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# Snodhill Castle, Peterchurch, Herefordshire: Archaeological, Architectural and Aerial Survey and Investigation

Mark Bowden, Rebecca Lane and Fiona Small

Discovery, Innovation and Science in the Historic Environment



Research Report Series 076-2017

**SNODHILL CASTLE  
PETERCHURCH  
HEREFORDSHIRE**

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL, ARCHITECTURAL AND AERIAL  
INVESTIGATION AND SURVEY**

Mark Bowden, Rebecca Lane and Fiona Small

NGR: SO 322 403

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ISSN 2059-4453 (Online)

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## **SUMMARY**

This report presents the finding of a programme of archaeological, architectural and aerial survey and investigation undertaken on the site of Snodhill Castle and its environs. This work was intended to inform the conservation of the site, currently being undertaken by the Snodhill Castle Preservation Trust with financial support from Historic England. The report is also intended to inform future research on the site. Snodhill Castle is a substantial motte and bailey castle, probably originally constructed in the late 11th or early 12th centuries. Continued investment in the site, particularly under the Chandos family, means that the surviving remains include structures of several phases. The surrounding area includes traces of a deer park, probably laid out in the 14th century, and other elements of a designed landscape have also been more tentatively identified.

## **CONTRIBUTORS**

Survey and investigation was undertaken by the authors. Aerial photography was undertaken by Damian Grady and ground photography by James O. Davies, except where noted. The plans were prepared for this report by Sharon Soutar. Documentary research was assisted by Johanna Roethe. The work benefitted greatly from the help of Sarah Lewis and Bill Klemperer.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

Historic England is grateful to The Snodhill Castle Preservation Trust for access to the site and for their hospitality and to the late Dan Dixon and his family for access to his property. We are also grateful to Mr and Mrs Morgan for access to Snodhill Court. Our work benefitted from discussion with members of the Castle Studies Group, particularly Pamela Marshall and Robert Higham, at an early stage in the project. Tim Hoverd and his colleagues at Herefordshire Archaeology have helpfully discussed the results of their excavations with us. All images and surveys used within the report are the copyright of Historic England, unless otherwise stated.

## **ARCHIVE LOCATION**

The archive of original survey drawings is held in the Historic England Archive, (former National Monuments Record), The Engine House, Fire Fly Avenue, Swindon. For more information visit [www.historicenglandarchives.org.uk](http://www.historicenglandarchives.org.uk)

## **DATE OF SURVEY**

Archaeological and architectural survey was undertaken during the winter of 2016-17 with one further visit in the early summer of 2017. Aerial survey was undertaken concurrently.

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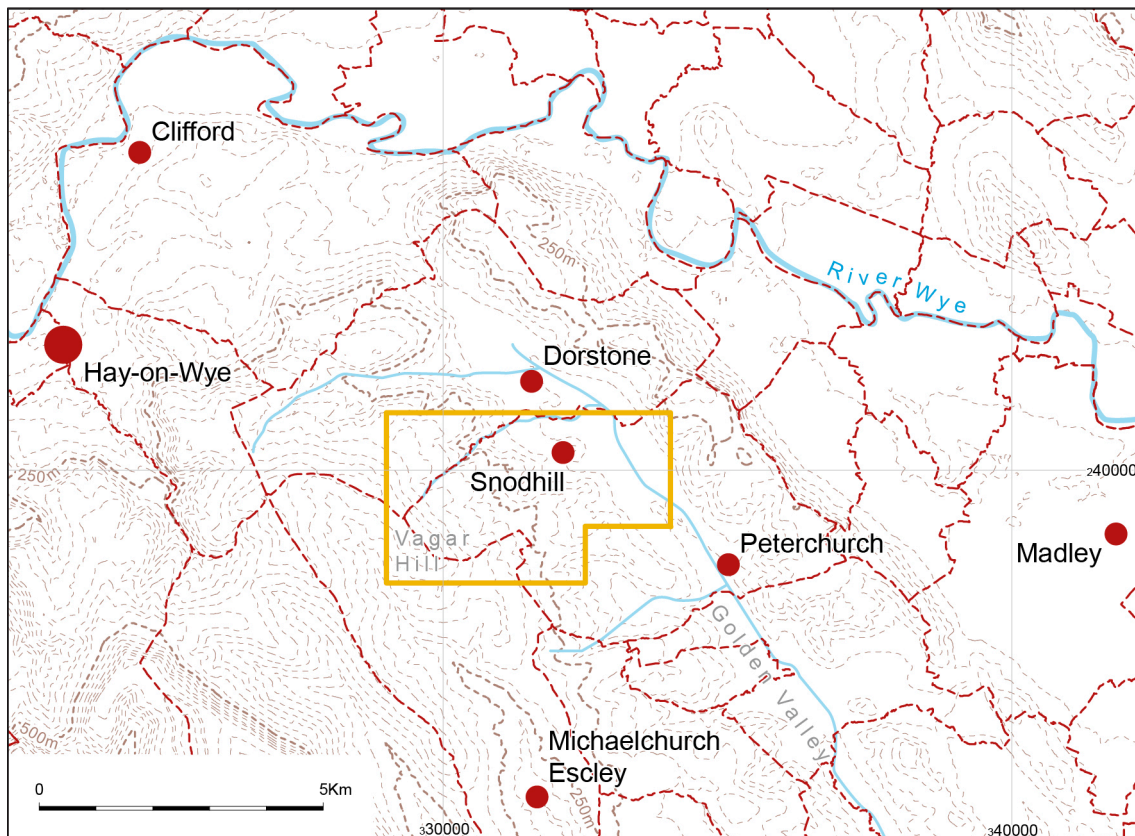
*“This [the Golden Valley] from an artist’s view does not fulfil the promise held out by its name, the scenery being below the average ..... The remains of Urishay and Snodhill Castles are devoid of artistic merit, and Peterchurch is utterly uninteresting”*

DR Chapman 1880, 49

*“The man must indeed be of a mind void of imagination, handmaid of art, who can stand here on the ruin of this old Border Castle, where Lords of the Marches fought and sported, and loved, and say such a spot is utterly uninteresting. If such a place is devoid of interest, it can only be because we know so little about it. How difficult it is to sweep aside the cobwebs of ages and look into the dark corners of the story of these border chiefs!”*

T Prosser Powell 1892, 227





*Figure 1 Location map, showing principal settlements and the outline of the study area in yellow.*

## INTRODUCTION

Snodhill Castle (NRHE: SO 34 SW 13) lies in Peterchurch parish towards the north-western end of the Golden Valley in Herefordshire at SO 322 403 (Figures 1 and 2). The castle occupies a substantial and prominent ridge between the floor of the Dore valley and the valley of the tributary Snodhill stream, with the ground dropping away on north, east and south. Rising up the valley side to the south-west is a medieval deer park (SO 33 NW 12). Also possibly associated with the castle is a moated site at The Gobbets (SO 34 SW 12) to the east. A number of other features and buildings of interest are also found in the hamlet of Snodhill, which lies to the west and south-west of the castle.



*Figure 2 The overgrown site of Snodhill Castle in the summer of 2008 with the ruins of the great tower amongst the trees. HEA 26042\_009 30-JUN-2008*

## METHODOLOGY

### Archaeological and architectural analytical survey

Archaeological survey of the castle and its immediate surroundings was undertaken using an existing topographical survey by the Downland Partnership for Historic England (then English Heritage) in 2012 as a control document. Prints of this survey with certain layers deleted were taken into the field and the archaeological remains supplied using trees, masonry, modern gates and fences, and other hard detail as control points. In most areas of the site this was achieved using tape-and-offset and drawing onto the plans in the field at the elected scale of 1:500; however, in the western outer bailey a relative lack of useable control points necessitated the use of a single plane table set-up from which archaeological detail was supplied by radiation. The hachure plan produced as a result of this survey is included in the report as Appendix 1. The newly discovered enclosure in the park was supplied as a divorced survey at 1:500 by tape-and-offset.

The architectural survey of the castle comprised principally a systematic visual analysis of the fabric. Rectified photography of the masonry elements was undertaken by the Downland Partnership in 2012.



## **Aerial photographic transcription and mapping**

The aerial survey of Snodhill Castle and its environs is based on the interpretation of lidar (airborne laser scanning) and aerial photographs supported by historical plans and maps. The aerial survey encompassed an area of 15km<sup>2</sup> surrounding the remains of the castle, and encompassing the extents of the former deer park and the majority of the former manor of Snodhill.

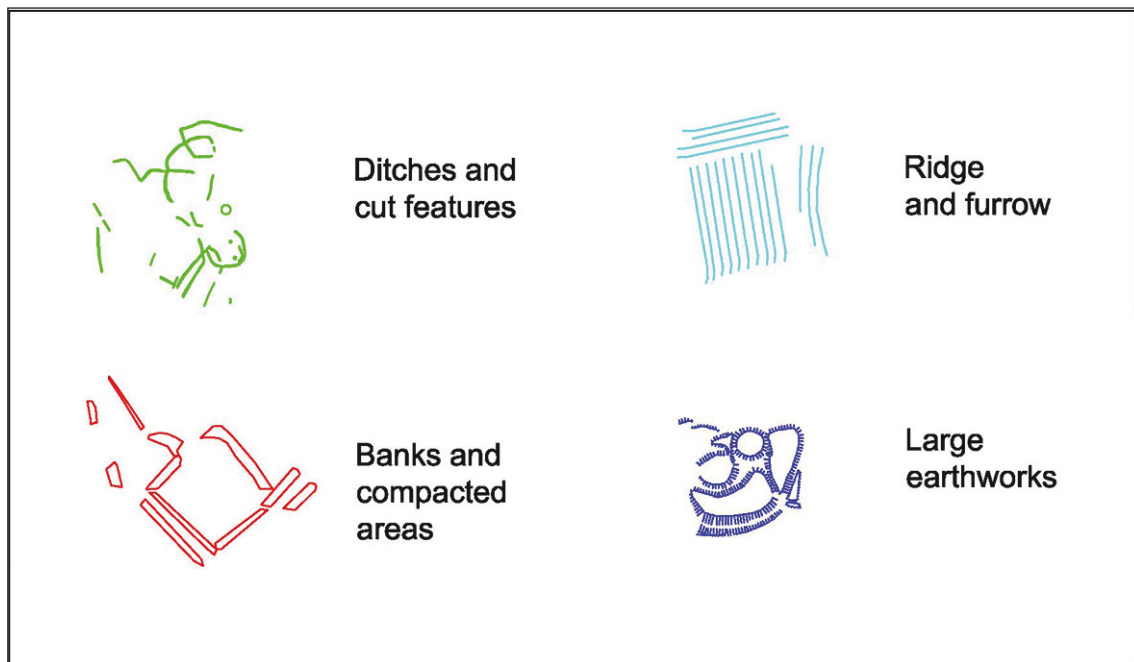
The aerial survey component of the Snodhill Castle Landscape Survey has provided an important overview of the castle in its landscape setting. Following the decline and abandonment of the castle traces of the settlement and manor have been lost through later cultivation with very little remaining. Although the small range of available historic aerial photographs was of limited value to the survey, recent photographs taken for the project identified the slight earthwork remains of a previously unknown enclosure within the park highlighting the value of continued aerial reconnaissance in the discovery of new archaeological sites. The existing Environment Agency lidar proved to be very useful across the entire survey area. The application of lidar with its ability to detect slight earthworks and survey through the tree canopy has enabled the mapping of earthworks around the castle as well as the nearby moated site at the Gobbets, both obscured by trees. It was also useful for recording the slight earthworks of the remains of the probable medieval village of Snodhill with traces of its strip fields and hollow ways.

It was hoped that the survey would be able to shed light on the extent of the park pale which only survives in the south-western reaches of the park. However, no further traces could be identified. The presence of possible medieval strip fields to the south of the castle with hints of ridge and furrow seen on lidar suggests the park pale stopped short of the village and castle rather than encompassing it, but no definite evidence of the park pale could be seen in the lower, eastern parts of the park.

The lidar has also revealed the earthwork remains of network of trackways leading up through the park linking Snodhill with farms and the extensive quarries in the north of the park. These quarries are probably post medieval in date, being exploited following the decline of the manor and the deer park.

## **Features recorded and conventions**

Features have been mapped to National Mapping Programme (NMP) standards. All archaeological features visible on aerial photographs and lidar were transcribed and recorded. These included all plough-levelled (cropmarks and soilmarks) potentially dated from the Neolithic to mid-20th century. Features were mapped in AutoCAD using NMP mapping conventions for ditches and banks with some larger earthworks are depicted with blue T- hachures (Figure 3). Ridge and furrow is depicted with a single line along each furrow. No differentiation has been made between medieval ridge and furrow and orchards within the map.



*Figure 3 Mapping conventions used for recorded features mapped from lidar and aerial photographs*

#### **Aerial sources consulted**

- Historic England Archive vertical photographs
- Historic England Archive oblique photographs - prints and digital
- Air Photography of Great Britain (APGB) supplied through Next Perspectives
- Google Earth and Bing online sources
- Environment Agency lidar processed using the Relief Visualisation Toolbox (RVT) developed by the Institute of Sciences and Arts (ZRCSAZU) funded by the Slovenian Government.

Oblique and vertical photographs were scanned and rectified using specialist AERIAL 5.29 software. Control was primarily derived from APGB rectified photography and Ordnance Survey 1:2,500 MasterMap ® vector data. Contour data was sourced from the APGB data.

Accuracy of rectified images is normally within  $\pm 2\text{m}$  accuracy of the source used for control. Consequently, the accuracy of mapped features, relative to their true ground position, will depend on the source used for mapping. This may be in the range of  $\pm 5\text{-}15\text{m}$  for images rectified using the OS base map, but will be sub-metre accurate for those features mapped from orthophotography or lidar.

## HISTORY

The documentary evidence for Snodhill Castle is extremely slight. For an early earthwork castle this is far from unusual; the lack of documentary references to the later masonry phases is more surprising, however. There are various stories about the castle but very few of them are anchored in verifiable fact.

It has been suggested that the castle was founded by William fitz Osbern at an 'early' date, that is to say shortly after the Conquest, and then passed either to Hugh de l'Asne or to Walter de Lacy. According to Robinson (1869, 151) Snodhill was held at Domesday by Hugh de l'Asne but he gives no reference and it is on the face of it a curious statement, given that – as Prosser Powell pointed out (1892, 228) – Domesday does not include an entry for the name Snodhill. However, it has been argued that the manors held by Hugh de l'Asne 'in valle Stratelie' are identifiable as the manors around Snodhill including 'Almundestune', which is probably Peterchurch, and other adjacent manors. These could thus be taken to include Snodhill (Marshall 1940, 151). Walter de Lacy has been put forward as an alternative owner on the basis of the uncertainty over the holdings of de l'Asne (Garry Crook pers comm).

A descent of the holdings of Hugh l'Asne to the Chandos family via inheritance has been suggested (Bartleet 1888, and several subsequent sources apparently on the basis of Bartleet's assertions), although there is no evidence for this, and even Bartleet only states it as a possibility. By the early 12th century in fact at least part of the area appears to have been held by Henry I, who granted it to Great Malvern Priory (Dugdale 1849, 448). This might suggest that some land in the area had reverted to the king since 1086, alternatively it may have represented a different manor from that which was held by the king's tenants in 1086.

In 1127 Great Malvern Priory exchanged their lands in 'valle de Strade', originally given to them by Henry I, for property at Hatfield, near Leominster, with Roger de Chandos (Dugdale 1849, 448). This was confirmed by a further charter under Edward III when it is described as 'terrae de Estradel' (ibid), the two terms presumably being used interchangeably to describe the same piece of land.

The Chandos family thereafter appear to have held the manor until the 15th century, passing through a series of inheritances, mostly from father to son, although the precise genealogy is uncertain. The frequent use of the first names Roger and Robert by more than one branch of the family makes the references to these figures difficult to rationalise. There are several branches of the Chandos family who appear to have held land in Herefordshire and Gloucestershire, and their precise relationship and descent is unclear. 'Strade' or 'Stradle' appears to have been held as part of a series of manors in the county of Herefordshire, including Fownhope and other manors nearer to Hereford, as well as some land in Gloucestershire. The other manors in the county appear to have played a subsidiary role to Snodhill, however, suggesting that this was their principal holding.

The first direct reference to a castle at Snodhill appears to date from soon after the Chandos' acquisition of land in the area from Great Malvern Priory. Several secondary sources cite documentary evidence for this, the precise dates for this reference vary through the 1130s and early 1140s, and the primary source for this reference (or references) is not always clear (see, for example, Shoesmith 2009, 235). The most firm documentary evidence is directly quoted in Bartleet (1882, 142), from the Registrum Aniquum of Lanthony Priory (Gloucestershire), with Robert de Chandos confirming the grant of his father Roger of land in Brockworth, Gloucestershire, to the Priory; the confirmation was made by Robert de Chandos 'in my castle of Stradel'. This is conventionally taken to refer to Snodhill (see, for example, Coplestone Crow 1989, 164). This is dated by Bartleet to 1136, and this is the most frequently cited date for the first reference to the castle.

In 1196 there is a reference to the castle in the Pipe Rolls as 'Strate (cum pertinenciis cum castello)' (Coplestone Crow 1989, 17). Pounds notes that in 1196 the 'keeper' of Snodhill Castle was paid 39s *per annum*, a relatively small sum for such a post, which he suggests possibly reflects the poverty of the honour of Snodhill (1990, 146).

All these early references are to the larger landholding of Stradle or Strate rather than to Snodhill itself. Coplestone Crow (1989, 17) has identified this landholding as covering a relatively large area, including Snodhill but stretching further east and south down the Golden Valley, covering the rest of Peterchurch, and adjoining parishes including Vowchurch, Preston and Madley. This is based on early documentary references which have been directly correlated with surviving place name evidence. Coplestone Crow, and other historians, appear to have been happy to associate Snodhill Castle with the early references to a castle within this landholding, but the precise justification for this is unclear. The continuity of the Chandos family holding into the 14th century (see below) makes an indirect case for Snodhill being one and the same with earlier references to a 'castellum de stradle', but the early documentary evidence on its own must be treated with some caution.

The lands pertaining to a Roger de Chandos and his honour of 'Snodhull' were listed in 1242-3 in the *Liber Feodorum* (PRO 1923, 814). They were Fownhope (Fagehop), Turnastone ('Turneston'), Wellbrook (Wirkebroc), Lyonshall (Wlmeston'), Trenant Farm ('Thurlokeshop'), Urishay (Haya Wiri), Stretton (Stretton'), Credenhill (Credehulle), Kenchester (Kenecestre), Wellington (Welinton') and a place called Wddeton' which has not been identified.

In 1353, on the death of one Roger de Chandos the Inquisition Post Mortem noted his possession of the manor of 'Snodhull' including a 'castle in ruins' (*Inquisitions Post Mortem Edward III* X, 131). The manor passed to his son Thomas who in turn died in 1375. His principal manor is again referred to as 'Snodhull' and the castle and manor are mentioned, along with the park (*Inquisitions Post Mortem Edward III* XIV, 106). This is the first reference to the park as a distinct entity. The estate was then held by Sir John Chandos, who appears to have been the last Chandos to hold the estate. He died without heirs in 1428, and the castle was passed to the Beauchamp family via the children of his sister Margaret.



Sir John Chandos appears to have been prominent in the defence of the area against the Welsh, particularly in the revolt of Owain Glyndwr. In 1403 he was ordered to fortify the castle of 'Snowdoun' against the Welsh (*Calendar of Close Rolls Henry IV*). This was in conjunction with the refortification of a number of other sites up and down the Marches, including (in the local area) Dorstone, Ewyas Harold and Goodrich (ibid). The chapel was functioning a few years later, when Sir John Chandos made a series of grants of the land to other prominent local landowners, including the Sherriff of Herefordshire, Richard de la Mare. In these the site is referred to in the same form identifying 'the castle, manor and lordship of Snodhull, co. Hereford, and the park, warren, mill and fishery in the water of the Dora and view of frank-pledge pertaining to the same' (*Cal Pat Rolls 1416-22*, 238; Pounds 1990, 228).

In the 15th century the castle was held briefly by Richard Neville, Earl of Warwick, in right of his wife Anne Beauchamp, who later gave it to King Henry VII. In 1540 John Leland described Snodhill:

*'There is a castell a mile and more benethe Dorston apon the right ripe of Dour. It is called Snothil, and ther is a parke wallyd, and a castle in it on a hill caulled Southill, and therby is undar the castle a quarrey of marble. The castle is somewhat in ruine. Ther is a Fre Chappell. This castle longyd to Chandos'* (Toulmin Smith 1964, 176).

Notable in this description are the park within which the castle stands and the 'quarrey of marble' – see below. Snodhill remained in royal hands until Queen Elizabeth granted it, with other former Warwick properties, to Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester.

The castle is said to have been bombarded by Scottish troops during the Civil Wars. Robinson gives some circumstantial detail. The castle, he says, 'suffered so severely from a bombardment by the Presbyterian army ... that it is even surprising that so much of the structure has survived. Either the head-quarters of the troops or the battery from which the numerous cannon-balls found within the ruins were projected was at a place called Scotland, about two miles higher up the valley' (1869, 155). However, there seems to be no contemporary documentary record of any such event and no reason to suppose that it took place. Prosser Powell stated that 'I can find no evidence of military operations ... connected with Snodhill during the Parliamentary wars' (1892, 229). Two cannon balls now in the garden of Snodhill Hall are said to have been found in the castle but as they have been used as cheese press weights (Surrey Garland pers comm) they might have been brought in from anywhere for that purpose.

By the 17th century the castle had come into the hands of the Vaughan family, but in the mid-17th century it was sold, eventually ending up in the hands of the Prosser family, who owned the site until the early 20th century. The Prosser family's connection with Snodhill goes back to the mid-seventeenth century, when the brothers William and Esay (or Esau?) Prosser purchased land there. According to his draft will of 1653/4, William Prosser had been baptised at St Margaret's in

Herefordshire (a parish near Snodhill) but later became a coach builder in the parish of St Martin's in the Fields, London (HARC F94/II/58; the final version of the will (1674) is at F95/II/108). His brother Esay was a farmer and tanner at St Margaret's and later at Peterchurch, while their brother Thomas (died 1684/5) had studied at New Hall Inn, Oxford, and became a clergyman. By 1663/4 the latter had acquired the advowson of Dorstone and became its vicar; this was one of several livings he held. Thomas was the first of the family to be the incumbent at Dorstone, a position which they held until 1953.

What appears to be the earliest deed linking the Prossers to land in Snodhill is a feoffment dated 25 February 1653/4. Nicholas Phillpott of Hereford, gentleman, and Mary, his wife, sold messuages and land to William and Esay Prosser for £1450 (HARC F94/II/60). Several fields 'under the castle' are mentioned and the property is said to have included Snodhill Court although this is not mentioned by name (HARC CE91/22/21, leaflet about Snodhill Court). All the land was 'for the use of William Prosser'.

A few years later, the manor and castle of 'Snowdle' were the subject of a feoffment dated 23 September 1657, between James Vaughan of Hynton [Hinton], Herefs, and his wife Margaret, and Esay Prosser (HARC F94/II/68). On 30 October 1659, William Prosser leased the 'manor of Snowdle with appurtenances' from his brothers Esay and Thomas Prosser for 40 years for a consideration of 6d and a peppercorn rent (HARC F94/II/76).

In July 1662, a marriage settlement was drawn up for the marriage of Phillipp [Phillippa] Carpenter and John Prosser, son of William Prosser (HARC F94/II/77-82). The manor, the castle, several messuages and parcels of land were granted by the Prosser family (comprising William, his wife Alice, his son and heir John, his brothers Esay and Thomas Prosser) to Thomas Carpenter, the bride's brother, and Thomas Jenings until the wedding but for the use of William Prosser. After the marriage, most of the property and the manorial title were to be the property of John Prosser and his wife, with a remainder (i.e. life interest) to William Prosser. A portion of the property was to be held by William and Alice Prosser for the rest of their life, with remainder to John and Phillipp Prosser.

The Prosser and Powell families owned the castle and the manor until the early twentieth century. The Powell family married into the Prosser family; in 1835, the Rev Thomas Powell (1802-86), a former East India Company surgeon and rector of Dorstone (1843-86), married Clara Prosser (1811-78) (Commemorative plaques in St Faith's Church, Dorstone). Their son, the Rev Thomas Prosser Powell, was vicar of Peterchurch (from 1875) and rector at Dorstone (from 1887) and lived at Hinton Hall which was then the vicarage (St Faith's Church, Dorstone, *website*).

At the time of the tithe assessment of the 1840s, the castle ('Castle Tump'), the adjoining fields to the north ('Ten Acres under the Castle') and west ('The Castle Piece') and Snodhill Court were owned by Anne Prosser and occupied by Edward Snead who had taken part in the walking of the manor's bounds in 1824 (HARC S341, tithe award for Peterchurch parish; O5/1-2, manor perambulation). (It

has been suggested that Snead was the farm manager for the Prossers (HARC CE91/22/21). The fields to the south and south-east ('Castle field' and 'Castle Rough') were owned by Sarah Cowdry. In 1867, a local directory stated that Mrs Sawyer and Miss Prosser were the ladies of the manor in the parish of Peterchurch. The Rev Charles J Robinson explained that 'the manor and site continue in the possession of the Prosser family, the representation of which is now vested in the wives of the Rev Thomas Powell and the Rev J W Sawyer' (1869, 155 – this is an error for W J Sawyer; he owned land near Snodhill Court in 1887 (HARC M5/27/21)). Mrs Powell (nee Clara Prosser) and Mrs Sawyer were sisters.

In November 1940, nearly 1,400 acres in the parishes of Peterchurch and Dorstone were sold by auction (HARC AB23/29, sales particular). The castle and the adjoining fields south of the road were part of Lot 16, comprising nearly 95 acres (38.4 hectares). They included the fields owned by Sarah Cowdry in the 1840s. The vendors were various members of the Powell and Prosser families. In 1986, the manorial title and the Castle were sold by auction (*The Times*, 2 October 1986, 5). In 2016 the castle came into the hands of a dedicated Preservation Trust.

### The ownership of Snodhill Court

Snodhill Court is said to have been part of the lands sold in 1653/4 by Nicholas Phillpott and his wife to William and Esay Prosser, although the property is not mentioned by name in the feoffment (HARC F94/II/60; CE91/22/21).

At the time of the tithe assessment in the 1840s, Snodhill Court was, like the castle site, owned by Anne Prosser and occupied by Edward Snead (HARC S341). Thomas Frederick Prosser-Powell is said to have been the last family member to live at Snodhill Court, in about 1856 (Garry Crook pers comm).

During the nineteenth century, members of the Pearce family lived there: In 1867, Thomas Pearce, farmer, and in 1900 James Pearce, farmer (*Littlebury's Directory and Gazetteer of Herefordshire* 1867; *Kelly's Post Office Directory* 1900). By the early twentieth century, they had been succeeded by the Haines family: Roger Haines and his son in 1937 and Price Haines in 1940–41 (HARC AB23/29; *Kelly's Post Office Directory* 1941). The fields to the north of Snodhill Court are labelled on a sale particular map of 1887 as the property of the Rev Walter James Sawyer (HARC M5/27/21).

Snodhill Court was part of lot 1 at the 1940 auction, and was described as 'the highly desirable farm, known as Snodhill Court', comprising 'a picturesque stone built, tile-covered house', a small lawn and vegetable garden, and extensive farm buildings (HARC AB23/29). Together with pasture, orchard and arable land it amounted to 230 acres, 3 roods and 2 perches (93.4 hectares).

It is said to have been bought by Lord Brocket who later sold it to Major Dixon. In 1979, the Dixon Trust sold it to the Morgan family (HARC CE91/22/21). Elwyne Morgan was living there in 1986 (*The Times* 2 October 1986, 5) and it is still in the hands of the Morgan family.

## The chapel

The location of the chapel is unknown. In depositions taken in 1687 in regard to a tithe dispute, the chapel was described as ‘the ruins of a decayed Chapel...near the castle of Snowdle’ (HARC O2/2, typed transcript of Exchequer Case, E. 134, 3 James II. Easter 14).

The chapel is mentioned in 1937: ‘There is also at Snodhill the ruins of an old chapel, of which Thomas [actually Robert] Fairfax, the well-known Elizabethan [actually late 15th-century] composer, was at one time curate’ (Kelly’s Post Office Directory 1937, 158). (Fairfax (or ‘Fayrfax’) only held the chaplaincy for less than a year in 1497-8 (Sandon 2007).) Despite the use of the present tense in the Directory account the ruins of the chapel had long been lost – it is not shown on any historic maps. In 1888 Thomas Prosser Powell had noted that ‘The site of this chapel has been pointed out to me as being situated where yonder cottage now stands’ (1892, 228). The vagueness of this description is tempered somewhat by the fact that he was standing within the castle and facing more-or-less south-west when he originally spoke these words; at least this account suggests that the chapel was not within the castle.

## Place names

The place name Snodhill has been transliterated as ‘snowy hill’ (Coplestone-Crow 1989, 164, following Ekwall (1960)) but was previously, and possibly more persuasively, derived from Anglo-Saxon ‘snoed’, meaning a piece of land separated from a manor (Flavell Edmunds, reported by Robinson 1869, 153n); this might fit Snodhill, a distinct manor within Peterchurch and an honour with its own dependant manors. However, the name Snodhill does not seem to be recorded before 1196 (in the *Pipe Rolls* – Shoesmith 2009, 235), which might raise a question over an Anglo-Saxon derivation. Other ‘Snod-’ place-names (Kent and Wiltshire) are attributed to a personal name ‘Snodd’ (Ekwall 1960, 429).

Marshall believed that the site on which Snodhill Castle stands was called Wilmastone, the Wilmestone of Domesday, but this name now belongs to a farm on the opposite side of the valley more than 1 mile to the east (and has done since at least the 1st edition OS 1:10560 map). He identified the other lands held by Hugh de l’Asne ‘in valle Stratelie’ as Godway (Beltrou), Lyonshall (Wlnetone), Peterchurch (Almundestune) and Urishay (Alcamestune) (1938, 151). Godway only exists now as the name of a wood but Upper Godway is shown on the 1st edition OS 1:10560 map on the east side of the valley opposite Snodhill and above Wilmastone Farm. Coplestone-Crow covers all these names, and others, in his entry for Peterchurch (1989, 163-5).

Towards the north-western corner of the park pale boundary, close to the top of Pitt Dingle, is a house marked on the map as Tre Domen. The name Tre Domen means ‘homestead mound’ in Welsh (Davies 2011), possibly indicating the presence of an earthwork mound associated with a historic settlement site. However, no obvious mound was visible on either the lidar or aerial photographs in the vicinity of the present cottage.

## PREVIOUS AND CONCURRENT HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESEARCH

Leaving aside Leland's description quoted above, the castle was first described by Robinson in the late 19th century (1869, 152-5). The Woolhope Field Club visited the castle in 1888, on which occasion it was described for them by the Rev Thomas Prosser Powell (1892).

The castle was briefly surveyed and described in the early 1930s by the RCHM (1931, 212-13), following which it was Scheduled as an Ancient Monument on 14th July 1933. In 1938 Marshal discussed its Norman origins (1940, 151). Another sketch survey of the castle was undertaken by Richard Kay in the 1950s (1952). Skelton described what were believed to be shrunken settlement earthworks near the castle (1983, 257). The castle was described again briefly by Phillips (2005, 317-19; 2006, 209-10) and by Shoesmith (2009, 235-8).

The castle was added to Historic England's Heritage at Risk register in 1998. Following the transfer of the castle to the Snodhill Castle Preservation Trust in 2016 clearance works began in advance of consolidation of the surviving masonry remains. In March-April 2016 Museum of London Archaeology undertook a watching brief during these preparatory works (MOLA Report 16/166, quoted by Hoverd 2017, 5). The analytical survey reported here was carried out between December 2016 and March 2017 with a further visit in July 2017. In December 2016 and January 2017, during the course of the current survey, some small trenches were excavated by Herefordshire Archaeology in advance of consolidation works (Hoverd 2017). Subsequently, further details have been uncovered in the course of the consolidation works on the masonry but we have not attempted to assimilate these in this account.



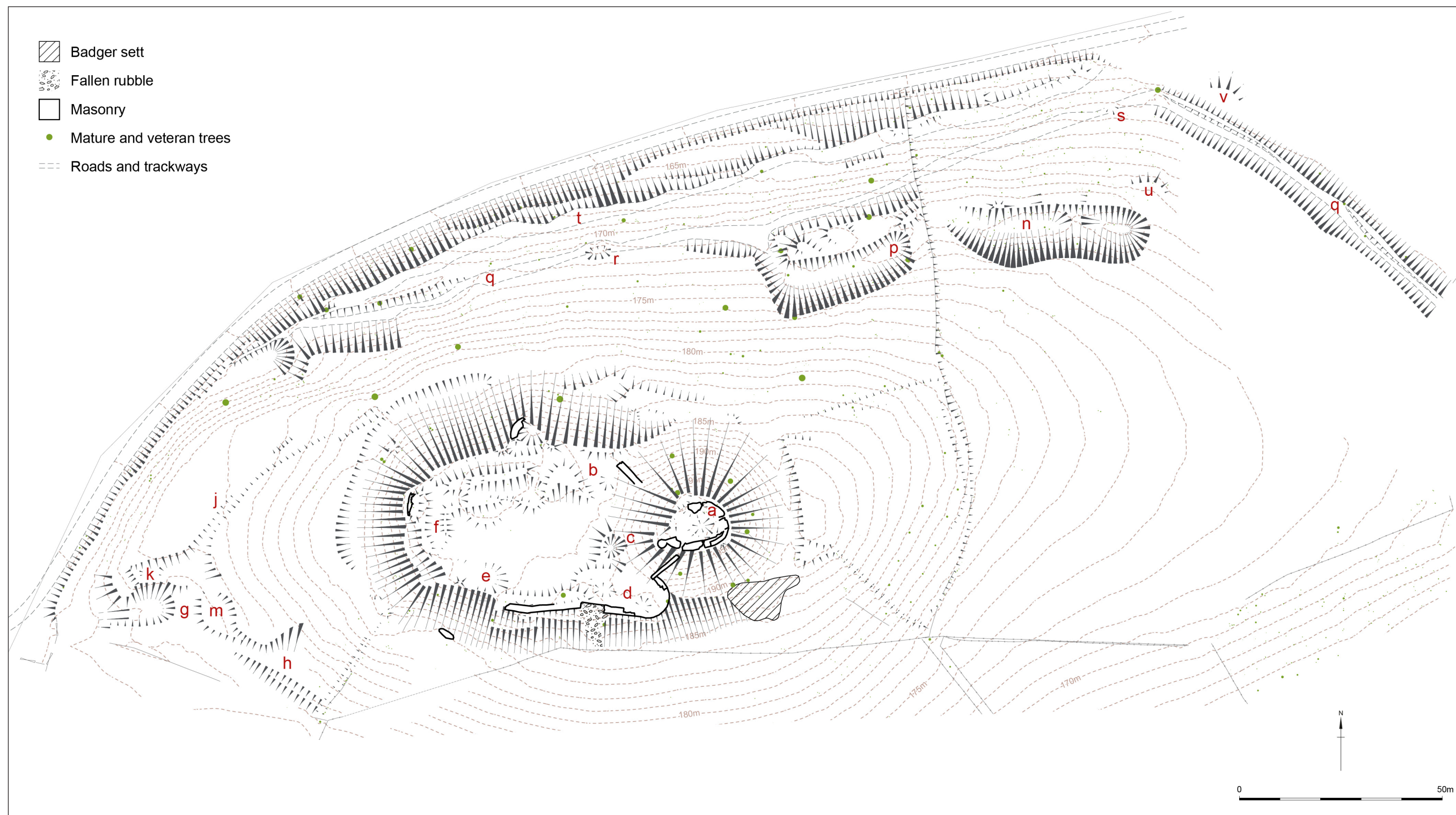


Figure 4 Historic England 1:1000 earthwork survey (reduced)

## DESCRIPTION

### The castle – earthworks

#### Motte

The motte is steep-sided, standing about 7.4m high above the bailey, 9.7m above the ditch to its east and as much as 14m above the terrace to the north. The maximum diameter of the foot of the motte is about 44m. The summit, which has been much modified by the building of the great tower, measures about 15m east-west by 12.5m transversely; it was possibly circular originally but has been apparently elongated by the construction of the later masonry gate. In the centre is a sub-rectangular hollow (Figure 4 - **a**) about 0.2m deep; this has been interpreted variously as the robbed out foundation of a central pillar, as a light well (see discussion of great tower below), or as a tree-throw or antiquarian trench. The remains of wing walls that would have connected the great tower to the curtain wall survive on the sides of the motte. The flanks of the motte have been much damaged by badger setts, particularly on the east and south sides. It also supports a number of mature yew and ash trees. The motte is separated from the ridge to the east by a ditch which is now 1.5m deep to the exterior where there is a slight counterscarp. There is no sign of a ditch on the sides of the ridge to north or south where the natural slope falls away steeply, though there is a ledge or terrace on the north side, a continuation of the route leading around the north side of the bailey (see below). More significantly, perhaps, there is no sign of a ditch dividing the motte from the bailey to the west, with the possible exception of a very slight scoop (**b**), no more than 0.2m deep. There is a much more substantial hollow (**c**) at the foot of the motte immediately below the great tower entrance; this hollow is enhanced by a bank on its west side. It has been interpreted as part of the access arrangements to the motte and this may be the case but it should be noted that the earthwork is well-defined and sharp, and may be the result of relatively recent disturbance – that disturbance might, of course, be the robbing of a masonry gate tower, bridge pier, drawbridge pit or similar structure.

#### Bailey

The bailey extends to the west of the motte and is defined by steep scarps, a modification of the natural slopes of the ridge. A masonry curtain wall survives partly on the south side but hardly at all around the rest of the circuit. At the foot of the scarp are distinct traces of a surrounding ditch to the west and north-west, though it only survives to a maximum depth of 0.4m. This ditch now terminates directly beneath the north tower; it has possibly been filled by material fallen from that structure and might originally have extended further to the east. There is no sign of this ditch to the south where the natural slope is particularly steep.

The southern part of the bailey interior contains the platform (**d**), 0.7m high, of a substantial rectangular building extending west from the south-eastern tower. At the time of survey this had two slight scoops within it, the easternmost of which has now been covered by excavation spoil; the other is a sub-rectangular hollow perhaps representing an internal division of the building. Otherwise the southern



area is devoid of features apart from two very slight scarps perhaps defining another building **(e)**.

To the west and north, however, are a number of substantial earthworks. These undoubtedly represent a range of buildings but whether the currently upstanding earthworks are the remains of walls or banks of upcast arising from the robbing of the walls is uncertain. The building forming the western end of this range **(f)** was arranged north-south and its southern end has been truncated by the modern path which enters the bailey at its south-western corner; this demonstrates clearly that this path does not represent an original entrance. The mounds along the northern side are more diverse but stand up to 0.9m high and contain at least some fragments of well-cut masonry.

The position of the original entrance to the bailey is uncertain. The modern path over the south-western corner is clearly not original. The only viable alternative seems to be the graded path which leads up to the north-eastern corner of the bailey below the motte, from the track which runs around the northern side of the castle. This suggestion may have gained some support from the recent discovery during scrub clearance of a wall stub projecting from the slope below this path. This stub of masonry is only a fragment measuring 1.6m thick, about 2.0m length of which is exposed; however, it demonstrates the possibility that there is more structural evidence to be uncovered in this area. The graded path itself is currently narrow but this must be to some extent the result of covering by material eroding from the motte above.

### Western outer bailey

The natural ridge slopes down quite sharply below the bailey ditch to a relatively flat area that is bounded by steepened natural slopes to north and west but only by a modern hedged boundary to the south. This area has been considered to be an outer bailey and is treated as such here.

A track leads up from the modern gate at the extreme west end of the site and divides at **(g)**: a modern path leads straight upslope and over the south-western corner of the bailey; this is not an original route – it is too steep and, as noted above, it cuts across one of the buildings inside the bailey; another track leads south-eastwards **(h)** where it overlies one of the building platforms but is cut by a redundant but relatively recent hedge bank, anchoring it in the relative chronology of the site; a second track **(j)** leads in a north-easterly direction and continues around the northern side of the inner bailey ditch.

There are two possible building platforms within this area. One **(k)** is cut into a substantial slope and seems to represent a narrow rectangular building with two subdivisions. The other is less well-defined but seems to be a larger building **(m)** laid out at right angles to the former at the foot of the natural slope; its south-western corner has been cut and smoothed by track **(h)**. Track **(j)** runs between the two buildings. These buildings could relate to the castle but could equally represent a small farmstead. However, it should be noted that building **(m)** is of some antiquity

as it is overlain by track (**h**) which is itself blocked by a hedgebank which can be dated to at least the later 19th century from historic map evidence (OS 1st edition 1:2500 and 1:10560 maps). To the north and west of track (**j**) and building (**k**) is a flat area at a higher level which may be the location of further buildings but no earthworks are apparent.

It should be noted that when the castle was re-fortified in stone only the motte and upper bailey were included; this phase of activity may therefore represent shrinkage of the castle's overall area, if the interpretation of this area as an outer bailey is accepted.

### **Eastern outer bailey or possible borough site**

To the east of the castle is a large area of relatively flat ground defined by steep natural slopes to north, east and south. This is currently densely covered in trees, bracken and brambles; no earthworks could be seen (other than some relatively recent hedge banks around its periphery) though the aerial survey found hints of earthen banks on the northern and southern sides. The possibility that further features exist in this area should not be dismissed. This area has been described as a further outer bailey (e.g. Shoesmith 2009, 236) but recently it has been suggested that it might have been – or intended as – a planned borough (Robert Higham pers comm). It might alternatively have functioned as a recreational area or garden with views across the Dore valley.

### **Tracks and quarries to the north**

The track (**j**) running around the north side of the castle outside the bailey ditch has been mentioned above. It opens into a terrace or ledge below the motte and from here a graded track leads up into the bailey – probably the original castle entrance. This track also appears to have continued to the east where it might have communicated with the outer eastern bailey or borough but is now cut by later hedge banks.

Below this on the steep northern slopes of the ridge are a number of other features – mainly a series of tracks and quarries. The two large quarries (**n** and **p**) towards the east end of the slope have been interpreted in the past as fish ponds but it is difficult to see how this idea arose or has been maintained. They do not resemble any other recorded fish ponds in form or topographical position. On the contrary they show all the signs of quarries with irregular forms following the topography, steep (almost vertical) faces and carefully contrived exit routes for removing the products. The easternmost quarry (**n**) is approximately 4.5m deep; the route from it leads to the east and has been blocked by a hedge bank, giving a clue to the antiquity of the quarry. The second quarry (**p**) is slightly smaller but even more dramatic in the steepness of its face and narrowness of its floor; it is about 6.0m deep. Its exit route leads out to the north-west and joins one of the tracks that run all along this slope.

This track (**q**) is a terrace way for most of its length but for a short stretch towards the east it is a hollow way, up to 1.0m deep; it also incorporates some other possible small quarry pits, including a small sub-rectangular hollow (**r**), which is 0.3m deep.



*Figure 5 Southeast corner of the tower showing the remains of the plinth at ground floor level (DP195780).*

This track, like all those on this slope, is cut by a major post-medieval hedge bank; it is also interrupted by another pit (**s**), up to 0.4m deep, just short of the point where it turns in a southerly direction around the end of the spur. Here again it is slightly hollowed for short stretches.

Below track (**q**) is another ledge (**t**) which is almost certainly also a track, though it has something of the appearance of a strip lynchet. These tracks are former versions of the modern road which bounds the northern side of the site.

Two other features on this slope are worthy of comment. One is a triangular platform (**u**) formed by a crescentic scarp 2.4m high just below the eastern end of quarry (**n**). Below and now in open pasture beyond the woodland boundary which follows track (**q**) is another scarp (**v**); this is very spread and low but looks like a degraded pair to (**u**). The only explanation for these features seems to be that they are connected in some way with removing material from the quarry, as the bases for pylons for an aerial ropeway, for instance. This suggests a relatively late re-use for this quarry, which might explain the deeper hollow that forms its eastern end.





*Figure 6 Ground floor entrance passage showing remains of door jamb (DP195368).*

### **The castle – masonry**

The top of the motte has a significant section of surviving masonry extending along its western and southern sides, with further, more fragmentary, remains to the east and north. These fragments relate to a polygonal keep or great tower which covered the entire area of the top of the motte. The majority of this structure appears to relate to a single phase of construction, with modifications predominantly to the western, entrance, end at a later date and some 20th century repair.

The original section of the tower comprises two storeys with a lower ground-floor level, and a taller first floor above. The lower sections of the southern side, and fragmentary remains to the east and north, relate to a substantial battered plinth, which appears to be of 12 sides externally. Certainly, 6 sides remain visible on the southern side and the remainder of the masonry, where traceable, suggests that the structure was roughly symmetrical, although this arrangement may have been compromised by the exigencies of the site. The external battered plinth rises the full height of this ground-floor level. The external face is of flat-bedded coursed stones with chamfered outer faces forming the batter, although most of these have been lost, exposing the rubble core (Figure 5). Internally the walling of the ground-floor area is of rubble stone, with squared stone quoins at the changes in angle in the walling.





*Figure 7 Small window opening to the southeast of the tower (Photograph Rebecca Lane).*

To the west, one bay of the ground-floor level comprises an entrance passage which appears to have run through the thickness of the plinth, although the outer face of this has been altered (see below). Approximately 1m from the inner face of the wall the passage contained a doorway, of which the southern jamb survives (Figure 6). The jamb comprises simple squared stones projecting from the main face of the wall and providing a rebate, but with no decorative detailing. Immediately east of the doorway, approximately 1m off the current ground surface, a square recess in the stonework indicates the position of a draw bar. The only other feature visible in the ground-floor area is a window opening in the south-eastern corner (Figure 7). This has been altered (see below), but the deep splays of the original opening survive, and the window itself has a square head and lintel. The rebuilding around the window makes it difficult to be confident that it is an original opening. However, given the difficulty of inserting such an opening into an earlier wall it is suggested, on balance, that it is likely to be an original feature.

Above ground-floor level there is a significant offset in the walling internally, marking the floor level of the first floor above (Figure 8). There is no indication of any vaulting associated with the ceiling of the ground-floor, so the floor was almost certainly supported on timber joists. No joist holes could be identified in the upper



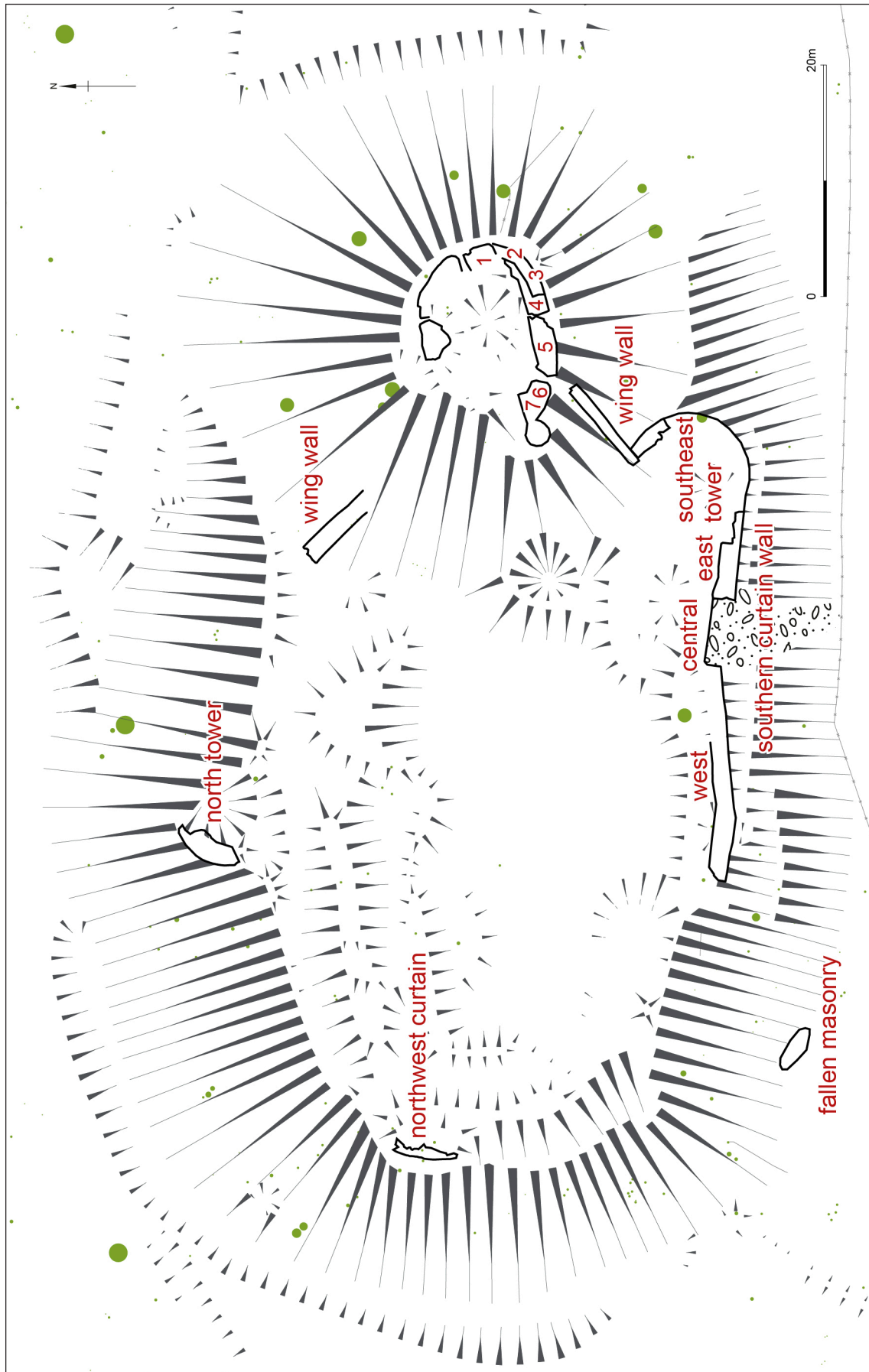
*Figure 8 Internal elevation of the south-eastern corner of the tower, showing the offset between ground- and first-floor level (DP195363).*

section of the ground-floor near the offset, but the top of the off-set is extremely degraded and overgrown so such indications may not be visible.

Sections of the first-floor survive only to the south and west, and retain elements of five sides of what may have been an irregular 10-sided structure. The difference in the number of sides between the ground- and first-floor levels has led to suggestions that the upper floor was added later (Garry Crook pers comm). However it is clear from a close examination of the fabric that this is not the case. There is no break in the masonry externally between the two levels, and the deep batter of the ground floor is designed to support the walling above. The difference in the number of sides of the structure at ground- and first-floor level can instead be explained by the need to accommodate the structure on the top of the earlier motte. This necessitated a 12-sided structure at ground-floor level, following the outer edge of the motte. Above this there was evidently a desire to create a more regular plan form which would allow for a larger, more high-status space. Thus a structure with walls on a different alignment was provided. Such changes in wall alignment between floors can be seen at other castles, for example in the surviving tower at Crickhowell Castle, Powys, and appears to have been a pragmatic response to the practicalities of building on complex sites.

The surviving section of the first-floor has five sides, with the position and orientation of a sixth and seventh identifiable to the east and west. These have been





*Figure 9 (opposite page)  
Plan of the motte and  
bailey with surviving  
sections of masonry  
identified.*



*Figure 10 Southwest  
corner of the tower,  
interior, showing the  
surviving western  
opening at first-floor level  
(DP195367).*

numbered 1-7 on the plan (Figure 9). The sides are not regular, but comprise two longer sections on the southern side (4 and 5), with only a slight change in angle between them, with shorter sections of walling to the east and west with more acute angle changes. It is presumed that the first floor was accessed via some form of stair from the ground floor of the building, but no evidence of such a feature has been identified. The alternative is that there was a first-floor entrance on the western side of the building, although space for this would have been extremely limited.

Towards the western end of the upper floor, the remains of a cross wall project northwards from the surviving section of the south wall (between sides 5 and 6 on Figure 9). This sits in alignment with the inner wall of the ground-floor level below, this wall thus effectively rising the full height of the building (Figure 10). At first-floor level this wall must have subdivided the central section of the tower from a smaller area over the entrance passageway. The position of a possible further subdivision is identifiable further east (between sides 3 and 4 on Figure 9; Figure 11). This is now marked by a recessed area of exposed rubble core. It is possible that this represents an area where the inner layer of masonry has fallen away from the wall face; however, it may alternatively represent the remains of a further dividing wall. If it does mark the position of a subdivision then the exact form of this is unclear. Whilst it may represent a further cross wall, there is no sign of it extending





*Figure 11 Exposed rubble core, possibly marking the position of a further subdivision in the building (DP195363 cropped).*

*Figure 12 Section of the springing of the arched window head, identified in the rubble at the base of the motte (DP195818).*







*Figure 13 Quoins marking the original return of the main internal wall for the western opening (DP195367 cropped).*

down into the ground-floor walling, as one would anticipate with a substantial stone partition. It may have formed part of a diaphragm arch, which could have spanned the interior of the first-floor chamber. Such arches were typically corbelled out from a wall face, and provided support for the roof or ceiling of a room, and were often decorated. Diaphragm arches are seen in high-status castle accommodation, such as the great hall of Chepstow Castle, although there is no suggestion that the example at Snodhill would have been as elaborate as the example there. Such a feature would explain why the walling did not extend all the way down through the building. The uncertainty over this feature means that it is unclear whether the eastern area of the tower was partitioned from the main chamber of the tower, or whether it formed part of it.

The positioning of the cross walls indicates a large central space at first-floor level, probably with smaller ante-room at the west end. At the eastern end there may have been a further separate room or an area separated from the main space by an open archway. The main space would have been lit by the large window in the centre of side 3, the surviving eastern jamb of which is still *in situ*, with further elements identified in the collapse at the base of the motte (Figure 12). It is possible that there was a further window in side 4, although as this side only survives at ground-floor





*Figure 14 Surviving section of splay for window at the east end of the tower (DP195363 cropped).*

level there is no surviving evidence for this. This would have provided a significant, large central room with commanding views to the south.

The small sub-divided space to the west sat over the entrance passageway. The surviving sections of walling in this area have been heavily modified by the remodelling of the entrance front and by 20th century repairs (see below), but the line of the original wall of side 5 is discernible behind the repair and adjacent to the stub of the cross wall. This then has a series of quoins for a further change in angle which appear to mark the side of a large full-height opening which sat directly over the western entrance (Figure 13). This could either have been a large full-height window opening or possibly a doorway for a first-floor access point. Given the alterations to this front it is hard to be confident of the interpretation of this feature. There is limited space externally for an access stair, but given the later modifications for the creation of the tower frontage, it is possible that there was space for a stair positioned along the line of the building.

To the east the walling of side 2 is visible. This turns the angle slightly to the inferred position of side 1, with very slight traces of a jamb for a window facing east. Parts of this have been robbed away, but sections of a jamb for a splayed opening are visible (Figure 14). In particular, three thin stones surviving approximately 2m above the



*Figure 15 Southwest drum tower built up against the walling of the earlier tower (DP195793).*

current ground level appear to be deliberately cut to provide the sides of the opening. Surviving sections of mortar above and below these may mark the position of larger cut stones which have fallen away, or been deliberately robbed out for reuse.

One significant phase of alteration to the tower is discernible – the remodelling of the west front. The principal feature of this is the solid drum tower which has been added to the southern end of side 7, built up against the earlier wall (see Figure 10). The phasing of these two features in relation to each other is particularly noticeable to the south of the drum tower, where the newer masonry is clearly cut to accommodate the batter of the earlier wall (Figure 15). Associated with this is the surviving fragment of an arch head which springs out from the northern face of the drum tower (Figure 16). This clearly marks the entrance to the tower in this phase, with a groove to the east of the opening apparently for a portcullis. How a putative portcullis would have worked with the existing opening at first-floor level (see above) is unclear, as raised it would have blocked such an opening. However this must have been accommodated within the modifications of use of the space in this later phase.

It is presumed that the drum tower worked in conjunction with a further drum pier to the north, although this feature barely survives even as an earthwork. The updating of the entrance front may have been associated with other modifications





*Figure 16 Surviving section of arched head springing from southwest drum tower (DP195801).*

to the interior, particularly if a portcullis had to be accommodated at first-floor level, but little further phasing can be observed within the tower. One further feature may form part of the same phase, the large buttress built up against the tower in the south-eastern corner (see Figure 5). This is an irregular feature, as there are no other buttresses surviving, and must have been built to assist in the structural stability of the tower. In this context the construction of the drum towers to the west is also interesting. Whilst they can be seen as features which updated the tower aesthetically, in a manner seen in other castles in the area (see, for example, Longtown Castle), they would also have formed an additional structural support, acting as buttresses for the earlier stonework at the western end. The construction of the large tower on the top of an artificial mound can be seen to have provided a legacy of structural problems which were being dealt with throughout the medieval period.

Only two phases of significant investment in the tower are currently visible, although given the fragmentary nature of the remains this does not preclude other phases of alteration. The tower thereafter appears to have gone through a process of slow decline, possibly including some phases of deliberate robbing or destruction, although it is not possible to trace these actions in the surviving fabric. By the time of the earliest visual records of the tower it is in much the form that survives today,



*Figure 17 Section of later walling built up against the original internal wall of the tower (DP195821).*

notwithstanding the loss of small areas of fabric such as the upper sections of the large first-floor window opening. There does however appear to have been at least one phase of minor repair to the tower, presumably an attempt to arrest further collapse. The principal evidence for this is the section of walling which is now built facing northwards at first-floor level above the entrance passage (Figure 17). This is built of stonework matching that of the medieval tower, and probably reused stonework from the original building. It appears designed to stop further collapse of sections of the cross wall and the associated walling in the western area. Proof of its late date is possibly provided by a photograph of this area of the tower taken in July 1929 by the RCHM. This is taken from an oblique angle, but it shows this area apparently prior to the construction of this section of walling (see Figures 18 and 19 for a comparison of the 1929 photograph with one taken from a similar angle in 2017). Although undocumented it appears that there has been some consolidation of the masonry in the mid to late 20th century. In this context the minor modifications in the window opening in the south-east corner are also significant (see Figure 7). This principally comprises a small section of masonry built up against the southern splay but at a different angle from the original opening, and appears to have been intended to help stop the collapse of the wall above. Although small in scale, in conjunction with the larger repair to the west it may also be evidence of 20th century intervention.





*Figure 18 Photograph of the southwest corner of the tower taken by the RCHM in 1929 (HEA RCHM Inventory notes: Peterchurch Parish).*





*Figure 19 Photograph of the southwest corner of the tower in 2017 (DP195814).*





*Figure 20 South wing wall, view from the north (DP195800).*

### **Curtain walls**

Two sections of wing wall survive running down the side of the motte from the tower to the base. These are both formed of rubble stone. That to the south is a more substantial survival, and is some 3.5m tall towards the base of the motte (Figure 20). That to the north survives in a more fragmentary fashion (Figure 21). Both of these sections are relatively undiagnostic in terms of date or phasing, with nothing in the way of openings or other features. The southern wing wall however, can be phased in relation to the surviving curtain wall to the south, suggesting they are relatively early features. It is possible they are contemporary with the first phase of the masonry tower on the top of the motte.

The principal section of surviving curtain wall sits along the southern side of the bailey. This is not a coherent single feature, however, with considerable variation in the masonry of the walling and in its alignment. It naturally divides into three sections, referred to on the plan as west, central and east (see Figure 9). A particularly notable feature is the recessed nature of the central section, which is set back behind the east and west sections by approximately 0.5m. These three sections in fact appear to relate to three distinct phases of construction.

The earliest phase of walling in this area appears to be the central section, the visible part of which now runs for approximately 5.5m. At its western end, adjacent to the west section, it has a series of stone quoins which appear to represent an end to the wall or, more likely, a corner for a structure which would have had a return wall





*Figure 21 North wing wall, view from south (DP195360).*

running north into the main area of the bailey. At the eastern end of the central section this wall appears originally to have run on slightly further north than, and on a different alignment to, the surviving eastern section of curtain wall. Thus the central section appears to relate to a building or structure formed of at least two stone walls. It is likely that further archaeological work to the north and east would resolve the overall proportions of this putative building, and possibly something of its function.

Built up against this early central section is the western section of walling (Figure 22). This starts from the putative south-west corner of the building, and appears to respect its location, suggesting it is a later feature. This now comprises an outer face of rubble walling, formed largely of coursed rubble stonework, surviving to a height of up to 4m. There is no batter to the base of the wall, and in places the undermining of the wall face suggests that it is built directly onto the bank of the bailey. The inner face of this wall is largely concealed by a build-up of collapse and undergrowth. It is however potentially unlikely, given its lack of foundation, that this was part of a building, probably instead forming a section of outer wall. This appears therefore to have been part of a curtain wall built to enclose the area of the bailey.

The final phase in this area, again built up against the early central section, is the eastern section of curtain wall. This is formed of fine ashlar blocks, of a form distinct from the other two sections of curtain wall, and indeed of the majority





*Figure 22 Part of the west section of the south curtain wall, view from south (DP195786).*

of the stonework of the rest of the castle (Figure 23). This fact alone is strongly suggestive of the later nature of this section, as is its stratigraphic relationship to the central section which it clearly post-dates. To the south-east the ashlar stonework is carefully cut to bulge outwards effectively forming a semi-circular tower projecting from the curtain wall and facing south-east. This returns against the south wing wall on the side of the motte, which is therefore another relatively early feature (see above). Limited excavation of the south-east corner of this structure has revealed some internal features (see Hoverd 2016), including fully exposing the recess which was partly visible in the eastern wall of this tower and which may have formed a cupboard, and part of a splayed opening which may originally have been a window. At the base of the window opening a small decorative feature was exposed in the form of a pyramid stop to the chamfered edge of the opening. Other features are less easily interpreted, but the putative evidence for 17th-century fortification (Hoverd 2016, 29-30) is considered doubtful (Edmund Simons pers comm). Further work may again reveal more of the function of this area of the building, but it appears to be a relatively late, and very high status, modification to the castle complex, probably forming a private chamber. Its relationship to the putative early building suggested by the central section of the curtain wall may be clarified by further archaeological work, and it is possible that it represents an updating, or expansion of the earlier structure. The survival of small decorative features further confirms the identification of this area as high status, although unfortunately the pyramid stop form is used throughout the medieval period and is therefore relatively undiagnostic in terms of date.





*Figure 23 Part of the east section of the south curtain wall and the south east tower, view from south (DP195785).*

The only other exposed section of curtain wall is the small fragment in the north-west corner of the bailey (see Figure 9). This comprises a short section, approximately 5.3m long, mostly of core rubble. What appears to be a recessed central section formed of dressed stones, is in fact probably a section of *ex situ* fabric resting on the top of the intact wall core. There are two dressed stones further down the side of the scarp, which are potentially part of the same structure. If so then the wall would have had a significant batter. Alternatively however they may be small sections of the wall dressing from the main section which have fallen and become fixed in the side of the scarp.

### **North tower**

The north tower sits approximately mid-way along the north side of the bailey, with earthworks to either side which are probably associated with buildings, or walling, which have been systematically robbed for stone (see above). The extant fragment of the tower survives to a considerable height (Figure 24). It is constructed of squared stone blocks, which are considerably worn and eroded. There is a suggestion that these have been deliberately ‘rusticated’, that is that the corners of the blocks have been cut or chamfered back to create an uneven surface. It is more likely that this is simply to do with the weathering of the tower, and that originally the blocks formed a relatively smooth stone face. In character this walling is therefore similar to that of the south-east bastion although possibly not quite as fine. In this context it is notable that they both provide curving tower-like structures which project from the presumed line of the earlier curtain wall. This may indicate that they are both





*Figure 24 North Tower, view from west (DP195357).*

later features, designed to update the earlier wall lines of the castle. They may not be directly contemporary however. As with the earlier sections of curtain wall investment may have been undertaken on a relatively piecemeal basis. There are few visible features on the surviving section of the north tower, not least because of the significant amount of ivy that currently covers the interior face of the building. Further clearance of the masonry may reveal more features, but at present there are no visible joist holes or off sets for internal floor levels. It is possible that the tower was intended purely for show from the exterior, and was simply open to the bailey on the interior, with no defined internal spaces.

## **Snodhill Court**

Sitting some 200m west of the castle is Snodhill Court, a house which appears to have replaced the castle as the manorial residence for the settlement. The connection between the two sites has been frequently cited, not least because they appear to have been in shared ownership for much of the last 400 years. The house was recorded by the RCHM in the 1920s, and interpreted as a 17th century H-plan building, consistent with a datestone visible on the north-east wall of the south wing, which has faint traces of the date 1667 (HEA RCHM Inventory Notes: Peterchurch parish). As such it has been associated with documentary evidence for the purchase





*Figure 25 Snodhill Court, main doorway, east elevation showing stone canopy (DP195439).*

of Snodhill Manor by William Prosser, a Hereford merchant. It certainly contains some extremely fine 17th-century features, most notably the open-well staircase in the south-east corner of the main hall.

Although it was not possible to examine this structure in detail as part of the project, it appears from cursory examination that the north wing of the current structure may in fact comprise a building which pre-dates the 17th century. This is particularly the case with the eastern section of the wing, where it incorporates a small spiral stair. The relationship between the wing and the main central hall to its south appears awkward, with the northern cross beam of the hall ceiling structure built up against a series of joists which appear to run into the hall from the north wing. More detailed survey work would clarify this possible phasing and help establish whether the building includes earlier remains.

The common assertion that much of the stonework in the Court came from the castle is difficult to prove or disprove, as much of the stonework is of a form equally likely to be consistent with a medieval or 17th-century date. This is also the case with some of the finer stone detailing in the house, including the main door in the east elevation, with its pyramid stops to the lower section of the jambs. Although these are commonly seen in medieval buildings, they were also used in the late 17th



*Figure 26 Snodhill Court, doorway to north elevation (DP195444).*

century (Hall 2005, 160). Of the timber elements of the house only the ground-floor details were seen as part of the current project. A cursory examination suggests that these were consistent with a 17th-century date, however, with no indications of reused timber work.

In terms of the history of the castle, the most significant surviving feature in the building is the series of corbels which have been used, or reused, in various positions around the building. The main east doorway, and a secondary doorway to the north both have stone canopies supported on pairs of projecting corbels (Figures 25 and 26). There are a further three supporting the eastern end of the cross beams in the main hall (Figure 27). And finally there is a single corbel located off-centre over the fireplace in the south-west corner of the hall (Figure 28). These corbels take three distinct forms.

Those over the secondary, north doorway, and the single corbel located over the fireplace are of the same form. The external corbels are considerably worn, but clearly originally displayed the same form of decoration as seen on the better-preserved internal example (see Figure 28). This comprises a complex moulding principally of rolls and hollows, with three decorative bands formed on each of the hollows. The upper band is of three quatrefoils, with the outer portions of the lobes





*Figure 27 Snodhill Court, one of the corbels supporting the eastern end of the cross beams in the hall (DP195435).*



*Figure 28 Snodhill Court, corbel over the fireplace in the west elevation of the hall (DP195428).*

slightly sunken creating a foliate form. The central band takes the form of a type of ball-flower decoration, that is a central ball held by four 'petals' or lobes. However, this does not take the usual ball flower form, which is typically a more pronounced round shape, and with a greater articulation between the central ball and the outer lobes (see for example Hereford Cathedral North Transept and upper sections of the tower). The lowest band is considerably damaged, even on the internal example, but may have had the same quatrefoil decoration as in the upper band.

The pair over the main east doorway to the house have an identical moulding pattern to those described above, but without the decorative embellishment. Although considerably weathered, it is clear that the hollows of the moulding have always been plain, with no sign of decorative features which have been cut back or damaged. Notwithstanding the differences, the similarity in overall form and proportion suggest that they may come from the same source.

Finally, the three corbels supporting the eastern ends of the transverse beams in the main hall are considerably different in scale, form and execution from the other two types. It is clear that they attempt to echo the decorative forms seen on the other corbels, notably in the use of a four-lobed quatrefoil shape, interposed with circular motifs perhaps intended to echo the 'ball flower' motif. However, these are much cruder renderings and appear to be considerably later in date. The central of these corbels has a date which can be read as 1769, but in fact appears to be 1X69. The inscribed date may relate to the insertion of the corbels into the house, although this is by no means certain, as it could have been added at any time subsequently. Dates were often added to earlier features to mark significant events in the life of the inhabitants, such as a wedding for example, and so cannot be treated as definite dating evidence.

It is likely that these corbels are not part of the original design for the hall ceiling. The moulding of the transverse beams, that is the chamfers with their scroll stops, run all the way to the inner face of the wall, rather than terminating at the projecting edge of the corbels as one would expect if they were part of the intended design of the ceiling. Although the plaster surrounding them prevents closer inspection, it is more likely that they were inserted some time after the construction of the ceiling, in order to provide structural support, perhaps because the original joints between the beams and the walls were found to be insufficient or failing. In this context it is notable that the northern transverse beam has also been supported at its west end by the insertion of a 20th-century post, confirming that there have been structural problems with the ceiling.

The uncertainty over the inscribed date means it is unclear precisely when they date from, although a late 18th century date remains the most likely. It is evident that they are considerably later than the other corbels in the building. The attempt to execute similar patterns however, indicates that they were carved by someone who had seen or had access to the earlier corbels. This may suggest that at least some of the earlier corbels had been placed in the building by the time that the later corbels were created. This suggestion is supported by the evidence of the earlier corbels over the main, eastern, doorway. These form part of larger stones which



are clearly coursed into the stonework of the east elevation and do not appear to be later insertions. The evidence from the corbels of the northern doorway is less clear, partly due to the paint on the north elevation, but they may also be original. The positioning of the best surviving corbel over the fireplace is strange, as it is serving no structural role, nor is it properly positioned as part of a later feature. At present the plasterwork around the corbel prevents closer analysis of how it has been fitted into the wall, but it may be that it is a later insertion, possibly moved or brought in perhaps as part of an alteration to the fireplace which it sits over.

It is clear that the earlier corbels relate to an extremely high status medieval structure. The most obvious source is the castle. Caution must be exercised however, as the corbels represent relatively small scale pieces which could potentially have been brought in from much further afield. In this context it is notable that there is no surviving evidence of any such elaborate features extant in the castle. While this may simply reflect the lack of surviving evidence in the castle, the possibility of other sources for the corbels should also be considered further. The decorative motifs are often seen in church buildings for example, and the dissolution of the monasteries in the late 16th century may have seen some such *spolia* available for reuse in the area. As *ex situ* pieces of fabric, the only evidence available to date the corbels is stylistic. The quatrefoil pattern is broadly late medieval, as is the overall form of the pieces, but the use of some form of 'ball flower' motif is more likely to date from the early 14th century. Ball flower is typically associated with the period 1320-1340, and is seen at Hereford Cathedral from 1310-15 (Morris 1973, 48). However, the poor execution of the ball flower in this instance makes the dating slightly less certain. It is possible this means it is a later attempt to emulate an earlier pattern.



*Figure 29 Looking west across the former manor of Snodhill to the Black Mountains in the Brecon Beacons National Park. Snodhill Castle lies in trees in the bottom right-hand corner and the park occupies much of the centre of this picture. HEA 29993\_008 25-NOV-2016*

## The landscape setting

The terrain around the castle rises steadily from the flood plain of the Dore to the ridge of Vagar Hill at 430m which runs north-west to south-east and marks the south-western extent of the manor and deer park of Snodhill (Figure 29). Beyond this the undulating terrain continues to rise towards the distant Black Mountains across the border into Wales. The immediate landscape of Snodhill forms a sloping elongated bowl sub-divided by a number of roughly parallel streams which rise high on the north-eastern flanks of Vagar Hill, flowing north-eastwards in the direction of the River Dore (Figure 30). Within this bowl lies the expanse of the former medieval deer park, the western end of which is still defined by the fragmentary remains of an enclosing park pale. The pale survives in parts in the upper (western) of the park, but there are no physical remains or cartographic evidence of the lower reaches of the deer park in the vicinity of the castle. Whether the castle lay within or outside its deer park has yet to be ascertained (see below).

Beyond the line of the park pale the landscape is dotted with small dwellings and farms, a pattern typical of the Welsh Marches. In contrast, with the exception of Park Farm, New Lodge and Old Lodge the interior of the deer park is devoid of houses or farms. Roads and tracks also skirt the boundary of the park.



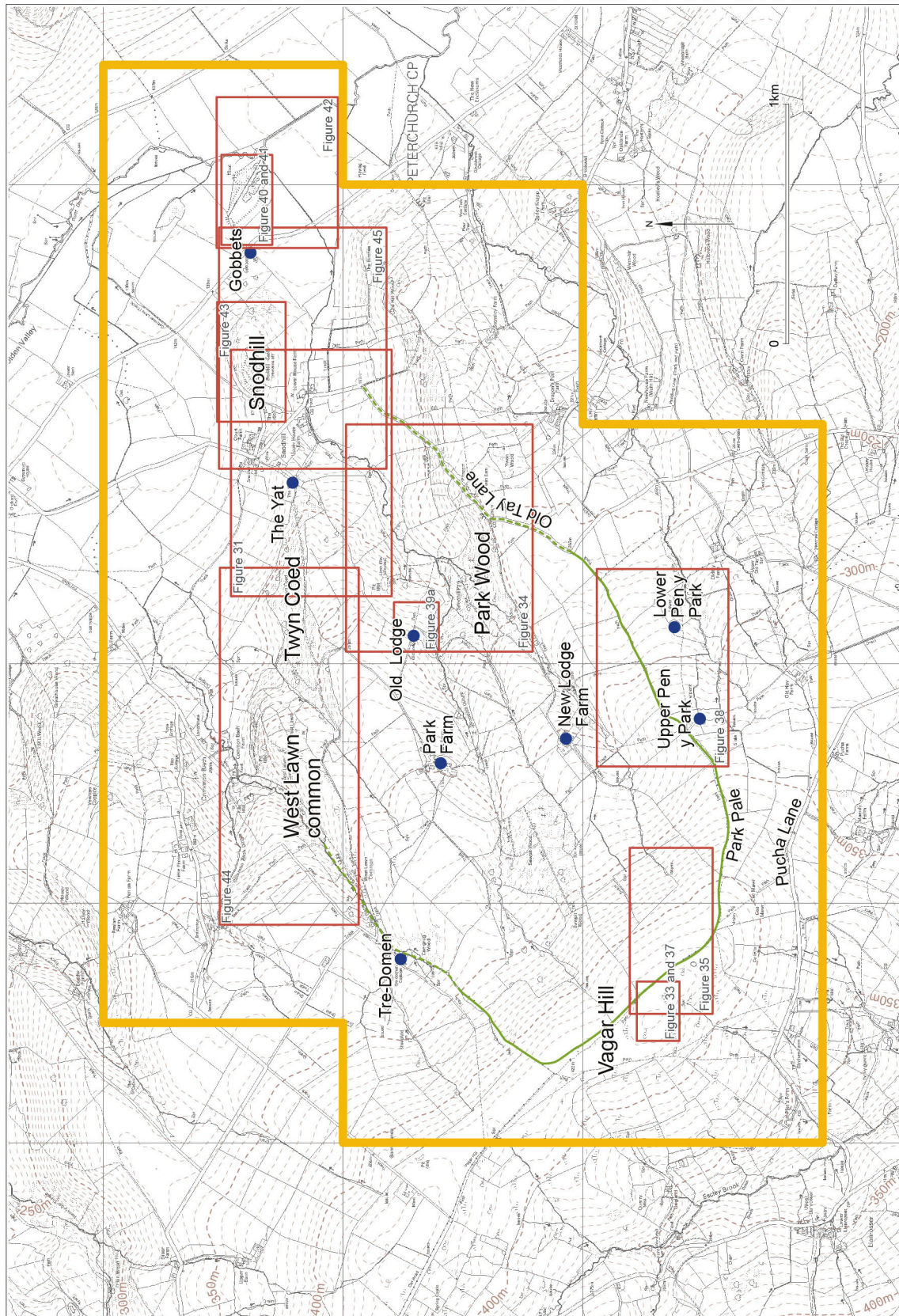


Figure 30 The area around Snodhill showing the study area (yellow) and the parish boundary (green). Red outlines indicate the location of subsequent figures in the text, which show features in greater detail. © Crown copyright 2017, all rights reserved. Ordnance Survey Licence number 100024900.



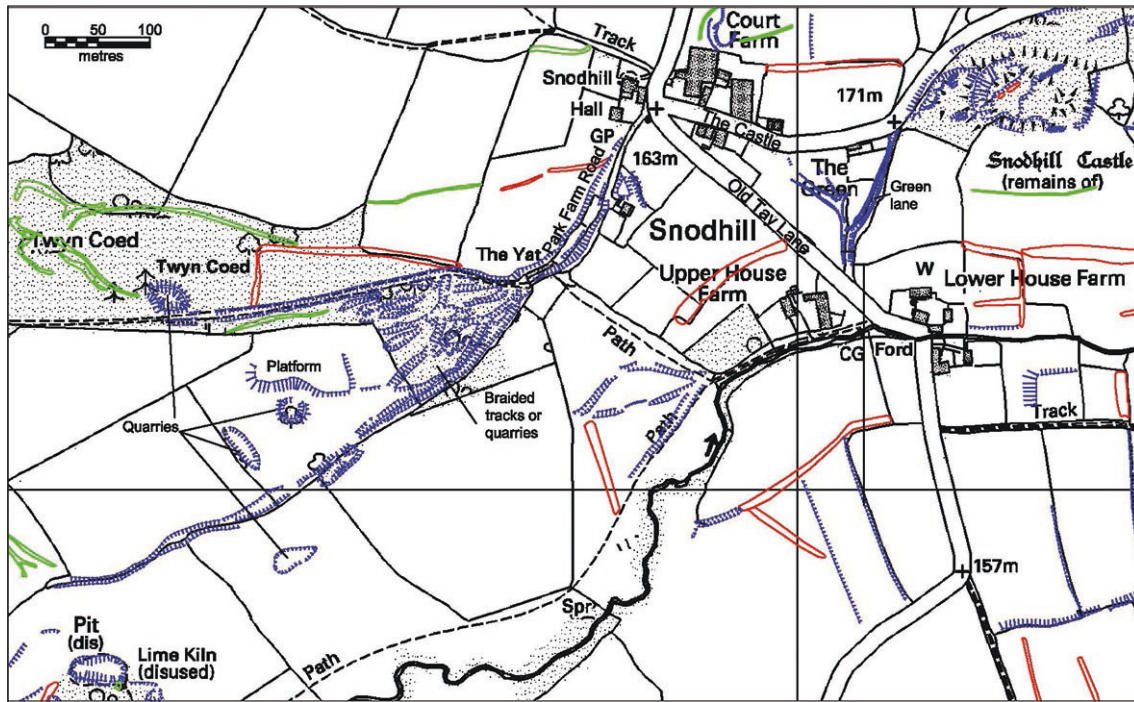


Figure 31 Map of Snodhill illustrating the earthwork remains of trackways and former roads in and around the village including the green lane linking The Castle and Old Tay Lane and the braided trackways, including the hollow way extending south-west from The Yat into the upper park. © Crown copyright 2017, all rights reserved. Ordnance Survey Licence number 100024900.

## Snodhill village and settlement earthworks

The village of Snodhill today comprises a handful of houses and three large farms (Court Farm, Upper House Farm and Lower House Farm) centred loosely around a triangular area known as The Green (centred at SO 3199 4029) and is perhaps more correctly described as a hamlet (Figure 31). The Green is bounded to north and south by current lanes, the southern one being Old Tay Lane.

The lane which runs along the northern side heads towards the current entrance to the castle, before skirting the around the northern side of the castle hill. These two lanes are linked on the eastern side of The Green by a now disused hollow way or green lane which runs 150m approximately north-south from the gateway of the castle entrance, meeting the lower lane opposite Upper House Farm. The earthwork remains of a hollow way branching off this green lane and heading north-west into the centre of The Green were noted in the field and are clearly revealed on the lidar images.

The lidar also shows slight earthworks within The Green which have been identified as potential house platforms and a mill site during a programme of field survey in 1983 sponsored by Hereford and Worcester County Council (Skelton 1983). Further earthworks are also visible on the lidar on the south-eastern side of the deep lane from Snodhill Hall to a group of cottages at The Yat (SO 3175 4020). This hollow lane also appears considerably wider than the present lane, its margins extending into



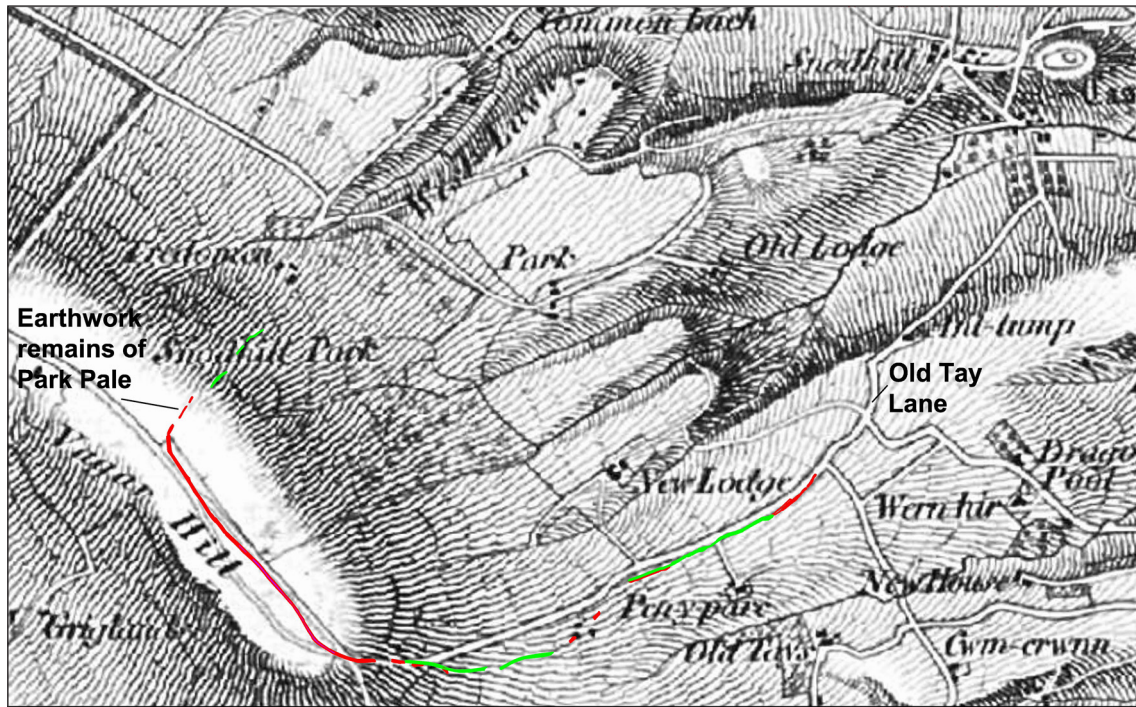


Figure 32 Extract of 1831-32 OS 6 inch map overlaid with the transcribed earthwork remains of the park pale. This shows the old road extending from Old Tay Lane past Pen y Park and New Lodge on the southern side of the park, following the course of the park pale up onto Vagar Hill. © Crown copyright 2017, all rights reserved. Ordnance Survey Licence number 100024900.

the fields to the north beyond the current hedge line. At The Yat the lane heads up through the woods of Twyn Coed. The lidar shows this present track as just one of a series of braided tracks visible as earthworks emanating south-west from this point (see Figure 31).

## The park

The large deer park stretches up the valley side to the south-west of Snodhill, its pale forming the horizon when viewed from the castle (Figure 32). The park incorporates two side valleys with steeply-descending watercourses flowing into the Dore. The pale is a conventional bank and ditch for much of the circuit but at its upper end it incorporates well-coursed stonework on its outer face at least. The entire course of the pale is not known as it is lost on the lower slopes. Consequently it is uncertain whether the castle sits within the park, as intimated by Leland in 1540, or whether it is external to it.

## The park pale

The visible extents of the remains of the medieval deer park at Snodhill suggest an enclosure c1.5km across (north-west to south-east) extending 4km south-west from the castle. The north-eastern half of the pale extents are not clear, but the presence of the village and traces of ridge and furrow between the castle and the deer park



*Figure 33 Snodhill Park pale on Vagar Hill (exterior view) with the much-reduced and filled outer ditch and dry-stone wall (DP195848).*

seen on lidar and aerial photographs suggests the park stopped short of the castle rather than encircling it as Leland's description implies, though the cultivation and settlement may post-date the park. The pale itself appears unusual for this area in that it combined a ditch with a stone wall rather than a wooden pale or hedge atop a bank. Traces of the pale survive on the southern and western sides of the park as a ditch of varying width and depth, and fragments of wall beyond (Figure 33). The ditch only survives on the southern side to the west and east of Pen-y-Park Farm. The wall is best preserved on Vagar Hill, with further fragments to the west of Pen-y-Park Farm.

From the ridge of Vagar Hill the park pale turns north-east, visible as a slight fragmented ditch, down the dingle which marks the parish boundary between Peterchurch and Dorstone parishes and marked the northern boundary of Snodhill Manor (see Figure 30). It has not been traced by aerial survey or ground observation beyond a point south-west of Tre-Domen Cottage close to the top of the dingle at SO 2965 3952, but it is likely that the pale followed this natural obstacle and the parish boundary for some distance. This is supported by the presence of two areas known as West Lawn Common and West Lawn located on the inner side of this boundary below Tre Domen – the 'Lawn' element referring to open tracts of pasture with a deer park.

A single 500m long curving bank which has been identified to the north-west of the castle (SO 3128 4082 – SO 3177 4028) may be considered as a possible candidate



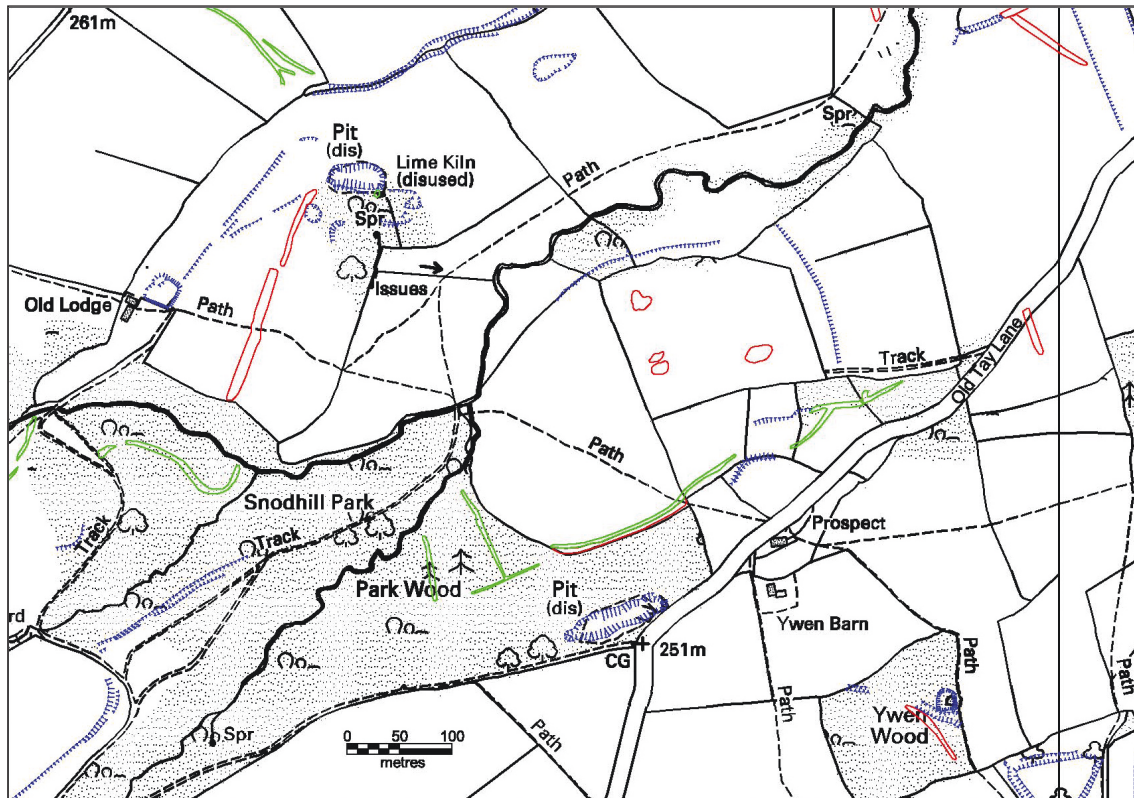


Figure 34 Large oval enclosure within Snodhill Park partially defined by a slight earthwork bank and traces of an inner bank on the southern side. The western end appears to be defined by the current boundary with Park Wood and a field boundary on the north-western segment. The eastern end has been straightened but the original boundary line is still apparent as an earthwork. © Crown copyright 2017, all rights reserved. Ordnance Survey Licence number 100024900.

for part of the northern park pale. This may only be a field boundary and does pass through a large field of possible medieval ridge and furrow seen as earthworks. However, it is not clear if it lies beneath or over the top of the cultivation ridges.

The 1831-2 6 inch OS map depicts an established path or trackway continuous with the lane from Snodhill following the line of the southern and western parts of the pale (see Figure 32). Today this lane from Snodhill bends sharply through 90° southwards away from the park boundary and continues to Urishay. Westwards of this junction a track followed the course of the pale ditch past Lower Pen-y-Park and Upper Pen-y-Park farms and continuing as it curves north-west along the ridge of Vagar Hill. Today this track can only be traced to just above Upper Pen-y-Park farm where it appears to have been used as access to the farm. Beyond this point it only survives as a right of way with little physical presence. This right of way, which is also the boundary between the parishes of Peterchurch and Michaelchurch Escley, continues north-west along the ridge, the park pale branching off to the north-east at SO 2933 3911.

The lane (Old Tay Lane) which heads down to Snodhill could be a continuation of the line of the surviving park pale ditch and it is possible that the lower part of the



lane, which becomes in part a deeply incised way, follows the course of the park pale at this point. However, there is no sign of the park pale at the junction where the current road branches off to New Lodge (SO 3159 3939).

### **Within the park**

Some internal features of the park are known. Two farms in the present landscape are called New Lodge and Old Lodge respectively and there are some other relevant place names – Park Farm, Park Wood, West Lawn Common, Lower and Upper Pen-y-Park. There are also physical features. A spring within the south-easternmost tributary of Snodhill Dingle is known as the Eye Well and has been believed to have beneficial properties (Harding 1992; Surrey Garland pers comm).

### **Oval enclosure at Park Wood**

A large oval enclosed area was identified in the field and on the lidar below the Eye Well and on the north-eastern edge of Park Wood (SO 316 3960; Figure 34). The enclosure is defined on three sides by a fragmented bank or scarp enclosing an area of 220m x 380m. Field investigation shows that this was once a completely oval piece of land, the north-eastern side of which has been straightened – the curving bank of the original boundary is still visible. This may represent a former woodland plantation within the deer park enclosed by a wood bank or a breeding enclosure for deer, conveniently overlooked by Old Lodge.

### **New enclosure west of Upper Pen-y-Park**

Aerial reconnaissance by Historic England in 2016 identified a small earthwork rectangular enclosure of uncertain date and function on a hillside 600m due west of Upper Pen-y-Park Farm, 180m from the south-western corner of the deer park pale (SO 3012 3861; Figures 35 and 36). The enclosure is defined by a low spread bank and measures 28m x 30m. No obvious internal features and no distinct entrance could be seen on the aerial photography, though the north-eastern side which faces down-slope may have a break or depressed bank suggesting an entrance. It is located on a steep, slightly boggy north-east facing slope at 380m OD and on the spring line where one of the streams flowing down through the park to Snodhill rises.

This enclosure was subsequently surveyed (Figure 37). It occupies a slight ledge on the steep north-facing slope near the upper edge of the park, directly overlooking the castle. It comprises a slight bank on the eastern side no more than 0.3m high, but only a single spread scarp to north and south; the western side is formed by the drop to the stream; there is no sign of a surrounding ditch. Survey confirmed that there is possibly an entrance in the centre of the northern side. Immediately to the west of the enclosure is a spring which has created a small but dramatically deep gorge. There is the slightest suggestion of a possible building platform within the western half. This may be the site of a post-medieval stock enclosure, but the site is somewhat similar to the so-called ‘church place’ enclosures of the New Forest, which are nothing to do with churches but were actually hunting lodges (Smith 1999, 23-7, fig



Figure 35 Aerial photograph showing the slight earthworks of a square embanked enclosure within Snodhill Park. HEA 29993\_010 25-NOV-2016

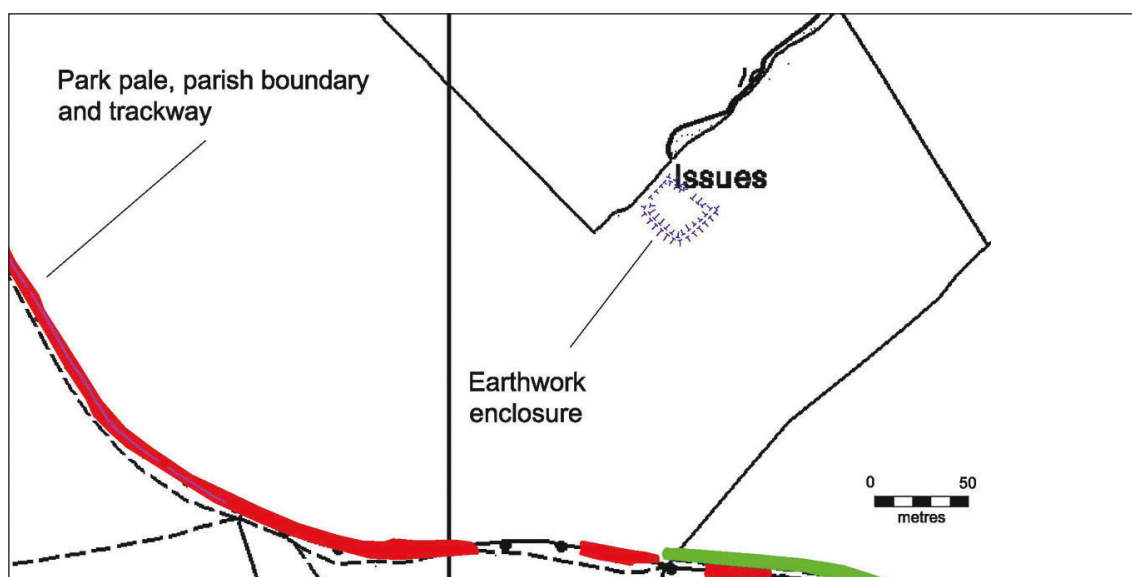


Figure 36 Location of the newly discovered earthwork enclosure in the upper part of Snodhill Park. © Crown copyright 2017, all rights reserved. Ordnance Survey Licence number 100024900.



Figure 37 Survey of the new enclosure west of Pen-y-Park.

14). However, these are all larger and more substantial than the enclosure in Snodhill Park (see below). The site has almost exactly the same dimensions as the raised rectilinear platform noted at New Lodge (see below), which measures c 29m x 30.

### Upper Pen-y-Park and Lower Pen-y-Park

These two farms lie in the parish of Michaelchurch Escley, immediately outside the southern boundary of the former medieval deer park pale, but within the former Manor of Snodhill. Upper Pen-y-Park farm (SO 3075 3851) has fallen out of use. Its buildings have recently been described by Davis (2017).

The farm buildings are surrounded by slight earthworks of former boundaries and trackways identified from the lidar images (Figure 38). The apparent main approach to the farm is down a short track from the park pale ditch to the north-west which



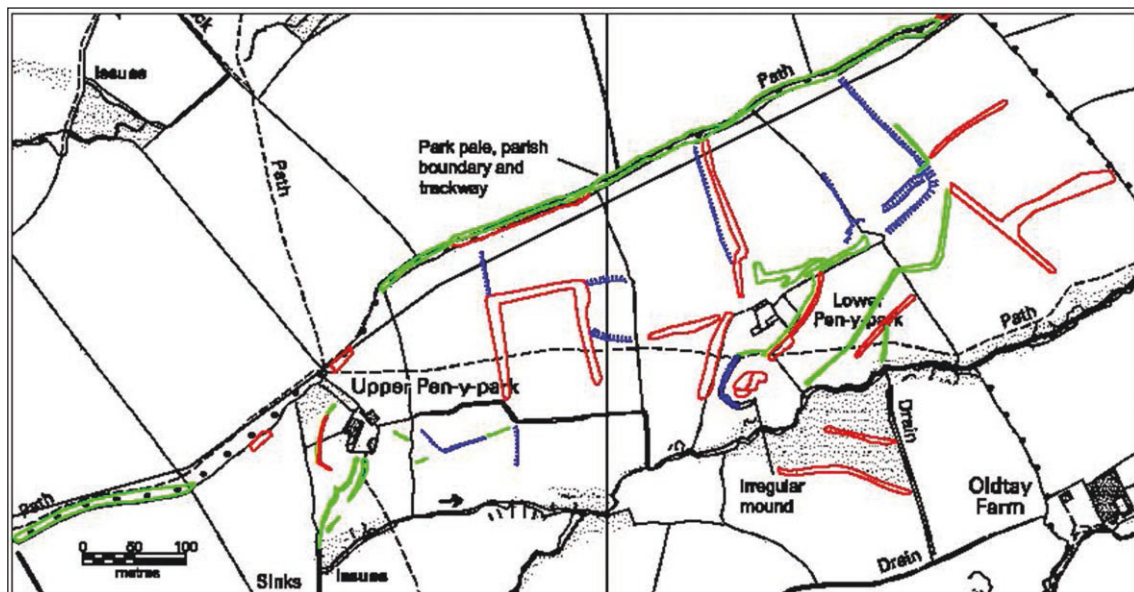


Figure 38 Traces of former fields and trackways around Upper and Lower Pen-y-Park farms and the irregular mound of uncertain origin and date identified from lidar images at Lower Pen-y-Park. © Crown copyright 2017, all rights reserved. Ordnance Survey Licence number 100024900.

appears to have become a pathway or track at some point following the decline of the deer park, leading up onto Vagar Hill and beyond. Heading north-eastwards this track joins the lane which descends towards Snodhill village.

Lower Pen-y-Park farm lies 400m to the east of Upper Pen-y-Park (SO 3116 3861). This farm is also surrounded by earthworks of former field boundaries and tracks, the fields abutting the park pale to the north. Some of the fields between the two farms could belong to either. South-west of the farm buildings the lidar suggests the presence of an irregular mound measuring 25m x 29m, surrounded on its western side by a curving bank describing an arc 60m in diameter. However, it is not clear from the lidar alone if this is a recent agricultural feature such as soil or hay or an earlier site.

## Old Lodge

The Old Lodge sits within the deer park at SO 3112 3971, and as the name suggests, is a potential site of a former hunting lodge. Old Lodge has been described as being the site of a Norman-medieval hunting hall with 'suggestions' that some of its fabric in the present house on the site dates back to the 12th century (Remfry 1992, 54). This has not been verified during the current investigation.

A rectilinear platform measuring 29m x 30m has been noted on the lidar immediately to the north-east of Old Lodge house at SO 3115 3972. This platform is slightly asymmetric and appears to have a mound in the northern corner (Figure 39). However, it is not possible to tell from the lidar alone whether this is associated with the site of the former hunting lodge. It may simply be the result of recent garden landscaping, but would benefit from further investigative ground survey, particularly

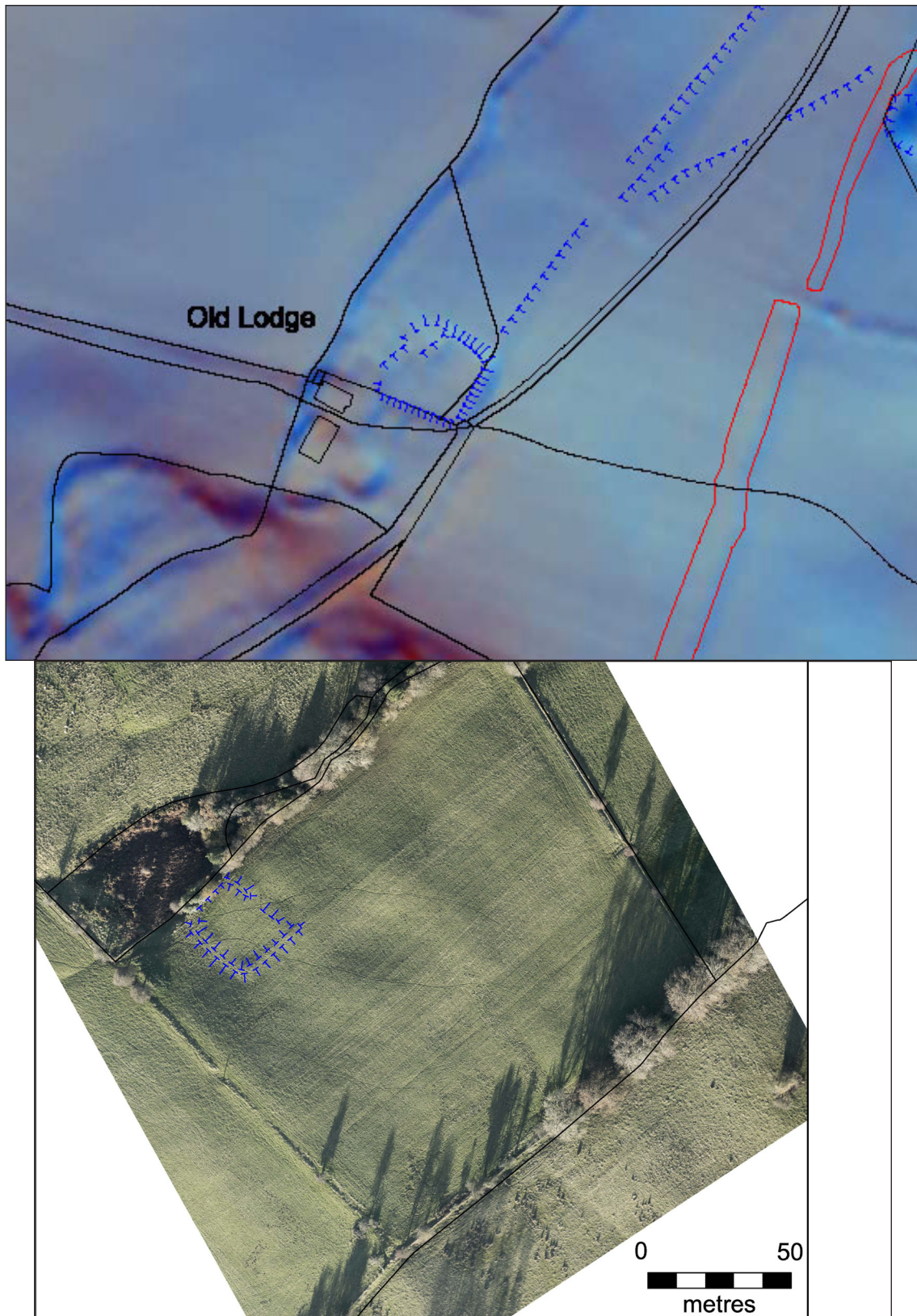


Figure 39 Earthwork traces of two newly identified rectilinear platforms adjacent to Old Lodge overlaid to Environment Agency DSM 16 direction visualisation (top), and (bottom) the new earthwork enclosure in the south-west of the park (overlaid on rectified aerial photograph 29993\_010 25-NOV-2016). Lidar data © Environment Agency 2006. All rights reserved. Map data © Historic England, Map base © Crown copyright 2017. All rights reserved. Ordnance Survey Licence number 100024900.

in the light of the recent discovery of an identically proportioned enclosure to the west (see above).

## The Gobbets

The area of earthworks near The Gobbets (SO 3303 4042) approximately 700m east of the castle, known locally as The Splashes, has not been surveyed as part of this project but a brief field visit was made and the site was examined and mapped from lidar and aerial photography (Figure 40). The field visit confirmed former descriptions of the remains as a moated island with a depression towards the southern side; the moat itself is discernible to the north-west and north-east but merges to the south with a wider depression, which was water-filled at the time of the visit, and appears to be at least partly the result of relatively recent drainage operations. Within this larger rectangular sunken area is a smaller inner oblong water-filled pond of 40m x 150m which extends north-west to south-east. In a record of a conversation in 1991 with the landowner he stated he had deepened this part of the site in the 1980s (HCC SMR 1556). The 1st edition 1:2500 OS map shows a footpath running across this area but this may in itself have been short lived – in 1888 Prosser Powell described the site as ‘a raised mound in the centre of the valley ... surrounded by a ditch; this mound stood in the centre of a swamp or morass ... now converted by drainage into rich meadow land, but it still bears the name of The Splashes’ (1892, 228). The RCHM surveyed the island in the 1930s and produced a basic plan (Figure 41) showing the sub-rectangular depression within the island.

Beyond the moat ditch to the north-east are further hints of outlying structures and a network of water channels linked into the River Dore which passes less than 50m to the east. Some of these channels may be later drainage of the riverside meadows.

This is recorded by Herefordshire County Council - SMR 1556. The list of records and observations attached to this monument record include a reference to it being marked on the tithe award as ‘The Splashes’. It is also noted by HCC staff visiting in 2016 in sight of stewardship as ‘a possible pleasance or planned moated gardens with feeder channel and a possible small structure platform to the north-east’ (HCC 2016 - SHE23731).

Prior to this, two field visits to the site were recorded in 1992 by the Woolhope Naturalists Field Club, who investigated the platform and identified ‘buried stones or timbers’ 50cm below the surface when probed, which were thought to be the remains of foundations or basement of a robbed-out building. The landowner at the time of the visit, Dan Dixon, confirmed the depression in the centre had always been there during his ownership (though this was already known from the RCHM survey), and that pottery retrieved from the site following the uprooting of a peripheral tree in a gale had been dated by Hereford Museum as ‘Norman’ (though the description given suggests that they were of early post-medieval date) (Harding 1992; Remfry 1992).

The earthwork remains of the site are clearly visible on the lidar images which show the raised platform, which measures 45m north-west to south-east and 32m transversely, with a distinct raised rim around its outer edge. The interior is slightly



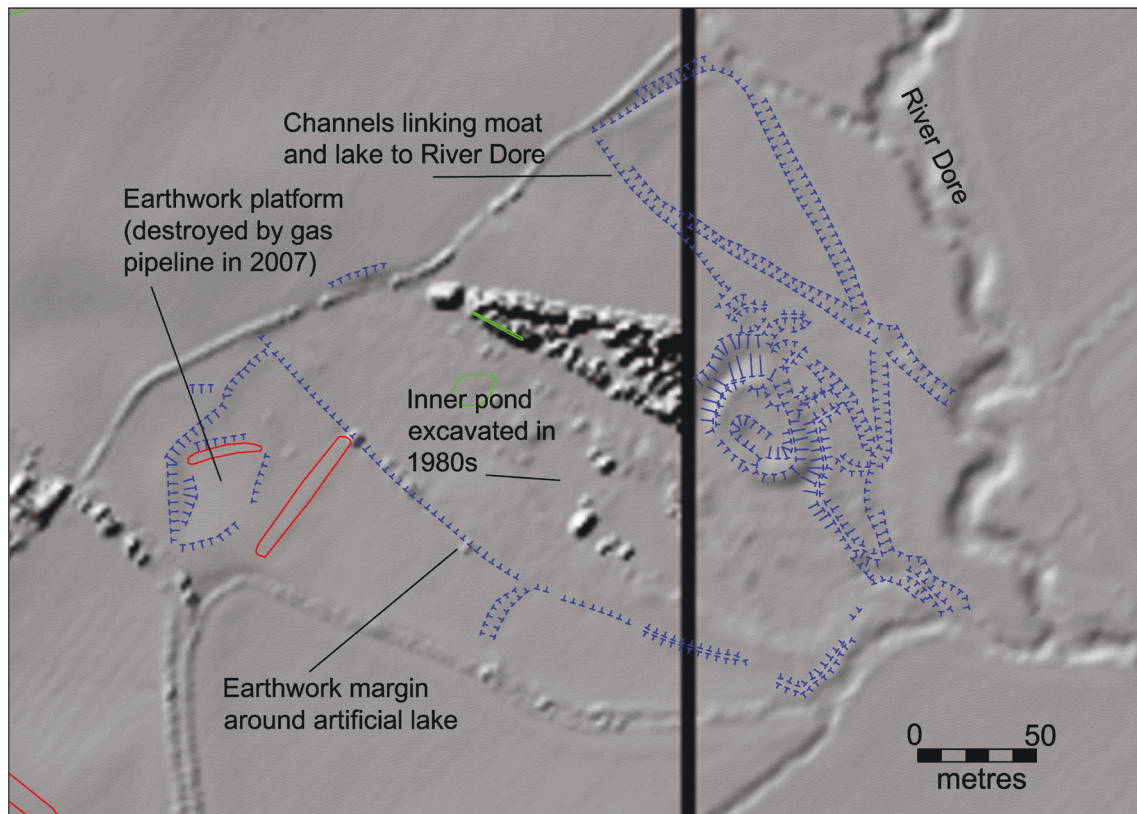


Figure 40 Moated site or garden feature at The Gobbets to the east of Snodhill Castle overlaid on the Environment Agency lidar. © Environment Agency 2006. All rights reserved.

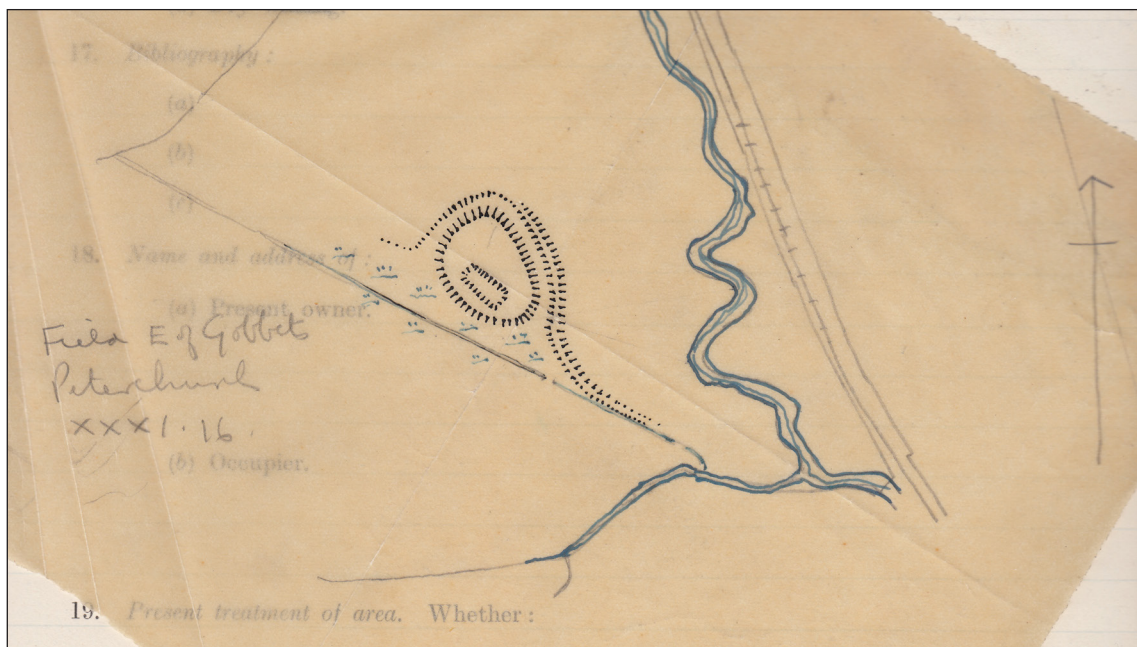


Figure 41 RCHM plan of the site drawn in 1929. The interior of the pond is depicted on the map with marshy vegetation indicating a contained waterlogged area (HEA RCHM Inventory notes: Peterchurch Parish).



*Figure 42 Google Earth image dated 24/5/2009 showing the pipeline scar – a band of different coloured vegetation caused by the gas pipeline cut passing between The Gobbets and the moated site. Google Earth accessed 16/08/2017.*

dished with the deeper elongated depression in the south-western half. The outer side of the moat or ditch which extends around the north-eastern half of the mound appears to extend westwards and south-eastwards from the mound rather than continuing around the south-western side. This earthen lip or scarp can be seen to form a long rectangular depression, possibly once a shallow pond adjacent to the mound and continuous with the half moat. This arrangement is recorded on various 20th century editions of the OS 1:10,000 scale map – depicting the earthworks of a shallow waterlogged rectangular depression (filled with marshy vegetation) to the immediate south-west of and extending around the earthen mound or platform beyond the line of the current field boundary.

The north-western end of this sunken area also appears to extend just beyond and west of the line of the current north-western field boundary, suggesting this earthwork, though not depicted on earlier maps, existed prior to the current boundary.

RAF vertical aerial photographs taken in July 1946 show the site with trees and bushes growing in the moat around the raised sub-circular mound, with more trees dotted along the western extension of the moat/rectangular pond scarp, and along the field boundary which cuts north-west to south-east, to the south-west of the mound. The interior of the rectangular pond appears darker than the surrounding pasture, suggesting the ground inside was waterlogged when photographed at the height of summer in 1946, and a later edition of the OS map depicts the entire enclosed rectangular area as marshy.



Immediately to the west of the large rectangular depressed area the lidar images revealed further earthworks of banks and a possible platform in the area between the rectilinear pond and the road to Dorstone at SO 3280 4040 (see Figure 40). These may represent further elements of the site, but although being visible on aerial photographs taken in 2001 and the lidar flown in 2006, Google Earth images dated 2009 clearly show the change in vegetation caused by the stripping of a broad swathe for the construction of a gas pipeline in 2007 (the Felindre to Tirley Natural Gas Pipeline; Figure 42).

This work appears to have removed all trace of these earthworks. It is not clear if the site was recorded prior to removal, but no mention of the any earthworks or finds is made in the report on the archaeological assessment. The entire pipeline route was subjected to geophysical survey and selected sites were excavated, but no mention or survey results for any sites in the vicinity of The Gobbets were included in the project report (Network Archaeology 2013).

It has recently been suggested (Bill Klemperer and Tim Hoverd pers comm) that this moated site might be interpreted as part of a pleasure ground in a watery context connected with the castle, a conclusion independently reached by the current authors (see below).

## Quarries and trackways

The entire project area encompassing the manor of Snodhill is dominated by Devonian sandstones – mostly Argillaceous interbedded sandstones and thin beds of St Maughan's sandstone. These overlie Siliurian mudstones which outcrop in the eastern region. The castle at Snodhill, formed out of a small cap of St Maughan's Sandstone, sits on a tongue of Sandstone surrounding by the earlier mudstones. Between these two beds is a thin bed of Bishops Frome Limestone defined as a Calcite-cemented silicate conglomerate (calcrete). A band of this limestone outcrops in a loop around the base of Snodhill castle hill on three sides. This localised outcrop of Frome Limestone may well be the 'marble' noted by Leland (Toulmin Smith 1964, 176) though it has also been suggested that this refers to a deposit of tufa.

The sandstone and limestone have been extensively quarried across much of the higher ground in and around the manor of Snodhill with the traces of many small quarries and attendant features such as lime kilns noted on the OS map. Many of the quarries are linear cuts which can be seen on the lidar images (Figures 43 and 44). When overlaid to the current geology map for the area the mapped linear quarries appear to be following the course of particular sandstone or limestone beds where they outcrop in the valley sides such as around West Lawn Common on the northern side of the park (BGS 2017). However, the narrowness of the outcrops of inter-bedded sandstones and limestones across the park and the scale of the geology maps available for consultation during the course of the aerial survey has made accurate identification of the exact rock type exploited in individual quarries difficult to ascertain as yet.



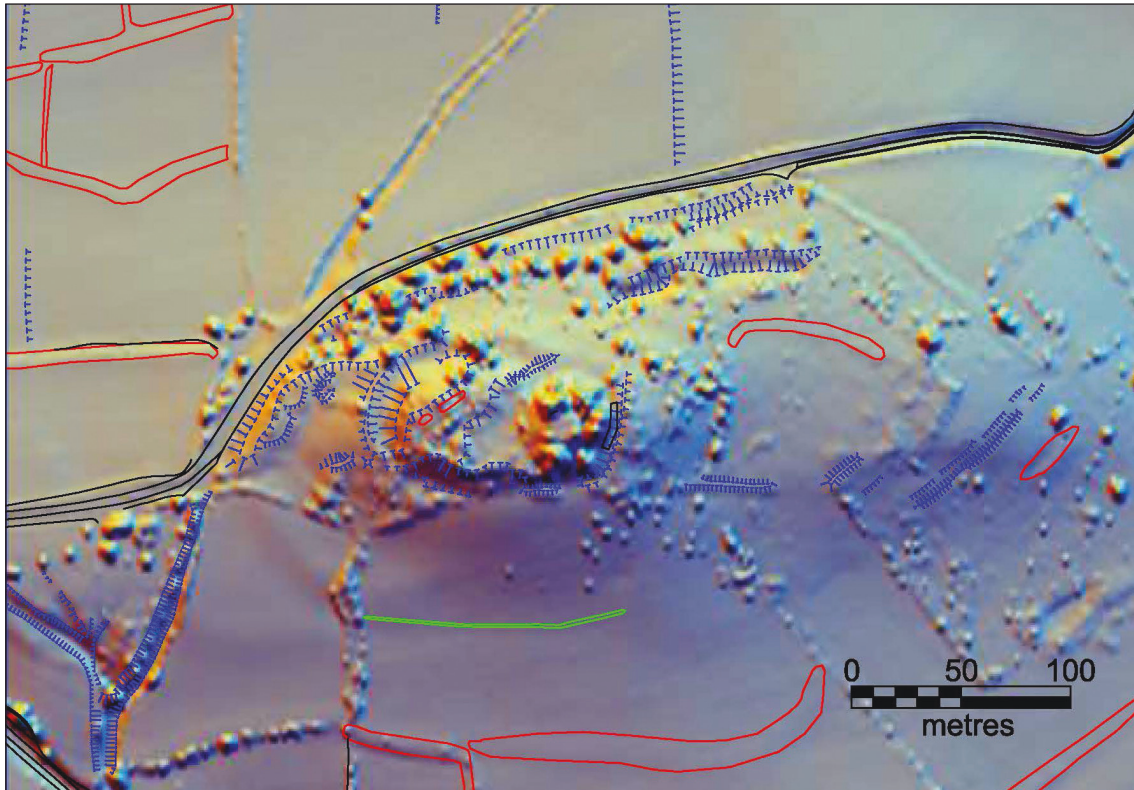


Figure 43 Lidar image showing the earthwork traces of Snodhill Castle, the quarries to the north-east and adjacent hollow ways overlain with the mapped interpretation in AutoCAD. Lidar DTM © Environment Agency copyright 2017, all rights reserved.

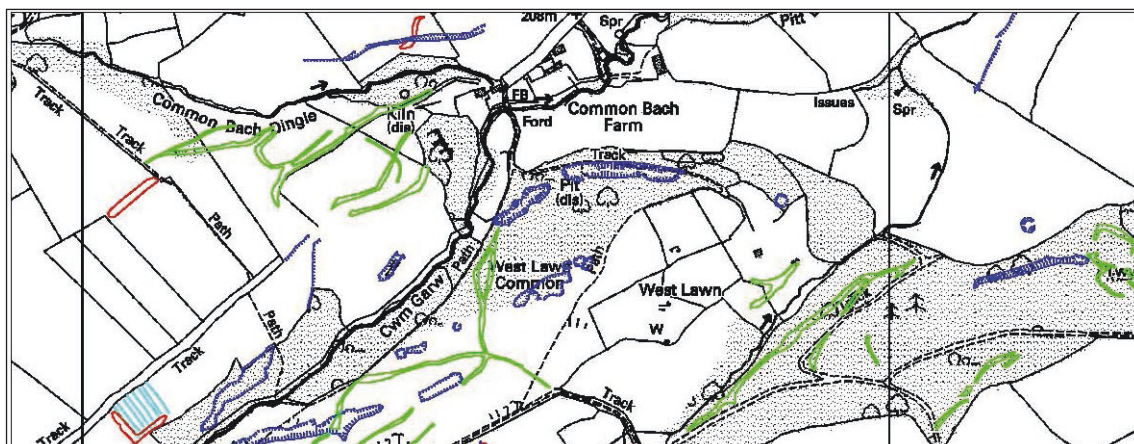


Figure 44 Transcription showing the extensive network of tracks and quarries west of Snodhill village depicted as ditches (green) and larger earthworks (dark blue) overlaid on the current OS Master Map. © Crown copyright 2017, all rights reserved. Ordnance Survey Licence number 100024900.

As well as quarries, the lidar has also highlighted the presence of numerous lost tracks and hollow ways (some still used as paths and marked as such on the present-day maps) which link farms to larger lanes, run between farms through the fields and serve the numerous quarries in the upper reaches of the park.

A number of tracks can be seen on the lidar images fanning out from the end of the lane from Snodhill village at The Yat (see Figure 30). The two main tracks can be seen; one a continuation of Park Farm Road heads westwards through Twyn Coed to West Lawn, the other heading south-west in the direction of Old Lodge is now a footpath. The tracks between these two main routes fade out at the edge of the woodland south-west of The Yat. This may be due to levelling through later cultivation in the field beyond, but there are other earthworks here of a large platform, 95m wide, cut into the slope with traces of quarrying to the south and west which may indicate that these tracks went no further than these quarries. Some of these cuts may also represent linear quarrying rather than incised trackways.

### **Ridge and furrow and apple orchards**

Slight fragmented traces of ridge and furrow were seen on the lidar images in patches concentrated around Snodhill village and to the south in the vicinity of several scattered farms including Stensley, Barley and Knapp Farms (Figure 45). These remains represent a mixture of a few possible fields of medieval or post-medieval ridge and furrow along with more numerous earthwork traces of straighter rig associated with post-medieval crop cultivation and orchard plantations.

In the valley to the south of the castle are what appear to be the remnants of probable medieval strip fields with traces of ridge and furrow on the southern slopes. These narrow fields can be seen extending up the hillside opposite the castle as a combination of existing field boundaries as well as slight earthwork linear banks of relic boundaries, some still topped by a hedge or occasional bushes.

Historically, apple orchards have been one of the principle land uses in Herefordshire, apples providing an important cash crop and fodder for pigs. The extent of the region's orchards is illustrated by John Evelyn, the diarist and agricultural writer, who stated in 1664 that 'Herefordshire has become in a manner an entire orchard' (HOCE 2008).

The locations of a number of orchards around Snodhill have been identified on earlier (19th and 20th century) OS maps, but other probable orchards can be seen on the lidar visible as characteristically straight narrow rig – such as those seen immediately to the south and east of the castle at Snodhill (see Figure 45). It is also likely that many post-medieval orchard plantations occupy former medieval open fields.

Because of the potential damage to crops from deer within the deer park, the presence of the remains of ridge and furrow and perhaps orchards (and the village) to the south of the castle suggests the park pale stopped short of the castle rather than surrounding it (see Figure 45).



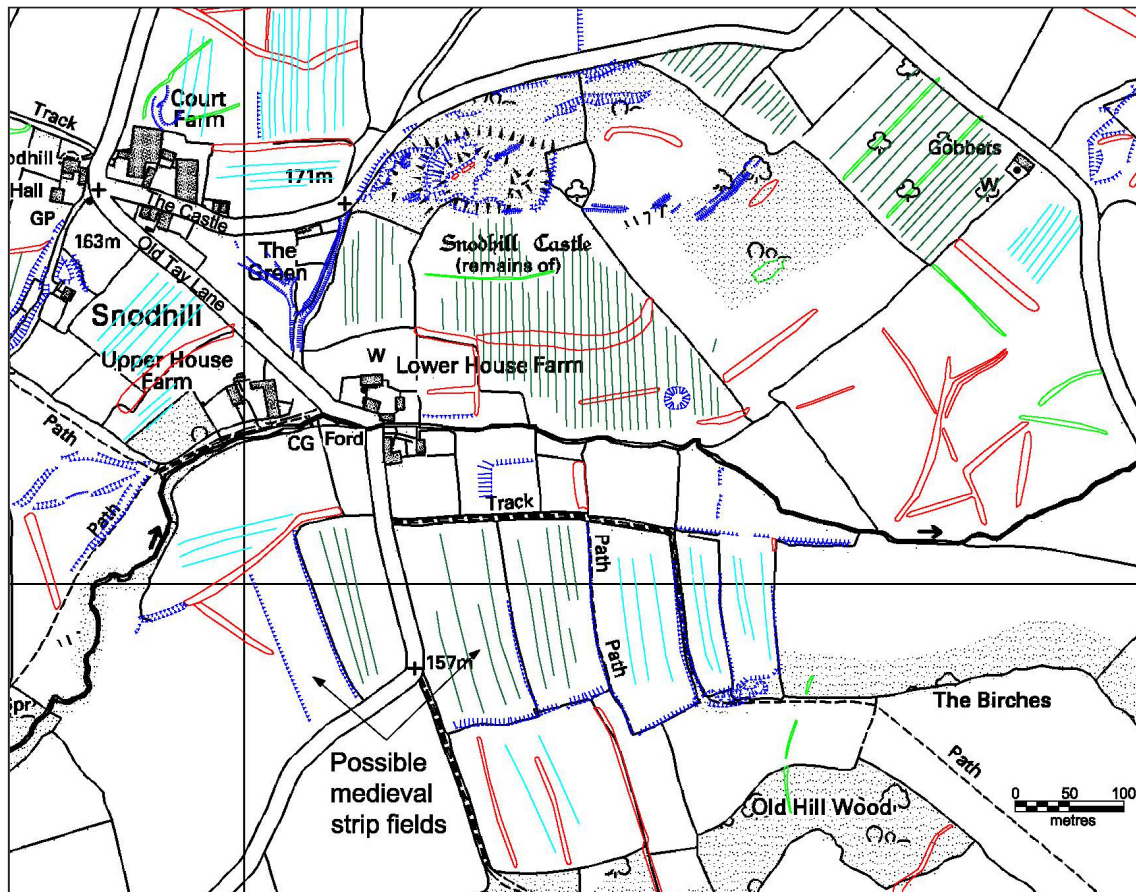


Figure 45 Snodhill village with the remains of possible medieval ridge and furrow and remnants of strip fields to the south of the castle seen as earth works on lidar images. Areas of known orchard plantation indicated on current and historic OS maps are depicted in dark green rig lines. © Crown copyright 2017, all rights reserved. Ordnance Survey Licence number 100024900.



## DISCUSSION

Following a brief discussion of the pre-castle landscape, this section presents the suggested phasing of the castle, on the basis of the surviving remains identified as part of this project. This is followed by a more general discussion about each of these phases, looking at parallels from other castle sites which may help inform our understanding of Snodhill. The castle landscape is then considered.

### The pre-castle landscape

There is an apparent absence of prehistoric, Roman or early medieval sites within the manor of Snodhill. It was hoped that the aerial survey, particularly the lidar images of the area, might lead to the identification of potential earlier sites, but to no avail. There are a number of known prehistoric monuments in the wider region, both on the uplands and down in the river valley, including several Neolithic and Bronze Age monuments – a long barrow, chambered tomb, barrows, standing stones at Dorstone and Wilmaston. There are also traces of prehistoric settlement and defended hilltop enclosures. However, apart from three dispersed find spots of two Mesolithic cores and a barbed and tanged arrow head (NRHE 105824, 105839 and 106088) there are no records of any prehistoric, Roman or early medieval sites within the park.

It is not clear why there is this apparent absence of sites earlier than the medieval park at Snodhill. It is possible that subsequent post-medieval farming activity has removed upstanding earthwork remains, but some trace would generally be expected at field edges and in woodland. The upper regions of the park have a tendency towards being slightly marginal land for cultivation, prone to water-logging, a factor which may have influenced land use in the past.

The survey utilised existing Environment Agency lidar flown at 2m resolution. It would be expected that the application of higher resolution lidar such as 1m or better would add detail to known sites, and could reveal some slight earthworks not identifiable on the 2m lidar. Studies of results from lidar across a range of geologies and terrains in the region of the Welsh Borders has shown similar results, particularly in areas of predominantly sandstone geology, which may suggest there is a link to the geology and soils of an area and the survivability of earthwork remains when subjected to prolonged ploughing and cultivation of certain crops associated with those conditions.

Within the park there appears to be little evidence of arable cultivation. It is possible that this factor, coupled with the low number of specialist oblique aerial photographs of the area, has resulted in no aerial photographic record of any surviving sub-surface archaeology in the form of cropmarks.

There are some later prehistoric defended hilltop enclosures located at intervals along the valley of the River Dore. On the eastern side between Vowchurch in the south and Dorstone to the north are the sites of Timberline Camp, an Iron Age hillfort above Lower Park Wood and a supposed promontory fort on Dorstone Hill overlooking Dorstone (NRHE: 105768 and 106123) but no further sites have been

noted between this and the Wye Valley to the north. Given the location and the readily defensible nature of the site occupied by the castle at Snodhill it is possible that an earlier defended site also occupied this location but no evidence for this has been found by the current survey.

## **Phasing of the castle**

While much of the form and nature of the surviving remains of the castle makes precise dating difficult, the phases of activity which have been traced do suggest a relative chronology which is laid out here. Phases of construction and alteration have been grouped into broad phases – based on the physical evidence from the site. The slight documentary evidence has also been considered in relation to this, although any correlations remain tentative. Within each phase it is unlikely that all the identified activity took place simultaneously; indeed the evidence suggests the opposite, with investment apparently taking place on a piecemeal basis.

### **Initial construction – 11th or 12th century**

The initial phase of construction at the castle saw the construction of the earthworks of the motte and bailey, making use of the natural ridge on which the castle sits. This included the creation of the motte, almost certainly with a timber tower, possibly surrounded by a palisade, on top. The inner bailey would have been laid out simultaneously, the earth ramparts crowned by a timber wall or palisade and containing timber buildings, though there is also the possibility that a substantial masonry building was constructed at this time (see below). There may have been an intention to lay out a borough adjacent to the castle at the outset.

While the motte and bailey form of the castle is suggestive of a relatively early date, it is almost impossible to establish with any certainty whether the site dates to the immediate post-Conquest period, or the early 12th century. The documentary evidence is ambiguous, with the first reference to a castle on the land in 1136, soon after the transfer of land from Great Malvern Priory to Robert de Chandos. If this is assumed to refer to Snodhill then this could be taken to mean that the Chandos family constructed the castle sometime after they received the land but it does not preclude the possibility that there was an earlier castle on the site which the Chandos family made use of. So, while a late 11th-century date for construction of the castle is probably correct there is no way of establishing the origin of the castle for certain. It was a motte and bailey castle of fairly conventional form, though there is some doubt as to whether the motte was separated from the bailey by a ditch, as was normal. While the form suggests a late 11th or early 12th century date, it is known that motte and bailey castles were being constructed later than this, in some areas at least.

Possibly also relating to this initial phase is the putative early building now represented by the section of recessed walling in the south curtain wall (the central section). The surviving section of c5.5m appears to relate to one side, including the south-west corner, of a rectangular building which would have extended further north and east. Although the evidence is tentative, an early rectangular stone building within the bailey may correspond to the type of detached hall block that

was sometimes constructed on castle sites at an early stage, even when the rest of the site was still predominantly formed of earthwork and timber features. Although considerably larger, the hall block at Grosmont is an example of this (Pounds 1990, 188). Whether this early stone building is contemporary with the construction of the earthworks of the motte and bailey is unclear. They may relate to separate campaigns of investment in the site, potentially under different owners.

### **Consolidation of earthworks and timber defences in stone – late 12th and 13th century**

The construction of the polygonal tower on the top of the motte, the wing walls running down the motte's sides and the identified sections of stone curtain wall (that west of the early building on the southern side, and sections to the west and north) appear to relate to the conversion of Snodhill from a predominantly earthwork castle site with some timber palisades and buildings into one in which the structures were mainly of stone. This does not appear to have taken place in a single phase, but is likely to have been undertaken in separate campaigns. The polygonal form of the original keep tower suggests a date in the late 12th century, contemporary with examples such as Richard's Castle, although the dating evidence for such towers is slight and largely based on a somewhat archaic typological progression (from square to circular, via polygonal). By the end of this phase the bailey appears to have been fully encircled with stone walling, some sections of which almost certainly relate to further buildings.

### **Updating the castle – 14th century and early 15th century**

There are several pieces of evidence within the castle for relatively late additions to the structures which appear to have been designed to enhance and update the earlier buildings. The clear phasing of the entrance to the motte tower indicates that the drum towers were added to the earlier polygonal tower. Within the bailey the north tower and the south-east tower also appear to be later – in their form and the distinctive use of squared or ashlar masonry. Again the differences in these types of stonework from each other appear to suggest that they were not undertaken at the same time, but as separate campaigns, but all amending and updating earlier structures. Although *ex situ*, the five surviving medieval corbels in Snodhill Court can also be dated to this later phase on stylistic evidence.

The reference in 1353 to the 'castle in ruins' could be taken to suggest that the site had received little investment in the early 14th century. By 1375 however the site is no longer described as ruinous, and the first reference to the park is made. While this may simply reflect a difference in descriptive style, it is possible that this reflects a significant investment in the castle and its surrounding landscape in the mid to late 14th century. It is possible that some of the phases of updating to the site relate to this phase of investment, although it is unlikely that they are all directly contemporary. The order to garrison the castle against the Welsh in 1403 indicates that it was in a good enough state to be rendered defensible and useable at that time. It is also possible that the laying out of the park therefore took place at this time, although it may only reflect the formalising of a landscape that had already been



used as such. This phase of investment may have carried on into the early 15th century, but seems unlikely to have continued beyond the middle of this century, as the site passed into the hands of larger landowners whose principal residences lay elsewhere.

## The castle in its context

### The early castle – 11th to 13th centuries

Several authors have considered the troubled area of the Welsh March after the Norman Conquest – where William FitzOsbern and his lieutenants were placed in command by the Conqueror; ‘patterns’ of castle building have been discussed (e.g. Pounds 1990, 55-7, 63, figs 3.1 and 3.5) though other authors are sceptical (e.g. Coulson 2003, 103; Creighton 2002, 50), suggesting that the choice of castle location was one taken by the individual landholder in relation to his own interests rather than one imposed from above. Documented castles of the immediate post-Conquest period in this area include Clifford, Ewyas Harold and Wigmore, all of which were in existence by 1070 (Higham and Barker 1992, fig 2.19). Pounds notes the establishment of ‘petty lordships’ around the Black Mountains, including Dorstone, Kilpeck, Ewyas Lacy, Ewyas Harold and Abergavenny, with motte-and-bailey castles in the early years after the Conquest and, despite the lack of documentary evidence, includes Snodhill in this list (1990, 158).

Snodhill Castle is well positioned defensively, being situated at the high point of a ridge with steep slopes on three sides, though the apparent exclusion of the ridge-end from the defensive circuit has to be explained (see below). It is also the case that this location, if devoid of mature trees and scrub, would be a very prominent one, especially when viewed by a traveller coming up the valley from the direction of Peterchurch; Creighton, amongst others, has drawn attention to the way in which a prominent position enhances the iconic aspect of a castle as a symbol of lordship (2002, 65). The position of the castle in a fertile valley can be explained by the importance of local provisioning for baronial castles (Pounds 1990, 125). Despite his remarks on ‘patterns’ of castle location, Pounds has also drawn attention to an apparent lack of strategic planning in the siting of baronial castles (ibid, 131, 162-3) but Higham and Barker argue that early rural castles were ‘in most cases...strong points strategically sited to control roads, ridgeways, river crossings or passes’ (1992, 201). Snodhill, it could be argued, had a strategic role in controlling traffic along the Golden valley. Other authors disagree, arguing that castles were designed to dominate and hold territory, not to block lines of communication (e.g. Creighton 2002, 40; Coulson 2003, 14). A castle can not in itself control anything beyond bowshot of its walls, relying on a garrison of mobile troops for such activity.

It is also necessary to explain the multiplicity of castles along this part of the valley, more than can have been necessary for such ‘strategic’ purposes. The documented castles at Dorstone and Ewyas Harold have been mentioned above but there are also earthwork castles at Newton, Mouse Castle, The Bage, Mynydd-brith, Nant-y-bar, Urishay, Cothill, Chanstone, Monnington Court and Newcourt (Bacton). Whether or not these are all contemporary – and there is no reliable dating evidence for any

of them – their origins probably all lie in the late 11th or early 12th centuries. It has been suggested on the basis of visible remains or geophysical survey that some of them, like Snodhill, had masonry buildings; these include Newton, Dorstone, Chanstone, Newcourt, Mynydd-brith and Ewyas Harold (Phillips 2006, 86, 109, 129, 135, 179-81, 186). If this is true it is possible evidence for longevity but it needs to be further tested. Not all of these castles are as well positioned defensively as Snodhill and they vary greatly in size and form; they are the creations of independent petty lords within their own landholdings, not the result of a strategic masterplan. Snodhill probably owes its position to its role as the caput of an honour more than to any strategic considerations (Pounds 1990, 130-51).

We have suggested that the entrance to Snodhill Castle was from the terrace on the north side and that it followed the current inclined path into the north-eastern corner of the bailey. Such a route, directly under the flank of the motte, would convey certain defensive advantages. However, it is not an arrangement seen at many motte-and-bailey castles, though there is a possible example at 'Goltho' (Beresford 1987; for a critique of the dating and other matters regarding 'Goltho' see Everson 1988) and others at Plympton (Higham *et al* 1985, 66-7, fig 1) and possibly Pontefract (Wilmott 1987). Everson has discussed 'proper' approaches to castles as defined in documented medieval etiquette and literature (2003, 26) and we may be seeing something of that nature here, with a prescribed route bringing visitors along the steep northern side of the castle, emphasising its dramatic location.

It is usually assumed that a stone castle on a motte and bailey earthwork had a timber predecessor – mottes that had stone structures from the start are apparently rarer; timber towers on mottes could be substantial and well-built structures (Higham and Barker 1992, 201, 244-5). Herefordshire supplies several examples of 12th-14th-century free-standing, timber-framed detached bell towers (e.g. Pembridge, see Boucher and Morriss 2011), which show the type of structure which might originally have stood on the motte at Snodhill. The motte is relatively large and steep-sided. It can be compared with Longtown, where the motte is about 11m high and 48m in diameter with a summit about 20m across (Smith 2003), or Bishop's Moat, Castlewright, Powys with an overall diameter of 42m and a height of about 8m with a top about 17m across. The motte at Ewyas Harold is about 10m high and is 64-74m across at the base. Other mottes in the Welsh Marches are of similar dimensions but many, of course, are much smaller (Higham and Barker 1992, 208ff). All are dwarfed by Richard's Castle, whose motte is about 60m in diameter with a maximum height of 26.5m (Brown with Fradgley 2000, 5) and Wigmore where the oval motte measures 94m by 79m at the base and rises 23m to a summit 50m long and 25m wide (Brown 2002, 9).

Access to the motte at Snodhill might have been obtained via steps up the side or a flying bridge from the bailey; both are attested. At Hen Domen a flying bridge between the tower on the motte and hall in the bailey has been postulated (Higham and Barker 1992, 342; in fact at least four successive bridges to the motte top are suggested – Barker and Higham 1982, 51-9, figs 60 and 61). Such flying bridges appear to be depicted on the Bayeux Tapestry at Dol, Dinan and Bayeux (Higham and Barker 1992, figs 5.1, 5.2 and 5.4). There is plentiful evidence for simpler

bridges crossing motte ditches, though that may not have been an issue at Snodhill. These may have led to steps up the motte, as at Launceston and as suggested at Abinger (Hope-Taylor 1950). Another solution is a tunnel through the motte into an undercroft, as suggested at South Mimms where ‘the entrance passage to the tower consisted of a raised board-walk in a revetted cutting through the motte’ which might have been roofed over (Kent et al 2013, 32 – the parallels for roofed passages suggested here are unconvincing, however). As noted in the description, the earthwork at the foot of the Snodhill motte within the bailey cannot be interpreted directly as a medieval structure but it might represent the position of a forework of some sort at the lower end of the motte entrance. Access to the motte from anywhere other than within the bailey is extremely unlikely and would be unparalleled. The apparent lack of a ditch between the motte and bailey might be due to later deliberate and effective back-filling when the curtain wall and wing walls were constructed, or it might be a genuine original feature – geophysical survey or excavation could resolve this question.

The possibility that there was an early masonry building at Snodhill finds parallels in early stone-built halls at other castles as well as Grosmont: at Richmond, Scolland’s Hall dates to before end of the 11th century; stone halls at Christchurch, Leicester, Carisbrooke and Oakham date to the 12th century (Pounds 1990, 186-188). Some stone buildings within castles have now even been dated to before the Conquest, as at Sulgrave; at Portchester there is a pre-Conquest stone tower adjacent to a timber hall; Eynsford has a stone tower now re-dated to a pre-Conquest phase (Higham and Barker 1992, 50-4). There is ample documentary evidence for stone buildings and towers in castles on the Continent in the 11th and 12th centuries and earlier (ibid, 171-2).

It has been suggested that the relatively flat ridge-top to the east of the castle might have been another bailey, though there is no convincing sign currently of any defensive perimeter. Alternatively, it might have been – or been intended as – the site of a borough (Robert Higham pers comm). Many, perhaps most, marcher lords attempted to establish boroughs outside their castles, either within outer baileys or immediately beyond their gates; some of these foundations succeeded but many failed (Pounds 1990, 217-19; Creighton 2002, 151-72). Ludlow is a conspicuous success, as is Longtown (Smith 2003), Wigmore less obviously so and Richard’s Castle must be counted a failure, though originally prosperous (Brown with Fradgley 2000, 1-2); if the level plateau at Snodhill was intended as the site of a borough it appears to have been a failure. The alternative suggestion, that it may have been left open as an area for recreation or a garden, equally awaits further research.

### **The later castle – 13th to 15th centuries**

The 13th century saw a reduction in the number of castles and aggrandisement of those surviving (Pounds 1990, 106). This would certainly seem to be the case in the Golden Valley. Despite the alleged evidence for stone buildings at several sites mentioned above, most of the earthwork castles were probably abandoned at an early date. There were continuing difficulties of provisioning castles in the Marches (ibid, 162), which may be one reason for the abandonment of several sites. For those



castles that continued in use, however, there were long periods of decay and frantic episodes of re-building; shoddy workmanship was often seen (ibid, 126). Periods of decay and re-building are certainly recorded at Snodhill in both the documentary and physical evidence. The castle was in decay in the middle of the 14th century but capable of being put in a state of defence at the beginning of the 15th, when Ewyras Harold and, perhaps more surprisingly, Dorstone were also called upon to resist the Welsh. The various styles of masonry evident in the curtain walls and towers at Snodhill, as well as the earthwork evidence for stone buildings in the bailey, all attest to several phases of construction.

There has been uncertainty over whether the masonry on the motte represents a small shell keep or a large tower, perhaps with a light well in the centre. As described above, we have interpreted the structure as a tower. It appears too small to have been a shell keep. The evidence for accommodation at first-floor level on the south side indicates that the keep must have included a roofed structure. This, moreover, appears to have been a high-status building, with generous windows for example, and located in the most prestigious section of the castle. Given the span of the keep, it seems highly unlikely that a substantial high-status range could have been built against the south wall of the keep with sufficient room for a useful courtyard or open area to the north. The recent excavations on the northern side show that at ground-floor level the interior plinth ran around the building as a consistent feature, which perhaps further strengthens this argument, as one might anticipate a different treatment of the northern wall if it was simply encircling an open area.

Snodhill had a 'free' chapel, that is one which was subject only to the king and the pope, and outside diocesan jurisdiction. Many chapels in royal castles were free but it is rarer in baronial castles, though by no means unknown; they tended to be in the castles of richer and more powerful barons (Pounds 1990, 231). The precise location of Snodhill's free chapel is unknown; there is conflicting evidence as to whether it was within or outside the castle but the balance seems to be in favour of a location outside the castle.

## The castle landscape

The park is a major element in the medieval and later landscape of Snodhill. Despite Leland's implication that the castle lay within the park this is unlikely; castles were rarely within their parks, more often lying immediately beyond the park pale (Creighton 2002, 188-90). The evidence at Snodhill is interesting because the park pale, well preserved on the higher ground to the south-west, is lost on the lower slopes; the current settlement of Snodhill and remains of medieval or later cultivation intervene. Therefore, either the park was detached from the castle with the settlement and fields in between, or the settlement and cultivation is later and has overrun the north-eastern part of the park. It is well established that hamlets and villages were not stable features of the medieval landscape but that their morphology and location could change as the result of a number of demographic, climatic, political, economic and social influences (Taylor 1978; 1983, chapter 9). Settlements could be cleared to make way for deer parks, as at Okehampton, but it is also possible

that settlements and cultivated fields could colonise abandoned parks, or parts of them. It is possible that the name The Yat indicates a gate into the park.

The newly discovered square enclosure within the park is in a significant position, next to a spring which has carved a small but dramatic gorge and overlooking the castle in the valley below. It is surrounded by a very low earthwork surviving as a slight bank only on the eastern side. The site is somewhat reminiscent of the royal hunting lodges of the New Forest, the so-called ‘church places’; however, these are all larger, measuring up to 50m across and almost invariably have an outer ditch surrounding the enclosing bank, which can be up to 1.5m high (Smith 1999, 25, fig 14), so these are altogether more substantial sites than the enclosure under discussion. Nevertheless, a similar function, as a hunting lodge or keepers’ lodge, is not impossible for this site; lodges tended to be fairly central to parks (Creighton 2002, 188). Its position in relation to the castle even suggests a special purpose in a ‘designed’ landscape that might have visually linked significant points connected with the leisure activities of the owners. Creighton has also pointed out that castles were designed to be seen from their parks as much as parks were to be seen from castles (ibid); Snodhill seems to provide a perfect illustration of this.

Another significant location in this landscape might be represented by the moated site at The Gobbetts, also locally known as The Splashes. Initially interpreted as a ‘homestead moat’ (RCHME 1931), this seems likely to be part of the outlying environs of the castle performing a similar function to moated sites adjacent to other castles – a location for feasting and other leisure activities. The ‘Pleasance’ at Kenilworth (Jamieson and Lane 2015) is the grandest and most famous of these but other examples are known or suspected, including the detached garden at Clun; interestingly, however, another earthwork at Clun, known as Bicton Ditches (NRHE: SO 28 SE 28), which has been interpreted as a Civil War military work, could also be an analogy. The ‘Gun Garden’ at Bodiam is another candidate (Everson 1996, 81-2). Two Irish masonry castles, Ballymoon and Ballyloughan in Carlow, are similarly accompanied by moats that seem to be part of designed landscapes (O’Keefe 2004). A common feature of most these examples is the presence of water, sometimes in extensive sheets; attention has been drawn to this fact and its possible significance by Paul Everson (e.g. 1998; 2003). These water bodies could have combined defensive, practical, aesthetic and symbolic roles. There are few other moated sites in this part of the Golden Valley; one possible example is at Chanstone, which is also opposite a small castle.

The current settlement of Snodhill, as noted above, is small but contains evidence of shrinkage or shift in the form of an abandoned hollow way and possible building platforms on The Green. The history of this settlement is likely to be complex and needs further research, particularly in its relationship to castle and park. Whether it has ever been a village, in the technical sense, is uncertain, lying as it does in an area with a high incidence of dispersed settlement.

## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

These recommendations are in order of priority.

1. Geophysical survey possibly followed by excavation at the Castle:
  - a. southern part of the bailey, including section near centre of south curtain wall which includes the putative early building
  - b. northern part of outer west bailey
  - c. east outer bailey/borough/garden, if and when it becomes sufficiently clear i.e. targeting the areas with few or no earthworks
  - d. area of the 'stub wall' to the north of the site, near the putative entrance.
2. Analytical earthwork survey of The Gobbets moated site (followed by geophysical survey of the island).
3. Identification of a geologist to comment on the purpose of the quarries to the north of the Castle; excavation within the quarries to confirm what was being quarried and their date.
4. Identification of missing parts of the park pale; field observation followed, if necessary, by geophysical survey – to ascertain if possible the course of the pale and its relationship with the Castle.
5. Geophysical survey of the newly discovered square enclosure within the park to provide more evidence on its possible function, followed by small excavation to look for dating evidence. Field observation of the similar platform noted at Old Lodge.
6. If the extraction of tufa at the Castle site is confirmed (see 3) then further identification of buildings in the area which use tufa (for example St Peter's Church, Peterchurch and Moccas Court, but where else?) would be of interest. Followed by photographic record of architectural details of Peterchurch church (such as pyramidal stops and use of tufa in window embrasures) for comparison with similar(?) details at the Castle.
7. Detailed architectural survey of Snodhill Court, to identify the phasing and its possible relationship to the last phases of use of the Castle.
8. Analytical earthwork survey of the hollow way and possible building platforms on The Green.
9. Examination of other neighbouring castle sites to establish their relationship, if any, with Snodhill.

NB any geophysical survey/excavation within designated areas would require SAM Consent.



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



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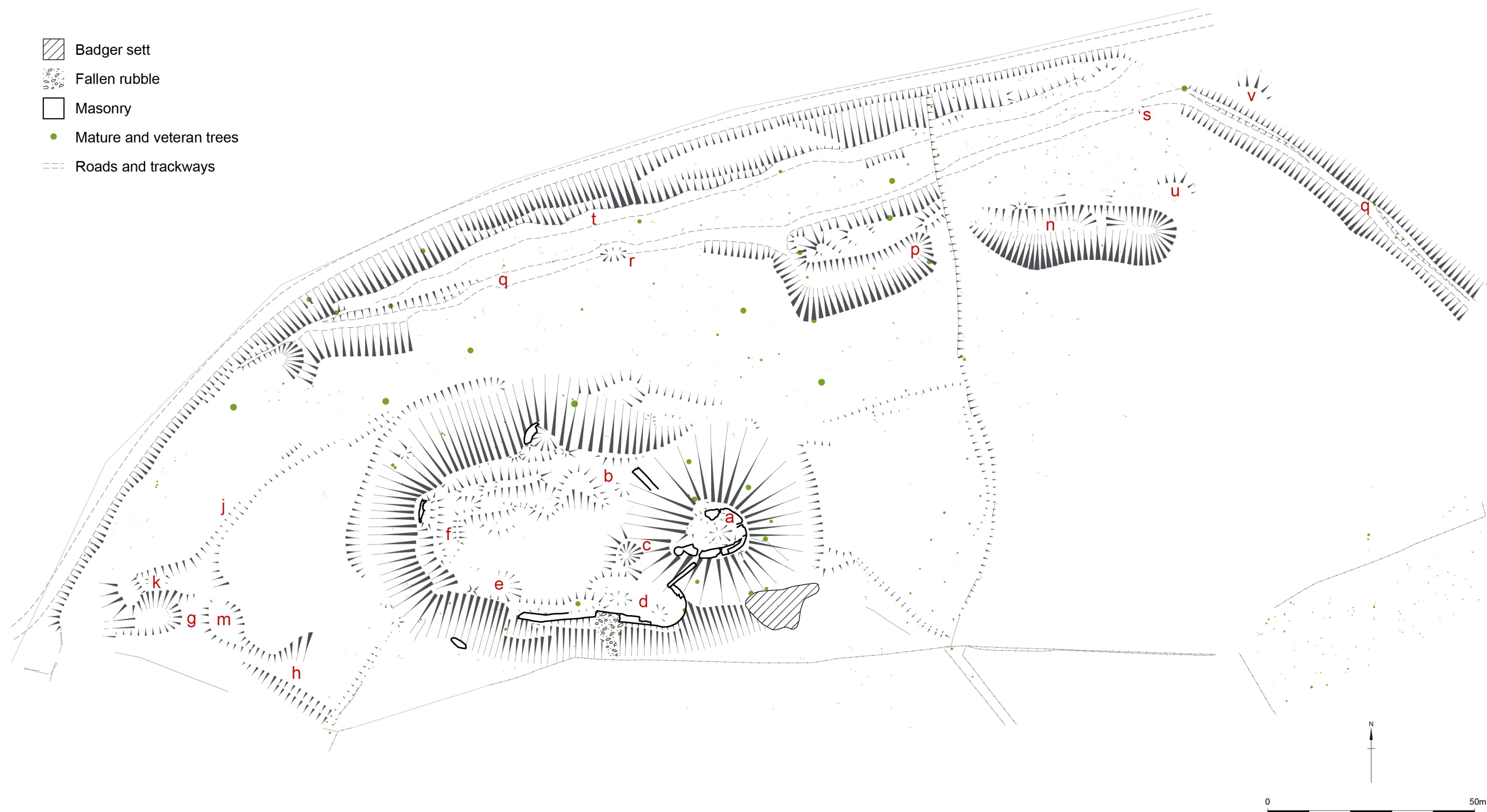


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## APPENDIX ONE

-  Badger sett
-  Fallen rubble
-  Masonry
-  Mature and veteran trees
-  Roads and trackways







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