



Herefordshire Archaeology
Conservation and Environmental Planning
Planning Services
Environment Directorate
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**Geophysical Survey of
Kilpeck Castle and Environs**
Herefordshire Archaeology
Report No. 198

Report prepared by
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Herefordshire Archaeology is Herefordshire Council's county archaeology service. It advises upon the conservation of archaeological and historic landscapes, maintains the county Sites and Monument Record, and carries out conservation and investigative field projects. The County Archaeologist is Dr. Keith Ray.

Geophysical Survey of Kilpeck Castle and Environs.

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Summary:

The survey described in this report (EHE43487), comprised the geophysical survey of two areas within the close environs of Kilpeck Castle, HSM 17. Both magnetometry and resistivity methods were used.

An area was examined over the western portion of an oval enclosure to the north of the castle. This feature survived as an earthwork into the first half of the 20th century but has subsequently been ploughed out. The resistivity survey picked up the bank and ditch of the enclosure but did not record any internal features. The magnetometer survey picked up the bank and ditch but also a strong anomaly close to the centre of the enclosure.

An area within the southern bailey of Kilpeck Castle was also examined. Both methods strongly suggest that the bailey was enclosed by a substantial stone wall. In addition to this the resistivity survey appears to have detected a series of positive anomalies within the north-western portion of the southern bailey suggesting a range of buildings.

Disclaimer: It should not be assumed that land referred to in this document is accessible to the public. Location plans are indicative only. NGRs 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 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. This material has been reproduced in order to locate the site in its environs.

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Introduction

This report (EHE43487) provides an account of a geophysical survey undertaken by Herefordshire Archaeology staff during February 2006 within the close environs of Kilpeck Castle. The fieldwork was undertaken and this report produced in compliance with a section 42 licence received from A .J. Fleming, Inspector of Ancient Monuments, English Heritage.

The survey was undertaken in order to ascertain whether either the southern bailey of Kilpeck Castle (HSM 17) or an oval enclosure to the north of the castle (HSM 3948) contained features which may have related to a priory church as suggested by primary documentary sources. These works were conducted in advance of the of the Kilpeck-Clifford Archaeology of Medieval Marcher Lordship (KCAMML) Project and to potentially provide a target to be investigated as part of an archaeological field evaluation which it is hoped will be carried out by *Herefordshire Archaeology*, the county archaeological service of Herefordshire Council, in collaboration with Channel 4's Time Team, (Ray 2006).

Location

Kilpeck castle is located at NGR SO 4450 3051, (Ordnance Survey, 1998). The site complex occupies the crest of a ridge broadly aligned south-west to north-east overlooking the shallow valley of the westwards flowing Worm Brook. This latter flows into the river Dore at Kenderchurch 5km to the west. The Dore then meets the Monnow 1km further west.



The Kilpeck 'ridge' lies at 100-116m OD, but is overlooked from rising ground to the south and south-east. This higher ground culminates in the east-west Orcop Hill – Saddlebow Hill ridge that rises to 293m OD just east of Cole's Tump.

The solid geology comprises Devonian Old Red Sandstone of the Silurian Raglan Mudstone Formation. The soils are coarse loams of the Bromsgrove association, mostly featuring argillic brown earths (Ragg et al, 1984).

Figure 1: The location of Kilpeck within the county.

Previous fieldwork / records

Kilpeck is most renowned for its parish church, the design and decorative stonework of which have excited much interest over the past 200 years. Most of the fabric of the present church dates from the 12th century, and much discussion has been devoted to determining, from the style of the ornate carvings adorning both internal and external elevations, exactly when in that century it was built and decorated.

There is a mention of an 'Ecclesia Cilpedic' in a charter of around 850AD, which is conventionally identified with Kilpeck. While the Concise Oxford Dictionary of Place Names (Ekwall, 1960) identifies 'cil' as Welsh for a nook or place of retreat, the Old Welsh and Irish place name element is often used for an ecclesiastical or more specifically, monastic location. The element is found elsewhere in the district today, for instance only 10km to the south-east in the valley of the Gamber/Garren (Amyr) brook at Tretire (nearby farm name: Killbreece) and at Llangarron (Trecilla Farm). In each instance, the location concerned is just across the river from the parish church. It is not possible to know exactly what form such an ecclesiastical establishment took materially. However, at nearby Dewsall, burials of C7-8th date were discovered more than 50m away from the present parish church. The mention of an 'ager' in the mid ninth century document concerning 'Cilpedic' suggests that the church was contained within a precinct boundary of some kind.

In the eleventh century, a person named as 'Catgendu' among the Llandaff Charters is identified as the lord of Kilpeck. This appears to correspond to the 'Cadiand' identified in the Herefordshire Domesday (1086) as holding Kilpeck in the year (1066) when King Edward the Confessor 'was alive and dead'. By 1086, the lordship had changed dramatically, and the lord of Kilpeck now was William fitz Norman, Sheriff of Herefordshire, who held it directly of King William. Kilpeck was the first, and was the most valuable, of the lands of the king identified in the Herefordshire Domesday survey as lying within Archenfield. This latter was the Welsh-speaking area of the county south of the Wye that had, until the late tenth or early eleventh century, been part of the Welsh kingdom of Gwent.

Kilpeck was probably William fitz Norman's centre for operations in the county. This is in part because, according to the 1086 survey, Kilpeck was the most important of the holdings that William possessed within the county. However, it is also because it is geographically central to the royal forests of Treville and the Hay of Hereford, that together with Dean, William held of the king as royal forester, for a fee of £15 annually. It cannot be doubted that this change in tenure also meant a change in the nature of the place. No mention is made of a castle in 1086, but soon thereafter it seems likely that a castle would have been built. Although it is routinely assumed that this would have been of earth and timber, there is no reason to suppose that a stone construction was not created from the start here.

The first mention of a castle here was in 1134, during the tenancy of Hugh 'Forester', who was clearly the successor to William fitz Norman in this role (Shoemith, 1992, 165). It is reasonable therefore to suppose that Kilpeck had by this time become fully established as the appurtenance of the royal forester in Herefordshire. Thereafter, Hugh becomes 'de Kilpeck'.

The mention in 1134 was in a foundation charter for a new Priory, established a cell of the Benedictine abbey at Gloucester, and endowed with the income from both St. David's church and 'St. Mary de Castello'. In effect, this identifies three churches at Kilpeck likely to have been in existence by the mid-twelfth century. The present church at Kilpeck, with its dedication to both saints named in the twelfth century, is no doubt significant. At the least it marks it out as successor to at least two of these early churches,

and given its architectural form and decoration, would seem likely to have actually been one of these. The fact that it was outside the castle, does not preclude its identification as 'the castle's church'. A building called 'The Priory' exists some distance to the south of the castle. This is the centre of a small farm complex. No medieval ecclesiastical stonework is known from the building or from the site, but it has been assumed as the site of the Priory, from the name. It is not impossible however, that rather than being the site of the monastery itself, it was its primary grange.

Kilpeck continued as the seat of the 'de Kilpeck' family until 1244, when the last Hugh died, and they were royal foresters for much of this time. William Walerand had married Hugh's eldest sister and Kilpeck passed to him in 1244, and in turn Alan de Plogenet, the son of William's half-sister inherited in 1273. In 1259, William was granted a market and fair, and Alan's son Alan revived this grant in 1309. When the second Alan died in 1325, Kilpeck was a thriving settlement. However, Alan was the last lord to be in permanent residence, and by 1338 the value of the settlement had diminished by two-thirds. The Priory also degenerated and was dissolved in 1428.

The first reference to the market in 1259 is unlikely to date the origin of the settlement to the east of the castle. The location of the twelfth century church at the head of what appears to be the market place, and its physical relationship to the castle, are both suggestive of the deliberate plantation of a settlement demarcated by walls and gates in that century. What did appear to happen, however, was that the late thirteenth and early fourteenth century saw considerable investment in the fortunes of the market.

The complex of archaeological sites evident around the parish church today survives due to the failure of the settlement and the effective abandonment of the castle by the end of the fifteenth century. Kilpeck Court Farm, directly opposite the church, is the only building that survives within the walled settlement area. This building appears to date only from the late sixteenth or early seventeenth century, but contains re-used medieval fabric.

The castle itself comprises a prominent earthwork mound surmounted by the remains of a polygonal shell keep wall with internal attached stone structures. It has been the subject of a recent study by Edward Impey, who identified it as a rare surviving example of such a structure. The mound is surrounded on three sides by a moat, beyond which is a kidney-shaped inner bailey. This too appears to be surrounded by a stone curtain wall with structures built into (and beyond) its inner face. Beyond this is a massive ditch, except to the east where this has been covered by the parish churchyard. Down the west-facing slope from the mound are further earthworks, including a further enclosure descending the slope.

To the south is a near circular area equal in size to the whole of the plan of mound and inner bailey. A massive earthwork scarp defines the limit of this enclosure on its southern and western sides, with clear evidence to the south-west for a massive outer ditch. Again, there is good reason to suppose that this was surrounded by a stone curtain wall. As such, the defence in depth represented here, and the massive investment in materials, suggests a former status for Kilpeck among the most important dozen castles in the county.

A large bank and ditch defines the limit of the settlement enclosure to the east of the castle and parish church. These defences demarcate a rectangular settlement area of some 12ha within the banks. The earthwork survives to its greatest size along its northern length. If the bank also obscures a stone wall, the question over whether this settlement was designed as a village or town is sharpened somewhat. In either case, it is very rare among such medieval market centres in Herefordshire, since at present only Hereford and Richard's Castle have an equal claim to having had stone built defences (Ray, 2001).

Within these defences, a spinal road marks the presumed site of the former market place that reached its widest extent by the church. The existence of individual plots is just discernible among earthworks to the north of this road. Later reworking of the earthworks has possibly masked the original form of these plots, although some individual platforms may mark the location of former structures ranged along the northern edge of the former marketplace.

An anomalous former oval earthwork enclosure defined by a bank and ditch has all but been lost to ploughing on the crest of the spur running northwards from the castle. This was well defined as an earthwork at the time of the 1st edition of the 1:10,560 scale Ordnance Survey map of the 1880s. It is still very evident from aerial photographs taken in recent years under optimum conditions of light or crop growth.

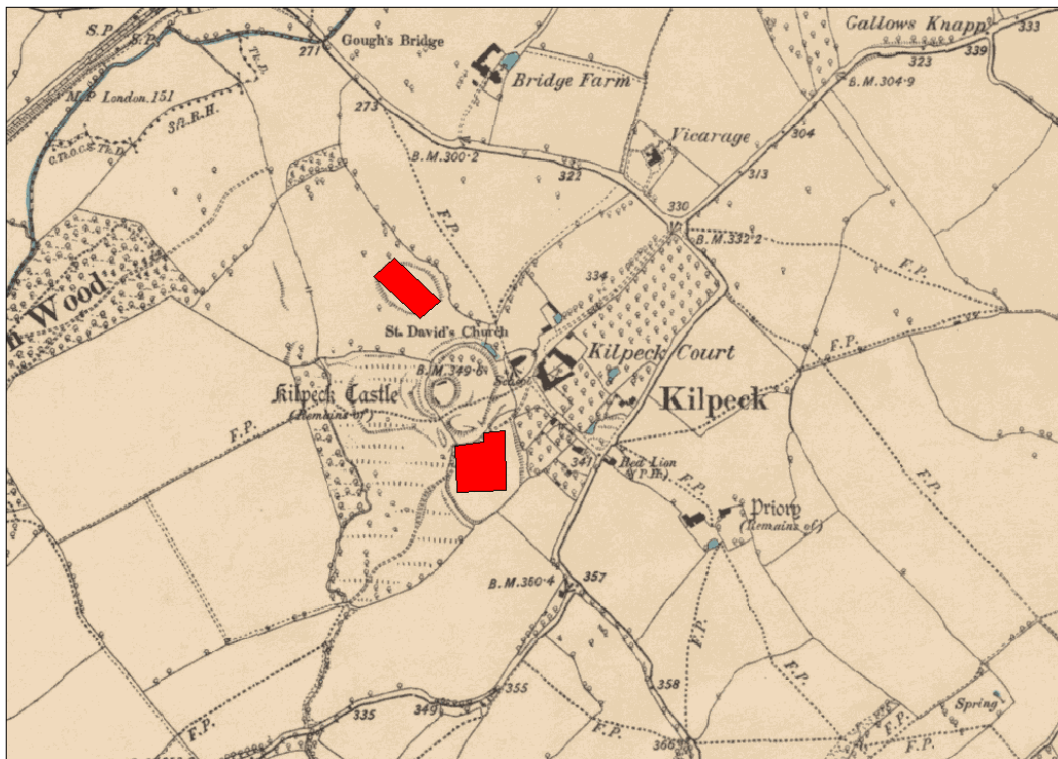


Figure 2: Location of areas investigated using an extract of the O.S. 1st Edition as a base.

Method

Resistivity

The resistivity survey was undertaken using a Geoscan RM15 twin probe array with readings taken every metre.

Magnetometry

The magnetometer survey was carried out using a Bartington Grad 601 with single sensor array. Readings were taken every 0.25m.

Field conditions

The fieldwork was undertaken on 27th and 28th February 2006. The weather during the survey was cold with flurries of snow.

Results

Geophysical survey of the oval enclosure to the north of the castle, NGR SO 443 230:

Two contiguous 30m grids were surveyed along the length of the oval enclosure. These were located within the western half of the enclosure within a permanent pasture field. The grid was aligned on a roughly north-west / south-east axis along the line of a modern wire fence which bisects the enclosure.

Resistance Data: (Figure 3)

Despite the low fluctuation in readings across the site, (a minimum of 7 to a maximum of 20 Ohms), The western and northern enclosure banks were located running diagonally through grids 1 and 2 respectively. Although only short lengths are visible both banks would appear to be straighter than the physical form of the earthwork suggests.

Within the north-eastern corner of the southern grid and the south-eastern corner of the northern grid there would appear to be a roughly circular anomaly approximately 20m in diameter, (if it were to continue to the east in its present form). The readings associated with this anomaly are only slightly higher than the mean suggesting that, in resistance terms at least, this is not a very robust feature.

The two dark stripes and the four localised angular blocks are missed readings almost certainly due to poor connection with the remote probe leads.

Data Set:
Top Left Corner X,Y: 1, 1
Bottom Right Corner X,Y: 60, 30

Display Parameters
Dot Density Plot (Clip)
Minimum: -.5
Maximum: .5
Contrast: 2.5
Units: Std Dev
Dot Width: 3 Pixels
Plotting Scale: 1:500
Printer Resolution (X): 300dpi
Printer Resolution (Y): 300dpi

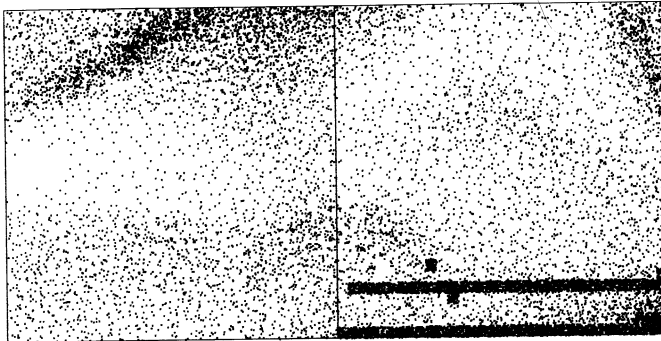
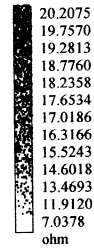


Figure 3: Resistance dot density plot

Magnetometer Data: (Figure 4)

As with the resistance data the magnetometer picked up the line of the bank on the western and north-western sides of the enclosure, although in this instance the bank appears to be less well defined than in the resistivity plot.

The anomaly picked up by resistivity in the north-eastern corner of the southern grid and the south-eastern corner of the northern grid may be apparent within the magnetometry plot. There is certainly a fairly well defined, roughly circular area in approximately the same position. This is however, less easy to define due to the nature of the surrounding readings.

The dark stripe along the eastern edge of both grids represents the signal from the wire fence.

Geophysical survey within the southern bailey of Kilpeck Castle, NGR SO 444 303:

Four 30m grids were surveyed within the southern bailey of Kilpeck Castle. These were arranged in a block making a 60m by 60m square which covered approximately 70% of the total area of the bailey.

Although improved pasture an earthwork within the bailey is still visible. This comprises a low bank enclosing a rectangular area within the western half of the bailey. It is however unclear whether this feature is contemporary with the bailey or a later sub division of the bailey for agricultural purposes.

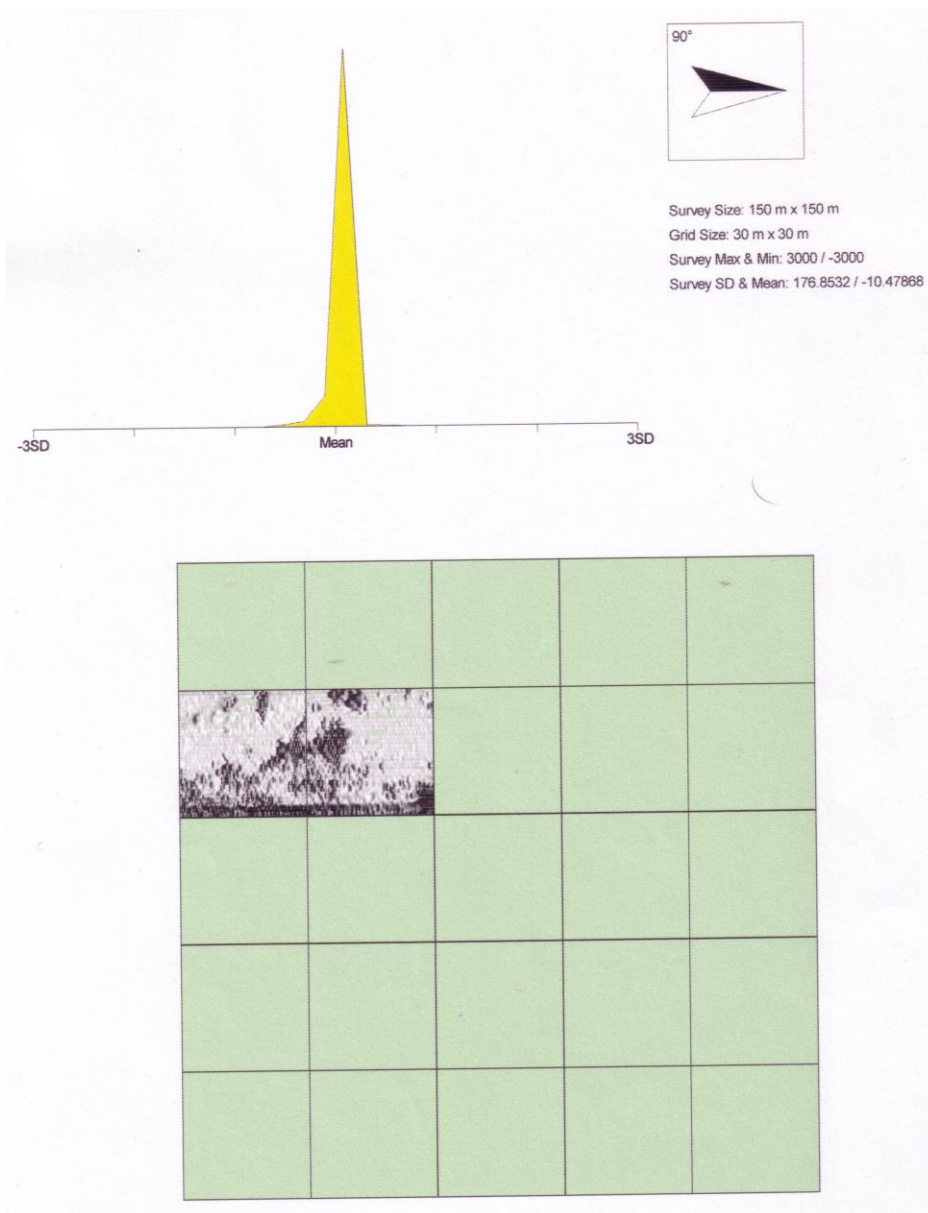


Figure 4: Magnetometer relief plot

Resistance Data: (Figure 5)

The resistance data shows an area of high resistance within the northern most grids. The shape of this anomaly strongly suggests the presence of a considerable quantity of stone possibly representing the location of a range of buildings within this part of the bailey.

The area of very high resistance in the south-western corner of the plot would also suggest a large amount of stone at this location (on the line of the bailey bank).

The dark, stepped area at the south-eastern corner of the plot represents null readings on a modern boundary close to the south-eastern corner of the bailey.

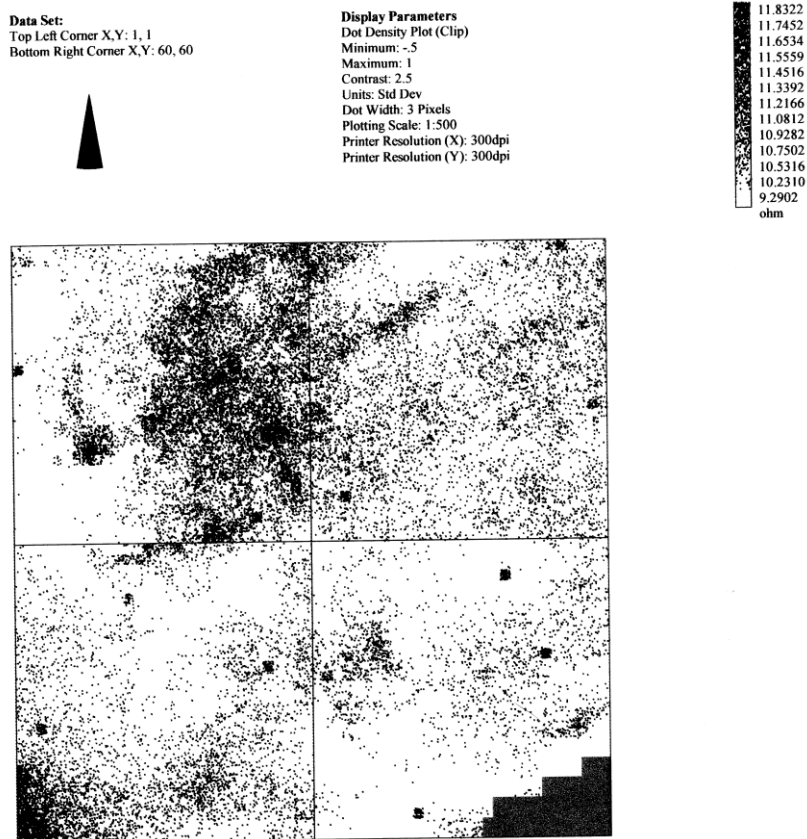


Figure 5: Resistance dot density plot

Magnetometer Data: (Figure 6)

The area surveyed within the southern bailey using magnetometry differs from that surveyed for the resistance survey. The resistivity grid was extended to the north in order to accommodate a further pair of 30m grids. The magnetometry survey therefore covers the northern pair of grids surveyed during the resistance survey and also two further grids located immediately to the north of the resistivity survey grid. This was done in order to determine the extent of the anomaly recorded during the resistivity survey.

The results of the magnetometer survey principally show a very strong anomaly close to the north-western corner of the survey area. Although close to two wire fences, the area covered by the anomaly (approximately 10m in diameter) is too large and too localised to have been created by this alone.

The plot provides little additional information concerning the anomaly recorded during the resistivity survey.

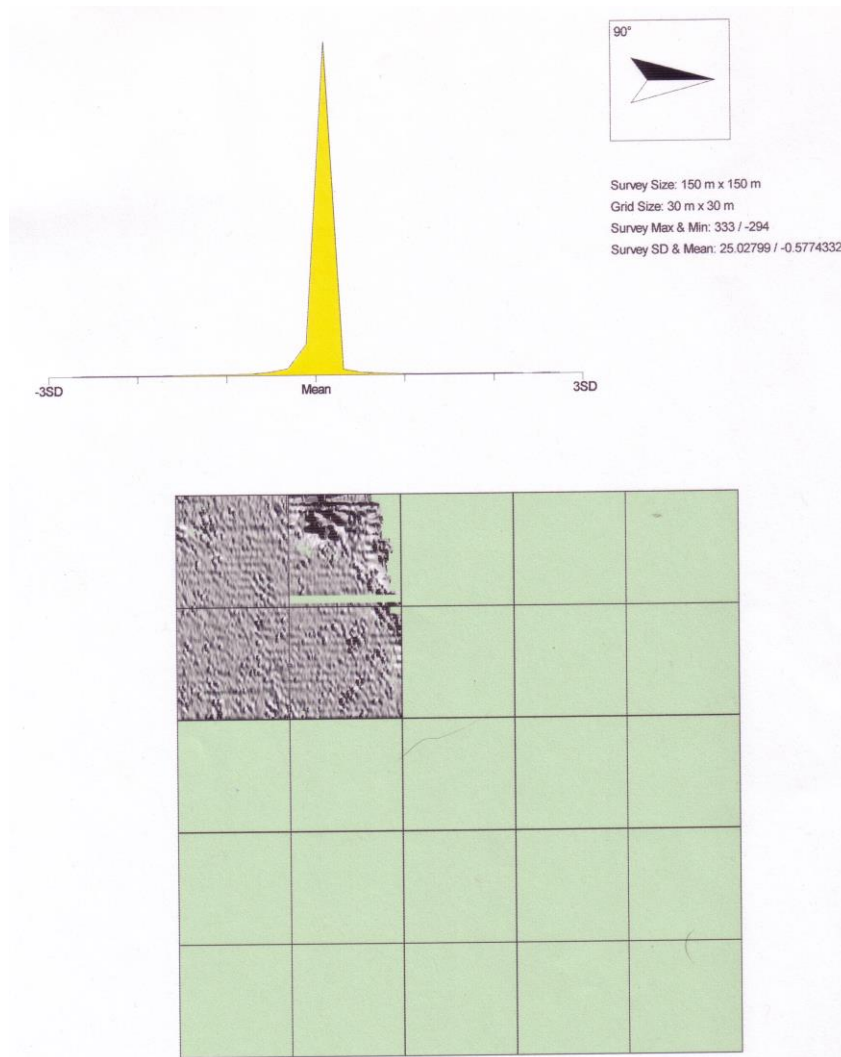


Figure 6: Magnetometer relief plot

Discussion & Conclusions

The northern enclosure:

Both techniques picked up the enclosure bank and these initial results imply that the bank on the northern and western sides of the enclosure, at least, is straighter than the surviving topography suggests. An anomaly close to the centre of the enclosure was also recorded. The resistivity data for this suggests that it is circular in form and is only slightly higher in resistance than the surrounding area implying that either the feature is buried under a considerable depth of soil or that the feature is principally constructed from earth. The feature appears on the magnetometry plot as a disruption within an area of higher readings. This suggests that the feature is less magnetic than the area immediately surrounding it.

The southern bailey:

Three distinct anomalies were recorded within the southern bailey, two using resistivity and one from the magnetometer survey.

The magnetometer survey indicated a well defined area of high magnetic variance close to the north-western corner of the bailey. This comprises a roughly circular area approximately 12m in diameter.

The resistivity survey provides information concerning the construction of the bailey bank. The high reading close to the top of the bank suggests that the outer bailey could have been surrounded by a stone wall. The second anomaly appears likely to represent a large area of spread stone. It is however possible to read the plot as indicating the presence of linear features within this area. This could represent the former existence here of a range of possibly fairly substantial stone founded buildings. The lack of clarity may relate to robbing and later plough damage.

Conclusions:

The combination of magnetometry and resistivity survey has identified a number of potential features within both areas. Of particular interest are the central anomaly within the northern enclosure and the possible building remains within the southern bailey.

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Acknowledgements

I would like to acknowledge the help and co-operation of both the tenant and owner for their assistance and co-operation with access for this survey.

Dr. Keith Ray, County Archaeologist, for his editorial input into this report.

Archive

2 Geoscan data files
2 Archsurveyor data files
2 Mapinfo data files
This document

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.

Dr. K. Ray, County Archaeologist.