

Watching Brief for de-silting works at Lower Brockhampton Manor House, Lower Brockhampton Estate, Bromyard.

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Herefordshire Archaeology
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**Watching Brief for de-silting works at Lower
Brockhampton Manor House, Lower Brockhampton
Estate, Bromyard.**

**Monument No: 4894
NGR: SO 6874 5590
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Summary:

The moat at Lower Brockhampton required de-silting due to a build-up of material over the last 30 years. This had led to anaerobic conditions within the moat which were adversely affecting wildlife and the visual appreciation of the site. The works were undertaken during late January and early February 2015 to an agreed specification and a written scheme of investigation.

After a series of initial site visits, progress was monitored every other day, a photographic record made and site notebook updated with each visit. The watching brief failed to identify any deposits of antiquity, suggesting that the moat had been thoroughly de-silted and possibly deepened during the 1980's. A series of samples were taken and run through a flotation system in order to assess the makeup of the silt from a number of locations within the moat. These were all remarkably similar, the material recovered representing plant material directly comparable to the water plants currently growing within the moat and the vegetation overhanging it.

The "drop off" recorded during the 2012 assessment of the moat within its eastern arm was confirmed and appears to comprise a channel approximately 3.5m wide and 0.8m deep. Whether this formed an earlier, narrow but deeper moat or represents a channel excavated during the 1980's de-silting in order to add to the volume of the moat is uncertain. However on the balance of probability, and in light of the lack of any discernible stratigraphy within the silting, it is likely that this represents "over-digging" during the 1980's.

The works had no impact upon any significant archaeological deposits.

With the exception of a single clay pipe bowl of late 18th century date, no artefacts of archaeological / historical significance were recovered.

The watching brief has provided some useful information which goes some way to confirming the extent of walling / revetting around the internal bank of the moat and has suggested that a less structural wall once ran along the top of the outer bank of the western arm of the moat.

Disclaimer: It should not be assumed that land referred to in this document is accessible to the public. Location plans are indicative only. National Grid References are accurate to approximately 10m. Measured dimensions are accurate to within 1m at a scale of 1:500, 0.1m at 1:50 and 0.02m at 1:20m

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1. Introduction

This report provides an account of archaeological watching Brief associated with the desilting of the moat at Lower Brockhampton, on the Brockhampton estate, Bromyard., Herefordshire, (NGR SO 6874 5590). The watching brief was required in order to record and retrieve information from within any deposits of archaeological / historical significance within the moat and to record any evidence of revetting of the moat banks.

2. Aims and Objectives

The aims and objectives of the watching brief were:

1. To record and investigate any deposits of archaeological significance (pre-19th century)
2. To provide environmental analysis of any deposits which could be identified as being of pre-19th century date.
3. To record any additional information concerning the historic use of revetting / walling or other methods of bank stabilisation, which may come to light during the works.

4. Location, Topography, Geology and Land-use

The National Trust's Brockhampton Estate is situated a mile to the east of Bromyard, and close to the border of Herefordshire with Worcestershire to the east. While most of the estate lies within the civil parish of Brockhampton, a detached part lies within Tedstone Delamere parish to the north. Lower Brockhampton House is situated at SO 688 560.



The geology underlying the site consists of the St Maughans formation of the Lower Old Red Sandstone. The soils are of the Bromyard Series, well drained reddish fine silty soil over shale and siltstone. The subsoil comprises a red clay / marl.

Figure 1: location of Lower Brockhampton within the county of Herefordshire

4 Current Knowledge

The place-name, which means simply 'Brook settlement', is first recorded in its present form in 1283. An earlier record of 1166 renders it *Brochant(one)*, held by one Bernard. Brockhamptons were the first recorded owners of the manor, from the 12th century, and Richard de Brockhampton passed the ownership of the manor to Robert de Furches in 1283. The manor was in the hands of Lawrence de Sollers by 1349 and Sir Thomas de Moigne was in possession from 1350. By 1383 it had in turn passed into the hands of John Domulton. Throughout the medieval period the parish church for Brockhampton was St. Peter's Bromyard although by the 17th century it appears that Whitbourne was regarded as the parish church for the area.

The earliest fabric of the chapel at Lower Brockhampton dates to the 12th Century. Meanwhile the open hall of the manor house can probably be dated to the early years of the 15th century. A deserted settlement at the Grove is thought to be the Studmarsh (or Stubmarsh) mentioned in the Red Book of the Bishop of Hereford in 1268-1275, but it is not mentioned in the Lay subsidy Rolls of 1334-6 and may have been deserted by then.

At the beginning of the sixteenth the estate passed to the Habingtons of Wichenford in Worcestershire, and in 1545 Richard Habington left the property equally to his three sisters. One of these sisters, Mary, married Richard Barneby of Bockleton in Worcestershire just to the north-east of Bromyard in 1552, and lived at Brockhampton.

In 1731 a nephew of the last of the male Barnebys, Bartholomew Lutley, inherited the estate. Following a change of surname from Lutley to Barneby and his marriage to Betty Freeman of Gaines in 1756, Bartholemew Barneby began building a new house at Brockhampton Park, in an elevated position to the south of the estate near the Bromyard to Worcester road. This is thought to have been designed by the renowned architect Thomas Farnolls Pritchard.

Bartholomew's son John Barneby built a new chapel close to the house in 1799. At this point Lower Brockhampton reverted to use as a farmhouse, and the medieval chapel was no longer maintained. The restoration of Lower Brockhampton House in the Victorian image of half-timbered Gothic domestic style has been proven to be the work of J.C. Buckler from around 1871.

The estate was bequeathed to the National Trust in 1946, and it formally took possession in 1950, with a further purchase in 1968 and the sale of various lands south of the A44 soon thereafter. The house, Brockhampton Park, is rented on a long lease.

5 Characterisation of the buildings and moat

Lower Brockhampton buildings

The Lower Brockhampton group of structures and historic features comprises the manor house partially surrounded by a moat, with a gatehouse to the south spanning one arm of the moat, a further minor moat to the north-east, and a ruined medieval chapel to the west of the moated site. This group contains most of the key historic assets on the Brockhampton Estate, besides the 18th century house, Brockhampton Park, two further significant listed Buildings, and two shrunken/deserted medieval settlements. Farm buildings constructed in the eighteenth century and nineteenth century to the south of the moated site form a

significant group of vernacular buildings in its own right. They record a period in which what had been the estate centre was used only as an ancillary estate farm.

The moated manor and its detached gatehouse regularly feature on National Trust promotional literature. One reason for their popularity arises from the visual attractiveness of the closely-timbered elevations of both the main building of the manor-house and the gatehouse. Such 'close-studding' was a marked feature of wealth display during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in England.

The rapid inventory survey of the estate undertaken by Herefordshire Archaeology in 2002-3 added some potentially important detail to the known record of the site (Ray, 2003/2010). The survey recorded a possible abandoned former course of the moat, and a probable area of settlement earthworks to the north in the adjacent orchard. It suggested that the stone elements of the manor could be earlier in origin than the timbered ones. It also emphasised the largely ornamental character of the building-group as constituted by the sixteenth century.

The manor house

This has two principal structural elements: a major hall and, set at right-angles to it, a composite east range with accommodation on two storeys throughout its length. The early fifteenth century hall comprises two bays that, following J.C. Buckler's late 19th century restoration, are open to the timber roof trusses and wind-braces. The hall is aligned broadly east-west with a former screens-passage to the east. The east range is set at the perpendicular to the eastern end of the hall, and is of indeterminate date, with different elements ranging from (possibly) as early as the thirteenth century, through to the nineteenth century. The report of the Royal Commission on the Historic Monuments of England survey, published in 1932 (Herefordshire East), suggested that the house was originally arranged on an H-plan with a west range parallel to that on the east. This, it was supposed, was destroyed at some point: although its foundations were said to survive (RCHME 1932, 32). No trace of these foundations is visible today, but geophysical surveys in 2003 and in 2010 may have located part of the footprint of this putative west range.

The two or three claimed northern extensions to the east wing that are dated by RCHME to the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries are in need of re-assessment. The most northerly of these structures is stone-founded and its internal arrangements indicate that some substantial rebuilding has taken place at some point. In view of what was also observed concerning the possible succession of moats, it is proposed here instead that this most northerly structure could once have formed part of the original stone and timber medieval manor house. If this was the case, then at some point it was substantially demolished and the remains altered to ancillary structures, perhaps around AD1400 when the new hall and cross-wings were built and the ornamental pond/moat created, perhaps in modification of an original moat. This original building might then possibly have been re-commissioned and linked to the east wing and hall, perhaps sometime after the west wing was demolished. The brickwork in this most northerly structure is most likely of late seventeenth or early eighteenth century date and this could be the date of re-construction.

This developmental interpretation (or model) is all supposition, based upon a superficial examination of the stone foundations of the northern part of the east wing in the field, and study of the (RCHME) surveyed plan of the constituent structures. It strongly contradicts the findings of the 'comprehensive analytical survey' of the manor house undertaken by Jill Campbell in 2011 (Campbell, 2011). This study, which included dendro-chronological dating of the hall timbers, was apparently based upon an incorrectly drawn (rationalised) architectural plan of the east wing, which ignored the (accurate) detail of the Royal Commission plan. What the developmental model outlined above does permit, however, is the testing of its interim conclusions through targeted future investigative work.

The gatehouse

This was once thought to be of late fifteenth century date, but is now dated both stylistically and through dendro-chronology to the period 1545-50. The two-storey formal structure is, in practice, a miniature. It should properly be seen therefore as something of a visual pun, echoing the flamboyant close-studded eastern elevation of the manor house. The ornamental nature of the gatehouse is emphasised not only by its size, but also by the clear indication that the moat was deliberately made narrower where the gatehouse was built, to enable it to span the water. This entirely compromised the defensive function that the moat might otherwise be supposed to have performed, but created a grouping of immediate visual attractiveness and balance.

The moats

The literature on the site notes the existence of the moat surrounding the manor house, but does not as yet record either the character or the developmental sequence of moats at the site. The survey visit and survey of 2002 and 2003 produced a significant new perspective on these features. The moat that exists today is markedly broader on the eastern flank of the manor house than the west, and curves around with a flourish to mark out the location of the gate-house on the southern side opposite the screens passage. This is a very carefully designed position, but the plan of the moat reveals that the house itself does not sit squarely within the moated area. It seems likely that the present form of the moat is, rather, designed also to enhance the prospect of the house from its principal southerly to south-easterly approach (which is defined by a north-south aligned hollow-way recorded in the survey of 2003 in the fields to the south of the manor house and farm).

During 2003, *Herefordshire Archaeology* survey recorded the former northern arm of what may have been the moat which survives as a largely filled-in curving broad gully to the north of the present northern arm of the moat. This in-filled ditch is more strictly aligned east-west than the present northern arm, and this aligns much more closely with the stance of the manor house. Just as the stone-founded northern 'extension' may represent the sole surviving above-ground trace of the former, pre-1400 medieval manor house, so the possibly in-filled northern arm of the moat may represent therefore the sole surviving element of the defensive moat that once surrounded that earlier manor house. Alternatively this feature could have been excavated as a feeder ditch for the decoy island and was controlled by a sluice from the moat.

The post-1400 ornamental moat appears designed, then, to look most impressive from the south-east and this sense of a designed micro-landscape of the environs of the manor house is enhanced by the addition of two other elements that are probably contemporary with each other, dating to the mid-sixteenth century. The ornamental gate-house will be discussed below, but the other feature is a miniature moat with a central moated area that is located to the north-east of the present moat and is connected to it by a small overflow channel. This miniature moated site potentially served as an ornament designed as a pun on the larger moated site. A dam in the dingle to the west would have created a pool to the east of the complex. This was another watery element that was added to complete the tranquil scene, perhaps in the eighteenth century. It is possible also, that the moated area within the miniature moat once featured another timber-framed structure such as a dovecote.

In December 2012, Herefordshire Archaeology were commissioned to carry out an archaeological assessment of the moat in order to provide information concerning its development and current condition. The water level within the moat was lowered by approximately 0.35m. This exposed an area of "foreshore" on both sides of the moat approximately 0.7m in width on average. This enabled the banks to be inspected and their composition and condition to be recorded where feasible. It became apparent that the 'topographic survey' drawing produced in 2010, on which annotations were to be made, did not derive from a measured survey and was not accurate enough to enable the mapping of the present banks in relation to the house and gatehouse. A new surveyed base plan was therefore produced using a Total Station survey instrument, and moat-side details were added to this. Two sections of walling were recorded, one of likely late 18th / early 19th century date (associated with a drain which entered the moat at its south-western corner), the second of unknown date and serving as a revetment to the northern gable end of the house. It is possible that this wall continued along the entire northern inner edge and the western arm of the moat. Whilst no evidence of a timber revetment was recorded, a line was traced underwater that represents a significant point of increase of depth within the moat. This perhaps provides an indication of the position of the original western limit of the eastern arm of the moat.

6 The Watching Brief.

The watching brief comprised a series of five site visits over the ten days which site work took place by the de-silting contractor. The silt was removed from the moat by means of a medium sized 360 excavator and a tracked dumper. The silt was then loaded from the dumper into a tractor trailer and removed from the site to be spread on fields nearby.

Access into the moat was created by cutting a 2.5m wide ramp (plate 1), into the moat close to the south-western terminal. Within the cut for the ramp were two stones running parallel to the moat edge. These appear to be aligned with the stone built wall, recorded in 2012, which encloses the western terminal of the moat. Investigations suggested that both stones were laid onto the top of the clay subsoil at a depth of 0.35m below the present ground surface. No evidence of mortar or any other bonding material was recorded and no additional stonework was encountered beneath them. It is possible that these represented the base footing for a dry stone wall, however if this were the case it has been heavily robbed and damaged by tree roots. The stones were clearly not associated with the well-built and mortar bonded wall recorded in 2012 and must have therefore belonged to a far less substantial structure.



Plate 1: Access ramp cut into western bank of moat close to south-western terminal.



Plate 2: General view of drained moat long east.
Description of the moat

The de-silting progressed from the south-eastern end of the moat in an easterly direction. It rapidly became clear that the moat profile was not uniform. The initial clean of the moat began to confirm the moat as being wide but shallow, similar in profile to other, no defensive moats (such as the moat at Ford Abbey Farm, Puddleston). However, the 2012 Assessment Report had recorded a “drop off” within the eastern arm of the moat suggesting that this represented either the original moat edge on the eastern side or that the moat profile was narrower and deeper originally. It appears that the recorded drop off represented the cut for a channel which runs along the centre of the entire moat. (plates 3 to 6 and figure 2). The channel is approximately 3.5m wide and 0.8m deep, cut into the clay / marl subsoil and is roughly central to the course of the moat.



Plate 3: Moat after de-silting looking west showing central channel.

The channel widens to approximately 5m within the eastern arm of the moat before narrowing to under 3m as it approaches the gatehouse. The side of the channel are cut to an angle of approximately 40 degrees, compared to the 15 to 20 degrees angle of the shallower moat cut.

Environmental sampling

The silt comprised a very dark brown / black sludge, typical of waterlogged deposits which have been deprived of oxygen. A series of five samples were taken, (each making up a 5ltr bucket). These were run through a flotation system and set of graduated sieves in order to retrieve environmental and small scale artefactual evidence. Each sample was given a rapid scan by an Archaeobotanist and where possible species identified.

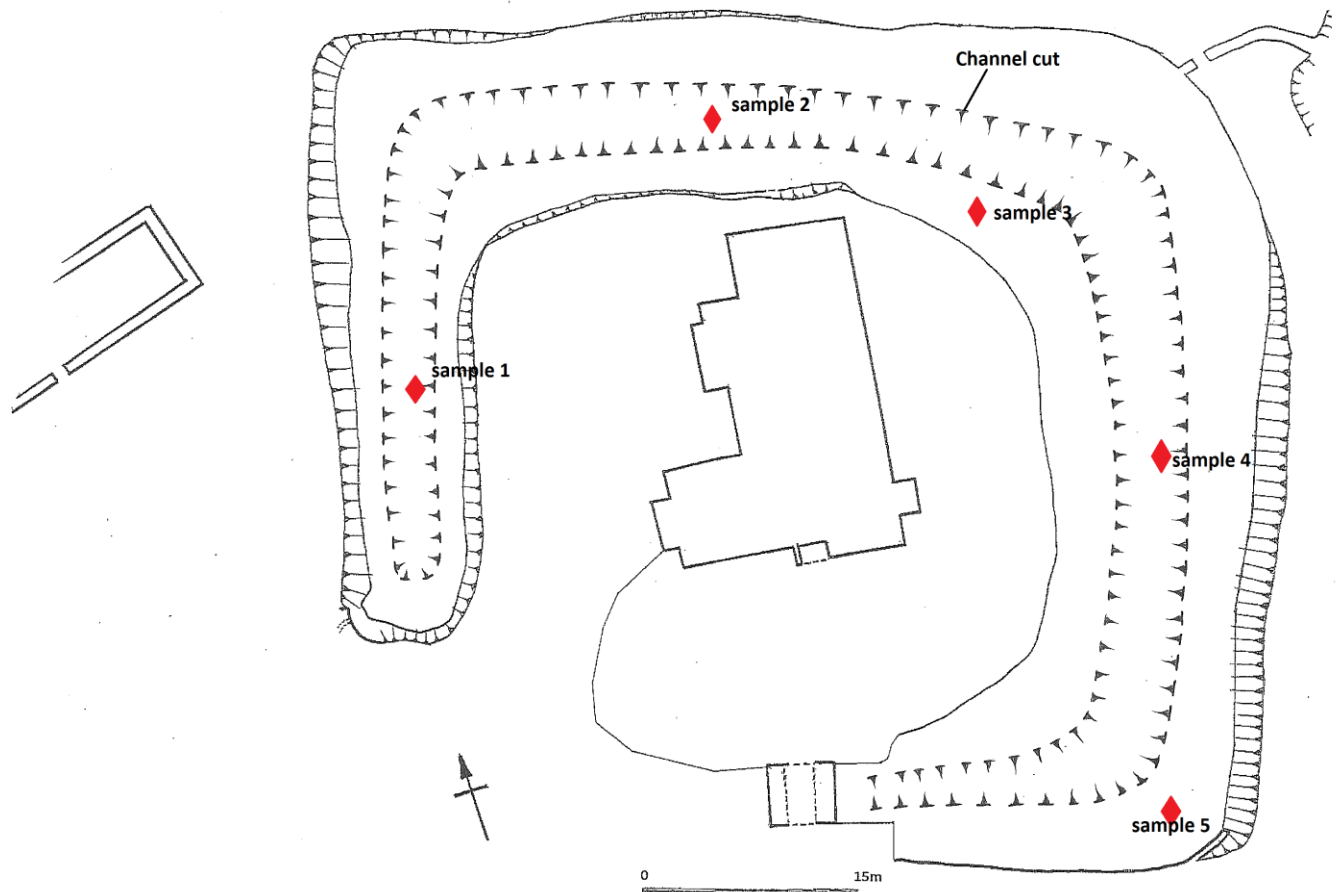


Figure 2: Plan showing extent of channel cut and locations of environmental samples

The samples were taken from five different locations within the moat, (see figure 2). Sample 1 was taken from the top of the silt within the western arm of the moat. Sample 2 was taken from the base of the channel roughly midway along the northern portion of the moat. Sample 3 was taken close to the inner bank at the north-eastern corner of the moat. Sample 4 was taken from within the channel roughly midway along the eastern arm of the moat. Sample 5 was taken from the eastern side of the moat close to its south-eastern corner.

There was little variation in the material from the sieved and cleaned samples. Much of each sample comprised a very fine organic (vegetable) deposit consistent with having been passed through the digestive system of waterfowl. The larger environmental fragments (apparent within all five samples), were identified as the leaf, stem and seeds of the Greater Reed mace, (*Typhaceae*), leaf and stalk fragments of Waterlily, (*Nymphaeae*) and Flag Iris, (*Iris pseudacorus*), small fragments of Canadian pondweed (*Elodea canadensis*) and Rigid Hornwort, (*Ceratophyllum demersum*), leaf and bark of Oak, (*Quercus*), Ash, (*Fraxinus*) and Damson, (*prunus*). Samples 1 and 2 contained small quantities of ash / charcoal. Sample 2 contained the lower jaw of a mouse / vole whilst a scale from a common carp was recovered from sample 5. Artefactual evidence comprised 3 modern wire nails (rusted together) from sample 2 and an 18th century clay pipe bowl from sample 3. The pipe bowl was badly abraded and obviously not stratified.



Plate 4: Moat after de-silting looking north-east.



Plate 5: Moat after de-silting looking north-west.



Plate 6: Moat after de-silting looking west.

No other artefacts were recovered from the sampling. The uniformity of the moat deposit, both in appearance and content would strongly suggest that the silt represent a fairly rapid build-up over a fairly short period of time. The relatively small amount (depth) of silt underlying the root mats of various clumps of bankside vegetation is also suggestive of a short time period since its last clean out. This is consistent with the moat having been de-silted during the early to mid 1980's.

The silt from within the channel was directly comparable with that from the sides of the moat and this, together with the shape and dimensions of the channel, particularly the fact that it widens and narrows as the moat widens and narrows, may suggest that this was excavated during the 1980's de-silting in an attempt to deepen the moat and increase the volume of water within it.

Investigation of the moat edges

In addition to the possible wall line recorded during the cutting of the access ramp, the remainder of the internal and external edges (banks) of the moat were inspected for evidence of walling and / or revetting. The 2012 assessment report suggested that a stone wall had existed along the inner bank of the northern part of the moat. This has been confirmed during the de-silting works and it is now strongly suggested that a stone wall ran from the north-east corner of the inner bank of the moat right along the northern inner bank and continued round to the south western terminal (Figure 3), possibly linking up with the section of walling recorded during the 2012 Assessment. Whilst there is not the quantity of stone which would be expected to indicate a collapsed wall over this distance, enough "occasional" fragments both within the bank and at the base of the bank to indicate its extent with some confidence.

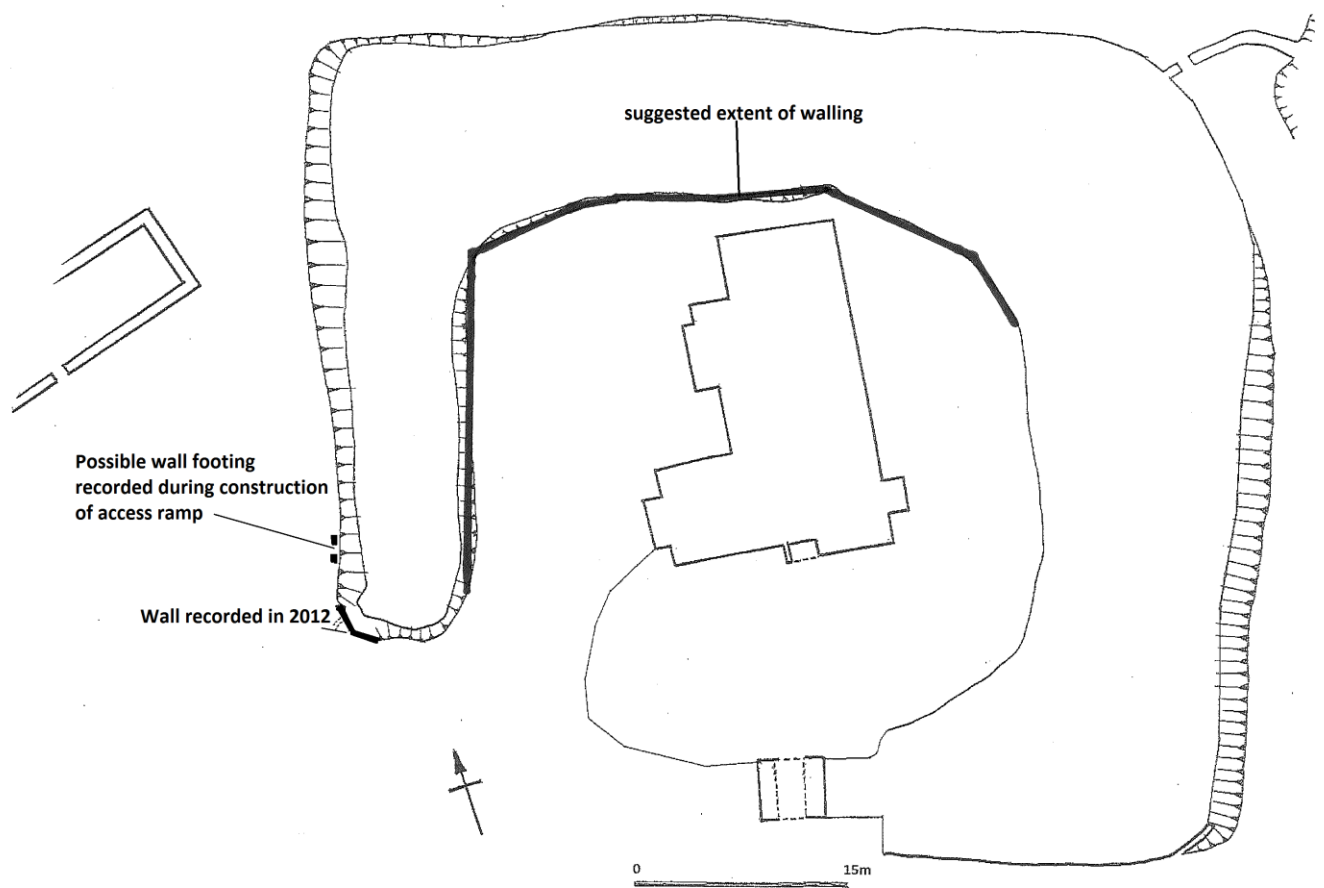


Figure 3: Plan showing the suggested extent of stone wall around inner bank of the moat, the light wall footings recorded within the cut for the temporary access ramp and the extent of walling recorded during the 2012 assessment.

7. Discussion

The watching brief has provided some useful information which goes some way to confirming the extent of walling / revetting around the internal bank of the moat and has suggested that a less structural wall once ran along the top of the outer bank of the western arm of the moat. It is suggested that the walling which must have collapsed into the moat from the northern and western internal banks was either removed for use elsewhere or removed during the earlier instances of moat cleaning / de-silting.

The channel running along the centre of the moat may well be of modern date. Its uniform profile and flat base is suggestive of machine cutting as is the fact that it widens and narrows with the present shape of the moat.

It is clear that the moat has been thoroughly de-silted in the recent past. Conversations with both the tenant farmer and longstanding National Trust staff would suggest that it was last cleaned out during the early to mid 1980's and that it was cleaned out prior to this during the 1950s or early 60's. This is supported by the lack of environmental evidence which appears to have only recorded species which currently, (or in the case of the fish had until recently), populated the moat and its immediate environs.

8. Acknowledgements

Herefordshire Archaeology would like to acknowledge the help and co-operation of David Coope and Janine Young from the National Trust. We would also like to acknowledge the assistance of Catherine Longford, archaeobotanist, for her assistance in this project.

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11. Archive

1 inked drawing

5 site notebook entries

42 digital images

Environmental samples (disposed of).

1 18th century clay pipe bowl (retained).

This document