollington BA MA

Report

Mitchell Pollington

Graphics/illustrations

Mitchell Pollington

Fieldwork

Mitchell Pollington

Claire Coulter BA

Mike Burns BA MA PhD