



Fig 1 St Ann's Hill, Chertsey (National Archaeological Record No TQ 06 NW 14)

NOTES

A Survey of the Earthworks at St Ann's Hill, Chertsey

The archaeological features on St Ann's Hill, Chertsey (NGR TQ 027 675; Scheduled Monument No Surrey 82) have been controversial for some time. It has been tentatively suggested that they are defensive in nature and may represent a hillfort (Manning and Bray 1814, 226; Clinch 1912, 383; Hogg 1979, 228), but their incomplete and confused form have led most workers to treat the site with caution.

At the request of the Surrey County Archaeological Unit the RCHME undertook an analytical ground survey of the hill-top, the results of which are presented here (fig 1). The existence of a hillfort is confirmed, but it has been severely affected by landscaping and other activities. The survey was carried out using electronic distance-measuring equipment with some points of detail obtained by using taped offsets. The full archive is deposited in the National Archaeological Record No TQ 06 NW 14.

St Ann's Hill, a notable landmark with commanding views over the Middle Thames gravel terraces, is now shrouded in dense vegetation. It is defined by steep slopes on its N, E and W sides but is approached by a gentler incline from the south. Although it stands out prominently in the local landscape, its gravel capped summit barely attains the height of 69m above OD.

Some 5m below this summit and circumscribing the hill-top are the remains of the hillfort. In the main it is univallate, enclosing approximately 4.7 ha (11 acres), though there are traces of a second, outer, rampart flanking the SE area of the circuit. The defences are best preserved along the W side. Here the broad rampart, standing to a height of 1m, is fronted by a ditch, 1.5-3.0m wide and up to 0.5m deep, partially interrupted by a footpath. Beyond is a broad counterscarp bank less than 0.5m high. Within the fort the main rampart is only 0.1-0.3m above the interior. Internal quarry-scooping is present towards the N end of the W side. A depression 8-9m across is visible and within it there is at least one sunken circular hollow which may have held a structure. The course of the fort along the N and E side is more problematical. The survey has indicated that there are a number of terraces here and it is assumed that the upper one is an element in the fort circuit. The presence of a slight back scarp mirroring that recorded along the W side suggests that this is the original rampart. However, the existence of a number of paths makes interpretation difficult. One of these, incorporating the present well-formed pathway cutting through the rampart, may be the line of the 'King's Way from Chertsey to the chapel of St Ann' mentioned in a charter of 1367 (Giuseppi 1915, 330 no 598). Another, the 'Old Coach Road' from London to Winchester, approaches St Ann's Hill from the N and directly impinges upon the SE corner of the hillfort. Here, it is located on the unusually broad inter-mural terrace which separates the presumed main rampart from an outer bank and ditch, before descending the hill. Exactly how these external features relate to the main rampart is unknown. Unfortunately, only 100m in length of these features survive, the remainder having been destroyed by the modern road to the SW and, to the N, they have been overlain by earthworks associated with the Old Coach Road ('x' on plan). Their position so far down-slope argues against them being an earlier line of defence. If indeed they are prehistoric features, it seems likely they were associated with a flanking entrance facade, since the less steep approach from the S makes this the most suitable location for an entrance into the fort. Although there are numerous gaps in the circuit, none appear to be original. In the SW corner the circuit has been

completely destroyed by a large former sand and gravel quarry some 150m in diameter and up to 50m deep which was already derelict by the early 19th century and which has been subsequently landscaped.

The fort remains completely undated though chance finds of an Arreton flanged axe (Turner 1909, 198; Needham, S, pers comm), a pegged spearhead (Chertsey Museum, D877), a 2nd century Dupondius and fibula (Chertsey Museum, D879), suggests that the hill-top, if not the enclosure, was subject to sporadic activity over a lengthy period.

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