

Marches Archaeology

Holms Farm Lydney Gloucestershire

**A report on an
archaeological desk-based assessment**

October 2004

Marches Archaeology Series 358

This report is produced by

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**Holms Farm
Lydney
Gloucestershire**

**A report on an
archaeological desk-based assessment**

NGR: SO 628 032

SMR: 21503

**Report by
Jo Wainwright**

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**Holms Farm
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NGR: SO 628 032

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archaeological desk-based assessment**

Summary

A planning application is proposed for development of land at Holms Farm, Lydney, Gloucestershire. It seems likely that until the medieval period the study area was utilised for agricultural purposes. The site was the centre of a freehold estate in 1558. In either the medieval period or the early post-medieval period a dwelling was built in the study area. It is likely that below ground medieval or post-medieval features and deposits relating to this dwelling and perhaps to other buildings may be located on the site.

In the 19th century the house was rebuilt and many of the farm buildings were erected. Further study of these buildings is required in order to understand the development of the farmyard as an indicator of the changing needs of the farm over time.

1 Introduction

A planning application is proposed for development of land at Holms Farm, Lydney, Gloucestershire (Fig. 1).

Hunter Page Planning, on behalf of the client, commissioned Marches Archaeology to carry out an archaeological desk-based assessment of the site.

The project proposal was seen by the Local Planning Authority's Archaeological advisor who confirmed that the project proposal provided an appropriate scope of work.

2 Aims and objectives

The purpose of Desk-based Assessment is defined by the Institute of Field Archaeologists as "to gain information about the known or potential archaeological resource within a given area or site (including presence or absence, character and extent, date, integrity, state of preservation and relative quality of the potential archaeological resource), in order to make an assessment of its merit in the appropriate context, leading to one or more of the following: the formation of a strategy to ensure the recording, preservation or management of the resource; the formation of a strategy for further investigation, whether or not intrusive, where the character and value of the resource is not sufficiently defined to permit a mitigation strategy

or other response to be devised; the formulation of a proposal for further archaeological investigation within a programme of research”.

3 Methodology

Documentary research

Primary and secondary sources were consulted. Visits were made to the Gloucestershire Sites and Monuments Record Office (SMR), the Gloucester Record Office (RO) and Gloucester Local Studies Library. The National Monument Record was consulted. The following sources were considered:

Ordnance Survey maps; Tithe maps; Estate maps and other historical maps;
Previous published and unpublished archaeological reports and archive work;
Written non-archaeological sources; Air photographs; Geological maps.

Fieldwork

A visit to the site was made on the 30th September 2004 to identify any visible archaeological remains. An archaeologist walked over the area of the proposed development. It was non-intrusive and no artefacts or ecofacts were collected. Access to the land was limited due to dense undergrowth. Several non-archival digital photographs were taken of the site.

4 Site description

The site is situated on the western edge of the town of Lydney and consists of 1.7 hectares of land with a farmhouse and farm buildings. The land is currently part of the Lydney Park Estate and is used for agricultural purposes as grassland or orchards. However, most of the land forming the holding appears to have been left to revert to dense undergrowth. The farmhouse and farm buildings are in a dilapidated condition with some of the buildings having fallen down totally (Plates 1-11). The garden of the farmhouse has also been neglected to some extent.

The holding is bounded on the north, south and east by houses and housing estates. To the west is farmland. A track running southwards from the farm complex gives vehicular access. The site boundaries are marked by either wooden or barbed wire fences. The land slopes down from the north to the west, south and east and the underlying geology is old red sandstone (Geological Survey of Great Britain, Sheet 233).

5 Archaeological and historical background

Lydney

There have been several finds from the prehistoric period in the vicinity of Lydney. About 300 metres east of the site pottery interpreted as part of a Bronze Age cinerary urn with fragments of Roman pottery was uncovered in 1939 (SMR: 5139, Fig. 1). Further east, there have been finds of a Bronze Age flint arrowhead (SMR: 5148) and a bronze palstave axehead (SMR: 6498). Fieldwalking, over land about 1 kilometre to the north and north-west of the site has produced prehistoric flint flakes (SMR: 17620 and 19412).

There is an Iron Age hillfort, on a wooded spur of land overlooking the Severn, and situated about 1 kilometre to the south-west of the site (Gloucestershire SAM: 48). A temple dedicated to the god Nodens and buildings associated with the temple were built within the defences in the Romano-british period.

During the Romano-british period a settlement grew up along the Chepstow to Gloucester Road (SMR: 5138, Fig. 1). As well as domestic occupation finds associated with iron working have been uncovered here. There have also been several finds of Roman coins within the vicinity of the site (SMR: 6371, 6499 and 22266). Roman pottery as well as a coin have also been uncovered (SMR: 13279).

It seems likely then that during the Romano-british period the area of the site was being utilised for at least agricultural purposes.

The place-name Lydney has been interpreted as meaning *Lida's Island* and probably belongs to the earlier rather than later centuries of the Anglo-Saxon period (Gelling, 1984). Lydney must have been in existence by A.D. 852 as a charter states that Burgred, King of Mercia gave *Lideneg* to his brother-in-law Ethelred of Wessex (Herbert, 1996). Ethelred or his heirs bequeathed the property to Glastonbury Abbey (Douthwaite and Devine, 1998). By 972 an estate of 6 *mansae* in Lydney belonged to Pershore Abbey (Herbert, 1996). Just after the Norman Conquest four estates in Lydney were granted by their lords to William FitzOsbern, Earl of Hereford who amalgamated them.

The Domesday entry reads:

*In Lydney Earl William made a manor from 4 lands which he
Received from their lords. From the Bishop of Hereford's
Lordship 3 hides. From the household supplies of the monks
Of Pershore 6 hides, where there were 6 villagers with 4 ploughs.
From two thanes he received 3½ hides. In lordship 3 ploughs;
8 smallholders.
A mill at 40d; woodland 1 league long and ½ wide.
In total it pays £7 (Moore, 1982).*

By 1228 the whole parish of Lydney lay within the jurisdiction of the Forest of Dean but by the early 14th century it was disafforested (Herbert, 1996). Lydney gained a market charter in 1268 and in 1322 25 bugages were recorded in the manor of Lydney (Douthwaite and Devine, 1998). However, the settlement remained small until the 19th century.

In the 12th century a small castle was built on Little Camp Hill close to where the Roman Temple was situated (Gloucestershire SAM 346). This was demolished probably early in the 13th century. Medieval settlement was focused along the Chepstow to Gloucester road and around the 13th century church (SMR: 5620) to the east. Excavations close to the main road (High Street) revealed medieval occupation deposits as well as iron working debris (SMR: 14611). Other metalworking debris has been uncovered in an evaluation closer to the church (SMR:17216). An evaluation and watching brief at the Feathers Hotel in the High Street produced medieval occupation features and much industrial waste including parts of hearth bottom, smelting slag and smithing slag (SMR: 17802).

To the south of the site earthworks have been identified from aerial photographs as possible medieval property plots (SMR: 26146, Fig. 1). Further south are a series of earthworks which although undated could be the remains of medieval field systems (SMR: 4087).

During the early post-medieval period the parish of Lydney was dominated by its landowners. After the late 16th century the Winters owned most of the land in one estate and in 1723 the Bathursts succeeded in possession of this estate (Herbert, 1996).

The field name Malthouse Mead, found directly to the south of the site, could be an early field name deriving from the OE *maed* (SMR: 21548, Fig. 1). It could indicate that a malthouse was situated close to this piece of land though there is no known archaeological site, although the occupier of the Holms at the time of the Tithe Map also occupied a malthouse (Fig. 2). Therefore it is possible that the field Malthouse Mead was associated with this malthouse.

Several archaeological investigations close to the site have uncovered no significant archaeological remains. An evaluation, 250 metres to the south-west of the site, revealed post-medieval garden features (SMR: 20681, Fig. 1) and an evaluation between this and the High Street uncovered the floors and foundations of a row of post-medieval cottages (SMR: 22181).

The site

The Holms is mentioned in a document as being the centre of a freehold estate in 1558 belonging to the Hyett family (Herbert, 1996, SMR: 21503). It was sold to the Winter family in 1600. It seems more than likely that a house existed on the site during at least the early post-medieval period as apparently in the 19th century the house was rebuilt (*op cit*).

The Tithe Map of 1843 shows a house and farm buildings on the site (Fig. 2) (see below for a more detailed discussion on the dating of these buildings). The holding was known as Holmes Barn and was much bigger than it is today and the occupier Richard Wade Hooke also held another house and malthouse. The Apportionment reads as follows:

Number	Owner	Occupier	Description	Cultivation	Area A R P
97	Charles Bathurst	Richard Wade Hooke	Holmes Barn Farmhouse, barns, sheds and yard		3 1

96	Charles Bathurst	Richard Wade Hooke	Eight acres	Arable	9
115	Charles Bathurst	Richard Wade Hooke	Holmes Orchard	Pasture	4 2 15
98	Charles Bathurst	Richard Wade Hooke	Holmes Meadow	Meadow	5 3 17
99	Charles Bathurst	Richard Wade Hooke		Pasture	2 37

The field boundaries in the north and west are where they are today. However, the field known as Holmes Orchard has been amalgamated with Eight Acres and the boundaries close to the house are slightly different from those on the ground today.

The 1880 First Edition Ordnance Survey Map is more detailed and shows the house and many of the farm buildings as they are today (Fig. 3). By this date the holding was known as The Holms. The field boundaries are unchanged apart from the garden area which has been enlarged.

The 1902 Second Edition Ordnance Survey Map (Fig. 4) and the 1921 Ordnance Survey Map (Fig. 5) show that more farm buildings have been erected on the site.

By 1931 the land was owned by the Right Honourable Lord Bledisloe and occupied by J. F. McCreath. A schedule of tenants and landlords claims held in the Gloucester Record Office deals with claims and counter claims between the landlord and tenant of leaving the land uncultivated and “foul” (D466 7 4/20).

Aerial photographs of the site taken between 1946 and 1981 do not show the site in detail. The 1946 photographs show the site as it looked on the 1921 Ordnance Survey Map (Plate 12, Fig. 5) with the fields as orchards. There are no earthworks or other archaeological features visible.

6 The buildings and current land use of the site

As access to the interior of the buildings was not possible, the descriptions are based on an external visual inspection only (Fig. 6). Building 1 is the farmhouse (Plates 1-3). In its original form it was a two storey, three bay block oriented east-west with brick chimney stacks to the gable ends. The slate roof may be original. The farmhouse is now rendered so it is not clear whether it is of brick or stone. Its form and detail, such as a plain fanlight and 16 pane sash windows to the front suggest a date circa 1800. In the mid-nineteenth century a two storey north range was added to the rear at right angles to the main building. This is again rendered and roofed with slate. Its windows are casements and the range is clearly subsidiary to the original farmhouse. It was built between 1843 and 1880 (Figs 2 and 3).

The buildings of the farmyard are a typical example of piecemeal addition during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Building 2 is a single storey stone agricultural building, possibly a granary, added to the extended farmhouse before 1880. Building 3, also of stone, and used as a granary, lies to the north of building 2, forming part of the farmyard. This range extends westward as building 4, a range of single storey slate roofed stone byres (or possibly stabling) (Plates 5-6). At the western end is a two storey, slate roofed, stone barn

(building 6) (Plates 5 and 7). The semi-circular window in the east elevation does not appear to be inserted or blocked, which suggests that the byre range to the east was either earlier or contemporary with the barn. The barn has architectural details typical of circa 1820-1840. The Tithe Map of 1843 (Fig. 2) shows buildings in this area (buildings 4 and 6). Building 5 is not shown on the Tithe Map but in the position of its southern part was an earlier building of unknown date. Building 5 itself is a later nineteenth century single storey stone byre with a pantile roof laid out to form a yard (J). To the west of the byre 5 is a stone fronted cartshed (building 7) with storage over, perhaps a third granary (Plate 9). The sides are of weatherboarding and the roof of slate. The timber bracing to the cartshed is typical of the second half of the nineteenth century and map evidence shows it was built between 1843 and 1880. Further north is building 8, a threshing barn of eighteenth or nineteenth century form (Plate 8). This could not be seen in detail. A range is shown here on the Tithe Map and it is likely that it shows building 8. The barn is partly roofed in pantiles and partly in corrugated sheeting, both probably replacements.

A number of other buildings of nineteenth century date exist in the farm complex, including pigsties (building 9), with further additions in the twentieth century. Changes in agricultural practice have rendered the historic agricultural buildings redundant and their condition is deteriorating significantly.

Further study of the buildings would be required in order to understand the development of the farmyard and to indicate changing needs of the farm over time. This is particularly shown by the presence of three buildings which may have served as granaries. Whether they were all used for this purpose at one time or whether there were changes to the use of different buildings may become clear in a formal appraisal of the building stock which lies beyond the scope of the current assessment.

The current land use of the site is as follows (Fig. 6):

Letter	Description of land use
A	Grass cut short which has the appearance of a playing field
B	Grass and dense undergrowth
C	Overgrown concreted yard
D	Grass and dense undergrowth
E	Grass and dense undergrowth
F	Grass and dense undergrowth
G	Tracks and undergrowth
H	Garden area. Consists of overgrown planted borders and a lawn. To the east there is a low wall which steps down to an overgrown area with fruit trees
I	Grass, fruit trees and dense undergrowth
J	Overgrown concreted yard

K	Grass and dense undergrowth
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The low wall separating the garden area from the orchard is probably of 19th century date (Plate 10). At the south end of the garden there is a raised earthwork in the form of a mound (Plate 11). This earthwork is about 1.5 metres high and about 5 metres east to west.

7 Discussion

It is likely that because of the site's proximity to a Romano-British settlement (SMR: 5138, Fig. 1) the land was being utilised for at least agricultural purposes. If this was the case then this usage would have continued into the Anglo-Saxon period. However, it cannot be discounted that the study area was woodland until perhaps the medieval period.

By 1588 The Holms is mentioned as being the centre of a freehold estate and it seems more than likely that a house existed on the site during at least the early post-medieval period as apparently in the 19th century the house was rebuilt (*op cit*). Therefore it is possible that this dwelling was built during the medieval period and it is probable that this house was situated within the study area. If this is the case below ground medieval features and deposits relating to the dwelling and perhaps to other buildings may be located on the site. It would seem plausible to suggest that these would be situated close to the present day house and farm buildings. The earthwork situated at the south end of the garden could be associated with this house but this must remain speculative until further investigation takes place. Other earthworks may exist on the site but because of the dense undergrowth if they exist they were not seen.

The present day farmhouse and farm building complex are all of a probable 19th and 20th century date. The 19th century stone buildings, although in bad condition, are noteworthy examples of buildings of their kind.

8 Recommendations

It is proposed to convert the farm buildings into dwellings and erect houses on the open land surrounding the buildings. If this proposal is accepted then further study of the site would be needed. The form of this study would depend on the planning proposal.

Earlier archaeological remains relating to a medieval or post-medieval house may exist on the site and these may be disturbed by any below ground activities associated with the proposed development. Therefore to protect the archaeological resource a programme of archaeological works is to be recommended. These would take the form of an evaluation to locate any archaeological remains, if they exist. The findings from an evaluation would enable a mitigation strategy to be formulated for the below ground remains within the site.

The farmhouse and farm buildings would require further study in order to understand the development of the farmyard and to indicate changing needs of the farm over time. It is recommended that a RCHME Level 2 Building Recording be carried out on all of the stone buildings.

9 Acknowledgements

The author would like to thank Paul Fong of Hunter Page Planning Ltd for his co-operation on the project.

10 References

Maps

1843 Tithe Map and Award of Lydney and Aylburton (RO) P209 SD 2/1,2

1880 First Edition Ordnance Survey 25 Inch Map, Sheet XLVII.6 (RO)

1902 Second Edition Ordnance Survey 25 Inch Map, Sheet XLVII.6 (RO)

1921 Ordnance Survey 25 Inch Map, Sheet XLVII.6 (RO)

Geological Survey of Great Britain, Sheet 233

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Schedule of Tenants and Landlords Claims 1931 D466 7 4/20 (RO)

Published references

Gelling, M, *Place-Names in the Landscape*, 1984

Herbert, N. M, (Ed), *The Victoria History of the County of Gloucestershire*, 1996

Moore, J. S, *Domesday Book: Gloucestershire*, 1982

Aerial photographs

1945 vertical. RAF/106G/UK/733. Frame 4010

11 Archive

The site code HFL04A. The archive consists of:

- 1 sheet of site diary and notes
- 1 report

The archive is currently held by Marches Archaeology awaiting transfer to an appropriate museum