



**Report on an Archaeological Watching Brief at the Motte &  
Bailey Castle North of Chennells Brook Farm,  
Horsham, West Sussex**

October 2014

## NON-TECHNICAL SUMMARY

***This document sets out the results from an archaeological watching brief carried out during the construction of two new bridges adjacent to the motte and bailey castle north of Chennells Brook Farm, Horsham, West Sussex. This work was undertaken as part of a Higher Level Stewardship agri-environment scheme funded by Natural England to assist with the ongoing management of the site. No archaeological features or deposits were revealed, although this lack of evidence suggests that the previous identification of a dammed pool on the south side of the motte may be incorrect.***

## BACKGROUND

### Topographical Background

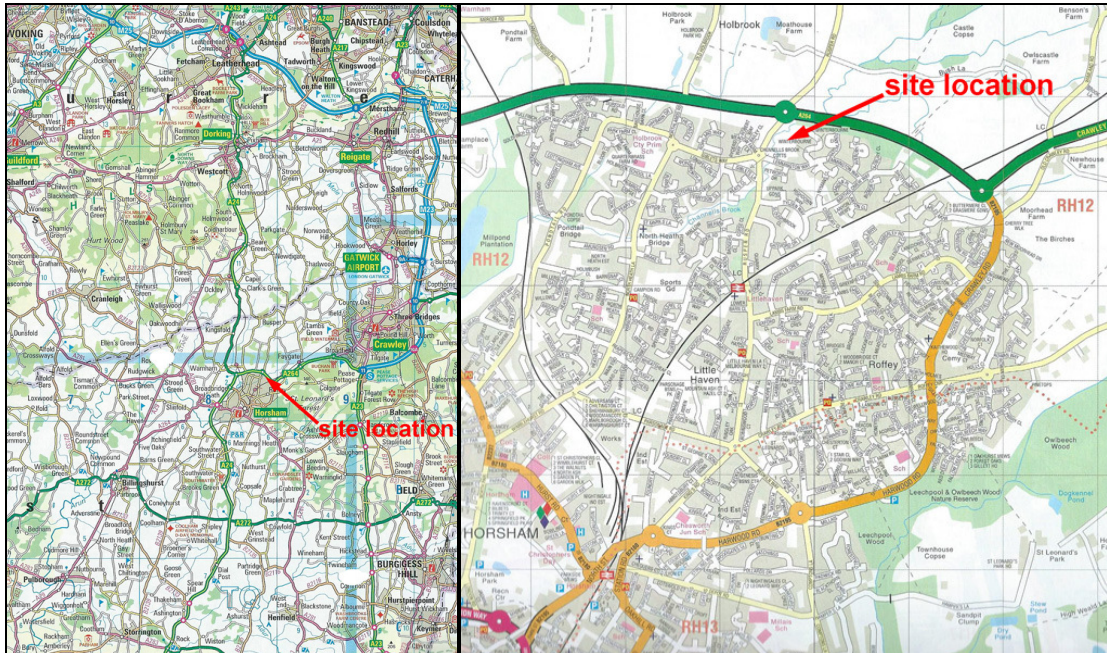


Figure 1 Site location. © Crown copyright. All rights reserved. License number: AL100036068

1. The motte and bailey castle lies on the northern limit of the town of Horsham in West Sussex, immediately to the south of the A264, at 52m aOD, OS grid reference TQ 1881 3327. Geologically the site lies within the Wealden Group, here comprising the Tunbridge Wells Sand.

### Planning Background

1. The motte and bailey castle is a Scheduled Monument (No.1014389). The watching brief was undertaken during the construction of two new bridges which were built over streams within the scheduled area. The installation of the bridges was for the purpose of improving the future management of the site in terms of facilitating scrub clearance, mowing and grazing. The work is being commissioned as part of a Higher Level Stewardship agri-environment scheme (AG00471933) funded by Natural England. Scheduled Monument Consent was granted to undertake the works, with a condition attached requiring a watching brief during works, to be governed by a written scheme of investigation (WSI) approved by English Heritage.
2. West Sussex Archaeology Ltd (WSA) was appointed by the landowner, Horsham District Council, to carry out the archaeological works required to meet this condition. A Written Scheme of Investigation, drawn up by WSA, set out the methodology used in order to fulfil the terms of the condition (WSA 2014).

3. This report details the results of that archaeological work, which was carried out on the 24th & 25th June 2014 by George Anelay of WSA. The project archive, which consists solely of paperwork, will be deposited with West Sussex Record Office.

## Historical Background

1. The remains of the motte and bailey castle consist of a central mound, or motte, which has been raised up to 2.2m above the level of the surrounding land to form an originally circular summit which would almost certainly have been the site of a wooden keep. Around the motte lies a broad moat averaging 10m across, the western and southern arms of which are now occupied by the Chennells Brook, while the eastern side survives as a dry ditch. To the east of the motte lies the bailey, which consists of a quadrangular open space, 75m long by 25m-55m wide, defended by an outer ditch, in this case some 7m wide. The entrance to the bailey probably lay on its south side, where a causeway through the encircling ditch still survives (WSCC HER No.MWS3985). It has been suggested that this entrance is in fact a modern feature, with the original lying where the bailey ditch meets that of the motte (Braun p.252). Braun bases this assumption on analogies with other sites and the position of what he interprets as a dam forming the south-eastern side of the motte's very broad southern moat.

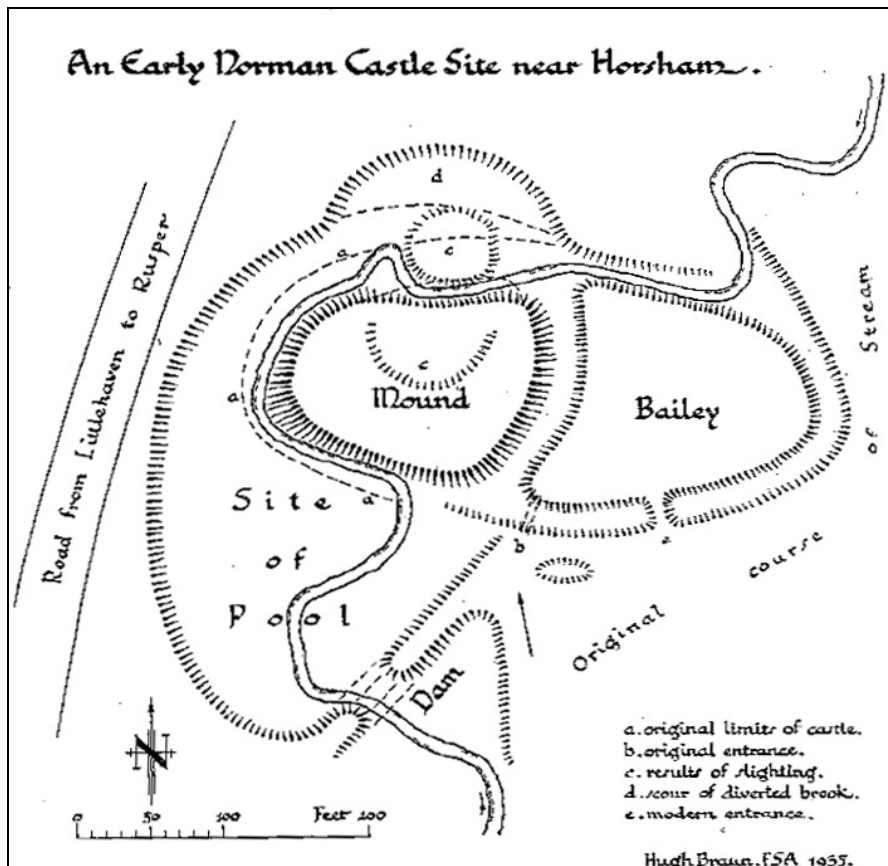
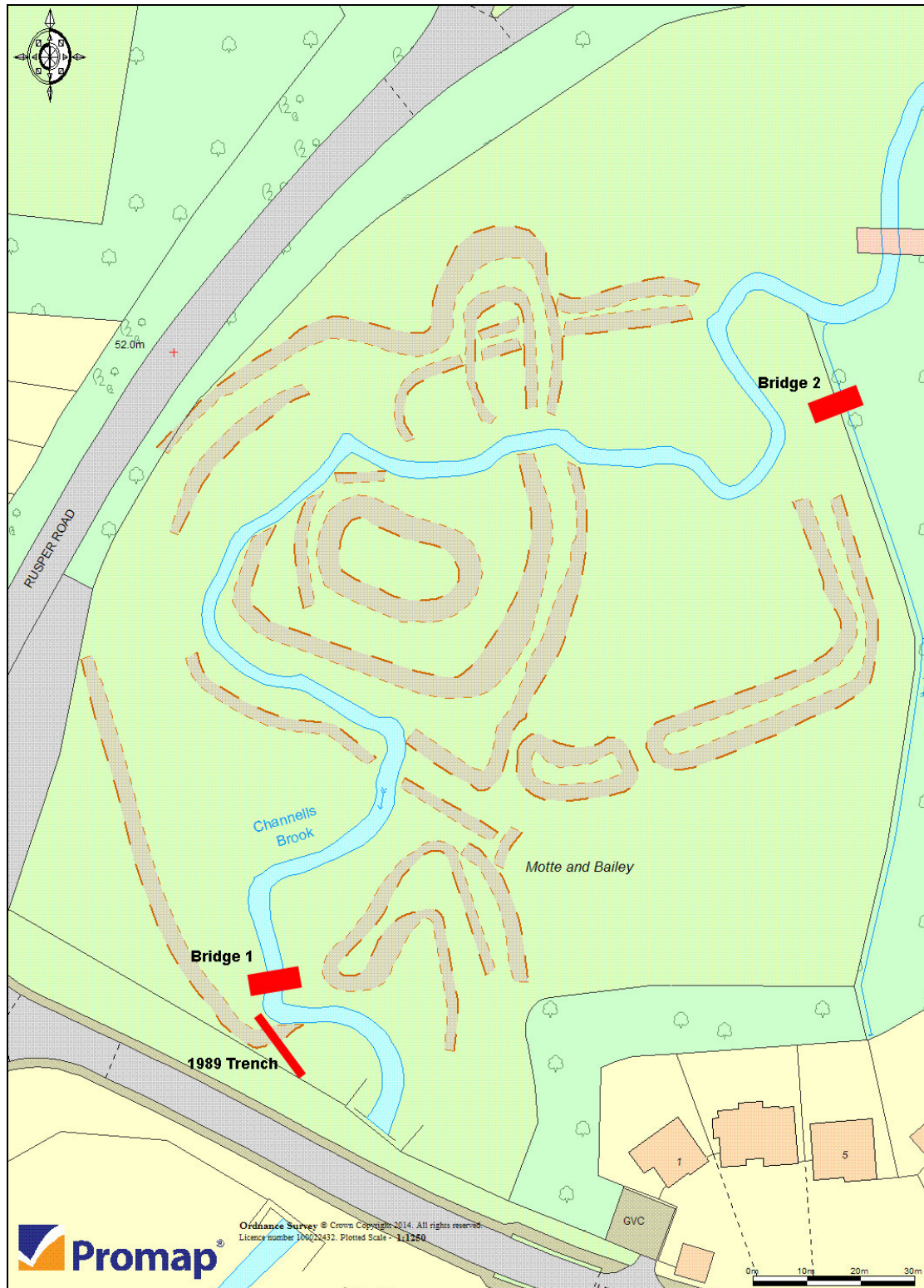


Figure 2 Braun's plan of the castle surveyed in 1935.

## WEST SUSSEX ARCHÆOLOGY

2. The current course of the Chennells Brook dates from after the castle's abandonment and has cut through the original monument in several places. The earlier line of the stream channel is not clear; it is likely that it was altered to form part of the defences of the castle when first constructed and filled at least some parts of the encircling ditches. It is thought that before this it flowed further to the west than at present, around the edge of the later position of the castle (WSCC HER No.MWS3985). Braun suggests that the moat was originally dry throughout, with the stream being introduced later, together with a dam to the south-east to form a broad pool on the south side of the motte (Braun p.252).
3. The history of the castle is obscure; it was probably constructed by the De Braose family in the 11<sup>th</sup> or 12<sup>th</sup> century as one of a chain of castles which included those at Sedgwick, Knepp and Bramber to the south. It may have continued in occupation until at least the 14<sup>th</sup>/15<sup>th</sup> century, as evidenced by pottery of that date found during archaeological work on one of its outer earthworks (WSCC HER No. MWS4410). Although it has also been suggested that it was abandoned in the 12<sup>th</sup> or early 13<sup>th</sup> century, with occupation shifting to the late 13<sup>th</sup> century building at Chennellsbrook Farm c.200m to the south (Hughes, p.7). The timing of and reason for its abandonment is not known, and certainly by the early 19<sup>th</sup> century it lay within an open field as a deserted earthwork, as shown on the 1806 Ordnance Survey edition, a situation which remained unchanged until the late 20<sup>th</sup> century when it was encircled by the current A264.
4. Only one previous archaeological excavation has taken place on the site and that was undertaken in 1989 in advance of a road scheme to the south. A single trench was excavated on the far south-east corner of the broad southern moat. Part of the fill of the moat was excavated with the 14<sup>th</sup>/15<sup>th</sup> century pottery noted above being recovered. It was concluded that the south-eastern end of the moat at this point was not man-made, but instead made use of a natural contour in the land (Place p.4).

RESULTS



**Figure 3** Plan showing the location of the bridges, and a 1989 archaeological investigation trench, in red. © Crown copyright. All rights reserved. License number: AL100036068

# WEST SUSSEX ARCHÆOLOGY



**Figure 4** Bridge 1 looking south. The scale is 1m.



**Figure 5** Bridge 1 section in west face, looking west. The scale is 1m.



**Figure 6** Bridge 2 looking west. The scale is 1m.



**Figure 7** Bridge 2 section in east face, looking east. The scale is 1m.



## WEST SUSSEX ARCHÆOLOGY

1. Each of the two bridges sit upon concrete pads positioned one at each end. In order to form the base for these pads two tapering trenches were excavated for each bridge into the opposing banks of their respective streams. These trenches were each 1.5m long, 0.9m wide, with their rear baulks set at 0.8m below ground level.
2. None of the four trenches revealed any archaeological features or artefacts. Overlying the undisturbed Tunbridge Wells Sands in all trenches was a layer of humic topsoil up to 0.4m thick (see Figs.5 & 7). Despite the fact that Bridge 1 was located within the “broad pool” postulated by Braun, no trace was found of any pond deposits in its trenches. Similarly the trench excavated in 1989, which was located a short distance to the south on the edge of this supposed pool (see Fig.3), found little evidence to support Braun’s theories. In the light of this it is suggested that further topographical survey work would need to be undertaken at the site to clarify its form.

### BIBLIOGRAPHY

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