

Marches Archaeology

Proposed Track at Castlett Farm Guiting Power Gloucestershire

**A report on an
archaeological evaluation**

August 2005

Marches Archaeology Series 389

Archaeological Consultants and Contractors

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Castlett Farm
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Gloucestershire**

**A report on an
archaeological evaluation**

NGR: SP 091 258

**Report by
Jo Wainwright**

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Summary

It seems likely that the route of the proposed trackway at Castlett Farm, Guiting Power lies on the peripheries of the medieval settlement of Castlett. The only feature which produced pottery was a ditch which was infilled in the 11th or 12th century. Other features excavated could also be of a medieval date.

1 Introduction

A planning application has been submitted to the local planning authority for permission to provide an access road for a men age (ref. 05/00666/FUL) (Fig. 1).

The site is listed on the local Sites and Monuments Record as a site of archaeological interest. A desk based assessment identified that elements of the neighbouring deserted medieval village may intrude upon the site (Wainwright, 2005). The Local Planning Authority’s Archaeology Advisor advised that further information was required before the archaeological implications of the application could be adequately assessed.

The Local Planning Authority’s Archaeology Advisor did not produce a brief but indicated that he required an archaeological field evaluation. Hunter Page Planning, on behalf of the client, commissioned Marches Archaeology to provide the archaeological services required.

2 Aims and objectives

The proposal stated that the archaeological project would consist of:

The excavation of seven trenches along the line of the proposed trackway as close as possible to the actual line. One trench was to be 10 metres long, another 6 metres and the rest 8 metres long. All of the trenches were to be 1.5 metres wide.

An archaeological evaluation aims to “gain information about the archaeological resource within a given area or site (including presence or absence, character, extent, date, integrity, state of preservation and quality) in order to make an assessment of its merit in the appropriate context, leading to one or more of the following: the formulation of a strategy to

ensure the recording, preservation or management of the resource; the formulation of a strategy to initiate a threat (*sic*) to the archaeological resource; the formulation of a proposal for further archaeological investigation within a programme of research” (Institute of Field Archaeologists Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluations).

The objectives of the evaluation, based on the above stated aim, were

To identify and record any elements of archaeology that may be threatened by the development.

3 Methodology

Documentary research

Documentary research was undertaken for the desk based assessment and no further research was necessary for this project. The findings from the research for the desk based assessment are reproduced below.

Fieldwork

It was originally envisaged that seven trenches were to be excavated. However, following consultation between the Local Planning Authority’s Archaeology Advisor, the client’s representative on site (Mark Eaton) and Marches Archaeology it was decided that Trenches 2, 6 and 7 could be omitted, for it was proposed that no below ground works were to be carried out in these areas (Fig. 2). There were also no proposed below ground works in the area of Trench 1. Nonetheless it was decided that this trench would be excavated as it was situated along the projected line of an earthwork. Plant and machinery were provided by the client.

The upper deposits were excavated by mechanical excavator to a level determined to comprise deposits, features or horizons of archaeological significance. Further excavation was by hand. All artefactual material recovered from hand excavation was retained.

The recording system included written, drawn and photographic data. For ease of recording site north was used which equates roughly to grid north-west. Trench recording sheets were completed and context numbers were allocated. Site notebooks were also used. Plans and sections were made and levels were taken. A temporary bench mark was used which was given the nominal value of 100 metres O. D. The photographic record was made using black and white negative and colour transparency film. Digital photographs were taken of certain features.

On completion of the fieldwork the trenches were backfilled.

Office work

On completion of the fieldwork a site archive was prepared. The written, drawn and photographic data was catalogued and cross-referenced and a summary produced. The artefactual data was processed and catalogued. Assessment was based on the site archive and the pottery which required specialist assessment was submitted for such work.

4 Site description

Before the construction of the ménage the area of the proposed track lay wholly within a field (Fig. 1). However, a temporary access route has been formed which runs from the ménage to

the lane at the north-east. This area has been fenced off and partially stripped with hardcore laid over parts to provide a solid base for this access route. Several site accommodation units line this temporary track. The north-western route of the proposed track, parallel with the existing lane, is still under pasture. Here the field is under long grass and a wooden fence separates the field from the existing lane.

The land of the study area slopes down from about 190m O. D. in the north-east to about 180m O.D. in the south-west. To the west of the ménage the land slopes steeply down to a stream and a series of ponds. Although there are earthworks visible within the field of the proposed track none can be seen along the proposed route. One small tree which has a fence around it is situated at the northern end of the proposed track.

5 Archaeological and historical background

A dense scatter of Neolithic and Bronze Age worked flint found about 1 kilometre to the south-west of the site attests that activity was taking place in the vicinity of the study area during this time (SMR 14066, Fig. 1). A magnetometry survey of the area revealed below ground features which may represent structures, pits and ditches.

An Iron Age settlement lies about 400 metres to the west of the site at “The Bowsings”. An enclosure and domestic features have been partially excavated (SMR 14065 and 14644, Fig. 1). Further west at “The Park” another settlement site has been identified (SMR 2223, Fig. 1). Both these settlements continued as farmsteads or larger units until at least the end of the Romano-British period. Another enclosure and settlement site has been partially excavated to the south of the study area at Guiting Manor Farm (SMR 2227, Fig. 1). As was the case at “The Bowsings” and “The Park”, settlement continued here into the Romano-British period. Therefore in the prehistoric period and the Romano-British period the area in the immediate vicinity of the site was settled and it is probable that the site itself was at least being utilised for agrarian purposes.

The place name Castlett is Old English and has the meaning ‘cats valley’. Gelling suggests that OE *slaed* can mean a short valley which lacked the bowl-shaped end which might have suggested the terms *cumb* or *hop* (Gelling, 1984).

The first spelling of Castlett (*Cateslat*) is found in Domesday. The entry lists Castlett as a separate manor from Guiting Power. The entry is as follows.

*Alwin held it. 2 hides which pay tax. In lordship
2 ploughs; 4 slaves.
A mill at 5s.
The value was 40s; now 10s. (Moore, 1982)*

It was held after the conquest by William Goizenboded. Slaves are mentioned in Domesday and it is possible that Castlett was originally settled by slaves as a separate entity from the lord and the manorial complex (Dyer, 2002). What is certain is that there must have been some sort of settlement at Castlett before 1066.

Previous excavations at Guiting Power have uncovered grass-tempered pottery. This probably dates to between the 6th to 9th centuries (Dyer, 2002). Parts of the defences of a

later Saxon *burh* have been excavated as have the Saxo-Norman church at Guiting Power (Marshall, 1992).

The site itself lies in the north-eastern corner of a deserted medieval settlement complex (SMR 2221, Fig. 1). The SMR lists the site as being centred on NGR: SP 089 259 and consisting of about 14 house platforms and associated paddocks. The area is delineated by a hollow way and a low boundary bank in the north-east (SMR 2221). In the north-east and south-east more recent usage of the land has obliterated any further remains. A visit to the site revealed that the area was under pasture. The earthworks to the north-west of the proposed track were very obvious. In the area of the proposed track no earthworks were visible but the length of the grass and the formation of the temporary access route in this area may be shielding any earthworks if they exist. The boundary bank and hollow way may have extended as far east as the proposed track and it cannot be discounted that other earthworks exist in the area.

Professor Christopher Dyer visited the site in December 2004 whilst the ménage was being constructed and much medieval pottery including oolitic tempered ware and two sherds of Brill jugs were observed in the ground disturbed by the earth-moving operation (SMR 2221). Oolitic tempered ware (Gloucester Type Fabric 41) dates from the late 9th century until the 13th century and the Brill jugs sherds probably date from the late 13th century to the 14th century (pers. comm. S Rátkai).

Earthworks situated to the west of the deserted settlement have been identified as cultivation terraces dating from the 12th-14th century (SMR 4289, Fig. 1). Marshall suggests that they may have been constructed for a specialised crop, perhaps vines, as terraces are usually constructed when there is sparse level ground. This is not the case here, for there is ample level ground in the vicinity (Marshall, 1992). These terraces could be associated with the settlement at Castlett but it has been argued that they may have been constructed as a distinct planned project serving the manor rather than the village community (*op cit*). The terraces were abandoned sometime in probably the later medieval period.

By 1381, after the Black Death of 1348-9, Castlett was reduced to a single household (Dyer, 2002). Presumably the settlement became deserted shortly after this date. The abandonment of the terraces to the west of the settlement and the absence of later medieval pottery recovered from earth-moving operations when the ménage was constructed appear to support a 15th century date for abandonment.

The earliest map evidence for the area is the 1840 Tithe Map for the Hamlet of Castlett (Fig. 3). However, the site of the proposed track and deserted medieval settlement are not shown. Presumably this area was not titheable. However, an 1869 Map of the Manor of Castlett taken from sale particulars does show the site (Fig. 4). The southern arm of the proposed track is within an area of trees known as the Fir Plantation and the western arm is within a parcel of land called Shepherds Close. The earthworks of the deserted medieval settlement are not shown but a line of trees running east to west in the north of the field may delineate the low boundary bank. A building is shown in the centre of the field as is a copse of trees.

The 1881 First Edition Ordnance Survey 25 inch Plan shows the fir plantation and the line of trees in the north of the field (Fig. 5). Although the line of trees in the north are shown as being slightly closer to the hedge than on the 1869 plan they must be the same trees. The building and copse of trees in the centre of the field are not shown or have disappeared by this time. A small building is shown directly to the south-east of the proposed track. The

1883 first Edition Ordnance survey 6 inch Plan shows no difference from the 1883 plan (not illustrated). The 1902 second Edition Ordnance Survey Plan shows a boundary where the Fir Plantation was but the trees have disappeared as have the trees in the north of the field (Fig. 6). The small building shown to the south-east of the proposed track on the 1881 Plan has had additions made to it.

The 1920s Ordnance Survey 25 inch Plan shows the same detail as the 1902 plan except there is no division between the area of the fir plantation and the field (Fig. 7). The 1955 Ordnance Survey 6inch Plan shows no change to the 1920s plan (not illustrated).

The earthworks of the deserted settlement do not show up well on aerial photographs. A 1973 photograph shows the earthworks but it is difficult to make out any actual form to these earthworks (Plate 1). The division between the plantation and the field is visible and the area where the plantation was situated appears to be a yard or at least not under pasture. No earthworks can be made out along the route of the proposed track.

The 1977 Ordnance Survey 1:2500 plan shows little change in the area of the proposed track from the 1920s plan but the building shown to the south-east of the track has disappeared (Fig. 8). However, the earthworks of the deserted settlement have been surveyed in. The plan shows the hollow way and low boundary bank but they do not continue as far as the area of the proposed track. However, these earthworks may have continued eastwards but in this area they have been disturbed by perhaps agricultural activity.

6 The evaluation

Trench 1 (Figs 9 and 10, Plate 2)

The earliest layer excavated was the natural limestone brash [111]. This was not homogenous throughout the trench and varied in colour from orange to beige. A layer [106] above [111] in the west of the trench was excavated. This was seen between two cut features and was a mid grey brown with silty clay with frequent limestone fragments. Cutting [106] in the far west of the trench was a sub-circular pit [110] at least 400mm deep with concave sides and a dish shaped base. The fill [109] was a mid grey brown silty clay with frequent limestone fragments and flecks and occasional charcoal flecks.

Cutting [106], to the east of [110] was a linear cut running north to south across the trench [108]. This was about 700mm wide and about 400mm deep. The western edge and base of this feature were not clearly defined and consequently the feature was over excavated. The fill was a dark grey brown silty clay with moderate limestone fragments and flecks and charcoal [107].

Running east to west along the centre of the trench (and cutting [108] and [110]) was a service trench [105]. This was at least 500mm deep and was dug in 2004 and was backfilled at that date with a mid brown silty clay with frequent limestone fragments [104]. Cutting the top of this was another service trench running north to south [103]. The backfill was a mid brown silty clay [102]. Sealing the service trenches was a layer of terram with about 400mm of scalplings forming the temporary access road [101].

Trench 2

This trench was not excavated.

Trench 3 (Figs 11 and 12, Plate 3)

The natural was seen about 400mm below the ground surface [305]. Cutting [305] was either a sub-circular or linear cut about 100mm deep [304]. This had concave sides with a flattish base. The fill was a mid grey brown silty clay with moderate limestone fragments and flecks [303]. Above this was a cultivation layer which was about 200mm thick and was a mid orangey brown silty clay with very frequent limestone fragments and flecks [302]. Above this was the topsoil which was about 200mm thick and was a mid grey brown silty clay with occasional limestone fragments and flecks [301].

Trench 4 (Figs 13 and 14, Plates 4 and 5)

The natural [408] was seen about 500mm below the ground surface. Cutting this in the south of the trench was a linear cut running east to west [405]. This was approximately 200mm deep but the top of this feature had been destroyed by cultivation out. The sides were irregular but concave and the base was irregular. There were two fills. The primary fill was a mid orangey brown silty clay with very frequent limestone fragments and flecks [404]. Above this (and partially ploughed out) was a fill of mid orangey brown silty clay occasional limestone fragments and flecks and moderate charcoal [403].

Cutting natural in the north of the trench was a sub-circular cut with irregular sides and base [407]. This was about 70mm deep and was filled with a mid grey brown silty clay with frequent limestone fragments and flecks [406].

Above the natural was a cultivation layer about 150mm thick [409]. This was a mid orangey brown silty clay with frequent limestone fragments and flecks and occasional pebbles. Above this was a similar cultivation layer which contained slightly less stone and was about 150mm thick [402]. The topsoil was above this which was a mid grey brown silty clay with occasional limestone fragments and flecks [401].

Trench 5 (Fig. 15)

The natural was seen about 400mm below the ground surface [503]. Above this was a 250mm thick cultivation soil which was a mid orangey brown silty clay with very frequent limestone fragments and flecks [502]. Overlying this was the topsoil which was a mid grey brown silty clay with occasional limestone fragments and flecks [501].

Trench 6

This trench was not excavated

Trench 7

This trench was not excavated

7 The finds

The pottery by Ed McSloy

Nine sherds of pottery (48g) were recovered from the fills of linear feature [405]. A further four sherds (14g) were unstratified. Condition was good with little apparent abrasion. An unstratified sherd exhibited evidence for use in the form of burnt food residues. A sherd from context [403] showed pitting to the internal surface resulting from the loss of calcareous inclusions. This suggests storage of corrosive contents.

With the exception of an unstratified internally-glazed earthenware sherd of Post-Medieval type, the pottery dates to the earlier medieval period, most likely between the 11th and 12th centuries. The medieval fabrics consist of oolitic limestone-tempered and quartz sand and oolitic limestone-tempered types. Both are typical of the north Cotswolds area and are comparable to Gloucester fabrics TF41b and TF43 respectively (see Vince 1983). Rim or base sherds were not recovered, however sherds from two vessels feature decoration (see catalogue). Comparable scored and rosette-stamped decoration occurs on oolitic-limestone-tempered wares from west Oxfordshire (Mellor 1995, Fig. 13) and in other fabrics from Bristol (Watts and Rahtz 1985, Fig. 79, nos 59-66) and Droitwich (Hurst 1992, Fig. 95, nos 2-6). Known examples share 11th or 12th century dating.

Catalogue

- U/S two bodysherds sand and oolitic (Gloucester type TF43), one bodysherd (2g) Cotswold oolitic (Gloucester type TF41b); one bodysherd (4g) internally glazed earthenware.
- 403 Six bodysherds (24g) Cotswold oolitic (Gloucester type TF41b). Includes one sherd with double groove. Dating C11-C12.
- 404 Three bodysherds (24g) Cotswold oolitic (Gloucester type TF41b). Includes one sherd with single groove with rosette stamp below. Dating C11-C12.

The flint

One unstratified waste flake of flint was recovered from Trench 5.

8 Discussion

Trench 1

The two early features [108] and [110] excavated in Trench 1 produced no pottery but it is likely that they date from the medieval period and are associated with the peripheries of the deserted settlement of Castlett. The linear feature [108] could represent the earthwork shown on the 1977 Ordnance Survey 1:2500 Plan as it is roughly on the same alignment and the bank shown on the plan could have been removed by cultivation in the later medieval and post-medieval periods or by the formation of the temporary access road (Fig. 8). The layer excavated between these two features [106] is also presumably medieval in date. The formation of the temporary access road and the excavation of service trenches has removed any other archaeological layers or features if they existed.

Trench 3

Although no pottery was recovered from the feature excavated [304] it was probably excavated in the medieval period. This feature is probably a pit and the top of this feature has been truncated by cultivation during the later medieval and post-medieval periods.

Trench 4

The linear feature [405] excavated in the south of the trench was the only feature to produce pottery. It seems likely that this feature was a ditch running roughly west to east which was infilled in the 11th-12th centuries. Perhaps this ditch represents a field boundary associated

with the medieval settlement. The top of this feature had been cultivated out by later medieval and post-medieval cultivation. The feature excavated in the north of the trench [407] could be a medieval pit but the nature of the fill and the irregularity of the cut suggests that it is a natural depression within the underlying limestone brash.

Trench 5

No archaeological significant features or deposits were excavated in this trench.

9 Conclusions

It seems likely that the route of the proposed trackway lies on the peripheries of the medieval settlement of Castlett. The only feature which produced pottery was a ditch which was infilled in the 11th or 12th century. Although the other features that were cutting the natural did not produce pottery it is possible that they are medieval in date. The paucity of medieval pottery from the site in general is unusual as cultivation in the area of the proposed trackway must have been taking place and therefore manuring of the ground would have occurred and pottery would have been mixed in with other household rubbish.

It is not known what depth the excavation for the proposed trackway will be but in the area of Trench 1, where the temporary road has been formed, significant archaeological remains were seen at the limit of this excavation. In the area where Trenches 3-5 were situated significant archaeology was excavated between 300mm and 400mm below the existing ground surface.

10 Acknowledgements

The author would like to thank Francesca Bradley for assisting with the site work. Thanks must also go to the surveyors from Midland Survey, Mark Eaton of Eaton Associates and the construction site workers at Castlett Farm for their help during the project.

11 References

Abbreviations

RO: Gloucestershire Record Office Accession Number

NMR: National Monuments Record

SMR: Gloucestershire Sites and Monuments Record

Maps

1840 Tithe Map for the Hamlet of Castlett (RO PC 1812/88)

1869 Map of the Manor of Castlett taken from sale particulars for the Manor of Castlett (RO D6432 2/4)

1881 First Edition Ordnance Survey 25 inch Plan, Gloucestershire Sheet XXI. 13

1883 First Edition Ordnance Survey 6 inch Plan

1902 Second Edition Ordnance Survey 25 inch Plan, Gloucestershire Sheet XXI. 13

1920s Ordnance Survey 25 inch Plan, Gloucestershire Sheet XXI. 13

1955 Ordnance Survey 6 inch Plan

1977 Ordnance Survey 1:2,500 Plan

1979 Ordnance Survey 1:10,000 Plan

Unpublished references

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Aerial Photographs

All held at the NMR

- 1 April 1946, Film Number RAF/106G/UK/1347, Frame Number 5176
1 April 1946, Film Number RAF/106G/UK/1347, Frame Number 5314
14 May 1948, Film Number RAF/541/17, Frame Number 3007
14 May 1948, Film Number RAF/541/17, Frame Number 3008
14 May 1948, Film Number RAF/541/17, Frame Number 3009
14 June 1973, Film Number OS/73288, Frame Number 75
14 June 1973, Film Number OS/73288, Frame Number 76
20 July 1983, Film and Frame Number 2145/0159
20 July 1983, Film and Frame Number 2145/0160
20 July 1983, Film and Frame Number 2145/0161

12 Archive

The site code is CFG05B. The archive consists of:

- 6 trench sheets
- 1 drawing index sheet
- 8 field drawings on 4 sheets
- 1 sheet of levels
- 2 sheets of site diary and notes
- 4 finds sheets
- 5 photo record sheets
- 2 films of black and white photographic negatives
- ? films of colour photographic transparencies
- 1 set of CD photographs
- 1 box of finds:

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