



A.P.A.C. Ltd.

Archaeological Perspectives Analysis Consultancy

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF

REPORT

WB/LGT/16

Longtown Castle.



ENGLISH HERITAGE

NHLE1021347, SM 28886, HA 1021347.



Summary

This document is a report for Archaeological Watching Brief undertaken during ground disturbance works necessary for the necessary for the erection of a 3 x A2 size display panels within the area of a scheduled Antient Monument; SM 28886, HA 1021347.

English Heritage were granted Scheduled Monument Consent to undertake the required ground disturbance work under an archaeological watching brief.

The work did not impact upon any archaeological resources.

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Cover Photograph: DSCO9633. Completed information display panel



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Introduction

This Archaeological Watching Brief Report has been prepared by DR. N. Phillips, APAC Ltd, for English Heritage and results from a programme of works to erect a series of 4 information display boards within the bailey of Longtown Castle, a Scheduled Ancient Monument, NHLE1021347, SM 28886, HA 1021347.

The new display boards replace previous information panels which had deteriorated beyond practical use and had become aesthetically detrimental to the property.

The need for a programme of archaeological investigation was one of the conditions of the Scheduled Ancient Monument Consent, approval:

(b) No ground works shall take place until the applicant has confirmed in writing the commissioning of a program of archaeological work during the development in accordance with a written scheme of investigation which has been submitted to and approved by the secretary of State advised by Historic England.

A Written Scheme of Investigation for the archaeological work was drawn up, submitted and approved in writing before any work began, WSI: WB/LGT/17.

Site Location and Description

The proposed site of the watching brief is centred on Longtown Castle at NGR 32057 29149, fig 01.

Longtown Castle is situated at the northern end of the Olchon Valley, at the eastern foot of the Black Mountains, and can be reached from the A465 Abergavenny to Hereford road where it branches off at Pandy.

Longtown Castle is a large masonry structure which stands on a hill above the linear village of Longtown.

The castle is dominated by circular masonry tower, *donjon*, which surmounts an earthen mound; widely but not unanimously accepted as a motte, (Phillips 2004).

The earthen mound has an associated masonry rectangular wall enclosing an inner bailey and the whole of the masonry structure is further enclosed within a rectilinear earthen rampart forming an outer bailey.

The information panels to be replaced are situated in the outer bailey, in the inner bailey and at the top of the access stair to the keep fig 01.

Brief archaeological and historical background

There is every probability that the larger earthen 'playing card' shaped enclosure is of Roman origin and Roman finds were reported in 1869 from the east bailey (Ellis 1997. 78).

If the origin had been Roman then similarities could be drawn particularly between Longtown and Caerwent; although plenty of evidence exists for similar re-use such as Pevensey, London, Exeter and Winchester (Higham and Barker 1995. 58).

The first mention of Longtown Castle could be 1187-1188 when a castle called *novum castellum* was built at Ewyas Lacy with Hugh de Lacy as the holder, (*Pipe Roll*. Ellis 1997. 67).

It is generally accepted that the round keep, as at Longtown, is a later development in castle design its use was first experimented with in East Anglia during Stephen's reign but it wasn't until the 1170s that its use became widespread (Braun 1947. 49).



A date range of 1185-95 was suggested for Longtown (Renn 1961. 133) but Knight referred to Richard Hartley's work at Longtown, where he suggested that the building hadn't started before 1200 (cited in Hillaby 1985. 223).

Hillaby, however, favours an even later date of between 1215 to 1233 suggesting that the castle was the work of Walter de Lacy who was sheriff of Herefordshire between those dates.

Walter was in exile in Ireland before 1213 and lost his shrievalty in 1233 (Hillaby 1985. 223).

In 1233 Henry 'Turbleville' was in payment of custody of Ewyas (*Cal Close*. 1226-1240. 235).

The late date for the castle is probable for Longtown has the unusual fortune of having two castles, the other is a motte and bailey type situated less than a half a mile to the south at Pont Hendre.

Documentary evidence for Longtown is never clear about the two castles because the two have never been referred to separately in old documents.

Typologically the Longtown Castle is later than the Pont Hendre Castle, therefore Hugh de Lacy's *novum castellum* 1187-88.

(Phillips, 2004)

Longtown, once an important Marcher hamlet around a medieval Marcher castle decayed to a small hamlet around the 15th century, possibly never recovering from the ravages of the Black death.

The castle itself has had some small archaeological investigations in the 1960s and 70s although there is limited documentation as to the outcome of these works.

An English Heritage document: Longtown Herefordshire, notes that 'The Ministry of works acquired the castle in in a dilapidated state and began clearing the site of rubble and consolidating its remains'; which may explain the findings of this undertaking, although it was highly unlikely that the excavation of three small post holes would add anything of significance to the archaeological record.

A brief consultation of the available Ordnance Survey mapping of the castle reveals no real change other than a difference in managed/unmanaged vegetation within the bailey, figs 2a & 2b.

Aims & Objectives

The proposal for scheduled monument consent was for the excavation of 6 small holes in which to place three pairs of supports for information interpretation panels.

There was a possibility that the excavation work may have impacted upon archaeological deposits within the development area.

The aim of the watching brief was to establish the presence/absence of archaeological structures or other significant features within the works area and should any archaeological resources have been revealed, their presence would have been recorded and a decision made as to any mitigation measures.

To carry out an archaeological watching brief to the standards laid down in the Chartered Institute of Field Archaeologists, Guideline for Watching Briefs 2014.

Methodology

Excavation of the ground, in order to provide subsurface bases for the supporting posts of the information display panels, was undertaken by a contractor appointed by English Heritage.



The location of the replacement information display panels was dictated by the existing display boards, fig 01.

The display boards to be replaced were supported in each instance by a single post; the existing hole for which was utilised to reduce the impact of the current ground disturbance.

Once the existing post had been removed, a second post hole was excavated alongside, using a 'double shovel' post hole cutter.

The excavation of the new holes was observed during the work and the resultant spoil investigated for any archaeological resources.

The newly excavated holes were then photographed and measured for depth prior to the holes being filled with quick set concrete mix.

The twin display panel supports were then sunk into the wet mix and some soil and turf replaced.

Watching Brief Results

The ground disturbance work was undertaken on 11th of January 2017; three new holes were excavated and three existing holes were utilized.

Information display panel post holes 1 & 2 were positioned at the southern end of the site, just inside the outer bailey rampart, PL01.

Both holes were 500mm deep and entirely contained within a stratigraphic context of mid-brown, soft sandy topsoil, [100] over a mid-brown, sandy topsoil with some angular sandstone; PL02 neither of which yielded any finds assemblages.

Information display panel post holes 3 & 4 were positioned at the southern end of the inner bailey, beside the entrance way, PL03.

In this instance post 3 was unexcavated; the required support hole being provided by cutting off the existing post and fitting the replacement inside, PL04.

Post 4 was, however, excavated and revealed an identical stratigraphy to post holes 1 & 2 and again no finds.

Post holes 5 & 6 were similar to 3 & 4 in that an existing post was cut off, PL05 and used for one of the supports.

Post hole 6; PL06 (right) however, proved to be difficult to excavate as the ground fill was made up of angular sandstone rubble, probably associated with the access ramp rather than the mound/motte structure.

No finds were observed during the excavation work.

Interpretation

None of the ground disturbance impacted upon any archaeological resources.



Staff

Dr. Neil Phillips, MCIFA.

Archive:

The original archive for this project will remain with APAC Ltd.

A copy of the archive will be deposited with Herefordshire Historic Environment Record.

Copies of the final report will be sent to Historic England & English Heritage

Acknowledgements:

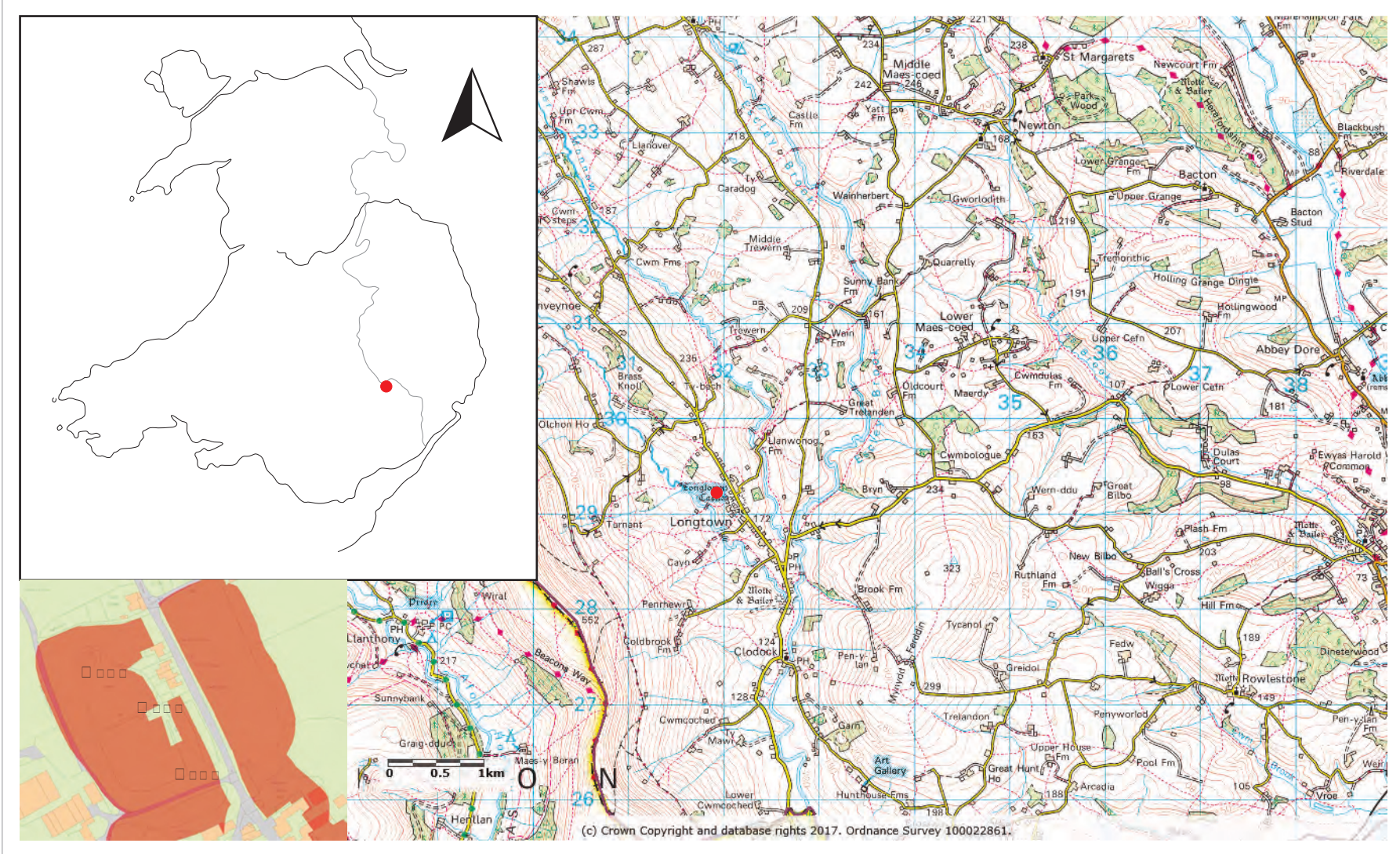
Thanks to English Heritage for allowing access to his site, and his efficient handling of the excavation.



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DSC02277





Plate 03: Location for information display panel 2

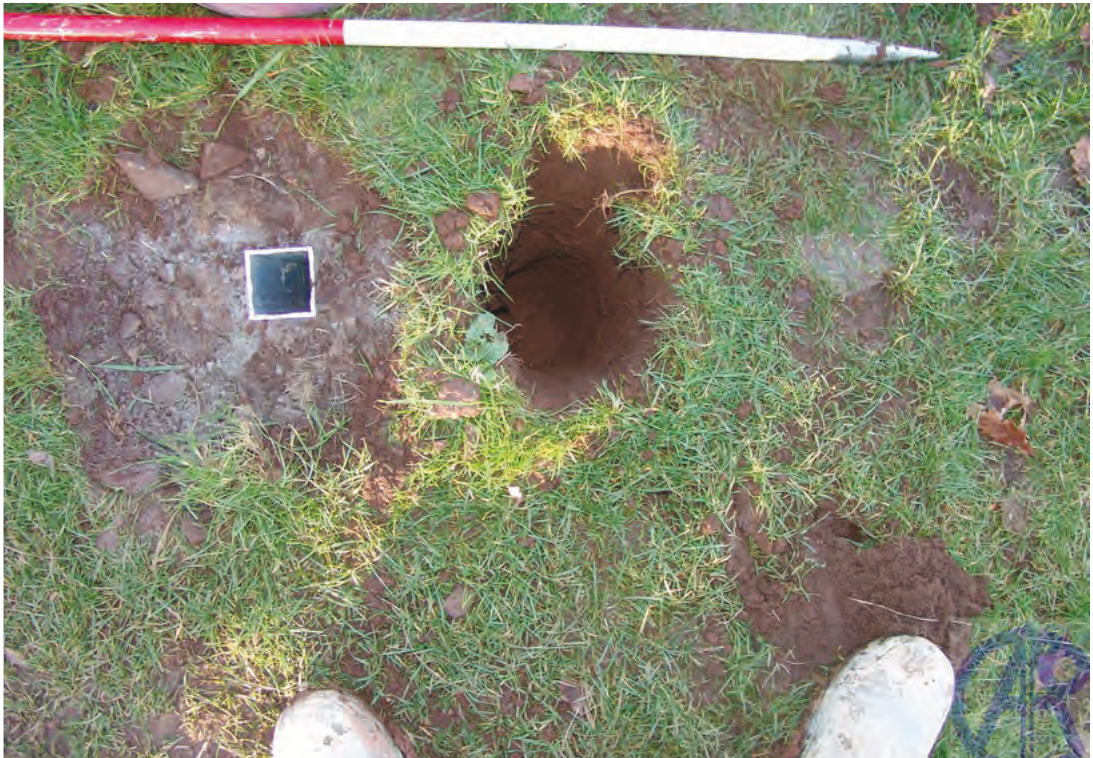


Plate 04: Original display post, left & new hole 4 right



DSC09631

Plate 05: Original information display panel at mound summit



DSC09632

Plate 06: Holes 5 & 6. Hole 6 is in original cement block



Photo no	Date	Camera	L or P	View	Description	Plate
DSC09624	11/01/17	SONY-F828	L	N	Initial excavation post hole 1	
DSC09625	11/01/17	SONY-F828	L	V	Post holes 1 & 2 finished	
DSC09626	11/01/17	SONY-F828	L	V	Post holes 1 & 2 finished	
DSC09627	11/01/17	SONY-F828	L	N	Setting information display panel 1. Outer bailey	
DSC09628	11/01/17	SONY-F828	L	V	Original display post, left & new hole 4 right	PL22
DSC09629	11/01/17	SONY-F828	L	N	Location for information display panel 2	PL02
DSC09630	11/01/17	SONY-F828	L	S	Location for information display panel 2	PL01
DSC09631	11/01/17	SONY-F828	L	SW	Original information display panel at mound summit	
DSC09632	11/01/17	SONY-F828	L	V	Holes 5 & 6. Hole 6 is in original cement block	
DSC09633	11/01/17	SONY-F828	L	NW	Information display panel 3	