

SCARBOROUGH ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL SOCIETY

THE 2019 EXCAVATION AT CASTLE HILL, BROMPTON

By Trevor Pearson, Marie Woods and Chris Hall



Frontispiece. Castle Hill looking south during the course of the 2019 excavation.

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THE 2019 EXCAVATION AT CASTLE HILL, BROMPTON, NORTH YORKSHIRE

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1. Introduction

In September 2019 the Scarborough Archaeological and Historical Society (SAHS) undertook a second research excavation on the Scheduled Ancient Monument of Castle Hill on the east side of the village of Brompton by Sawdon (Figure 1). The first excavation in 2018 established that earthworks visible in a pasture field on the west side of Castle Hill preserve the remains of a medieval structure towards its south side and a massive stone wall on the western edge (Pearson *et al* 2018). The 2019 excavation advanced understanding by revealing a further section of the stone wall south-east of the 2018 trench and several more buildings towards the centre of the site. It now appears very likely that the remains belong to an important medieval residence, most likely a manor house set apart from the rest of the village. The excavation took place over seven days split between two long weekends at the end of September, the second of which coincided with a local history event in the the village.

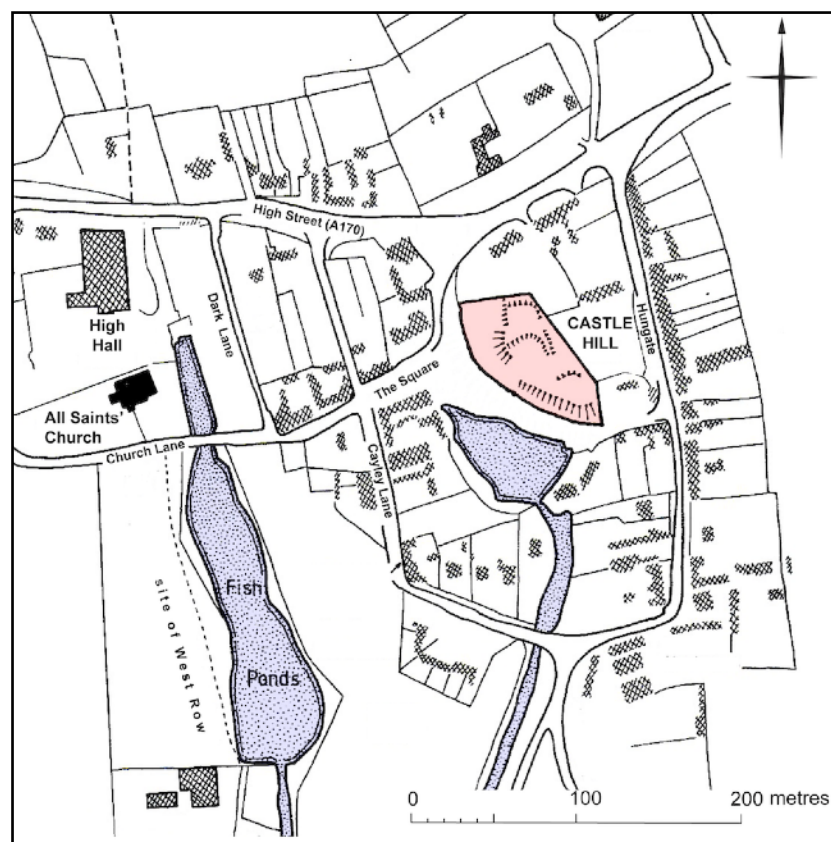


Figure 1. The centre of Brompton village showing the location of Castle Hill (after Evans 1992, Figure 1).

Permission for the excavation was granted by the landowners, the Cayley Settled Estates, and the tenant farmer, Mr Ashley Mudd. A project design for the excavation was agreed with Historic England because the site is a Scheduled Ancient Monument and therefore protected in law from unnecessary disturbance (Scheduled Monument number 1021268). Agreement was reached with Historic England for the research excavation comprising up to four trenches with a total area not exceeding 30 square metres. These were numbered Trenches 5-8 to distinguish them from Trenches 1-4 excavated the previous year. The full area allocation was used although the size of the trenches and the position of one of them (Trench 6) was changed during the course of the excavation in order to answer specific questions that emerged as the work progressed.

2. The Site and its archaeological setting

Castle Hill is on the east side of the village and is now mostly covered by houses and gardens with the pasture field on the south-west of the hill top the only large area of open ground remaining (Figure 2). The ground falls away steeply to the west and south while a more gentle slope down to Hungate marks the east side of the hill. On the north side the hill merges into the more general slope of the Tabular Hills rising northwards to a high escarpment overlooking Troutsdale.

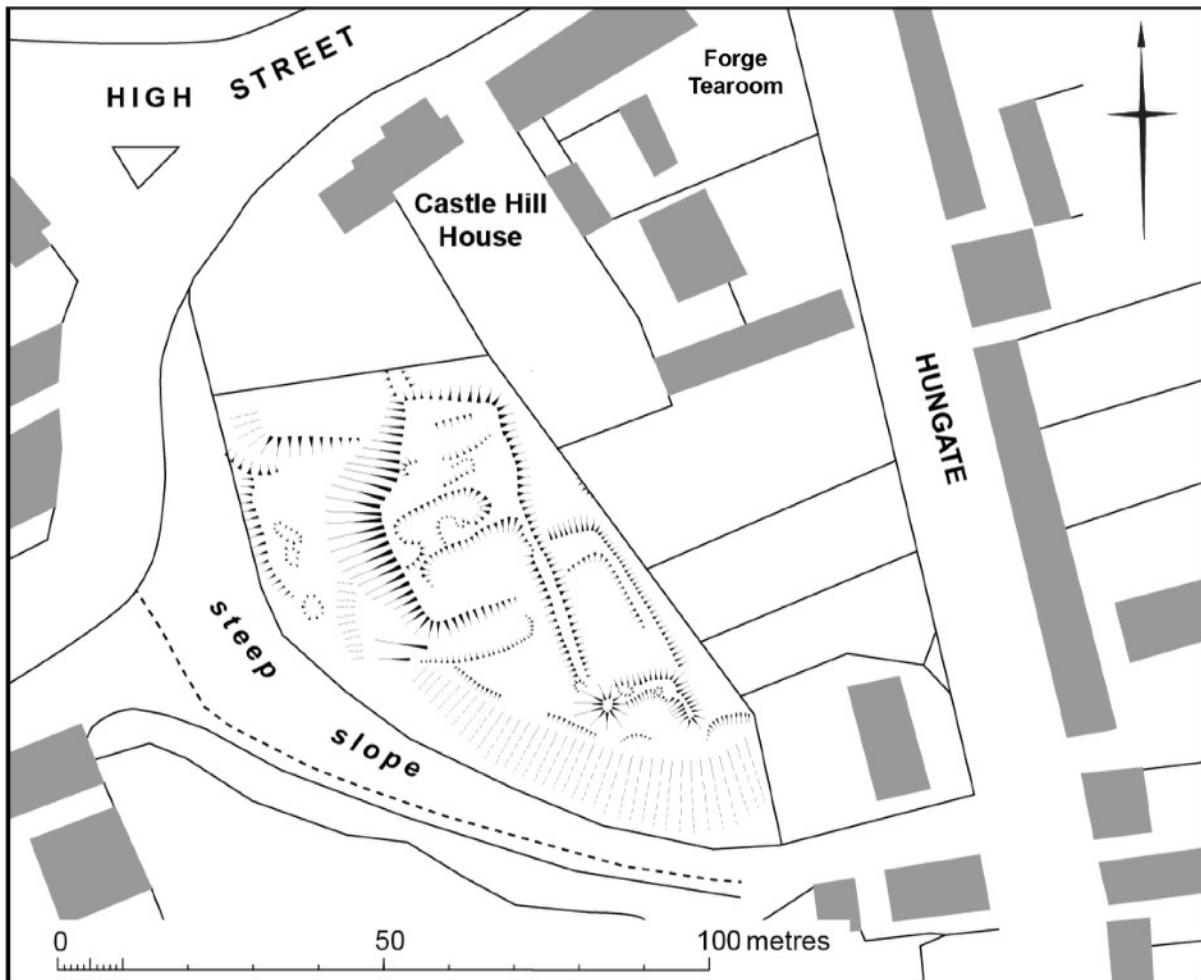


Figure 2. The immediate environs of the earthwork site on Castle Hill.

In addition to Castle Hill, the parish church of All Saints occupies a second, prominent flat-topped hill 200m to the west with steep southern and eastern sides while the low ground in between contains a number of springs that form two small streams. The stream nearest to Castle Hill is reputedly fed by 17 springs and has been dammed to form a mill pond (Harrison 2001, 19) and may be the the location of the mill mentioned in the Domesday Survey of 1086 as belonging to the manor of Berenger de Tosny. The second stream to the west was canalised by the Cayley family at High Hall in the 18th century to form a garden feature and the flow directed below the foot of the west hill into a large ornamental lake called 'The Fishpond' (Evans 1992, 16).

Beyond 'The Fishpond' and stretching for nearly 2km south of the village is an amorphous ridge of glacial till, part of a formation known as the Hutton Buscel sands and gravels (Eddy *et al* 2017, fig 12). This feature extends the dry land available for cultivation south into the Vale of Pickering as

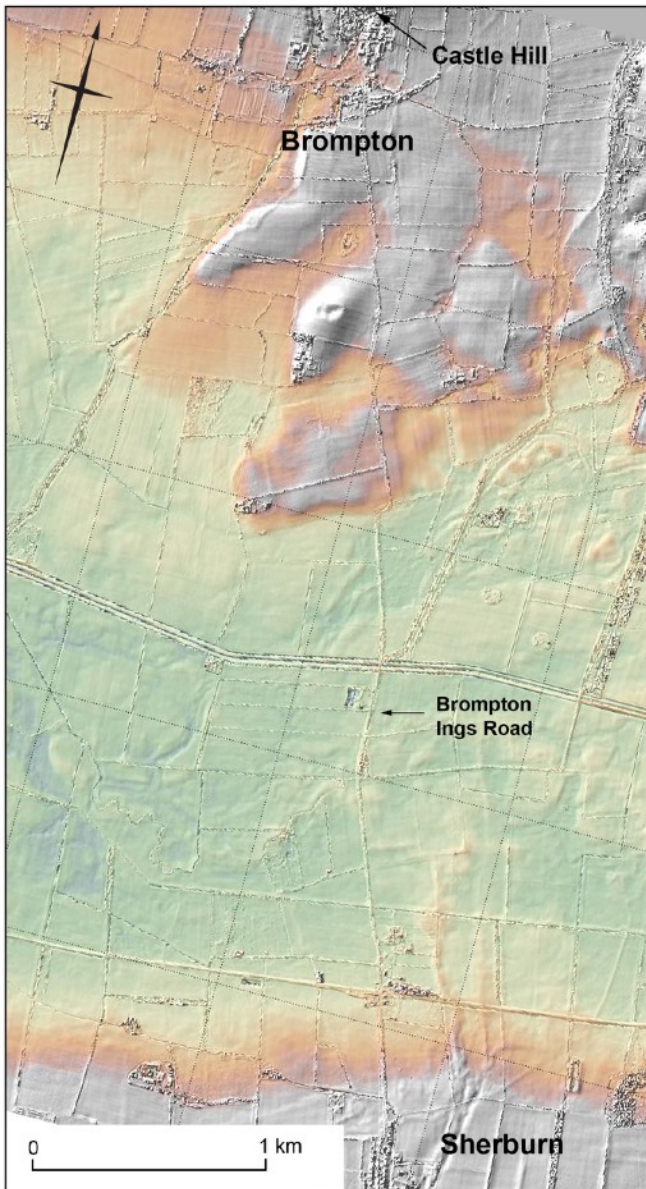


Figure 3. Hill-shaded lidar image showing the vale between Brompton and Sherburn. Map contains public sector information licensed under the Open Government Licence v3.0.

settlement 450m to the east of Castle Hill consisting of a series of small rectilinear enclosures either side of a north-south trackway (Knight 2011). However, evidence of occupation at Brompton in these periods is still hidden in the archaeological record. The name Brompton is Anglo-Saxon in origin and is thought to refer to a location where broom or gorse grew (Smith 1928, 95). Topographic names like Brompton which reference the landscape are thought to be the earliest phase of English place names (Wrathmell 2012, 101) pre-dating 'habitive' names that link a person with a place such as the nearby example of Ebberston meaning 'Eadbriht's Farm' (Smith 1928, 95). Even though it may be early, there is no way of knowing when the name Brompton came into use but it helps to build the impression that along with the collection of springs nestling between the two hills the future site of the village must have stood out as a distinctive area of natural landscape.

indicated by traces of medieval and later ploughing visible along the ridge top on Environment Agency lidar data (Figure 3). The ridge also provides a natural route southwards into the vale elevated some 2-3m above the surrounding fields which was marshland before the draining of the land for agriculture. The post-glacial lakes in the Vale of Pickering mostly turned to marsh around 10, 000 years ago (Lincoln *et al* 2017, 90) leaving behind a watery landscape passable in places by judicious use of areas of slightly higher ground. Using the ridge at Brompton and other smaller ridges nearer to Sherburn (clearer on lidar data than on the ground) it might have been possible to cross the vale before the construction of the causeway which carries the modern Brompton - Sherburn road (Brompton Ings Road). Other crossing points of the vale aligned on natural ridges are thought to have existed nearby between Sherburn and Wykeham and between Staxton and Seamer. Both these crossings are thought to have been in use in the Roman period (Kitson Clark 1935, 41-2; McGeown 2015, 8; Haken 2017).

The north side of the vale abounds with crop mark evidence of farmsteads, field systems and tracks of Iron Age and Romano-British date including a

Brompton is recorded as having a church and priest in the Domesday Survey of 1086 (Faull and Stinson 1986, 8N6). No visible trace of Brompton's Domesday church survives but it probably stood on the flat topped hill where its successor now stands and which has several 12th century architectural pieces built into its walls (Craine 2011). These pieces presumably came from the building that replaced the Domesday church which was itself rebuilt in the 13th - 14th century (Bairstow 2017, 49). That the site overlooks a group of springs could mean the spot was endowed with spiritual significance and conceivably might have been venerated in pre-Christian times. Local evidence of the spiritual importance of springs comes from West Heslerton on the south side of the vale where excavations have uncovered a Romano-British shrine next to a spring and from Lastingham on the north side (Pickles 2018, 42). Here a pagan cult centre focussed on a group of springs may have existed prior to the founding of the monastery in the mid 7th century.

As well as these specific locations, it is possible that the wider vale was regarded as a sacred landscape in prehistory. Finds of Bronze Age metalwork between Brompton and Sherburn (Poyer 2015, 218) might be evidence of the practice of ritually depositing metalwork in places such as bogs, marshes and rivers as appears to have happened at another nearby marshland site at Skipsea in the East Riding (Bradley 2007, 203-4; Jamieson 2019, 348). At Brompton ritual deposition may account for the discovery of a Bronze Age spearhead near the former railway station about 300m south of Castle Hill and therefore very close to the marsh on the west side of the glacial ridge (Elgee 1930, 170). That the marshlands continued to hold spiritual significance into the Christian era could explain why some parish churches like at Seamer and Sherburn stand on the edge of the former marshland rather than more centrally in their respective villages. Both churches are likely to be early foundations as they are mentioned in the Domesday Survey and in addition Sherburn church preserves fragments of 9th-11th century sculpture (Lang 1991, 201-6).

The layout of medieval Brompton is not known for certain and there may have been several settlements centred upon the different manors documented in the Domesday Survey which later coalesced to form the present village (Evans 1992). It is likely that the main focus of settlement was along the street between All Saints' parish church and Castle Hill (Barnard Lane/Church Street). This street was then part of the east-west route along the north side of the vale, the forerunner of the present A170 which at Brompton has been realigned to pass on the north side of the village (Evans 1992, 17) probably as a result of improvements carried out by the York-Scarborough Turnpike Trust created by royal assent in 1752 (McMahon 1964, 28). What was the medieval village street is today divided by a cross roads. East of this junction the street widens to form a rectangular open area which historically has been known as The Square. This open area is bounded by houses and the village hall on the south side, houses and the primary school on the north with Castle Hill forming the third, eastern side. This space is an historic feature appearing on the earliest Ordnance Survey 1:10560 map of the village (Ordnance Survey 1854). This area could be the site of the weekly market and annual six-day fair granted by Henry III to the lord of the manor, William de Vescy in 1253, the open space providing traders with a dedicated area to set out stalls (Calendar of Charter Rolls 1226-57, 434). After three years the burgesses of Scarborough petitioned the king to have the market closed down along with neighbouring ones at Sherburn and Seamer as they claimed that these villages were taking trade away from the town, though the fair at Brompton continued (Page 1923, 427).



Figure 4. The 1854 1:10560 scale Ordnance Survey map of Brompton. Castle Hill shaded red; possible medieval plots shown green; possible market area shaded yellow. Map reproduced with the permission of the National Library of Scotland.

Evidence of possible medieval plots at Brompton are depicted on the 1854 Ordnance Survey map as a series of long parallel closes on the north side of the street from the suggested market place to the parish church (Figure 4). One can speculate that modern day Dark Lane and Cayley Lane formed part of this arrangement beginning as paths out to the fields on the north edge of the village. The map also indicates that the High Street (now the A170 Pickering to Scarborough road) cuts across the rear of the closes confirming that this section of road is later as it is part of the York to Scarborough turnpike. There is no map evidence for a comparable row of medieval closes on the south side of the street from Castle Hill to opposite the parish church. Some of this area nearest to Castle Hill was probably taken up by the medieval mill and mill pond, the predecessor of the existing mill building and village pond. Much of the rest of the area on the south of the street had been landscaped to make parkland by the time Brompton was mapped by the Ordnance Survey in 1850 so we cannot be sure if any closes existed. Some earthworks were still visible here as late as the 1970s (Evans 1992, 16) so it is possible there were buildings on this side of the street in the medieval period, as well as a vanished lane heading south from opposite the church which was bordered by houses called West Row.

3. The 2019 excavation on Castle Hill

There is no record of any archaeological work having taken place on Castle Hill before 2014 although the remains of a small trench across the prominent bank on the south crest of the hill noted in 2018 may be evidence of an unrecorded archaeological excavation. There is also mention in the unpublished notes of John Rushton (Bairstow 2017, 15) that human remains were found on the north-east side of Castle Hill at Brompton Forge (now the site of Forge Tearoom) but there is no published account of this discovery and no significant archaeological remains were uncovered in the recent archaeological evaluation of the site (Stodart 2018).

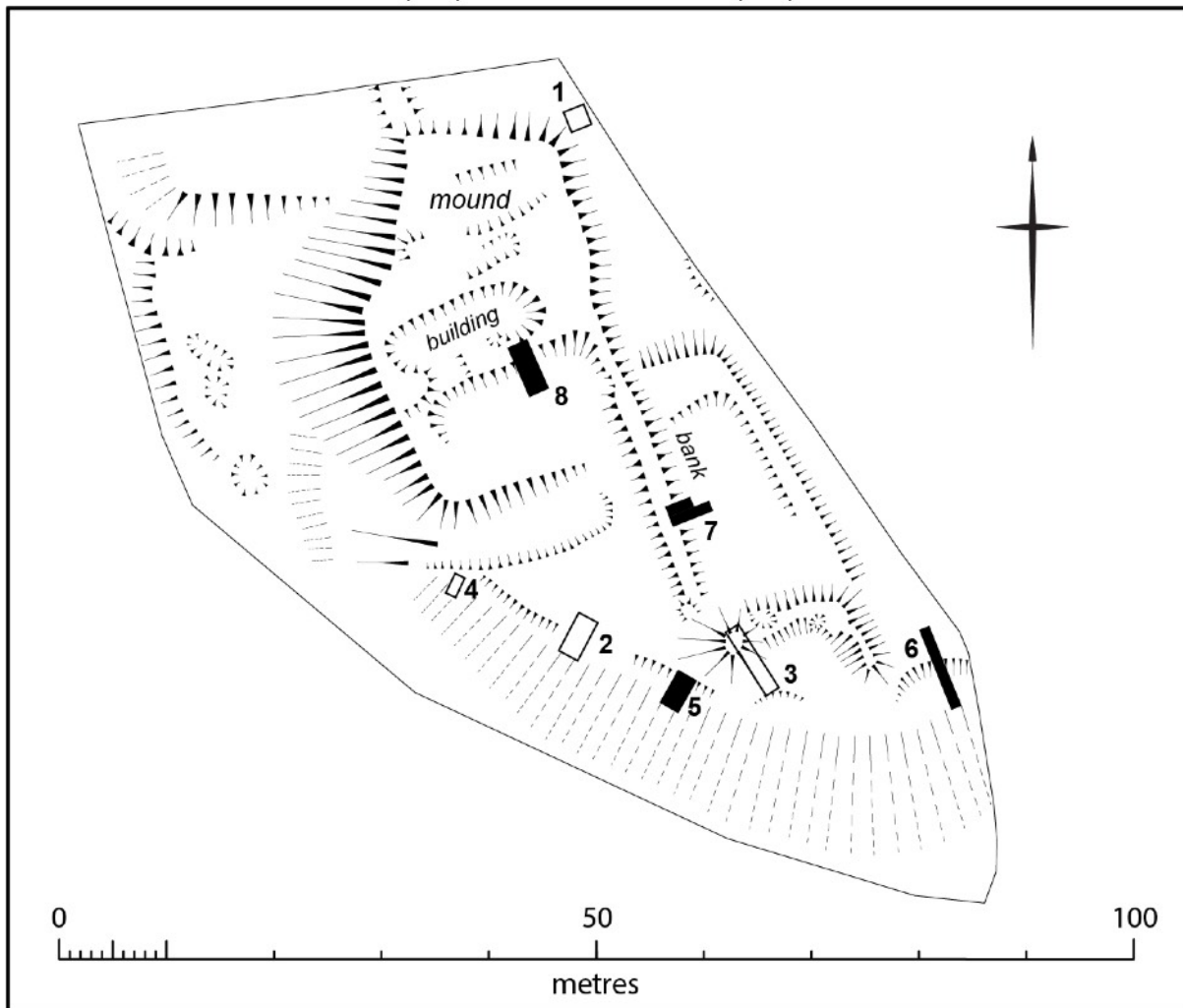


Figure 5. Plan of the site showing 2018 trenches (1-4) and 2019 trenches (5-8).

- In 2014 James Lyall of geofizz.biz undertook a geophysical survey on behalf of the Brompton Local History Society (Lyall 2014). The survey covered most of the pasture field and parts of two adjacent gardens to the north and east. The survey indicated the survival of a possible boundary bank or ditch curving around the crest of slope on the west side of the hill with a rectilinear arrangement of possible structures across the east half of the site — most of which equate to surviving earthworks. The survey recorded nothing of any note in the two gardens.

- In 2016 the SAHS undertook an analytical earthwork survey to record and interpret the visible remains in the pasture field (Evans et al. 2016). The survey concluded that the remains were those of one, or possibly two, agricultural structures and associated yards of no great age.
- In 2017 the SAHS excavated two trenches in the garden of Castle Hill House which borders the pasture field to the east (Pearson and Woods, 2017). The larger of the two trenches exposed medieval wall foundations and an adjacent cobbled surface while the second trench, much smaller and closer to the boundary with the pasture field, encountered a rubble deposit of small rocks.
- In July 2018 MAP Archaeological Practice undertook an evaluation excavation as part of a planning condition in the grounds of Forge Tearoom towards the east side of Castle Hill (Stodart 2018). The two trenches failed to discover any significant archaeological deposits.
- In September 2018 SAHS excavated four trenches in the pasture field following the grant of Scheduled Monument Consent by Historic England (Pearson *et al* 2018). The excavation aimed to assess the survival of medieval remains comparable to those uncovered in the garden of Castle Hill House the previous year (Figure 5). As was mentioned above, Trench 2 on the west edge of the hill exposed a 1.4m wide and 1.4m deep stone wall with a build up of deposits on either side including stone rubble on the east side of the wall which may be from demolition of structures nearby on the hill top. Trench 3 towards the south edge of the hill was positioned across a prominent linear bank which preserved the remains of at least four phases of stone-walled building including several pieces or reused architectural fragments. In contrast Trench 1 in the north-east corner of the field and Trench 4 also on the west edge of the hill failed to locate any significant archaeological deposits.
- In September 2018 while the excavation was in progress, Yorkshire Archaeological Aerial Mapping used an Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (UAV) to undertake low-level aerial photography of the site. The resulting false-colour digital image revealed a number of archaeological features including possible areas of stonework including a rectilinear building also visible in the earthworks which was investigated in 2019 (Trench 8).

Excavation aims

The aims for the 2019 excavation as set out in the Project Design were:

1. To establish if the stone wall encountered in 2018 Trench 2 is a free-standing wall defining the west perimeter of the hill or if it is part of a building. This will shed light on the idea that the site was a fortified residence.
2. To investigate further the structural remains encountered at the south end of 2018 Trench 3 in order to establish their relationship and date more closely.
3. To investigate two earthworks namely:- (1) a rectilinear earthwork towards the centre of the site which possibly indicates the site of a substantial medieval building as shown by the 2016 earthwork

survey and the 2018 UAV infra-red image and (2) a linear bank which runs from north-south across the centre of the site. It is a key element of the layout as it is abutted by several other east-west banks.

4. To define more clearly the presence of pre-medieval activity on the site through the recovery of artefacts and the recording of any associated stratigraphy.

5. To increase understanding on the state of preservation of archaeological remains to assist the owners and other interested parties in the future management of the site.

6. To strengthen the value placed on the site by the local community. In the short term this will be through an open day during the course of the excavation; by an article in the village newsletter and by presenting the results in a talk to the Brompton Local History Society in April 2020.

7. To inform the Society's developing plans to investigate the wider settlement of Brompton.

Excavation Results

The 2018 and 2019 excavations together established the exceptional quality of survival of the archaeological remains on Castle Hill with well over a metre depth of stratigraphy surviving on the summit of the hill in the area of Trenches 3, 7 and 8 and nearly 2m in the area of Trench 5. As in 2018, this year's excavation found very little evidence for robbing of walls or disturbance from later agriculture consequently the complex of medieval structures and associated features probably survive reasonably intact across the field, fully justifying its protected status.

Trench 5

Trench 5 measured 3.5m x 2m and was positioned on the crest of the south-west side of the hill in order to determine if the massive stone wall uncovered in Trench 2 in 2018 extended for another 8m to the south east along the top of the slope. The excavation established that the wall did indeed continue and was revealed to share broadly the same dimensions and method of construction as the section investigated in 2018.

The wall (F5005) was 1.4m wide at the surface constructed of coursed blocks of local oolitic limestone with a rubble core visible on the top of the wall and formed from small angular pieces of stone. The bonding material between the coursed blocks and the rubble core was a powdery sandy mortar. The wall was excavated to a depth of 1.7m on the south-west side facing away from the hill and 1.2m on the inside face. The excavation did not encounter the base of the wall on either face and therefore its overall surviving height was not established. The archaeological deposits on either side of the wall all butted up against the interior and exterior faces which indicates they all post-date its construction making the wall the earliest feature in the trench (Figure 6). The exterior face of the wall stepped out by 0.1m at a depth of 1m from the top presumably to aid stability by giving the wall slightly more width towards its base. Starting immediately above the plinth the wall face for about 0.6-0.7m was rendered with a thin sandy deposit which largely obscured the stonework and is presumably the decayed remnant of some sort of



Figure 6 (left above). The top of wall F5005. South-west is to the right.



Figure 7 (left). The exterior face of wall F5005 showing the offset course and the stony layer 5012.

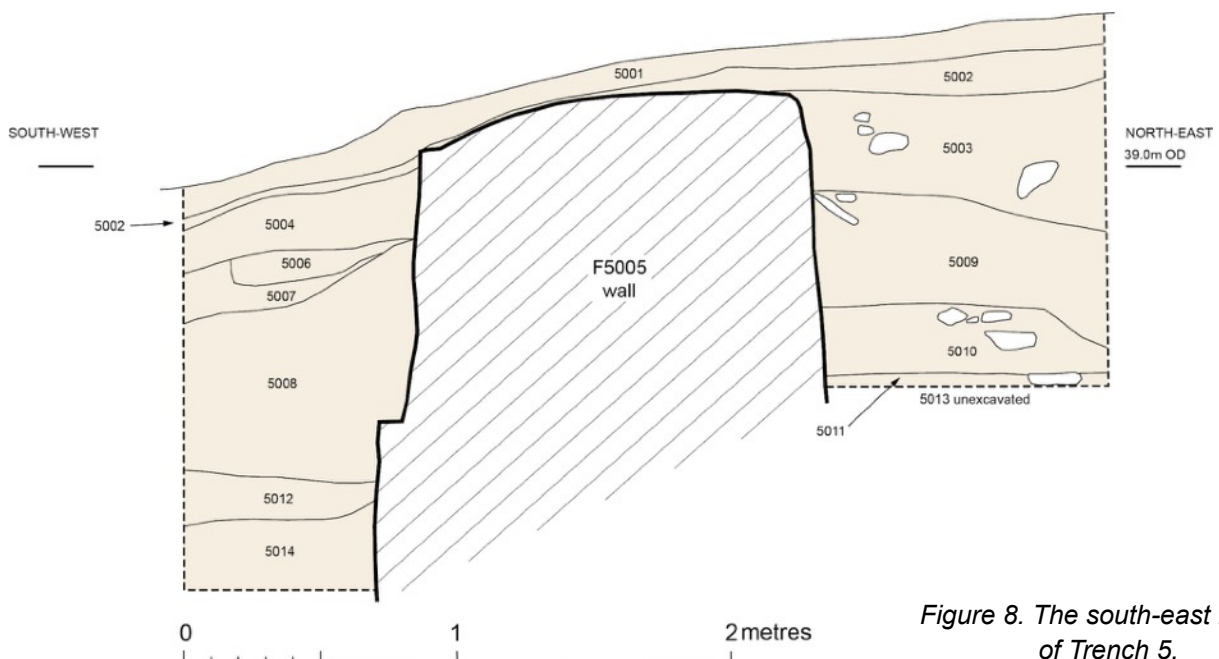


Figure 8. The south-east facing section of Trench 5.



Figure 9. Burnt layer 5013 in the sondage in Trench 5.

mortar/plaster facing. Nothing similar to this was noted on the exterior face of the wall in 2018 in Trench 2 although a similar step or plinth did exist at exactly the same depth as that in Trench 5.

The lowest excavated deposit on the outside of the wall comprised a friable sandy loam about 0.3m thick containing small fragments of stone and charcoal (layer 5014). It was excavated in a sondage at the south-west corner of the trench but excavation was halted for safety reasons before the base of this deposit was reached. The deposit butted up against the wall face and therefore must post-date the construction of the base of the wall (Figure 8). The overlying deposit (layer 5012) comprised a sandy loam with many angular fragments of stone creating a distinct stony surface butting up against the wall (Figure 7). The most likely interpretation of this deposit is that it is debris from the construction of the wall.

The 0.7m thick deposit above the stony layer 5012 comprised a 0.7m thick loamy soil with inclusions of small stones and some larger rocks (layer 5008). It rose above the level of the plinth to rest against the thin sandy render on the exterior face of the wall. Layer 5008 had therefore helped preserve the render which suggests it was dumped rapidly on the outside of the wall rather than accumulating gradually over a long period. In contrast the face of the wall above the top of layer 5008 preserved no trace of render suggesting these courses had been exposed to the elements for a prolonged period as the deposits overlying layer 5008 gradually accumulated against the wall face. The lowest layer in this sequence overlying layer 5008 was a 0.2m thick layer of gritty loam (layer 5007) with a distinct horizon of light brown sandy clay within it (layer 5006). Both these deposits were capped by a mid-brown gritty soil up to 0.25m thick (layer 5004) containing a patch of stone rubble at the the south-west end of the trench. The top of this layer was at the same level as the exterior face of the wall.

On the north-east, inside face of the wall the lowest deposits were excavated in a sondage covering the west half of the trench. They comprised a deposit of white/grey mortar mixed with dark soil and ash (layer 5013) which occupied the north-east half of the trench and which adjoined a deposit of hard-packed orange/brown clay over the remaining width of the trench (layer 5011) (Figure 9). A sample of layer 5013 was tested on site for magnetic properties and magnetic susceptibility (see Appendix 1). Both deposits butted up against the face of the wall. At the junction of these two contrasting deposits, the clay of layer 5011 was reddened and blackened by burning. Neither of these deposits were removed. They were overlain by a 0.3m thick deposit of blackened/burnt soil (layer 5010) containing large quantities of charcoal and fragments of burnt stone. These three layers collectively indicate some sort of small-scale industrial or domestic activity against the inside of the wall which had scorched the stonework. A broadly comparable surface of sandy soil containing thick bands of charcoal was noted at about the same depth in Trench 2 in 2018 and likewise suggests activity on the inside of the wall.

Layer 5010 was overlain by two deposits of gravelly and gritty soil (5009 and 5003) up to 0.8m thick containing large amounts of angular stone rubble reaching virtually to the top of the wall. The two layers probably represent stony material dumped against the wall from either large-scale levelling of the rocky summit of the hilltop or from building construction or the demolition and clearance of nearby structures. The same dump of stony material was noted to a similar depth on the inside of the wall in Trench 2. After being reduced to ground level the wall was covered by two thin layers of gritty dark brown loam containing small fragments of stone (layers 5002 and 5001).

Interpretation

The discovery of the wall in Trench 5 comparable in size, appearance and position to the section uncovered 8m to the north-west in 2018 establishes the existence of a single massive boundary wall following the crest of the slope on the south-west side of Castle Hill. The alternative that the wall is part of a building on the edge of the hill now seems less likely given the distance that separates the two sections of wall and the fact that neither trench revealed any definite signs of a floor surface on the uphill side of the wall. While the two sections of wall are broadly the same there are several differences to point out. The wall in Trench 2 was about 1.4m deep and rested on a 0.3m thick raft of stones below which was bedrock while in Trench 5 the wall must be a lot deeper as the bottom was not reached even at the depth of 1.7m. Clearly the builders had to adapt their construction to accommodate minor changes in the natural shape of the hill side which are not apparent on the surface today.

The evidence therefore points to this being a strongly-constructed free-standing wall on the interior of which some activity took place as indicated by the burnt clay, soil and spread of mortar encountered in Trench 5 and the layer of sandy soil and bands of charcoal in Trench 2. The on-site analysis of layer 5013 suggested the possibility of a lime burning clamp (see Appendix 1). That these layers were then covered by thick deposits of stone rubble indicates a dramatic change in the use of the wider hill top but as yet it is not clear if this was to do with levelling the hilltop or the clearance of stone debris from construction or demolition.

Trench 6

In the 2019 Project Design, Trench 6 aimed to continue the investigation of features discovered in Trench 3 in 2018. However, for operational reasons it was decided during the course of the 2019 excavation to instead open Trench 6 further to the east with the single aim of looking for the continuation of the wall encountered in Trenches 2 and 5 further around the hillside close to the eastern boundary of the field. Trench 6 measured 8m x 1m and was aligned lengthwise across the crest of the slope in order to test several possible positions of the wall.



Figure 10. Trench 6 looking south-east with wall F6001 in the foreground.

A stone wall (F6001) came to light towards the middle of the trench immediately below the topsoil (layer 6000) at a depth of 0.2m (Figure 10). The wall corresponded to a very slight bank visible near the crest of the slope which does not appear on the 2016 earthwork survey. The wall was 0.8m wide and built from roughly coursed stonework with a rubble core and appeared to be clay bonded. Both sides of the wall were abutted by a clay loam containing angular fragments of stone (layer 6002). This layer was removed for a short distance on either side of the wall to a depth of 0.5m without reaching its base. The deposit clearly post-dated the wall as it abutted both wall faces. Across the remainder of Trench 6 excavation ceased at the top of layer 6002 with no evidence of any other features or layers.

Interpretation

While wall F6001 occupies the crest of the slope on the south face of the hill it is almost half the width of the wall found in the same situation on the south-west side of the hill in Trench 2 in 2018 and Trench 5 in 2019. It is also more lightly constructed being only bonded with clay. Nevertheless the size and coursing

of the facing stones broadly resembles the walls in Trenches 2 and 5 which could indicate they served the same function delimiting the boundary of the site but that there was no requirement to construct the perimeter in a uniform fashion. The possibility also exists that wall F6001 was not a free-standing boundary wall but was in some way connected with the building remains to the west revealed in 2018 in Trench 3 and which underlie the prominent bank which ends near to the trench.

Trench 7

Trench 7 measured 2.5m x 2m with a 1.5m x 1m extension to the east. It was positioned to cut across the east side and centre of a north-south aligned bank that extends for around 25m across the middle of the field. The excavation discovered a sequence of walls below the bank forming several phases of a building which continued well beyond the confines of the trench (Figure 11).

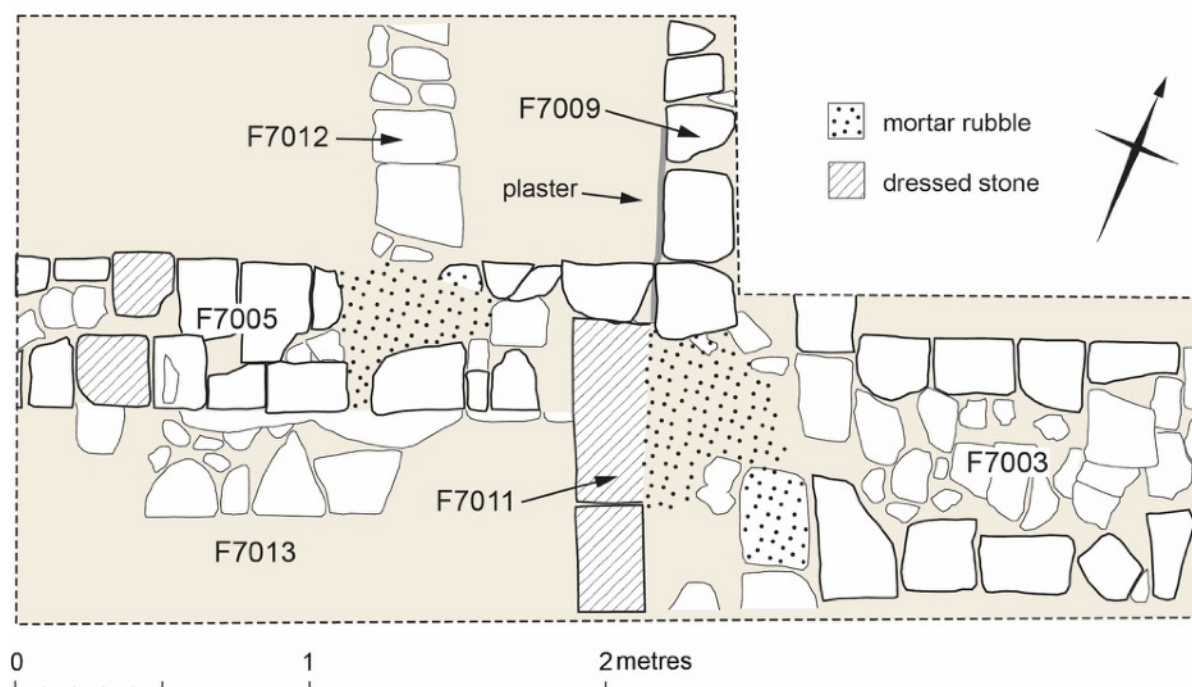


Figure 11. Plan of Trench 7.

The sequence begins with three sections of wall which together formed a right angle and presumably formed part of a building. Firstly wall (F7003) was 0.9m wide and aligned east- west and from the evidence of the 2014 geophysical survey probably continues for several metres beyond the trench to the east. Secondly wall F7009 abutted the west end of F7003 at right angles and continued north beyond the confines of the trench. This wall was at least 0.25m wide but the full width could not be ascertained as it fell outside the excavation. An area of thick plaster adhered to the exposed west face of this wall. Both F7003 and F7009 were constructed of roughly laid and roughly squared white limestone and yellow oolitic limestone blocks bonded by a decayed clayey mortar. The upper course of F7003 was more loosely set without any trace of bonding material and may indicate the wall was rebuilt in a much cruder fashion or had been damaged. Thirdly, on the west face of the junction of the previous two walls were two courses of neatly dressed squared blocks of hard grey stone (F7011). The two stones forming the lower course had a chamfered outer face (Figure 12). The contrast between the quality of this masonry and the rough stonework of F7003 and F7009 was very marked



Figure 12. View of Trench 7 looking east with wall F7011 in the centre, wall F7003 behind and wall F7005 in the foreground.

and most likely indicates either that F7011 is the surviving part of an earlier and more finely constructed building or that the blocks were reused from elsewhere.

Subsequently an east - west wall (F7005) was added to the west side of wall F7009. F7005 was 0.5m wide and constructed of roughly squared blocks with a rubble infill bonded with mortar. At its east end it butted up against the plaster render on the west face of wall F7009 helping to preserve it and crucially establishing that F7005 was a later addition. It was also slightly offset to the north of the alignment of the earlier east-west wall F7003.

There were three features associated with the east-west wall F7005. Firstly at the base of the south side of F7005 was a setting of flat stone slabs (F7013) which could be the remains of a floor surface or paved yard although the setting appeared to end on the south along a clearly defined straight edge. Secondly, extending northwards from the bottom of the the north side of wall F7005 was a single course of flat slabs (F7012). The feature looked like the cover for a drain but no such structure was found upon removal of one of the slabs which rested on the ground. Thirdly, on the north side of the right-angle junction between wall F7005 and the earlier wall F7009 fragments of two large medieval (probably Staxton Ware) cooking pots were covered by a stack of six complete limestone roof tiles and several thin tiles of calcareous shale (F7010) (Figures 13 and 14). This feature is as yet unexplained. The pot rested on a layer of sandy/gritty soil with patches of burning which extended across both sides of the east-west wall F7005. This deposit (7016) was not excavated but could well represent the ground level contemporary with wall F7005 and the features associated with it.



Figure 13. Trench 7 showing stone slabs (F7012) to left and limestone and shale tiles (F7010) covering the Staxton Ware pot fragments.

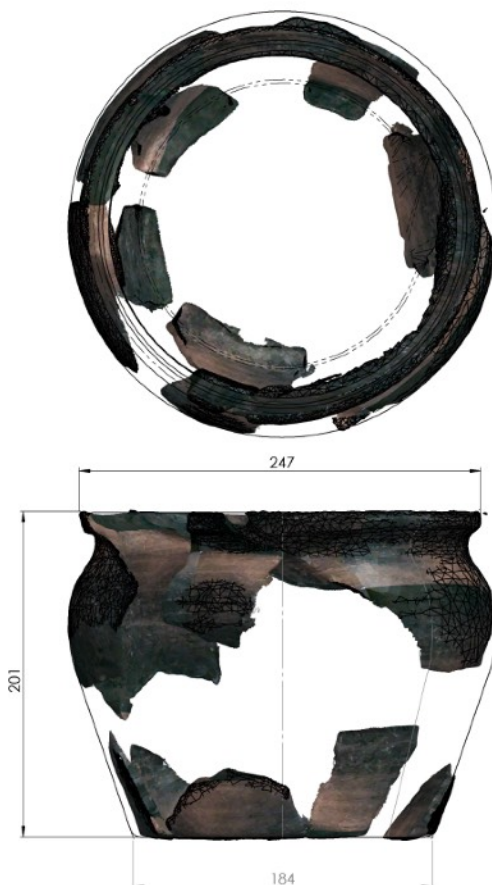


Figure 14. Top and side scans of a reconstructed Staxton Ware pot from below tile setting F7010. Dimensions in millimetres. Copyright G. Davies.

The deposits immediately overlying the several sections of wall in Trench 7 and their associated features probably relate to the demolition of whatever buildings these walls originally formed part of. Layers 7007 and 7008 had built up respectively against the south and north sides of the east-west wall F7005. Both deposits comprised a stony soil with large angular fragments of rocks, decayed mortar, fragments of plaster and broken limestone roof tiles and one of shale, a soft type of laminated rock in practice unsuitable for use as roofing. Two further deposits of stony demolition rubble (layers 7002 and 7006) containing numerous fragments of broken shale and stone tile and lumps of plaster completely buried all the walls in the trench. Set into the uppermost of these demolition deposits (layer 7002) at the west end of the trench was a line of large boulders (F7004) which formed the core of the earthwork bank where it crosses the line of the excavation trench. This establishes that the earthwork bank post-dates the demolition and levelling of whatever building the walls in Trench 7 formed part. Finally, a dark brown loam built up over the demolition deposits and the stones at the core of the bank (layer 7001). A shallow cut in this layer observed in the north section of the trench (7014) appeared to have penetrated to the top of wall F7009 and may have been to rob the upper courses of stone and another cut for perhaps the same purpose (F7015) was noted in the west section above wall F7005. Neither of the suggested robber trenches had caused much damage.

Interpretation

Trench 7 established that the remains of an extensive stone-walled structure of several phases survive in this part of the site. There is no indication of the building in the earthworks although one of the east - west walls (F7003) appears on the the 2014 geophysical survey. The overall extent of the structure is unknown though it is possible that it is connected with the probable building to the south towards the edge of the hill indicated by the prominent bank and the walls exposed in 2018 in Trench 3. The discovery of several blocks of finely tooled and shaped stone (F7011) even though they may be reused, indicates, as did the similar architectural fragments found in Trench 3, that one or more buildings of quality and status stood on the hill top for a period in the middle ages. F7011 appears to be a very similar hard grey stone to one of the two 12th century sections of moulded capital built into the east wall of the south aisle of the parish church (Bairstow 2017, 116). This could mean that the stones of F7011 came from the 12th century church after it was rebuilt in the 13th century or that the 12th century church and a building on Castle Hill shared the same source of stone, perhaps because they were built at the same time.

Without more extensive excavation it is impossible to be certain of the development of the structure revealed in Trench 7 beyond the observation that wall F7005 was added to the west of a right-angled arrangement of walls (F7003/F7009). It is not certain either if any of the walls marked the outside of the building though it is possible that F7009 and the section of fine stonework immediately adjacent (F7011) were on the exterior until the addition of wall F7005. The boundary bank that was the original focus of the trench appears to have little structure despite its prominence as an earthwork. Perhaps it marks an old hedge line rather than a formerly constructed bank which was enhanced as an earthwork by dumping stone cleared from adjacent land.

Trench 8

Trench 8 measuring 5m x 2m investigated part of a probable rectangular building visible as an earthwork towards the north end of the field and in the 2018 UAV image. The 2016 earthwork survey concluded the site was probably that of an agricultural building of no great age but in view of the discoveries made in 2018 it was also considered possible that it was the site of a large medieval building. The trench was positioned across the south side of the building as indicated by a flat-topped bank and to the east of a narrow gap in the bank that was thought likely to indicate an entrance. The excavation discovered that the site was more complex than the earthworks indicated with evidence for two structures on different alignments one represented by a single damaged wall in the north half of the trench probably medieval and the other represented by two substantial walls at right angles in the south part of the trench probably post-medieval (Figures 15 and 16).

The earliest feature encountered in Trench 8 was the damaged remains of a stone wall aligned obliquely NW - SE across the trench (F8012). The fair south-west face of the wall survived several courses high and comprised roughly laid small rectangular blocks of limestone and sandstone. The wall was at least 1m wide and had a rubble core bonded with clay but it's original width could not be determined as the north-east face no longer survived, either because this part of the wall was robbed or had been destroyed when a much later pit was dug across the north part of the trench (F8009) as will be described below.

A stone-free mid-brown soil (layer 8013) accumulated around the base of wall F8012 and also continued into the south part of the trench (layer 8015). This deposit was not excavated but probably represents an old ground surface which was then disturbed by the construction of a large hearth. The hearth had to be excavated in two discrete areas as it was divided by a later east-west stone wall to be described below (F8002). South of this later wall, the hearth was defined by a shallow straight-

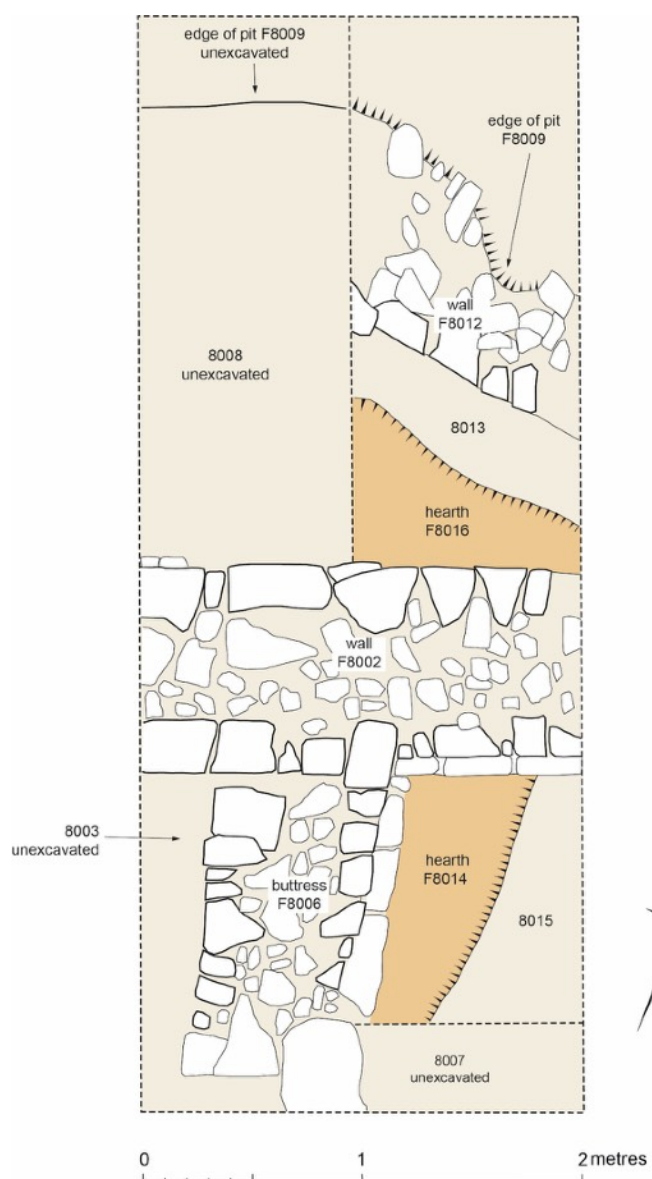


Figure 15. Plan of Trench 8.



Figure 16. Trench 8 viewed from above after excavation. North is to the right.

sided cut (F8014) aligned roughly north-south and edged with a 0.16m thick lining of clay. It was filled by a compact deposit of ash, burnt clay and charcoal (layer 8011) suggesting intense burning had taken place. Visual inspection of a sample of the ash indicated it contained a large proportion of burnt grain. A sample of layer 8011 was tested on site for magnetic properties and magnetic susceptibility (see Appendix 1). The same hearth to the north of the later wall was defined by a similar shallow cut this time aligned obliquely NE -SW across the trench (F8016) on the same alignment as the stone wall F8012. The shared alignment suggests the hearth and wall are contemporary. This part of the hearth was filled with the same burnt deposits (layer 8017).

The hearth and wall F8012 were buried below a 0.15-0.2m thick layer of compacted silty clay containing large amounts of angular fragments of stone. This deposit underlay the east-west F8002 wall and was numbered 8010 and 8008 to the south and north of the wall respectively. This deposit could originate from the demolition and levelling of whatever structure wall F8012 formed a part, and perhaps had been also deliberately compacted to make a firm base for the construction of the building represented by the east - west stone wall F8002 and the adjoining north-south wall F8006.

The east - west stone wall F8002 was 0.9m wide constructed from roughly squared blocks of sandstone and oolitic limestone. Tooling on several of the stones indicating the blocks were reused from elsewhere. Both wall faces were crudely coursed and infilled with a rubble core bonded with clay. It is this wall which creates the rectangular earthwork and is visible on the UAV image from which it can be deduced that the wall formed part of the south side of a rectangular building aligned east-west measuring about 12m x 5m. A second wall aligned north - south (F8006) abutted the south side of F8002. This was similarly constructed of roughly squared limestone and sandstone blocks with a rubble core. The east face was fully exposed in the trench and was laid in crude courses and was similarly 0.9m wide though the base of the wall was slightly wider with the bottom course of the south face protruding to form a plinth. The west face was only observed in plan as it fell very close to the edge of the trench. Stones of the top course overlay the south face of wall F8002 which it abutted not quite at right angles indicating F8006 was the later of the two walls. In the other direction the character of wall F8006 changed since it reduced in height and incorporated a row of flat slabs. This

change from coursed stone work to flat slabs may mark the end of the wall after no more than 1.4m. A wall this short may in fact have been an exterior buttress to the east - west wall F8002. A thin layer of mid-brown to orange sandy silt (8007) in the angle between the buttress F8006 and the main wall F8002 was probably contemporary with these two features.

The building of which wall F8002 formed part was then demolished and levelled producing the thick deposit of stone rubble around F8002 and the adjacent buttress F8006. This layer was given the number 8005 in the north half of the trench and 8003 over the south half of the trench. The rubble reached to the top of wall F8002 and buttress F8006 but did not cover either of them.

The earthworks indicate a notable hollow within the rectangular building which could be explained by the gradual wearing down of an earthen floor through use of the building by people or livestock. However the excavation also discovered that this hollow is partly the result of digging a steeply-sided pit through the demolition rubble (F8009) which may also explain the damage to the north side of the early wall F8012 mentioned above. The pit was filled with a fairly loose dark brown to black loam containing some flat fragments of stone (8004) and a tangle of wire netting. This and other finds from the infill suggest the pit is quite recent and may be connected with the use of the field for training by the Home Guard during the Second World War. In this part of Trench 8 the dark brown topsoil noticeably thickened from 0.1 to 0.3m where it filled the top of the pit.

Interpretation

Trench 8 produced compelling archaeological evidence for a quite radical change in the layout of this part of the site over time. Completely unexpectedly the rectangular building indicated by the earthworks and partly sectioned by the trench was found to overlie an earlier wall on a different alignment associated with a hearth, possibly used for an industrial process as suggested by on-site analysis of layer 8011 (see Appendix 1) or perhaps for drying cereal as indicated by the burnt grain found in the fill. The pottery dating evidence indicates that these features are medieval and therefore may be related to the other excavated structures elsewhere in the field.

Trench 8 provided convincing evidence of the rectangular building indicated by the earthworks in the shape of the south wall constructed of stone with an external buttress. The wall was not strongly constructed or bonded so may not have had any great height originally, but could conceivably have supported a timber superstructure. With no evidence for a floor level the likelihood is that the interior was of bare earth and therefore the building was probably an agricultural building connected with a small yard to its south also visible in the earthworks. The date remains uncertain but it is unlikely to be medieval. Most of the medieval structures found by excavation have left few visible earthworks unlike this building which is very clear on the ground suggesting it is more recent in date. Finally, the discoveries made in Trench 8 established that an element of the surface depression visible within the earthwork outline is not entirely the result of erosion resulting from use of the building but is also partly a later pit.

4. Discussion

While no evidence of occupation before the medieval period has been discovered, several fragments of worked flint found during the 2018-19 excavations and a possible mesolithic microlith in 2017 demonstrate that the hill top was at least visited in prehistory if not actually settled (Pearson and Woods 2017, 7). Nevertheless pre-medieval occupation might still be anticipated as Castle Hill is a prominent landmark with open views of routes south into the vale along the glacial ridge and west along the vale edge with the springs adjacent to the hill adding to the significance of the location.

The excavation has revealed tangible evidence to support the local tradition first recorded by Thomas Hinderwell in 1798 of an 'ancient building' on Castle Hill. The 2019 excavation extended the investigation to previously unexplored parts of the site and the results clearly confirm those from 2018 that archaeological remains are extensive, complex and well preserved. However, the limited nature of both seasons of excavation means that the character, layout and development of the site are still largely obscure. In broad terms the archaeological evidence points to this being an enclosed medieval residence but it seems unlikely from what has been learnt about the site that Castle Hill is 'a hill with a castle' comparable in size and strength to those nearby at Pickering and Helmsley.

The discovery this year of a further length of massive wall on the south-west side of the hill following the crest of the slope makes it more certain the feature was a free-standing boundary and not part of a building. We can interpret the effort lavished on the wall on this side of the hill as deliberate and intended to give an impression of strength when viewed from the village and the route from there on to the hill. The position of the entrance facing toward the village is probably indicated by the hollow way noted in the 2016 earthwork survey cutting the crest of the hill. However, it is also clear that this strong wall did not continue on the south side of the hill as the footings excavated this year in Trench 6 on the crest of the slope were far narrower and less strongly built. If this wall is the same date as the strong wall, then we can speculate that construction was maybe scaled back on the south side because the boundary wall was less visible from the village and the entrance. The evidence from Trench 3 excavated in 2018 is that the space between the strong wall and its much narrower continuation was probably occupied by a building indicated both by earthwork remains and several excavated walls. However it is uncertain if this building was constructed as an integral part of the perimeter or was added later to the inside of a previously free-standing section of boundary wall.

We will probably never be able to establish for certain that the wall completely encircled the site because of the loss of archaeological evidence, particularly on the east side of the hill due to the encroachment of properties fronting Hungate. It seems likely though given the apparent importance of the buildings on the summit that the hill top would have been entirely enclosed in order to keep the area identifiably separate from the rest of the village (Figure 17). As on the west and south sides, the east boundary probably continued on a curving alignment along the crest of the slope which is quite pronounced overlooking Hungate. On the north there is far less of a hill slope and so the alignment of the boundary is more uncertain. If it continued on a curving path then the north boundary may have been south of the High Street (the A170), making it about 60m across and 90m long giving an enclosed area of about 0.5ha. However, the area could have been much larger if the boundary continued further north on to the rising ground beyond the modern road.

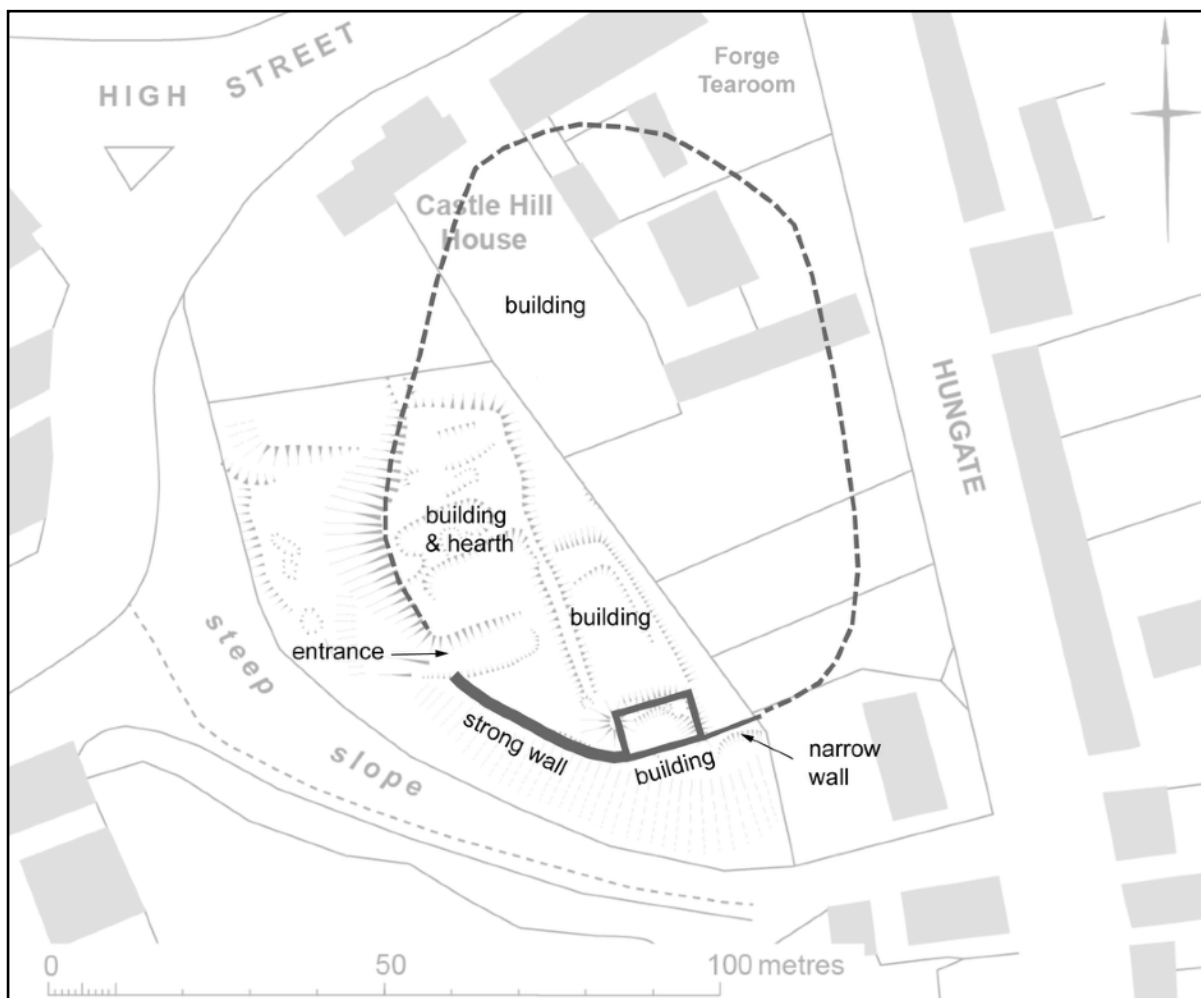


Figure 17. Conjectural reconstruction of the layout of the manorial enclosure on Castle Hill based on the results of the geophysical and earthwork surveys and the 2017, 2018 and 2019 excavations.

On the hill top itself the medieval layout is slightly clearer after the 2019 excavation in that structures have been found in two more areas, these being the sequence of walls and a possible floor level uncovered in Trench 7 and the wall and hearth found in Trench 8. Setting these locations alongside the walls found in 2018 in Trench 3 shows that there were a number of buildings in this part of the hill top though we do not have a complete plan of any structure or any clear indication of what the buildings were used for. In contrast no features other than wall F6001 came to light in Trench 6 on the south side of the hill so alongside the buildings there must have been sizeable open areas, perhaps yards and gardens. Clear evidence for phasing of walls and the possible reuse of architectural fragments in Trench 7 (as in Trench 3 the previous year) points to the medieval phase having been fairly long-lived despite the apparent absence of any contemporary documentary references to the site while the pottery dating evidence points to occupation sometime in the 13th and/or 14th centuries.

The site on Castle Hill was clearly an important residence set apart within its own enclosure overlooking the village. It was most likely connected to one of the two manors into which the village was divided in the middle ages and whose holders can be traced back in time to the Domesday Survey of 1086 as will be discussed in more detail below. There are about a dozen possible manorial sites known on the north

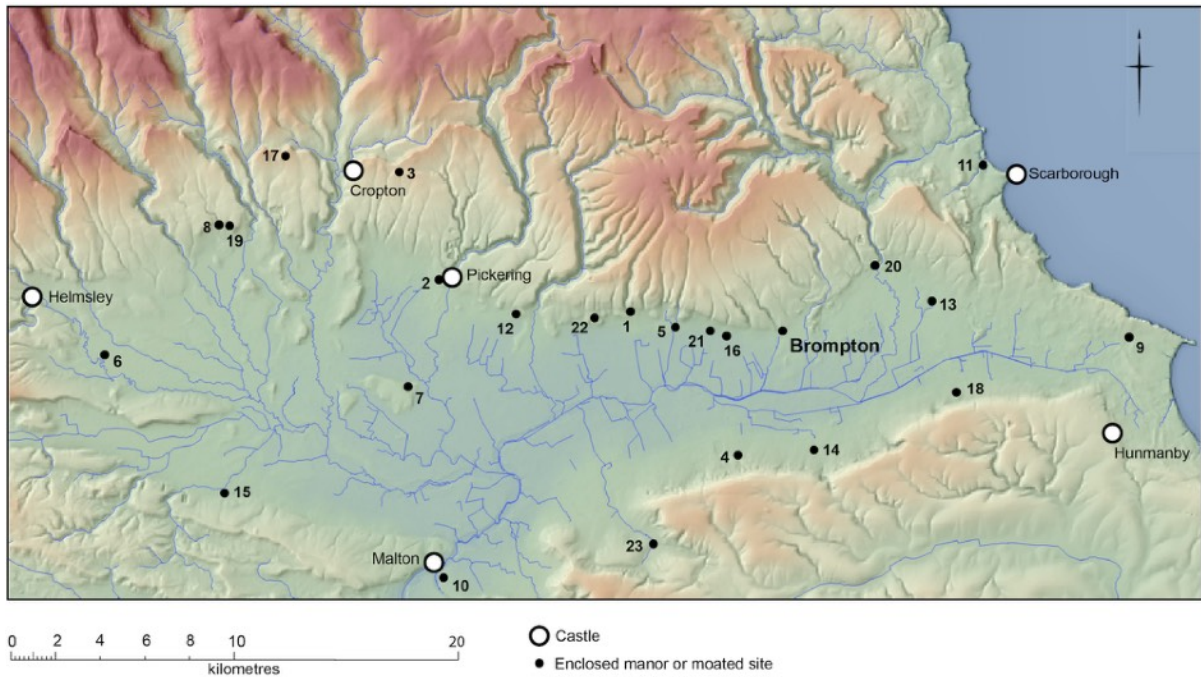


Figure 18. Distribution of medieval castles, manorial enclosures and moated sites around the Vale of Pickering. 1. Allerston 2. Beacon Hill 3. Cawthorne 4. East Heslerton 5. Ebberston 6. Harome 7. Kirby Misperton 8. Neville Castle, Kirby Moorside 9. Newbiggin 10. Norton 11. Peasholm 12. Roxby 13. Seamer 14. Sherburn 15. Slingsby 16. Snainton 17. Spaunton 18. Staxton 19. Stuteville Castle, Kirby Moorside 20. West Ayton 21. Westfield 22. Wilton 23. Wintringham. Map contains public sector information licensed under the Open Government Licence v3.0.

side of the Vale of Pickering identified as enclosed, fortified residences, sometimes with an external moat (Figure 18). Where dated from historical sources or archaeology, they generally fall within the same 13th-14th century time span indicated by the pottery from the Castle Hill excavation. In contrast there are hardly any sites on the south side of the Vale suggesting the estates there were less prosperous since they had to contend with north-facing slopes and poorer soils (Hurst 1988, 112).

The manorial sites on the north side of the Vale range geographically from the earthwork remains of Seamer Manor house in the east to the moated site called Stuteville (or Vivers Hill) Castle at Kirbymoorside in the west. The best preserved is at West Ayton where the early 15th century tower still stands among a complex of lesser buildings now reduced to earthworks. The earliest of these buildings was dated to around 1200 in the extensive excavations conducted by the Scarborough and District Archaeological Society (SDAS) between 1958 and 1961 (Rimington and Rutter 1967). A closely comparable site to Castle Hill is the manor house on the north side of the nearby village of Allerston. Excavated in the early 1960s by the SDAS, Allerston was probably the residence of a branch of the powerful Hastings family who held the manor for a large part of the middle ages (Rimington 1966). The excavation uncovered most of a medieval masonry building interpreted as a 13th century hall which (as at Castle Hill), was roofed with tiles of stone and fired clay, the latter covered with green glaze. The excavators noted the use of thick plaster rendering on both the internal and external faces of some walls, as was found this year at Castle Hill on one of the walls in Trench 7. Also like Castle Hill, the manorial complex was bounded by a stone wall some 3-4 feet thick traceable as an earthwork but as the site is on a gentle south facing slope this boundary would not have dominated the village to the same extent as at Brompton.

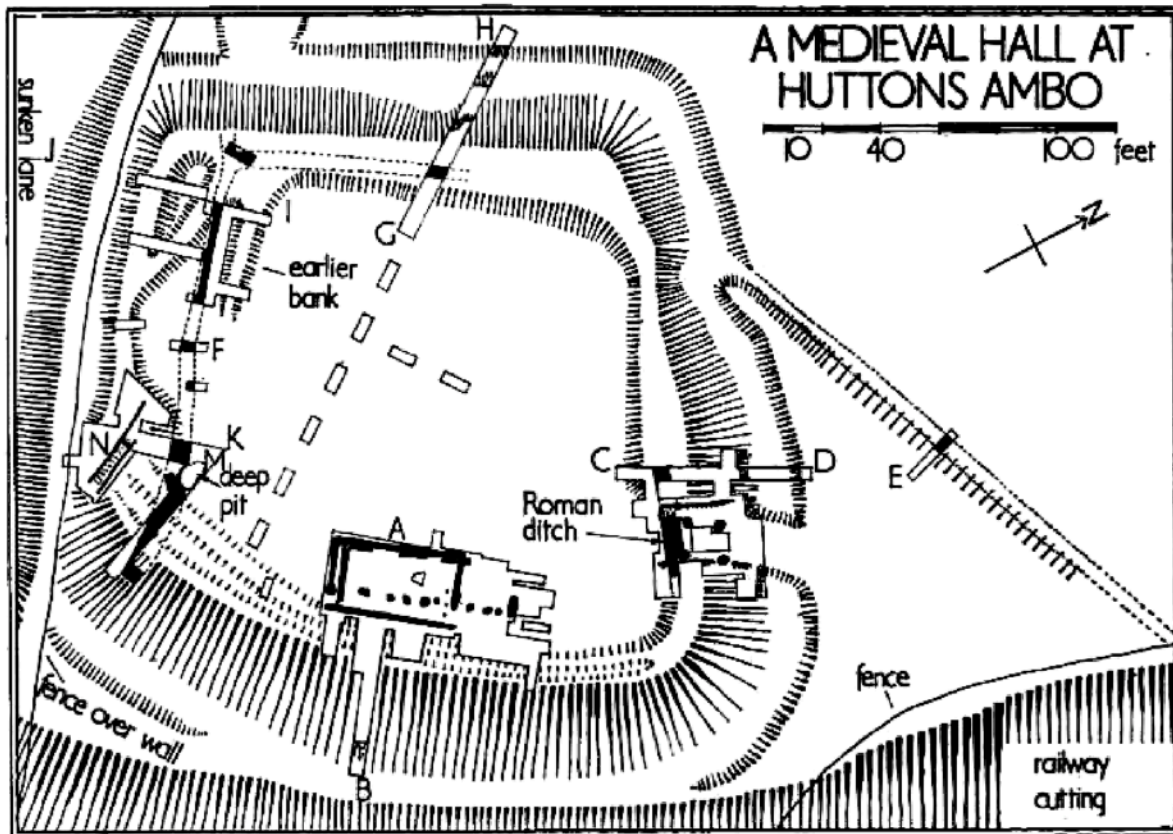


Figure 19. Excavation plan of the manor house at Huttons Ambo (Thompson and Smith 1957, Fig. 1).

Some distance from the Vale of Pickering at Hutton's Ambo in the Howardian Hills (NGR SE 7631 6738) are the earthwork remains of a fortified medieval manor house which is similar to Castle Hill both in terms of its size and its hill top setting. The enclosure sits on the edge of a bluff overlooking the River Derwent and, like Castle Hill, uses a steep natural slope as part of the perimeter (Figure 19). The enclosure is roughly square in plan about 60m across so broadly about the same size and shape as the postulated form of the Castle Hill site. It is thought that a fairly minor lordly family called Colswain resided at Huttons Ambo in the 12th and early 13th centuries, the manor then passing to the Boltons. An excavation in 1953-54 found the remains of a 12th-century timber hall replaced in stone in the 13th century after which the site was abandoned (Thompson and Smith 1957).

It has been suggested that at Castle Hill the raised area towards the north of the field beyond Trench 8 is the base of a levelled mound or motte typical of many late 11th and 12th century earthwork castles with the rest of the hill top forming a bailey (l'Anson 1913, 332). This idea has yet to be tested by excavation but the dump of stony rubble found at the rear of the strong west wall in both 2018 and 2019 might have come from the levelling of earlier Norman structures and defences including, perhaps, a motte. The Norman takeover of settlements around the Vale of Pickering after 1066 resulted in the construction of motte and bailey castles on the north side of the vale at Cropton and Pickering (the latter with a supposed second motte called Beacon Hill 650m to the west) and on south side of the vale at Hunmanby. At Cropton the Norman motte and bailey castle became the site of a manor house when a range of buildings was constructed in the bailey by the Wake family in 1290-5 (l'Anson 1913, 344-5). A similar sequence could have happened at Brompton too, the main difference being that at Cropton the motte was left standing.

The manorial history of Brompton in the middle ages is complicated as there were two principal manors in the village and several smaller holdings (Rushton 1963; Rushton 1964; Evans 1992). We cannot be certain but it seems likely that the buildings on Castle Hill were the main residence of the holder of one or other of the two principal medieval manors. At the time of the Domesday Survey in 1086 the larger of the two manors at Brompton was held by Berenger de Tosny. His manor included the mill, church and priest mentioned above and was evidently being managed successfully as it doubled in value between 1066 and 1086 when the Domesday Survey records most places around the vale were worth much less or had no value at all by the latter date. Perhaps the availability of good agricultural land well out into the vale on the ridge of glacial material helped drive the increase in Brompton's prosperity in the later 11th century. Seamer, held by the Percy family, is the only other local manor that increased in value between the same two dates and similarly also has a ridge of cultivatable land extending well out into the vale. It is possible that Berenger de Tosny fortified Castle Hill in the late 11th or early 12th century by constructing a motte and bailey castle in order to safeguard this valuable manor and perhaps to make Brompton the seat of his wider Yorkshire estate which mainly comprised manors spread around the the Vale of Pickering to the west of Brompton and on the north part of the Wolds (Dalton 1994, 61). Berenger de Tosny died childless in 1116 and his estates in England eventually descended by marriage to the Bigod family, who continued to hold them in the 13th century with John de Vescy recorded as the Bigod's tenant at Brompton in Kirby's Inquest of 1285 (Skaife 1867, 141).

The second smaller manor at Brompton was held directly by the king in 1086 but was given by Henry I (reigned 1100-1135) to Nigel d'Aubigny in the early 12th century to form part of his new Honor of Mowbray. For a period the Mowbray manor at Brompton was tenanted by Eustace Fitz John who was a powerful figure in the local area during the reigns of Henry I and Stephen (reigned 1135-1154). Much of Stephen's reign was marred by Civil War in which Eustace Fitz John was involved locally as the supporter of William of Aumale, Earl of York against rivals such as the de Gants (Dalton 1994, 174) whose widespread estates in the East Riding including a castle not far from Brompton at Hunmanby. Fitz John held the castle at Malton in 1138 and may conceivably have built a motte and bailey on Castle Hill during this period to counteract the threat posed by the de Gants to his estates on the north side of the Vale. Stephen's successor, Henry II (reigned 1154-1189) restored royal authority and ordered the destruction of many castles built during Stephen's reign. The Earl of York's fortification on the headland at Scarborough suffered this fate as it had been built without the royal permission and something similar may explain why all certain traces of a motte and bailey castle have vanished at Brompton. Eustace Fitz John died in 1157 and his estates, including Brompton, went to his son William who adopted the name 'de Vescy' and by Kirby's Inquest of 1285 it was also in the hands of John de Vescy (Skaife 1867, 144). The Vescy family therefore held much of Brompton as tenants for a period in the 13th and early 14th centuries though their holdings were broken up after William de Vescy died childless in 1314. The Vescys rise to prominence at Brompton broadly coincides with the period that archaeology indicates the buildings on Castle Hill were occupied so it is conceivable that this was their residence. The evidence discussed above that William de Vescy established a market at Brompton in 1253 on a likely site immediately to the west of Castle Hill strengthens their connection with this part of the village but we will probably never know for certain that the Vescy's resided on Castle Hill. An alternative location is immediately to the north of the church on the site that later became High Hall (Rushton 1964, 28).

Several local manorial sites continued to be occupied well after the medieval period most notably at Roxby to the west of Thornton le Dale where the medieval manor house underwent major refurbishment in the middle of the 16th century with the addition of new wings and the laying out of formal gardens by the Cholmley family. However the Cholmleys abandoned Roxby early the next century in favour of their mansion at Whitby Abbey and now the site only survives as earthworks (Swan and Mackay 1989). At Castle Hill the bulk of the pottery recovered from the excavations dates to the 13th and 14th century which implies that occupation did not continue into the late middle ages or beyond. Rather, the site appears to have been open ground long enough for all traces of the medieval layout to vanish. The excavation across the earthwork bank (Trench 7) and the rectilinear building (Trench 8) established that both these features overlie the remains of medieval structures but do not respect the medieval layout. These features and other banks and possible yards recorded in the 2016 earthwork survey are probably part of an agricultural landscape that developed after the medieval buildings and walls had been levelled, although how much time elapsed between these two phases is not yet clear.

The fact that Castle Hill was not subsequently built on and that the wall foundations were not extensively robbed suggests the villagers retained a lingering respect for the former importance of the site. Over time this may have evolved into the two proud traditions of a castle on the hill and of Brompton having once been the 'residence of the Northumbrian kings' (Hinderwell 1798, 303).

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The landowners and tenant farmer are thanked for giving permission for the excavation and Keith Emerick of Historic England gave advice on the project design and the application process to obtain Scheduled Monument consent. Chris Evans gave a lot of help in the planning of the excavation.

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It is a pleasure to record the support for the project from the villagers of Brompton who allowed us to use the nearby village hall and joined us to see the results on the open day towards the end of the excavation. A brief report on the work appeared in the village newsletter while children and teachers from the local primary school paid several visits to the excavation and helped with washing the finds.

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Appendix 1. Soil analysis

John Dean

Soil samples from contexts 5013 and 8011 were observed for inclusions and tested for magnetic properties and magnetic susceptibility. Magnetic properties and magnetic susceptibility measure the physical properties of iron at a molecular level. In its metallic state iron has magnetic properties that are readily detected with a magnet. Metallic iron does not occur naturally (except as meteorites) and is consequently an indicator of human activity. Magnetic susceptibility measures a characteristic of naturally occurring iron and is principally an indicator of high temperature processes. It is expressed here as a relative, mass value. The magnetic susceptibility of the site subsoil is typically 110 μ CGS.

Context 5013

Compacted anthropogenic soil varying in colour between dark red, black and mottled white. Charcoal inclusions <1cm, plus one larger piece of carbonised wood plus a significant amount of lime which in turn contains small pieces of charcoal and limestone.

The context is a level layer with the appearance of a working platform. The presence of charcoal, lime, limestone and reddened soil are clear indicators of a lime burning clamp. The reddened soil and reddening of an adjacent limestone wall, however, have low magnetic susceptibility values, 60 μ CGS and 30 μ CGS respectively. This is probably due to an almost complete absence of natural iron in the lime and limestone. In isolation these both gave 0 μ CGS results. None of the context has magnetic properties.

Context 8011

Dark red and black compacted anthropogenic soil. Charcoal inclusions <3cm. No traces of lime. A magnetic susceptibility value of 2820 μ CGS was recorded for the context as a whole. The context is a level layer, probably a working platform built of compacted clay.

A large sample (763g dry weight) was dried and tested for magnetic properties. A significant proportion of this (15%) gave a positive response. It consists of dust and what appear to be flakes of hammer scale and bloom fragments. A magnetic susceptibility value of 2880 μ CGS was recorded for the extracted sample. Together these results indicate the site of a high temperature process i.e., a bloomery furnace rather than iron forging alone.

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