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Council**

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An Archaeological Watching Brief at Lower Brockhampton Manor House, Bromyard, Herefordshire

Report prepared by

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Herefordshire

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Herefordshire Archaeology is Herefordshire Council's county archaeology service. It advises upon the conservation of archaeological and historic landscapes, supports the maintenance of the county Sites and Monuments (Historic Environment) Record, and carries out conservation and investigative field projects. The County Archaeologist is Dr. Keith Ray.

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Summary

This report has been produced in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation agreed between The National Trust and Herefordshire Archaeology in order to record the presence or absence of archaeological features / deposits which may be exposed during the construction of a path between the manor house and the gatehouse at Lower Brockhampton moated site.

A path was required in order to minimise the transportation of mud into the manor house by visitors.

The design and structure of the path was determined by an evaluation excavation undertaken in October 2011 by Herefordshire Archaeology. The path comprised a series of locally sourced flag stones separated by narrow strips of grass. The stones were laid on a dry mortar mix.

The turf was stripped by hand and the underlying mesh cut by disk cutter to the shape of the flagstones which will form the path. The topsoil was then excavated by hand to a maximum depth of 0.15m. The excavated material comprised modern deposits of pea gravel overlying a rubble layer deposited during works associated with the renovation of the site in the 1950's. No deposits, features or artefacts of archaeological significance were encountered.

Disclaimer: It should not be assumed that land referred to in this document is accessible to the public. Location plans are indicative only. NGR's 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 1:20.

Figures contained within this report contain material from the Ordnance Survey. The grid in this material is the National Grid taken from the Ordnance Survey map with the permission of the Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office (OS Licence 100024168). This material has been reproduced in order to locate the site in its environs.

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1. Introduction

This report (EHE 2066) provides an account of an archaeological Watching Brief carried out by Herefordshire Archaeology at Lower Brockhampton moated manor house. The fieldwork element of the work was undertaken on Monday 17th November 2012.

The report firstly sets out briefly the aims and objectives of the project, describes the location, and provides an outline historical background. It then characterises the main buildings and the moats belonging to the Lower Brockhampton site complex. The report goes on to describe the progress and findings of the Watching Brief, and concludes with an overview of the results of the project.

2.0 Aims, objectives and methods for the study, including reporting

The National Trust has identified that an unacceptable quantity of mud was being transported into the manor house on the shoes of visitors crossing the grass between the gatehouse and the manor house. It was decided that in order to mitigate this, a series of closely spaced flagstones were to be placed between the gatehouse and the manor house to form a path which could be kept clean. During October 2011, Herefordshire Archaeology were commissioned by the National Trust to undertake an archaeological evaluation in order to record the types of paths used between the gatehouse and the manor house in the past, (Hoverd & Williams 2011). The evaluation showed that the grass had been reinforced with thick plastic netting in a strip between the gatehouse and the manor house in order to minimise wear and mud. This netting had now been buried under a sufficient thickness of turf so as to render it obsolete. Below this was a series of pea-gravel spreads laid directly onto a rubble matrix which, in turn, was laid down over much of the island during and immediately after the 1950's renovation work on the manor house.

3.0 Location

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.



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

4.0 Background history of Lower Brockhampton

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 Wichford 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.

5.0 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.

6.0 Fieldwork in 2012

The watching Brief comprised the supervision of the removal of turf, topsoil and a small amount of underlying rubble.

The edges of the paving for the path were laid out and cut using a petrol disk cutter in order to cut through the plastic re-enforcing net within the turf. (Plates 1 & 2). The turf was then cut into sections using the disc cutter before being removed from site. Once the turf was stripped a further 0.10m of material was removed in order to provide sufficient depth to bed the flagstones. A gap of approximately 0.1m was left between each stone and turf was placed within these gaps.



Plate 1: Layout of paving pattern.

The excavation was carried out by hand to a maximum depth of 0.15m below the top of the turf. The excavated material comprised a 0.02m layer of pea gravel immediately below the turf which overlay a 0.05m thick layer of well mixed, loamy soil. Immediately below this was a layer of brick and stone rubble. This layer was not completely excavated – only the larger fragments of rubble being removed to provide a flat surface onto which to bed the flagstones.



Plate 2: The path under excavation



Plate 3: The excavation completed prior to the laying of mortar and flagstones.

7.0 Conclusions

The excavations for the path did not reach sufficient depth to impinge upon deposits / features of archaeological significance. The building rubble layer has been identified (Hoverd & Williams 2011) as rubble associated with the 1952 renovation of the manor house. The 2011 suggested that this rubble layer had purposefully been deposited to provide a well drained base for the pea gravel path. This was confirmed by the excavation for the new path which showed that the rubble deposit continued along the entire length of the excavated strip for the new path.

Appendix 1

Site Archive:

9 digital images

1 entry in a site note book

This document

Acknowledgements

Herefordshire Archaeology would like to acknowledge the help and co-operation of the National Trust staff at Lower Brockhampton, particularly David Coope and Janine Young, Consultant Archaeologist for the National Trust.

List of Illustrations

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

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Plate 3: The excavation completed prior to the laying of mortar and flagstones.

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Validation

Herefordshire Archaeology operates a validation system for its reports, to provide quality assurance and to comply with Best Value procedures.

This report has been checked for accuracy and clarity of statements of procedure and results.

Julian Cotton (Archaeological Advisor)